

# Los Angeles' Successful Bid for the 1984 Olympic

## Games: A Case of Olympic Idealism Versus American Pragmatism

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Los Angeles' bid for the 1984 Olympic Games began on October 25, 1976, when the United States Olympic Committee urged Los Angeles' representatives to bid for the 1984 Summer Olympics. On September 26, 1977, the United States Olympic Committee nominated its representative city to bid for the 1984 Games before the International Olympic Committee in Athens in May, 1978. In defeating New York for the right to host the Games, Los Angeles adopted a hard line against high costs, promised not to use taxpayers' money in hosting the Olympics, and Governor Brown stated that no State funds would be utilized.

Lord Killanin, the I.O.C. president, visited Los Angeles early in 1977 and, prior to his departure, asked Los Angeles to name its Olympic Organizing Committee. According to I.O.C. rules, at least one I.O.C. member and two American members of the I.O.C. must be named to the local committee. However, Bradley's administration preferred undisputed local control. Killanin, in turn, said that if the 1984 Games went to Los Angeles it would be the I.O.C. and not the city that would be running them, adding that the city would have to meet all the needs of the I.O.C., the twenty-one international sports federations that traditionally help run the Olympics, and the United States Olympic Committee. A further dispute between the Los Angeles organizers and the I.O.C. arose when they discussed the rule that appropriated all the money raised by the Olympics to the I.O.C. and all debts to the host city. Months of confrontation between the I.O.C. and the Los Angeles Committee followed.

The I.O.C. provisionally awarded the 1984 Games to the city, but said it would withdraw the award and call for new bids unless the city signed a contract to abide by all I.O.C. rules. Mayor Bradley then instigated the formation of a private, non-profit Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee and tried to convince the I.O.C. to let it take the financial responsibility for hosting the Games. The I.O.C. did not budge, and Bradley recommended to the City Council that it formally withdraw the Los Angeles bid for the Games. This was the turning point in negotiations, for within 24 hours, Lord Killanin expressed a desire to open talks with the city, and within a month agreement was reached. One contract was signed between the city of Los Angeles and the I.O.C. which freed the city from all responsibility for the financial operation of the Games or any deficits accruing from them. A second was to be signed between the U.S. Olympic Committee which had decided to come to Los Angeles' rescue and the Los Angeles Organizing Committee, with the I.O.C. dividing the liability between the U.S. Organizing Committee and the local organizing group.