

Cost of Staging the Olympic Games

by The Marquess of Exeter

A considerable number of sweeping statements have been made concerning the cost of staging the Olympic Games, and I feel that we should look at this in greater detail to see what it really entails. To break the problem down, there are two main headings of expenditure. Firstly the provision and equipping of the actual stadia, and the transporting of the athletes and their housing, and secondly the general expenditure connected with the housing, transport, etc., of the visiting public. Incidentally the cost of the Olym-

pic Village should of course not be included as a capital charge in the first group, there should only be a renting figure for six weeks, for immediately the Games are over, a fully adequate return on the money invested should be available as a housing estate if the accommodation has been appropriately designed. There is of course the cost of equipping the rooms and kitchens above the selling off price and the pay of the staff and food in so far as they are above the net amount of the contributions from those staying in the



The Organising Committee of the Olympic games in London, 1948. From left to right: standing: Mr Cowley, Mr Studdert, Sir S. Rous, C^l Hunter; sitting: L^r C^l Bevan, Marquess of Exeter, Mr E.J. Holt.

Village, and too there is the staffing of the stadia, etc.

As Chairman of the Organising and Executive Committees of the 1948 Olympic Games, I think that what happened then, although on a smaller scale, may be of interest.

As regards the provision of stadia, fortunately we had a large one in Wembley, at which the chief expense was the laying of a track, and we had next door to it a fine pool for the swimming, and we were able to adapt a number of other halls, etc., in and around London to take the various other sports. There were 17 sports (21 in Munich) and accommodation had to be found for 4,000 (9,000 in Munich). The basic problems were however the same. Accommodation of course offered immense problems, for as a result of the war no houses had been built for some years and many had been destroyed. We were however lent an Air Force camp and another Government one in Richmond Park, and had to house the other athletes in 33 different schools which we had to equip with kitchens, etc., in 3 days. The ladies stayed in a ladies educational college. As regards the organisation and cost of transport, unlike the present Games where most competitors start and finish at the Olympic Village, in 1948 we had some 35 different starting and finishing points, and with those competing in the different sports going to many different venues for practice (61) and competition. The net result was that our hired vehicles travelled 345,000 miles during the period. Incidentally I am happy to say that no-one missed their event!

Over the whole revenue and expenditure of the Games there was a net profit of

£ 30,000, and this without the assistance of the television contribution of today.

As regards Munich, expenditure under these headings was of course very much greater, for as a result of the war they had an immense amount of construction to do from ground level. However in future to meet the expenditure on this side of the picture, it looks as if there will be substantial revenue accruing to the Organising Committee not only from gate receipts, but the amount that the International Olympic Committee allot to it from the television fees, and provided that not many halls which will be a liability afterwards have to be built, any net cost should not be large. There are other problems of course which arise from too many competitors; however the Programme Committee of the IOC is hard at work and this should result in a reduction of numbers next time. The real reason however for the gigantic explosion in cost is group 2 and is directly attributable to the enormous popularity of the Games throughout the world. Huge crowds of people from all over wish to attend, which means accommodation, transport and road improvements to handle them, and not unnaturally any City organising the Games, which is for 2 weeks the centre of the world, wishes not only to put on the finest show that it can, but also condenses many years of normal local development with federal help into 4 or 5 years. This ever increasing world popularity opens up a very real problem for the future, for more and more people are going to try and get to them than can possibly be seated or housed, and there will undoubtedly have to be serious thought given to the rationing of the numbers that move in for the occasion, and the great mass will have to depend on television.

After 40 years service on the IOC I feel that I am entitled to say what a warming and rewarding proof this is of the policies, all too frequently criticised by those outside, of the IOC (and too of the International Federations), in their determination to maintain their high ethical standards including particularly basic amateurism. What a unique and infinitely worthwhile contribution the Olympic Movement is making to the future of mankind.

L.E.