
**STATEMENT MADE BY Mr. ARMAND MASSARD,
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The following letter has been sent to the monthly Bulletin of the Comité National des Sports in France and appeared in its columns under the rubric 'Sport in France'. This subject being of particular interest to the International Olympic Committee, we reproduce it here with the author's permission.

Going back to a movement as old as the world... to Olympism which was manifested a good long time ago by creating a Committee of International Federations under the aegis of the late Paul Rousseau, a challenge is being directed against the International Olympic Committee.

The cause of this opposition is undoubtedly the system of co-opting members adopted for recruiting the International Olympic Committee. Moreover, this system was ordained by Pierre de Coubertin. What were his reasons for wanting it? Since nobody seems to know why, let us recall the fact that de Coubertin, was fully aware that his system of a self-perpetuating Committee would be criticized. He set forth his point of view on the matter in a most precise manner on the occasion of a dinner held by the British Government during the Olympic Games in London in 1908.

When he said: "We are not a body of elected members but we are self-recruited and our mandates are unlimited. These facts alone are sufficient to be at variance with an opinion which is used more and more: the growth of the power of the electoral system in its gradual extension and domination over all recognized institutions. In our case, there is a twist to the general law which is hard to accept, is it not so? Well, we are perfectly willing to assume the responsibility of this anomaly and to do so without anxiety.

"As far as I am concerned, I learnt long ago a great deal from this country, namely that the best way to safeguard freedom and to serve democracy does not always consist in a wholesale surrender to the electoral system, but, on the contrary, the devising within the big electoral ocean,

of occasional landmarks in the form of islets where in certain specific instances, the continuity of an independent and steady effect can be maintained.

"Independence of action, absolute reliability, these, Gentlemen, are the means which have enabled us to achieve great things. These qualities are unfortunately sadly missing from the group system of today, and more particularly from the sporting groups and associations. There are some among us today who still think that the opinions which I am expressing point to a deep wisdom, and are rich alike in political awareness and prophetic insight. What would have been the fate of the Olympic Games during the unprecedented upheavals which shook the world to its foundations, had the International Olympic Committee been recruited on the same principles than the other Governing Bodies? Either they would already have disappeared or we would have two opposing factions confronting each other, the one composed of elected personalities, the other of State appointed persons more concerned with propaganda than with sport as we mean it to be. The Games would become the battlefield of the ideologies which divide the world. This in answer to the insatiable people, for whom the question resumes itself in this dilemma: Is this 'to be or not to be'? We do not propose to concern ourselves unduly over these people".

But where the problem assumes a real importance is when it deals with the interference of a General Director of the Youth and Sport Movement such as Mr. Gaston Roux whose word carries weight and who is attending the Games regularly in his capacity of a Government Representative within the French Olympic Committee... This calls for a few comments.

Actually, in a recent issue of *Sport in France*, Mr. Gaston Roux interviewed on his return from Melbourne by a collaborator of the National Sport Committee finished his statement with these remarks: "I am of the opinion that the powers of the International Federations should be extended while limiting those exercised by the International Olympic Committee. I think that

these suggestions dictated by experience are in conformity with the spirit which inspired Pierre de Coubertin."

Personally, I am of the opinion that it can be inferred from the quotation reproduced above, that the ideal which inspired Pierre de Coubertin, unless I am mistaken, was precisely to keep a proper distinction at all times between the responsibilities incumbent to the International Olympic Committee, namely the preparation and holding of the Games, and the duties of the International Federations. The latter have full control and undisputed authority over the highly important aspect of the technical direction of sport. Apart from this, the relationship between the International Olympic Committee and the International Federations has never given cause for reproachful comment on the part of the International Federations, on the contrary, a very friendly understanding prevails on each occasion when they meet at their annual Conferences. The last one has just taken place in June at Evian.

Furthermore, how is it possible to extend the powers conferred to the International Federations since they have already full control of the technical side of their sports and control the sport installations, their powers extending even to the right of veto whenever these do not comply with the rules prescribed by the federations themselves? How is it possible to prescribe a limit to the powers conferred on the International Olympic Committee without running the risk of seeing the collapse of the whole structure so carefully raised for the renotion of the Games?

Could it be that political power in its ascendancy is feeling jealous and resents being kept outside this world wide Movement? Here also, danger is looming ahead. Here we allow ourselves a second quotation made by Pierre de Coubertin, when commenting his book *A twenty one year campaign* on the epithet used by de Saint-Clair to describe the 1900 Olympics — 'A stupendous

fiasco'. Pierre de Coubertin wrote "Whenever public authorities interfere in sports organization, the direct outcome of this will be the appearance of the fatal germs of incapacity, inefficiency and mediocrity. The tie binding together in a spirit of goodwill all members of an autonomous sporting group becomes slack whenever the gigantic yet undefined figure of this dangerous thing called the State makes its appearance. Then follows a general relaxation when everyone tends to free himself of all restraint and "harbours only one desire 'to pull the blanket over to his side of the bed'. Why make a disinterested effort to economise and seek a good organization. Isn't the State there to pay and to bear the responsibility?"

From one Olympiad to the other the Olympic Games have pursued their road to success, expanding and getting results both on the basis of sports achievements and on that of fostering a lasting fellowship between nations. This is true to such an extent that some Scandinavian personalities did not hesitate to put forward the candidature of the International Olympic Committee for the Nobel Prize of Peace. The International Olympic Committee succeeded in bringing about the amazing achievement of persuading both Germanies to send a united team to the 1956 Games.

Without turning down systematically an evolution which is brought by the present times conditions, I refer particularly to the financial support and assistance from the State which has become indispensable for want of something better, let us refrain from attacking a structure which has proved its worth in a most striking manner.

It is always an easy thing to attribute words to the dead. But it is also a dangerous practice especially when, as in the case of Pierre de Coubertin, enough printed matter and texts have been left to express in an unequivocal manner a straightforward thought, a sound and solidly built doctrine establishing clearly the bounds of its subject.