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CIRCULAR-LETTER

**to Members of International Olympic Committee, to National Olympic Committees
and to International Federations**

The following statement, which you may find of interest, was released by President Avery Brundage from his office in Chicago, for publication Sunday, April 8, 1956.

Statement from Avery Brundage President, International Olympic Committee

Much of the hysteria in certain United States circles about Russian performances in sport, I am sorry to say, sounds like sour grapes to the rest of the world. The fact that the complaints have come from a country that has been notorious internationally for gross irregularities in sport in educational institutions, of all places, has not added to their validity or their acceptance.

Just what is meant by "subsidized athletes" ? I assume the inference is that they get better food and living quarters, and more time to practice. There was an article in SPORT ILLUSTRATED recently, in which a Czech champion skater stated that she was given a job with the munificent salary of \$200 a month. When I was in Russia recently I paid 13 rubles, \$3.25 for two packages of cigarettes. At that rate \$200 a month represents very little. In almost any newspaper in the United States you can find advertisements for beginners in any one of several fields at \$300 a month.

So far as extra food and better living, conditions are concerned, I doubt if the best that is available in Communist countries today, is as good as that enjoyed by our poorest (financially) athletes.

As for more time to practice, the 5-day week and the 8-hour day are almost universal in the United

States. Students, of course, have even more time to themselves. Anyone who cannot find ample time to train under such conditions, is not much of an athlete.

A great deal of arrant nonsense has been written on this subject. The Austrian, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, and Swiss boys and girls, and the U. S. figure skaters, who defeated the Russians at Cortina d'Ampezzo, didn't cry about Communist advantages. They minded their own business, trained assiduously and faithfully, and won Olympic medals. There are lots of United States boys and girls, unawed by Communist victories, who are doing just that and who will win at Melbourne.

No country has better material than the United States. No country has better facilities, no country has better coaches, and there is no reason why our athletes should not win if they are willing to apply themselves, work hard, and make the sacrifices that are necessary for victory. It is not easy to become a champion. Besides ability, it involves long and weary hours of arduous practice. Champions are not made by subsidies or training camps, but by diligence and intelligence.

For sixty years, since the Olympic Games were revived, the International Olympic Committee has been preaching the tremendous value of national programs of physical education and competitive sport to any country, in building stronger and healthier boys and girls and making better citizens. Communist countries have adopted this idea enthusiastically. (Their motives will not be analysed here, but their motto is "For Labor and Defence"). Children begin to receive training in elementary schools. Thousands of scientifically educated teachers and coaches have been trained, and Communist children are taught by experts using the most advanced methods. Sport has been placed on a higher level in their society and their champions are acclaimed as national heroes. This program was started twenty-five years ago and

begins to produce results. Their athletes do not have to be paid. In Communist countries sport provides an outlet, and sometimes the only outlet, for natural competitive instincts. Moreover, they have no professional sport which attracts many of our stars, and because their countries are not so advanced, they do not have so many distractions, automobiles, cinema, television, etc.

United States athletes have won about as many, or more, Olympic medals than the rest of the world combined in track and field athletics, the sport which heads the Olympic program. Even so, ten of the 24 events, the 5,000 and 10,000 metre runs, the marathon, the 400 metre hurdles, the 3,000 metre steeplechase, the 10,000 and 5,000 metre walks, the hammer throw, the hop, step and jump, and the decathlon are not on most of our programs and therefore have few participants. Also, we do not use the metric system like most countries and our athletes are therefore not accustomed to Olympic distances.

We must always remember that about half the sports on the Olympic program, fencing, cycling, soccer, canoeing, women's track and field hockey, gymnastics, etc., have few participants in the United States. I was told in Moscow that there are 800,000 expert gymnasts in the U.S.S.R., and I can readily believe it because of what I saw with my own eyes. Try to find 800 in the United States. Communist countries are active and organize teams in *all* sports. They even want to enlarge the Olympic program.

It is not the strength of other people that we in the United States need fear. It is our national complacency and the softness of life, brought on by too much prosperity. If Russian success in the Olympic arouses us, and the rest of the world, to correct our own weaknesses and shortcomings it will serve a very useful purpose.

AVERY BRUNDAGE.