

"THE ORDER OF SPORTSMEN"

Colonel Raoul MOLLET, President of the Belgian Olympic Committee, and Mr. Luc SILANCE, President of the Legal Department of that Committee, have sent us in booklet form the draft of an idea of theirs, "The Order of Sportsmen", from which we publish a series of long extracts below.

Certain activities, more than others, require those who practise them to respect a moral code, submit to rules, and possess a number of virtues.

Sport is an outstanding example of a field where the person who practises it is expected not only to comply with the rules of the game, but also to submit to discipline and show exemplary behaviour, as much out of respect for himself as out of consideration for fellow members of his team, his opponents, his coach and manager, from a sense of fair play in fact . . .

. . . Even if the morality of practising sportsmen and most of their mentors is, as a general rule, beyond reproach and not under fire here at all, the rules of amateurism have remained so strict that they have led to an inadmissible situation.

Drafted at a time when sport was the pastime of a leisured class of society, these rules have not kept pace with the evolution of sport and its popularization.

In addition to sport as a leisure pursuit, practised by the majority, there has grown up a branch of sport at a very high competitive level accessible only to the best and our concern is that this elite should not be forced by the rigidity of rules valid fifty years ago to resort to hypocrisy and concealment irreconcilable with the moral principles governing their activity . . .

. . . In certain countries, the athlete in certain sports is by the very nature of things, at a certain level of proficiency, forced to go in for professional spectator-type sports.

Elsewhere, during the years of his sporting prowess, a fictitious job or assistance in kind provides him with a livelihood without too much work beyond his training.

In certain cases, the difficulty is got round by secretly giving the top athlete sums in cash sufficient to ensure for himself and his family a pleasant or decent standard of living . . .

. . . This state of affairs cannot go on, everybody is agreed on that.

Presidents of National Olympic Committees must no longer - courageously or out of ignorance, or by closing their eyes to the facts - sign false declarations that in most cases they know to be incorrect, to say the least.

There is no place in sport, and especially in Olympic sport, for perjury; a rule that results in this to such a general extent can only be a bad rule.

Why is this ?

In addition to moral and legal reasons, there are others based on the very specificity of the problems: in every country, in every sport, the situation is different and an identical solution cannot be applied to all . . .

. . . Moral codes differ according to the country, the period and political regime. Suicide, a deadly sin in western religions, is an act of bravery in the Japanese form of Hara Kiri.

Loans at interest, condemned by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, but permitted by the Israelites, are now accepted and subject to legislation.

Personal profit, the driving force behind capitalist society, is condemned by socialist society.

In view of such contradictions, it is imperative to revise the generally accepted idea of one rule and a single interpretation of this rule, for amateurism.

In order to draw up an acceptable system, we think

that as general a rule as possible should be made and that an honest and practical means of applying it to particular cases should be found, i.e. by adapting it to the diversity of political and economic regimes, to the particular needs of different sports and the fundamental differences existing between men.

THE "ORDERS"

In order to ensure compliance with the rules of deontology, the science that deals with moral obligations, one of the most suitable ways found by experience down through the centuries is the creation of an "order"...

. . . The example of the Bar is not an isolated one, the medical profession too has formed an order. In different countries, doctors are not allowed to practise the art of healing unless they are inscribed on one of the rolls of the Order.

The purpose of the order of doctors is the same as that of the order of lawyers, or the Bar: the council of the order is responsible for maintaining the rules of medical deontology, the honour, discretion and dignity of members of the order in the exercise or on the occasion of the exercise of their profession. It has to report to the competent authority any acts involving the illegal exercise of the art of healing brought to its notice and is empowered to judge the method of fixing fees and the amount of fees in certain cases . . .

SPORTSMEN

Should sportsmen have to be bothered with such matters ?

Above all, if they are worthy of the name, they must respect the rules, whether those laid down by the International Olympic Committee or those made by the Federation governing the sport they practise.

The practice of sport should inculcate in the young and their elders the qualities of loyalty, honesty, dignity and courtesy.

Thus, in sport too, we find once again the basic qualities of the professions which have set themselves a discipline.

From this we deduce that it is necessary to create an Order of Sportsmen. It should be placed under the auspices of the International Olympic Committee assisted by the International Sports Federations. In each country, there would be a section Placed under the authority of the National Olympic Committee assisted by the National Sports Federations.

ORDER OF SPORTSMEN

Principle

The Order of Sportsmen should be created on international and national levels.

Its role, composition, powers and method of operation should be laid down in statutes whose broad outlines should be defined by the International Olympic Committee.

Role

The International Order of Sportsmen and the National Orders of Sportsmen should be responsible for seeing that sportsmen comply with the ethical principles and general rules laid down by the International Olympic Committee, the National Olympic Committees, the International and National Sports Federations...

... In the light of the general rule of the International Olympic Committee and the broad outlines illustrated by the decisions of the I.O.S., the national orders would apply reasonable solutions to each concrete case for the whole country or for each sport in the country, or again for particular cases.

Composition

The International Order of Sportsmen could be composed of the President of the International Olympic

Committee and three members of the I.O.C. one of whom would be responsible for representing the President in case of absence, three representatives of the International Federations, three representatives of the athletes and three international lawyers or legal experts with a sufficient knowledge of sport.

In each country, the National Order of Sportsmen should be composed of the President of the National Olympic Committee, assisted by the Secretary General or another member of the N.O.C., responsible for representing him in case of absence, the member - if any - of the International Olympic Committee for the country, two members of the National Olympic Sports Federations, two representatives of the athletes and two lawyers or legal experts with an adequate knowledge of sport.

Substitutes should be appointed to deputize in the case of absence or unavailability of the regular members of the Order . . .

CONCLUSION

In the present state of the organization of sport and in view of the recent changes due to the speeding up of modern life, the Order of Sportsmen could provide rational and specific solutions to many problems.

Most of today's tricky questions - amateurism, doping, etc. - could be submitted to it for its opinion.

It would exercise its jurisdiction over sportsmen in a specific manner, being closer to the athletes than any other legal body or any other supreme tribunal in existence.