

The National Olympic Committees

(continuation VIII)

(See our Bulletins 59 to 66)

ICELAND (1908)

The first time Iceland participated in the Olympic Games (London 1908) there existed no sports federation and hardly any sports club or organized sport in the country. The participation was the outcome of a solemn promise or vow given in the traditional Viking style by one of the members at a meeting of a nationally ambitious young men's association in the north of Iceland. The underlying motive for this, undoubtedly, was to bring the Icelandic style of wrestling, *Glima* to the attention of the Sporting World. Seven *Glima* wrestlers went to London. The team had occasion to exhibit in their style, both at the Olympic Stadium and at a London Variety.

On the second occasion of Iceland's participation (Stockholm 1912) a governing body of amateur sports in Iceland (Ithrottasamband Islands) had been founded. (Founded

that selfsame year to make Olympic participation legal.) And during the interval from the London Games quite a number of sporting clubs had been founded. On that occasion two men competed and our *Glima* wrestlers' team (8 men) got special permission to perform at the Olympic Stadium (an exhibition July 7th and a competition on the last day, July 15th). The trophy of the competition — a cup — is now among the Olympic Trophies at Lausanne.

The *first* Olympic Committee of Iceland was founded by the Federation of Amateur Sports in Iceland (Ithrottasamband Islands) on the 13th October 1921. (For the VIIIth Olympiad, Paris 1924.) Nominated members were twelve. Mr. Benedikt G. Waage, present member for Iceland in the International Olympic Committee, then a Treasurer of the Icelandic Federation was entrusted with the task of calling the first meeting of the committee together. The date of this meeting

is not known, but it must have been soon after. The task of this committee did not bring the wished for results, for Iceland did not participate in the Paris Games of 1924; the main reason presumably being that Iceland did not, at that time, possess any athlete of competitive quality for this super-quality meeting. — The two successive Olympiads (Amsterdam 1928 and Los Angeles 1932) were also jumped over, and no Olympic Committee functioned during that period in Iceland.

When the Olympic Games were allotted to Berlin in 1934, considerable improvement had taken place in the standard of Icelandic athletes. Consequently it was deemed appropriate to take part in the Games of 1936 and an Olympic Committee for Iceland was again founded. This committee, which was founded 16th April 1934 by the governing body for amateur sports in Iceland — Ithrottasamband Islands — *was the first ever approved for Iceland by the International Olympic Committee* at its February meeting in Oslo 1935. The work of this committee was successful in that Iceland participated in Berlin — in Track and Field Sports and Waterpolo, with 15 competitors.

When the Games of the XIIth Olympiad was allotted to Tokyo, Iceland did not entertain any thoughts about participation, but after the plan for organizing the Games was transferred to Helsinki, an Olympic Committee was once again founded. This committee kept connection with the Finnish Organizing Committee while there remained any hopes of staging the Games in Helsinki.

When, after the World War II, the Olympic Movement once again could resume its activities and allotted the Games of the XIVth Olympiad to London, Iceland again founded an Olympic Committee 28th May 1946. Number of members 8.

The same year Mr. Benedikt G. Waage, President of the Federation for Amateur Sports in Iceland, was nominated by the International Olympic Committee as its member for Iceland.

Iceland sent a relatively big team to London (22 competitors in Swimming and Track and Field Sports) and also participated in the Vth Olympic Winter Games in St. Moritz. (This was Iceland's first participation as a Republic.) An Olympic Fund was founded by this committee to encourage future Olympic participation, from remaining funds of the Olympic contributions not needed on this occasion.

When the Games of the XVth Olympiad was allotted to Helsinki, a new Olympic Committee was formed for that occasion, with eight members as before. This committee started work 10th December 1949, and took over from the previous committee considerable reserve funds, with which this committee could immediately start preparations, but despite this our participation in Helsinki

was confined to Track and Field Sports only. A Glima team performed in Helsinki on this occasion. But participation in the VIth Olympic Winter Games in Norway — in the Skiing Events — was considerable.

In 1954 a new Olympic Committee for the Games of the XVth Olympiad in Melbourne was formed, which started its task on June 3rd. This was the first Olympic Committee in Iceland modelled according to the Olympic Rules, with representatives of the National Federations concerned making up the majority of votes. Members were fifteen — of which five were executives. On this occasion Iceland participated in the VIIth Olympic Winter Games in Cortina — in Skiing Events, as on previous occasions. A two-men team, plus a Chef de Mission, was sent to Melbourne, participating in Track and Field, on which occasion Iceland won its first Olympic Medal.

The present Olympic Committee is composed on the same lines — that is, according to the Olympic Rules. Members fifteen, of which five executives.

Contribution to the Olympic participation has in most cases chiefly been from the Government of Iceland, the municipality of Reykjavik and, in smaller degrees, from various counties and villages, and the public in general. Also from lotteries arranged by the Olympic Committee. Officials filling the nation's highest political positions have of late been very understanding and friendly in their attitude to the Olympic Movement.

In 1948 an Olympic Fund was founded, with a sum of Iceland kronur 100,000,00 the interests of which in time shall be used to prepare and send participants to future Olympic Games.

The Olympic Day has been observed every summer of late, especially with Swimming Contests.