

Volunteers for science !

This heading is no longer just an appeal. It has become reality, thanks to the originators of the Olympic Medical Archives (O.M.A.) on the one hand and to more than 2000 athletes, fully aware of the contribution they can make to the furtherance of science, on the other. This undertaking deserves to be better known and we must first of all make clear its origins.

On the 3rd October 1964, Mr. Avery Brundage opened the International Congress of Sporting Sciences in Tokyo with the following words :

"The International Olympic Committee has agreed to cooperate with the Fédération Internationale de Médecine Sportive in its project to conduct a continuing scientific medical survey of olympic athletes. All the world admires a champion athlete. In every country it is the same and this is not a modern manifestation. It was always the strong and virile man who led the tribe. 2500 years ago, olympic winners were public heroes. The Greek gods themselves were handsome specimens of male and female health, beauty and virility. There has always been a natural curiosity about what makes a champion tick, what physical characteristics they share, which they were born with, and which were acquired and developed. It is surprising, therefore, that a comprehensive international investigation was not started long ago...

"A first step has been taken. The International Olympic Committee rejoices at the news and at the same time is happy to assure the International Sports Medical Federation of its support in the future."

What is this first step that has been taken ? It is that the Fédération Internationale de Médecine Sportive has begun a study of the lives of olympic athletes. Athletes have volunteered to answer an extremely detailed questionnaire on their aims, their intellectual and psychological training, family details, training methods. They have been willing to submit to complete medical examinations and to commit themselves to undergo these regularly, every eight years or so, for the rest of their lives. From this confidential information the F.I.M.S. will draw conclusions to be carefully kept on record at Mon-Repos, Lausanne, and which will constitute for the future unique files of scientific data that no laboratory research could have obtained.

In fact, tests carried out will serve not only sporting interests. They will form part of a general research into human beings as a whole, and, from this point of view, will be useful to the whole of humanity.

Heading the Committee of Olympic Medical Archives is Professor Joseph Wolffe, who invites all athletes to register with their National Olympic Committees as "volunteers for science".