

## AMATEURISM

## *and Art*

Brussels, April 19th 1958.

Mr. Chancellor.

In the May publication of the Bulletin, the International Olympic Committee refers to the definition given by our president Mr. Avery Brundage, of an amateur, followed by the extract of an article by a correspondent named 'B' who requests Mr. Brundage to reply to his comments.

If I may dare to intervene personally in this argument without awaiting our president's reply, it is because the arguments brought forward by Mr. 'B' have, on various occasions, caused a similar controversy in Belgium, when, on each occasion, I have taken a direct part in the debate. I hold therefore definite personal views on the subject and do not discuss this matter at random.

In my opinion, the subtle definition used by Mr. Brundage in order to distinguish an amateur athlete from a professional is just perfect, whereas the comparisons advanced by Mr. 'B' are, to my mind, entirely besides the point.

There are two essential factors which are opposed to the principle of professional sport : firstly, sport can only be practised till about the age of 35, this logically means that unless a professional athlete, who retires at that age, has kept in touch with another form of trade or profession, he is likely to go adrift and become a useless member of society. It is for the purpose of readapting former sport professionals to usual social standards, that a Pierre de Coubertin Society was founded in Paris. Secondly : the fact that money

plays an important part in sport competitions constitutes a danger in itself, as it jeopardizes the idealism and integrity of purely non-retributed competitions. The lure of material gain often calls for various personal arrangements between athletes competitors (especially in individual sports competitions). In short, money inevitably has a corrupting influence on sport.

Let us now refer to artists, painters, sculptors, violinists, pianists, actors, singers, etc. This category of artists can, with impunity, trade their talent for two main reasons : firstly, they can exercise their profession till almost the end of their lives (as is the case with Cortot, Thibaud, Casals, Toscanini, Picasso, etc. for example). Actors have the faculty of changing their rôles according to their age, (juvenile lead into the part of heavy father, an ingénue can become a duenna, etc.). Secondly, there is no competitive rivalry among these to be compared with the rivalry which exists among athletes which may be affected by the personal arrangements cited above and which amateurism will never use and always ignore. I personally think it is useless to go on insisting on the fact, as it is absolutely impossible to compare sport and art in relation to their respective value concerning the possibility of trading talent.

*Ed. Hermes,*

President of the Royal Belgian  
Athletic Association ;

Vice-President of the Belgian  
Olympic Committee.