

Editorial

One often reads that, if he returned, Pierre de Coubertin would no longer recognize the movement he started, and would even perhaps repudiate certain developments in its tangible form — the Olympic Games. This is to attribute extreme short sight edness to a man who, without a doubt, knew better than any how to make material things serve an idea. For the Olympic Movement cannot be boiled down to the simple spectacle of the Games or the difficult question of amateur sport. Each of these is only one of several aspects, if not a pretext.

Coubertin, that small man (is it only a coincidence ?) saw things big. His writings prove it to us, as do his achievements, for sport was not his one and only preoccupation. Did he not conceive a vast plan for a working man's university, a school reform, a new system of pedagogy ? By proposing the revival of the Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin wished to confer a spectacular dimension upon, and create a massive movement around an essential principle: harmony of body and spirit. As an informed educationist, he considered that culture was not sufficient to ensure the blossoming of the human spirit and that it was necessary to develop the physical resources in such a way and according to such rules that a voluntary effort of the body would affect spiritual behaviour. He wished to found a new chivalry, depending no longer on

mere birth, that would be tested in the fire of competitive sport, observing the principles of loyalty and of voluntary action, or — in other words — of amateurism, principles that are diametrically opposed to those of the mercenary.

However, it was essential to gain for this idea not merely the sympathy of a few, but the interest of all. The Olympic Games today can be seen to have an incomparable impact on the world; they have captivated even those who do not practise sport. However, the effect and the cause must not be confused. The Games are a stage in a programme which must constantly be applied in the private sphere. Let us remember Pierre de Coubertin's own words : "Sport is a bodily constraint achieved by the devoted application of surplus effort. It is therefore not natural to Man, who always tends to obey the law of least effort..."

In fact, the revivor of the Games was far from being an utopian. In his wisdom he knew how to exercise discrimination between Man's theoretical need for surpassment and the practical application of his inward drives. That is why the philosophy he propounds to us is clothed in the outward apparel of the Games and is girt about with rules. The best effort that Coubertin demands of a man — like so many philosophers — is that he know himself, that he take full stock of himself in order better to understand others and to excel himself.

Editor.