

## FREE TRIBUNE

**Mr. 'B', you are wrong !...**

*In answer to the question put to Mr. Brundage in the publication la Semaine sportive  
(See our Bulletin Nr. 62)*

If I do reply to this article, it is not because I think that the President of the International Olympic Committee is not capable of doing so himself. On the contrary, in my opinion, it is more judicious that Mr. Brundage should not take up the cudgels and

become involved in such a poor battle, besides, this gives a fresh opportunity to prove that he is not the only one to hold these views but is backed by many sportsmen who share his views and think that he defends perfectly the cause of amateurism.

The *supreme* argument put forward by Mr. 'B' in order to defend the cause of *out-of-date amateurism* is that of pointing out the analogy between sport and the Fine Arts, when he endeavours to show that, in case of the Fine Arts, the work executed by an amateur is of no value whereas that executed by a professional, is the only work of value. Thus he challenges the defenders of the cause of amateurism in sport to admit that there is a *difference* between Art and Sport.

If we were prepared to argue on the same line, we would simply reply to Mr. 'B' 's query by challenging him to find a *similitude* between the Fine Arts and... amateur sport !

For, the curious thing about the suggested comparison is precisely that whereas it is true that *professional art* does not differ very much from *Professional sport*, it is in no way similar to *amateur sport*. Therefore the comparison made by 'Mr. B', instead of bringing professionalism and amateur sport nearer to each other, tends to draw them further apart.

The professional sportsman is similar to the artist inasmuch that he also sells his wares. Of course like the artist, he tries to offer the best achievement and to produce the best performance, not only because this will command the best price, but, we are ready to admit, because he loves his sport, he cherishes his ideal, and exerts himself in a profession which appeals to him above all else, just like the artist who is an idealist and has become a salesman... in order to earn his living. I have no wish to disparage or even question the honesty, the loyalty, and sincerity of the professional. This is beside the point in our present disagreement ! Nevertheless, the one like the other are professionals both in Art and Sport as they work essentially for the enjoyment of others and not for their self-enjoyment. They work for tangible results in order to be seen or heard by the public or by spectators, whereas an artist, who works for his self-enjoyment without using his talent with intent to receive a gain or be remunerated in anyway for his

performance, is considered only *an amateur* among artists.

Just as the amateur sportsman who practises sport for the enjoyment he gets from it, for his personal well-being and own amusement aiming at winning not on account of the performance but for the pure joy of victory.

We will not go as far as to say that amateurs are indifferent to the stimulating effect of acclamations of the crowds, or that they prefer to practise their sport without spectators. But I insist on the fact that therein does not lie the *essential aim* of the practice of sport as it is performed by the majority of amateur sportsmen. It is the effort and the desire to conquer which drive them into action.

Mr. 'B' 's opinion is also that as works of art would be of a low standard if professional artists were refused access, sport performances would gain in quality if professionals performed in them, and professionals only. We are ready to admit this but it is precisely on this point that Mr. 'B' commits his biggest mistake, to us who are only concerned with amateur sport, the point of interest to us is not what is offered for the enjoyment of the spectators but what is offered to the athlete ; it is not his performance that counts but what he feels.

An argument or reproach which may be made to us is 'why don't you ask amateurs to go in for sport for their self-enjoyment, while you offer to the public professional performances !'

This is however besides the point and does not concern our subject which is the analogy made between 'art and sport' for here lies all the *tragedy* of spectacular sport.

As far as this matter is concerned is it necessary to extol any further on the subject ? We are justified in drawing the same conclusion and say as we did at the start : 'well, Mr. 'B' you are wrong !...'

*Andre' G. Popliment, Brussels.*