

**Speech given
by Mr. Avery Brundage,
President of the International
Olympic Committee**

on June 23rd, 1964, at la Sorbonne in Paris.

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Rarely has a man's work been at the same time so misunderstood and so successful as that of Pierre de Coubertin. Great ideas are like great men : others take them to reshape them in their own image, to make them say what *they* want, neglecting the deeper message to stress only the superficial elements.

The International Olympic Committee wishes to thank the French nation for its efforts in paying tribute to-day to the memory of Coubertin. I am thinking, in particular, of the efforts of the French Olympic Committee and the effective support it has had from the Ministry of National Education and the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport.

Through this 70th anniversary of the renewal of the Modern Olympic Games and through the celebration last year of the centenary of the man who renewed it, French Youth now knows Pierre de Coubertin's message.

What is that message ? It goes far beyond the international manifestations of which it is the cause — I mean the Olympic Games — and becomes associated with the perennial values of philosophy. But the mere existence of a message or of a philosophy is not sufficient. The ideal aim is to apply it, to give it a real context — in a word, to see it through. And this is the 'raison d'être' of the International Olympic Committee, which too many people would like to see enter the sporting arena, when its real task is to defend, foster and illustrate principles which occupied the Greeks themselves not on the field but in the meeting-place.

Too often the public believes the International Olympic Committee to be aimed at organizing Winter and Olympic Games every four years and that our task is a sort of higher — and for some, superfluous, control of amateur sport. Others attribute to us strict political conservatism where we are, in fact, beyond all ideologies, having always practised non-discrimination between peoples as to colour, race, religion or system of government .

Pierre de Coubertin did no more than consider sport as a universal philosophy in which all men could communicate, wherever they come from and whatever their circumstances. By his personality and his vision of the great social principles governing the world, he bears the stamp not just of the reformers, but of the creators, the pioneers — those who

foresee the future of a civilization. He might have contented himself with engendering the idea and leaving us the message, but he also gave us the instructions for the implementation of his ideas, for he was a teacher more aware than anyone else of how necessary it was to teach others — and particularly youth — the lessons which inspired him. That is why, 70 years later, his writings still have such validity in the present day that they can be put into practical effect without alteration.

The Olympic Movement, thanks to Pierre de Coubertin has become a philosophy — yes, but a living, clear and dynamic philosophy — a philosophy so close to human life that it is accessible to all.

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I that stand before you am a faithful adept of the Olympic Movement and I can assure you that the President of the International Olympic Committee is perfectly aware of the grievances expressed in certain circles with regard to the directors of the Movement. For example we are accused of being obsolete and of preventing athletes from making a quick fortune out of sports. We are also reproached for imposing amateurism on a century where stardom leads everywhere to professionalism. We know all that, and we do not fear such reproaches because they are based on the encouraging assumption that no one is left cold by the Olympic Movement. Nevertheless, as you have been so kind as to honour the representatives of the International Olympic Committee with an invitation to the celebration, I take this opportunity to remind you that the man whose memory we are celebrating today, your compatriot and our master, Pierre de Coubertin, was also faced with the famous dilemma comparable to Shakespeare's 'to be or not to be' — 'submit or resign' — and that he emerged the victor. When one has a mission as important as that of defending the Olympic spirit, one cannot submit to the pressure exerted by others, nor resign the principles which constitute the creed, the novelty and the eternal spark of the Olympic Movement.

Now on this anniversary and Olympic year and here in this place where the past meets the future, I reaffirm that the International Olympic Committee will remain faithful to the universal idea of the great Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin.

Echoes of the Centenary

It was Mademoiselle Renée de Coubertin, the daughter of the Restorer, who during the ceremony described above, unveiled the plaque placed on the house in the Rue Oudinot where her father was born.

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