

HODGSON PRATT
NINETEENTH CENTURY LEADER
FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING
THROUGH SPORTS
BY DON ANTHONY

Hodgson Pratt was born on January 10, 1824, in Bath, Somerset, England. He went to school at Haileybury College, near Coventry and then to London University where he studied oriental languages.

For fourteen years he worked for the East India Company and for the Government of Bengal, returning to England in 1861.

For the rest of his life he crusaded for peace through arbitration, supporting the industrial cooperative movement, the working men's improvement programmes, and the promotion of international understanding.

He was founder of the International Arbitration and Peace Association (IAPA) and, on behalf of this body he visited many cities in Europe including Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Budapest, Milan and Rome.

In Brussels, in 1882, he led the British delegation to the Peace Congress which attracted over 500 delegates.

In his work he collaborated with people like Bajer, Passy, and Ducommun—all of whom were invited by Pierre de Coubertin to be honorary members of the founding Congress of the IOC in 1894.

All of them also became Nobel Peace Prize winners up to 1913. Pratt was nominated for the Prize but lost out to US President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. Roosevelt was helpful to Coubertin during his North American voyages.

In his address as Chair of the Universal Peace Congress of 1890, in London, he said:

'We hope that our deliberations will mark a further step towards the attainment of that great future, when different nations shall look upon themselves as members of a vast community, when they shall feel that peace is the ultimate condition of all progress in religion and civilisation'.

Pratt was also down on Coubertin's list of honorary members in 1894, representing the "International University Alliance".

In his letter of apology for absence, he told Coubertin that he concurred with the idea of "bringing together young men of various nationalities to promote the great object of

unity and fraternity", and reminded Coubertin that the idea of international student festivals combining both sport and arts, was something he had proposed at the Rome Peace Congress in 1891.

The minutes of this Congress show Pratt to have proposed: "that an annual conference and university fete of international fraternity be held successively at the seats of the great universities, including an international contest viz gymnastics and similar exercises, and in contests of merit in poetry and prose on subjects relating to international concord and cooperation".

In 1889 he was a collaborator in the organization of the Universal Peace Congress, and this is perhaps where he met Coubertin. Pratt continued his peace work until his death in Le Pecq, Seine et Oise, France, 26 February 1907.

It seems likely that Hodgson Pratt was the first to think of the idea of international student sports!
