

A Call to Arms: The Conflict and Resulting Autonomy of the Canadian Olympic Association

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In 1948, the traditional approach to Canadian Olympic sport management was overturned. Since its inception in 1907, the Canadian Olympic Association (COA) had operated as a committee of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAUC). However, following the Second World War, the sub-par performances of recent Canadian Olympic teams began to concern a number of administrators. It was forwarded that the COA's status as a committee of the AAUC was a roadblock to government funding that would undoubtedly benefit the Program.

A power struggle for administrative control of Canadian Olympic participation ensued. COA President Sidney Dawes vociferously campaigned for separation of the COA from the AAUC. He believed that the AAUC's compositional control of the COA was preventing adequate representation of Olympic sport governing bodies that were not affiliated with the AAUC. Dawes was of the opinion that an organization more representative of all Olympic sport governing bodies would be in line for increased federal financing. The current organizational structure also did not conform with IOC regulations, and this fact concerned Dawes.

Dawes was opposed by AAUC President George C. Machum. Machum desired to prevent COA separation because he feared that the AAUC's international sport stature

would suffer if the prestigious leadership of the Olympic program was removed. Dawes' enlistment of the support of IOC leaders Avery Brundage, and Sigfrid Edstrom also angered him. A bitter conflict between the two Canadian administrators developed.

The paper focuses on the battle between Machum and Dawes, as well as on a number of the organizational precedents that foreshadowed administrative conflict. It also highlights the persistence of Sidney Dawes in his quest for COA independence. Undaunted by Machum's threats of removal from office, Dawes succeeded in gathering the necessary support prior to the decisive 1948 AAUC annual meeting. Dawes' independence victory resulted from the apparent need to conform with IOC regulations, the support of influential friends such as Brundage and Edstrom, as well as a poor Canadian Olympic team performance at the 1948 London Games. Analysis of the conflict required the investigation of the Avery Brundage and John Howard Crocker Collections located at the University of Western Ontario, as well as personal interviews with a number of former AAUC members.

Although the conflict did not receive a significant amount of media attention at the time, an analysis of the independence battle appears important because of the effect that Machum's defeat had upon the AAUC. The removal of Olympic participation control from the AAUC represented a major stage in a period of erosion that resulted in the demise of the organization in 1970.