

SPORTS SOCIETIES OF FRIENDSHIP

by **GUNNAR ERICSSON,**

IOC MEMBER IN SWEDEN

Sports societies are places of fraternity and welcome for every individual who finds some interest in sport. Mr. Gunnar Ericsson has belonged to such a society for thirty years and is launching an appeal for the proliferation of such opportunities for getting together and enjoying friendly exchanges.

CONTACTS WANTED

Would you like to be a member of an international family of distinguished sports leaders and sports friends without any admission fee or annual subscription, meeting now and again, being useful to sports and sports organisations of all kinds — and having fun at the same time ?

Well, I myself have been a member of such a society here in Sweden for over thirty years, and our Secretary General Lars Ekegren is now trying to spread the idea in order to form fraternal societies all around the world, backed up by the IOC and other important sports authorities.

Foreingen RV (Sports society of friendship in Sweden) was founded in 1916, and its first Chairman was J. Sigfrid Edström (IOC President from 1946 to 1952). In this capacity, he has been followed by such Olympic giants as Honorary IOC members Bo Ekelund and Sven Thofelt, who is currently the society's Chairman. Among our 375 or so members are H.R.H. Prince Bertil, Ingemund Bengtsson, Parliamentary Speaker, who is very interested in sports, the Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, a former football player, promi-

nent sports leaders from various — not only Olympic — sports, journalists and beloved former sports stars.

We meet here in Sweden once or twice a year as individuals and good friends. On these occasions, we do not represent sports or sports organisations — only ourselves. We then discuss sports matters of all kinds, promote the publication of sports memoirs, grant scholarships to deserving sports leaders and promising youngsters and have fun — eating the same pea-soup dinner as we have done now for seventy years.

Milestones in our development were reached in 1982 and 1984, when our Finnish and Faroe Islands Fraternal Societies were founded, giving us a valuable opportunity to meet friends from abroad and to compare our experiences internationally.

As a matter of fact, it was the successful result of this new line of activities that gave our Secretary General the idea of trying to make our international family still bigger.



We send our wishes for a good recovery to Mr. Gunnar Ericsson who was involved in a car accident last February.

About one year ago, therefore, he wrote to all the National Olympic Committees outside the Nordic countries (which were approached in another way), and the response has been remarkable. Up to now, fraternal societies have joined us from the following countries : Faroe Islands, Finland, Hong Kong, Kuwait, New Zealand, Israel, USA, Bolivia and Cameroon, About twenty more countries are at present looking into the possibility of following their example.

Of course, there are some practical problems to be solved. The long distances to be travelled, for example. But to begin with, we could base our international activities on regional meetings.

Such a regional meeting will be arranged for the Nordic countries (Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) in Stockholm (SWE), on 23rd and 24th May 1987, starting with a reception in the Parliament Building hosted by Parliamentary Speaker Ingemund Bengtsson, and in the presence of H.R.H. Prince Bertil.

Observers from other parts of the world are also very welcome to this meeting, the practical details of which are being handled by Assistant Director Carl Erik Hagström of the SJ Travel Bureau Head Office in Stockholm.

Does the idea of this cooperation sound interesting and appealing to you ? If so (and I sincerely hope it does), it is very simple indeed to join our growing international family of prominent friends of sports. You simply write a letter to Mr. Lars Ekegren, Secretary General of RV, Källängsvägen 6, 8 tr, S-181 43 Lidingö, Sweden, and give him the name and address of your Society and the names of its Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. He will then forward this information to all the other fraternal societies.

G . E .

