

Evans, H. Justin, *Service to Sport: The Story of the C.C.P. R. 1935 to 1972*, (London: Pelham, 1974.)

This reviewer, in several ways, grew up with the Central Council of Physical Recreation (C.C.P.R.) for both were born in 1935 in England. Outside the writer's control were the social conditions which lead to the need for the C.C.P.R. but the Council's programmes did influence his early physical recreational opportunities and he had the privilege to work for the organization in the final two years described in Justin Evans' excellent book. As an old C.C.P.R. "Rep.", I find it particularly appropriate that Justin Evans should have been selected to write the history for he was the one who kept reminding staff of the need for, and importance of, good simple English writing style. Justin, in his book, has practiced what he preached and has done an excellent job of searching through documents and people's memories to record the story in an objective yet very interesting manner.

Structurally, the book is divided into fifteen chapters and five appendices which record the history in sequences of periods of years, interspersed with chapters devoted to easily separable aspects of the Council's work. The author's chief emphasis is "on the gradual, organic, structural development of a body whose very success in getting increasing public recognition and statutory financial support may have planted the seeds for eventual absorption of its staff and assets by a statutory body".

As Justin Evans skillfully portraits, the need for the Central Council of Recreation Physical Training (as it was called until 1944) can only be understood in the light of the social, educational, economic, and international situation of the early 1930's. For the masses in Britain, the general prospects for a good "quality of life" and physical fitness were dismal but, what could be done?

. . . get the medical profession more closely linked with physical educationists? . . . harness the technological knowledge of the physical education profession in the service of voluntary youth organizations? . . . promote co-operation between the governing bodies of sport and other specialist bodies? . . . recruit and train more voluntary leaders? . . . persuade local authorities to be far more active in using their powers to provide facilities for physical recreation? . . . get the Board of Education more deeply involved in what people were trying to do for those who had left school and for unemployed men and women? . . . ensure that all those working in this amorphous field of post-school physical recreation at least knew each other

and that none of the scarce resources available ran to waste . . . ?

All this needed doing but to conceive one organization which could attempt it is fantastic. However, that is exactly what Phyllis Colson (P.C.C.) did in 1935 with her "vision splendid" and then, with consummate skill, implemented her ideas until 1962.

Initially, only the Ling Association (now the Physical Education Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and the Association of Organizers of Physical Education gave financial support to Miss Colson. Those associations, like Miss Colson, were greatly influenced by the Swedish system of gymnastics so, not surprisingly, the early philosophical emphasis was on recreative physical training. Thus it was a significant shift when, in 1944, the name changed to C.C.P.R. and future policy tended towards more concern for recreations people wanted for intrinsic reasons. Such tended to be the emphasis, which the book carefully relates, from that time as physically trained staff were gradually appointed to carry out the ideas of the "vision" throughout England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and via the S.C.P.R. in Scotland.

It is interesting to see recorded the concern P.C.C. had for staff because they have certainly been the strength of the organization. Similarly of note is the story of the growth of national recreation centres in accessible yet beautiful parts of the country — Bisham Abbey, Lilleshall Hall, Plas y Brenin being early examples. The chapter on the Founder, herself, is a most important part of this history for P.C.C. and C.C.P.R. were synonymous.

Though not P.C.C.'s idea initially, she was encouraged to support what became known as the Wolfenden Committee on Sport which was:

"To examine the factors affecting the development of games, sports and outdoor activities in the United Kingdom and to make recommendations to the C.C.P.R. as to any practical measures which should be taken by statutory or voluntary bodies in order that these activities may play their full part in promoting the general welfare of the community".

In 1960, this committee recommended the setting up of a Sports Development Council which in 1972 became the Royal Chatter Sports Council and so that report was the beginning of the demise of the original C.C.P.R. Unhappily, P.C.C. felt, "Bang goes a life's work" for she thought the new system would be too political. Shortly afterwards she died and strangely, the C.C.P.R. was preserved and reconstituted as a different

body for the staff and assets had gone to the Sports Council. Different was emphasized for it could only “jockey” the government and the Sports Council which by then was being served, as the old C.C.P.R. had been, by the same dedicated staff. The full impact of this final manoeuvre remains to be seen and told.

For those who have previously read of the importance of the C.C.P.R. in Peter McIntosh’s books, or have studied its methods for application elsewhere through the writings of Eric Broom, this book completes the picture in accurate detail and is recommended without reservation for students of sports history.

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