

DOPING

Has there been Governmental Meddling in Sport or Any Real Progress in the Protection of the Athlete ?

This is the question which is being asked. In fact, following the proposal of Mr. Maurice Herzog, the Council of Ministers in France has just adopted a decree on the banning of doping in sporting events. This project is to be submitted to Parliament. If it is adopted — and it seems certain that it will be — the struggle against doping will gather new strength in France.

For a long time, we have fought against the use of dope in our columns, so we are happy to be able to state that, for the first time in the history of sport, if we are not mistaken, a government has taken this problem seriously in order to protect young people from this scourge. Mr. Herzog, Secretary of State for Youth and Sport, has made a spectacular move, which is more than justified. By this anti-doping law, the struggle already taken up by certain international federations — limited by reason of lack of funds — will receive official backing. This will also mean that sportsmen will have to submit themselves to tests, blood, urine, saliva and sweat, in order to establish whether they have been doped. Official competitions will be closed to sportsmen found guilty of doping and they will be fined, while their accomplices will be liable to terms of imprisonment. Mr. Herzog has clarified his ideas in declaring : 'It is not so much a question of restricting competitors as of protecting them against these officials and trainers who are sometimes guilty of abuse where their athletes are concerned, whether it be from motives of vanity or with the aim of procuring funds.' Let us add to the list

of *accomplices* those *quack* pharmacists who will also risk prison sentences. Another argument put forward by the Secretary of State is that of keeping sport healthy in an age where the government is making prodigious efforts for the benefit of its athletes and the sporting movement in general.

Objections are already being put forward. 'French athletes will be at a disadvantage vis-a-vis those who, in international events, use artificial means in order to win'. Here again Mr. Herzog pertinently replies and we approve of what he says without reservation. 'Never mind these objections, sport should remain a game. Victory is less important than participation and the country which gave birth to de Coubertin should show an example.'

Government meddling in the field of sport, which up to now has been a matter for the sporting federations, is also talked about. It is said too that the simple fact of introducing legislation in this field will result in the limitation of that precious individual liberty which is one of the foundation stones of our society.

On our side, we have always criticized the infiltration of politics into sport and government meddling in this sphere which rightfully belongs to sportsmen and their organizers. Unhappily it must be stated that, for many years, the struggle against doping and the measures to be taken have been discussed, but nothing — or very little — has been done to give to this struggle a positive and active form. Most countries have no legislation which allows national

federations to intervene where necessary and the federations which could intervene have not the means of doing so. That a government today should seek to protect its youth

against this danger and to give to sport its moral and educational value is completely understandable. Let us, moreover, congratulate them and say BRAVO.

O. M.

