

Speech
given by Mr. Avery Brundage

President
of the International Olympic Committee

at the Solemn Ceremony of the 53rd Session in Sofia
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Mr. President, Mr. Mayor, Your Excellencies,
President Stoitcheff and Members of the Bulgarian Olympic Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen :

Today, here in Bulgaria, a new-old country, we open the 53rd Session of the International Olympic Committee. Last year we met in the antipodes, in Melbourne, on the Fifth Continent, far away, in another hemisphere. The year before we assembled in Paris, capital of *la belle France*, and centre of the fashionable, artistic, gastronomic and intellectual world. Next year we travel to the Far East and our meeting is in Tokyo, one of the great capitals of the Orient. After that we already have invitations from Beirut, Lebanon in Asia Minor, from Nairobi, Kenya, on the Dark Continent and from many other cities in near and distant lands. The point to this is, that now, only sixty years after the Olympic Games were revived, on every continent, in all parts of the world, there is a desire to participate in and to understand better the Olympic Movement.

Moslems from Cairo, Istanbul, Karachi and Teheran ; Hindus from India ; Buddhists from Japan, China and Thailand ; Catholics and Protestants ; followers of every religion as well as atheists who have none ; all approve and accept Olympic regulations.

Royalists from ancient kingdoms and empires ; communists from the new governments of the 20th century ; democrats, republicans, socialists ; all respect the Olympic code. Participants from primitive and undeveloped countries or from those which have had the benefit of centuries of civilized development ; participants from industrial and from agricultural nations, from Buenos Aires, from Mexico City, from Moscow, from Washington, from every quarter of the globe, observe the same regulations.

Africans, Americans? Asians, Europeans, regardless of race or of religious faith or of political convictions participate happily together under the Olympic flag with the five coloured linked circles on a white ground.

Not so long ago a sceptical journalist said to me, 'You sport leaders fight a losing battle, why bother with meetings like these ? Politicians rule the world and wars will continue, cold or hot, but equally burdensome, expensive and wasteful. Moreover, today everyone wants to make money - even from sport - there are no more amateurs. What chance have sportsmen without either guns or dollars ? Be realistic - get up-to-date - occupy yourselves with more practical matters and do not waste your time.' In my own country, I have even been called *the last of the amateurs*.

Fortunately, there are still many people in the world, however, who believe there are more important things than dollars and who can see in the idealism of the Olympic movement a hope for a better world. If this were not so how would it have

been possible for millions of followers in over ninety-different countries to have been enlisted in the Olympic movement in only six decades. *Nothing like this has ever happened before in all history.*

The Olympic Games are a wonderful athletic spectacle, full of excitement, suspense and drama, but don't ever think that is not the only reason for their astounding success. The principal reason for this success is that they are a demonstration of idealism in action and as such they appeal to all people of every country who hope for a better world. Good sportsmanship, which is the basis of the Olympic code, is nothing more or less than an application of the Golden Rule - the essence of all religions. They are an enterprise, conducted by devotees, by dedicated individuals who seek to demonstrate the best and the finest without thought of personal gain. Based on the high principles of the amateur code, they illustrate a system where everyone has an equal opportunity and where the reward is measured by the ability and the application of the participant - a system that is honest, fair and just and so a system which meets the aspirations of all people. Sportsmen are admired and respected because they exemplify high moral qualities as well as physical ability.

If the Olympic movement has had such an overwhelming success in the first sixty years starting from nothing at all, it is because it stands for what is right and stands against what is wrong, and it is difficult to overestimate what may be accomplished in another six decades. The possibilities are unlimited.

But it is not a simple task - there are many difficult problems today as there were in the beginning. The first was how to administer satisfactorily a project of this kind. The natural rivalry of sports or of nations with some being stronger and perhaps more important than others, if not restrained, might well have wrecked the Games at any early date. The solution was found in the International Olympic Committee, composed of individuals who do not represent any country or any sport but who do represent impartially and impersonally the Olympic Movement and only the Olympic Movement. It is the duty of the International Olympic Committee to enforce Olympic regulations and to preserve the pure amateur spirit of the Games, free from commercial encroachment, which would soon lead to public disapproval, or from political intrusion which would quite obviously be disastrous.

The very first vital problem to be faced by the International Olympic Committee after it was constituted was whether or not it should organize the Games itself. Very wisely, it decided that it should not, and the task of handling all the business arrangements was left to a national Organizing Committee specially formed for that purpose. The second serious problem concerned the technical administration of the various sports on the Olympic programme. For the first few Games technical matters were also handled by the Organizing Committee. This soon proved to be unsatisfactory and after the 1908 Games the technical management of the sports was turned over to International Federations which were created for that purpose.

Today we have another important problem to which we must find the correct answer and that is the size of the Games, which, with more than ninety nations participating in a score of different sports, have become so large and so costly that they are difficult to manage. Shall more sports be added to the programme or shall the number be reduced because the Games are already too large and expensive and are in danger of becoming so top-heavy that they will collapse of their own weight. There

are arguments on both sides of this delicate question.

We shall also discuss amateurism here in Sofia. Some one once defined science as 'anything you cannot understand'. Cynics have said the same of amateurism. But just as the scientists know what science is – amateurs know what amateurism is. The great difficulty is that amateurism as a thing of the spirit, is not easy to define. As a result there are many definitions. Each sport has its own and each country has its own.

The Olympic definition is quite clear. But since it is interpreted differently in different places it seems necessary to amplify or to explain it more in detail so that there will be no misunderstanding and no misinterpretation. What a competitor can do without losing his amateur standing and what he cannot do must be clearly understood. Conditions for all must be the same. It is unquestionably the duty of the International Olympic Committee to make the Olympic amateur definition clear and not to leave it to others which will only lead to confusion.

Amateur sport is recreation, an avocation and not a vocation, play and not work.

To exist and flourish it must be free, without other political or commercial dictation. Professional sport, so called, is not sport at all, but a branch of the entertainment business like the circus ; it is for the spectators whereas amateur sport is for the players. A competitor, who is paid, is a workman and not a player. The professional takes from sport, while the amateur gives to sport. These are fundamental truths that must always be remembered.

We must never forget that 'the most important thing in Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well'.

Here, in the friendly atmosphere of Sofia, we hope that we can find the correct answer to some of these pressing questions. Our aim is to uphold the prestige of the Olympic Movement and ever to strive for a more peaceful and more perfect world. We are indebted to General Vladimir Stoïtcheff, member of our Executive Board, and to the Bulgarian Olympic Committee for their kind invitation to meet here in Bulgaria, and we are appreciative of the friendly hospitality with which we have been received. We are sure we shall leave with most pleasant memories of our visit of Sofia.