

Speech given by President Avery Brundage during the solemn opening of the 72nd session of the International Olympic Committee

on 30th January, 1972 in Sapporo, Japan

The first Olympic Winter Games were held in 1924 in Chamonix, France, a charming little mountain resort in the shadow of Mt. Blanc. There were less than 300 competitors from 16 countries. Everyone knew everyone else and it was a nice, cozy festival of snow and ice sport "Très charmant".

The last Olympic Winter Games were also held in France at Grenoble, a provincial capital, university and scientific center in the valley of the Isere River, 44 years later in 1968. There were more than four times as many competitors. \$240 million was spent by France in connection with the Games. There were 1,545 accredited journalists, television and radio men. The mountains were far from Grenoble. The main Olympic Village was in the city but the competitors could not be expected to go up and down several thousand feet twice a day, so subsidiary Olympic villages had to be established at Autrans, Chamrousse, Saint-Nizier, Alpe D'Huez and Villard-De-Lans. Thus, the basic Olympic idea of bringing all the competitors from all over the world to live peacefully together during the period of the Games was destroyed. It was more like five separate world championships than an Olympic Games. Lost completely was the intimate charm of the first Games in 1924.

In the meantime, due to the enormous public interest stimulated by the Games, there was a tremendous world-wide ex-



plosion of participation in invigorating outdoor winter activities and sport. Interest in Scandinavian and the alpine countries, where it started, had expanded immensely and the development soon spread to North America, South America and as far as Japan. Hundreds of resorts equipped with lifts and other facilities have been built - and there are today millions who enjoy the invigorating pleasures of snow and ice sports. An entirely new business involving hundreds of millions of dollars supplying

clothing and equipment to this huge mass of participants has been created.

All this fantastic development has not been without criticism. \$240 million for ten days of sport, even although most of it was for municipal improvement is, at least, slightly excessive. Few communities will care to become involved in an enterprise with such possibilities. In the wealthy city of Zurich, the subject was placed on the ballot and defeated by a huge majority. Most citizens wanted nothing to do with the Olympic Winter Games. It was the same in Bern, Switzerland, when that community thought of inviting the Games. What was one to do with hundreds of journalists paid to look for incidents that might be developed into sensations?

Denver, site of the next Games, is already having its trouble with Colorado taxpayers who resent the use of public money for this purpose. The expenditure of a million dollars or more for a bob run, when there are only a few hundred competitors in the entire world, is difficult to defend. The only run in America, built for the 1932 Games, has recently been shut down, because of the high cost of operation.

It is not only the costs that have been subject to adverse criticism; conservationists have been active in denouncing the effect on the landscape, the intrusion into the wilderness, the destruction

of trees, etc. Their concentrated efforts, national and international, undoubtedly ruined the chances for success of the invitation to stage the Games from Calgary-Banff, Canada a few years ago. Today, Denver is suffering from protests from the same people. In fact most of the residents of the areas where the events will be staged are actively against them.

Baron de COUBERTIN was against the Olympic Winter Games on two grounds - and he was right in principle, but he was outvoted. He said there should only be one Olympic Games - not two ... and, in deference to him, it was originally specified that they must always be in the same country . . . but, this proved to be impracticable - and it had to be abandoned already in 1928 when the Games were given to Amsterdam. He also maintained that events on the Olympic Program must be universal in character, which winter sports obviously are not. When the alpine ski events were added later, it made them even less universal. More than one half the National Olympic Committees have no interest whatsoever because there is no opportunity to participate in winter sport unless they travel to another country. Never have there been participants from more than 37 of the 130 National Olympic Committees - and the huge majority of the medals have been won by competitors from the Scandinavian and alpine countries - less than a dozen altogether.

Had COUBERTIN known what would happen to winter sport because of the vast commercial development involving hundreds of millions of dollars in construction and other hundreds of millions of dollars in providing equipment and clothing, he would undoubtedly have been even more opposed. The growth of public interest soon led to the formation of professional ice hockey leagues in Canada and the United States - and nearly all the better players became professionals. Ice Hockey became part of the entertainment business. Several extravaganzas on ice were formed and regularly toured the world. The winner of the last Olympic Figure Skating Championship for women received a contract said to amount to \$500,000. Olympic figure skating became a stepping stone to a professional career. Ski manufacturers began to place skiers surreptitiously on their payroll to advertise their produce. Any competitor whose name or picture is used to advertise equipment or products of any kind becomes a manufacturer's agent. The Olympic Games must not be permitted to become a competition between manufacturers. These paid skiers, of course, lost their amateur standing and became ineligible.

Today, the Olympic Winter Games are still far from universal ... they are monopolized by only a dozen countries ... and they are difficult to keep amateur. The winter tourist business is so important to some countries that their ski

teams have literally become almost government departments and are subsidized accordingly. This is not sport. They can only be given to large communities which can afford the enormous expense - and they are more likely to be a set of world championships than Olympic Games. Usually there is a possibility of insufficient snow. Moreover, they are open to attack by ecologists who deplore the damaged surroundings and by taxpayers who resent the expense. They have accomplished a tremendous humanitarian service by popularizing healthy winter sport and recreation ... but, they seem to have served their purpose and find it difficult to continue as an amateur event.

Here in Sapporo, however, despite the fact that it is a large city, we once more have ideal conditions due to our Japanese friends. Snow conditions are perfect ... the facilities are excellent ... and the organization is perfect. Great credit is due to the Organizing Committee headed by President Kogoro UEMURA and Secretary Tomoo SATO, which has had the support and co-operation of former Mayor HARADA, the present Mayor ITAGAKI and the city authorities. All of the events will be held either in the city or in close proximity ... and we can anticipate great success for the XIth Olympic Winter Games.

Sapporo is already famous because of its elaborate and artistic snow festival ... and, now with all the most modern facilities, will unquestionably become the winter resort in the Orient.


Avery Brundage