



In spite of everything

Democratic appointment procedures are not necessarily the best for all organizations.

[...] There is no other organization that has such a generalized and strong relationship with the population of the whole world as the IOC, nor one which has proved to be so enduring. There are more nations and states in the IOC than the United Nations General Assembly. And a majority of the world's people attach more importance to the Olympic Games than to meetings of the UN General Assembly.

The Olympic Games are the culmination of a cycle of four years, during which tens - if not hundreds - of thousands of athletes all over the world try to get noticed so that they can take part in the Games. These athletes are the best in their country. And in each country, in each sport, thousands of athletes are less talented, too young or too old follow the progress of their compatriots on their way to the Games. During the Games themselves, hundreds of millions of viewers watch the events, in particular the performances of their fellow countrymen. Those taking part regard each other as opponents, but not as enemies or demons. The fierceness and fanaticism seen during the competitions are nevertheless followed by the losers wishing the winners good luck.

The Olympic Games, as watched on television by millions of people, are an exceptionally powerful demonstration of the interests and emotions shared by people all over the world. And you do not have to be a sports enthusiast to realize this.

by Ruud Stokvis*

The IOC has also existed for longer than the United Nations, which is the second body seeking to unite people on a global level. The League of Nations, which preceded the IOC, lasted just 20 years. The durability of the IOC is partly due to the system of co-optation by which it recruits its members. This is unquestionably not a democratic system. But it has not been proved that democratic appointment procedures are the best for all organizations. Companies have never seriously started adopting them and universities have, against their will, gone back on such decisions. In parliamentary parties, party discipline predominates.

By constantly seeking new members for whom the growth of the Games is the most important thing, second even to the interests of their own country, class, race, ideology or religion, the IOC has succeeded, in spite of all the ups and downs of the century, in organizing the Games every four years, except during the two World Wars. A more representative organization would have failed long before, given the deep contrasts between its members. In view of the sharp divisions existing in the world, the Olympic ideals were bound to get trodden on regularly during the course of the century. The remarkable thing is that in spite of this, the organization has succeeded in performing its tasks.

[...] The origin of the corruption being talked about in connection with the IOC is easy to understand. There is

so much interest in major sports events, and the Olympic Games in particular, that the leaders of those cities hoping to hold them are prepared to do anything, whatever the cost, to make a good impression in the eyes of the world. They go to great lengths to collect the money needed for the various construction projects which will make their bid more attractive. This means that, for the developers behind these projects, huge financial interests are at stake in attracting the Games. In doing so, they are prepared to make the utmost efforts. For them, there are no limits to hospitality, friendly services and, of course, reimbursement of expenses. For years now, the current leadership of the IOC has been devoting itself above all to exploiting the commercial possibilities of the Olympic Games. The time has come to combat the harmful side effects of this. The IOC must introduce new procedures to eliminate corruption when the Games' host cities are chosen, and the people responsible for making this choice must be better trained to refuse or avoid attempts to bribe them. For IOC member such as Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, it is a royal challenge to add his support to fighting for the integrity of a splendid organization like the IOC.

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