

Should the Governments give Financial Help to the National Olympic Committees ?

In our last issue of the Bulletin (N° 53), we called attention to the remarks made by H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh concerning the public anneal which is being launched in order to raise the necessary funds for sending a British team to Melbourne. He said "The team we desire to send should be composed of amateurs and not of temporary Civil servants" : by these words the Duke meant to express his disapproval of people who think that Governments should give financial assistance. With the kind consent of the Editor, we wish to publish some passages of interest compiled from an article written on this subject and published recently by Mr. Willy Meisl (Foreign news editor) in the British sports magazine "World Sports" (which happens to be the official magazine of the British Olympic Committee.)

Well, I am one of those many who say that the Government *should* take a hand in the matter, but I express myself in a slightly different way. It is not so much that I want to see the Government push out the "volunteers." No. What I *do* want to see is the Government taking its hands out of the pockets of sport, where it has so often plunged them, and, for once, putting back a tiny fraction of what it has taken.

That's all I want. Is it asking too much ?

A considerable fraction of the money which the Treasury collects from horse-racing is being ploughed back to help national horse-breeding, yet national health and fitness depends to a very small degree on horse-racing. Why should not a similar attitude be taken towards sports on which the nation's physical education depends to a very *high* degree ?

The Government is taking from sport, in its widest sense, many millions of pounds every year. What more natural than to plough back a fraction of this amount regularly—and a slightly bigger percentage occasionally ?

It is not true that we don't care whether the Bannisters, Piries, Wardrops, Llewellyns

and Garganos win or lose; we *do*. Rightly, we do not consider it a national disaster when they are beaten, but, just as rightly, we enjoy it as an individual *and* national success when they win.

In last month's *World Sports*. Mr. J.P.W. Mallalieu, M.P., expressed himself against Government financial aid for sport partly because he feared Governmental interference as a result. I hope nobody is under the impression that talented athletes and footballers in Russia or Hungary are forced to train eight hours a day or be despatched to some "Siberia" or other. But they have much better facilities, of course, and only because their Governments and local authorities are so anxious to put them at their disposal. We should not forget, either, that Russia, for example, has not only become a big power in top-line sport ; many millions of Russians are indulging in one sport or another.

We need not go to the totalitarian countries of the East, however. Let's look at a country as democratic as Sweden. Does her Government subsidise sport ? Yes—insufficiently, of course, but it does so nevertheless. They have just had a nice big row, as they do almost every year, about the size of the annual subsidy paid to the *Riksförbund*, the Swedish body which represents all sport and physical education organizations. The upshot is that the Government has agreed to increase the annual subsidy to about £675,000, and part of this will be used to finance preparations for and participation in the 1956 Olympics. The Swedish Government, please note, does not attach any strings to this subsidy.

Finland's State-run football pool covered the deficit of the 1952 Games, which meant much to Finland in every respect. Seventy-per-cent of the pool's net profit goes to sport, and now the whole of this percentage for two weeks is going towards Olympic costs. Again—no strings attached.

We have the same sort of thing in Norway and Denmark, while in Belgium. M. Leburton, the Minister of Health, has promised

to give a million francs towards Olympic preparation and six millions towards the travelling expenses. That is not quite £50,000. The British Olympic Association's fund is aiming at £75,000, but Belgium is slightly smaller and has no special ties with Australia, so we can say, perhaps, that Belgium's participation in Melbourne, virtually speaking, will be entirely subsidised.

The Belgian minister said that his promise was conditional : that the cash was to be used only for the preparation and despatch of competitors capable of representing the Belgian flag honorably, and that the number of officials must be kept low. The Belgian Government, of course, has not the slightest intention of checking whether these "conditions" are fulfilled ; the sports authorities plus the Press and public will see to that. And the same applies in all countries.

I for one would not mind the British Government distributing, under the same conditions, a quarter of a million pounds (or at least £100,000) from the dozens of millions which it annually extracts from sport. Certainly I would not consider it unfair interference, and still less would I consider the athletes thus "financed" as Civil servants, however temporary.

Referring to the subsidies granted to sport in Italy and Germany. the author goes on to say that, in these countries, sport is entirely organized by Clubs and sports Associations which are free agents and just as independent as those of Great Britain. Governments do not run sport, nor do they interfere with its organization, at the most, the Treasury contents itself with helping with a view to serving national interest. These Governments grant regular subsidies to sports Associations, Olympic subsidies being in addition.

In these countries, of course, the amateur law has been equally democratised, and "broken time" (payment for wages lost through competition) is being in practically all sports. Only this enables the average workers to take part in international events which may keep them from work for from one to four weeks."

Restatement of the Question

Dr. Meisl's article which we cut down on purpose, calls for a restatement, for, one could easily be tempted to agree with him unreservedly were it not for the fact that things do not happen in the same way in every country of the world. As a matter of fact, the author of the article confine himself to describing facts which pertain to Great Britain only, while supplying his readers with points of comparison with what is happening elsewhere in *Europe*. One could easily be tempted to endorse his opinions, but this cannot be done in view of certain facts which we are in a position to reveal. These occurred *overseas*

where the slightest governmental financial assistance virtually cause the civilian and... even the military authorities to exercise total control and interfere in sport. It happened not a very long time ago, that the International Olympic Committee had to deal very severely with National Olympic Committees, the members of which has been appointed by the government, in view of this, these committees, of course were composed entirely of people biased in favour of the government and ready to serve its interests.

Last year, the International Olympic Committee had a serious disagreement with a country of Central America where the Government granted subsidies in favour of sport, and thus had tried to assume its control by creating a Sports' Ministry, supervised by the brother-in-law of the President of the Republic. The Government tried to control the National Olympic Committee of that country and of sport in general. These happenings occurred on the eve of the Caribbean and Central America Olympic Games, which were held in March 1955 at Mexico-City when a team payed and subsidized by the government was under the complete control of the civil Authorities. The International Olympic Committee which has granted its patronage to these Games, obtained the full support of the organizers in Mexico who assisted the International Olympic Committee to take the necessary steps, by refusing to enter this "State team" till the day when the elections would be held in a normal way and on democratical lines. The upshot of the incident was that the athletes of that nation did finally compete in the Mexican Games, the necessary funds were raised by the National Olympic Committee of that country *through a public subscription*.

We can give a still better example of what can happen : that of a National Olympic Committee of one particular country which is composed of only one *political person* appointed and paid" by the Government. The cat came out of the bag on the day of the funeral of the beneficiary when the matter came to light ! Cases of State interferences have been on the increase in the last few years. So much so, that the International Olympic Committee became seriously concerned and tackled this all problem most energetically. It intervened in every case where the State or the military Authorities seemed to get a foothold in the affairs pertaining to sports organizations and sport Authorities in charge. For this motive, we recommend that sport be self-supporting, living on its own resources, however modest and that it should be entirely free of interferences of all types. This applies specially in countries where the Olympic concepts ought to be taught, and where the ideal which animates the responsive sports leaders of certain countries, is non-existent. It is also the reason why the

International Olympic Committee has been concerning itself lately with the new version of the Olympic Rules which have just been adopted, devoting particular attention to Art. 25 which has been the object of long discussions. The reader who reflects on the matter, will soon perceive that certain of the texts of this Rule are not intended for countries which do not possess any experience in Olympic matters, nor for persons who often have a very vague idea of the meaning of the Olympic Movement.

Herewith is the English version of this Rule :

Art. 25. National Olympic Committees must be completely independent and autonomous and entirely removed from all political, religious or commercial influence.

Because of the importance of National Olympic Committees which are in complete charge of the Olympic Movement in their countries, great care must be exercised in choosing members, who should be men of good standing, of upright character, sound judgement, independent mind, and with a knowledge of a belief in the Olympic principles.

They must include in their membership :

- a) the members of the International Olympic Committee in that country ;*
- b) at least one representative of proved service to his sport, nominated by each recognized National Federation, whose sport is included in the Olympic Games program. Individuals of this category must constitute a voting majority of the National Olympic Committee.*

The following are not eligible to serve on a National Olympic Committee :

- 1) a person who has ever competed as a professional ;*
- 2) a person engaged in or connected with sport for personal profit. (It is not intended to exclude individuals occupying purely administrative positions in connection with amateur sport.)*
- 3) a person who has ever coached for payment. Exceptions may be made in the above*

categories by the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee in special circumstances.

A National Olympic Committee must not recognize more than one National Federation in each sport and that Federation must be affiliated to the International Federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee.

Officers and Members of the National Olympic Committee and the members of its Executive Committee shall be elected at least every four years, at a National Olympic Committee meeting held expressly for that purpose.

They may co-opt to the Committee, persons who have rendered or can render exceptional service to the Olympic Movement, subject to the restriction to clause b. above. Members of National Olympic Committees shall accept no salary or fee of any kind in respect of their position. They may, however, accept reimbursement for transportation, lodging and other proper expenses incurred by them in connection with their duties.

National Olympic Committees are responsible for the behaviour of all their athletes and officials.

They make all arrangements for taking part in the Olympic Games.

All communications on such matters shall be addressed to them.

In order to obtain recognition, a certified copy of the Rules and Regulations of a National Olympic Committee, with, if necessary, a copy or translation in French or English, certified as correct, must be sent to the International Olympic Committee. Subsequent changes of these Rules must be reported to and approved by the International Olympic Committee.

In the event that any regulations or actions of the National Olympic Committee conflict with International Olympic Committee Rules, the International Olympic Committee member in that country must report the situation to the President of the International Olympic Committee for appropriate action. If there is no International Olympic Committee member in the country, the President has the power to appoint a member from another country to investigate and report to him.