

Avery Brundage And Olympic Television: Chapter I in the Saga of IOC Wealth Accumulation and the Struggle for Control of its Distribution, 1960-1966

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If we are not careful, this television
money can lead to disaster.

Avery Brundage, 19 May 1966

Avery Brundage believed that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was courting disaster in light of rapidly escalating Olympic television revenue during the 1960s. The aging and crusty Chicagoan, who presided over the IOC between 1952 and 1972, was acutely aware of the organization's growing dependence on television money in the latter years of his presidency. This development disturbed Brundage, an individual whose distaste for commercial influences on the Olympic Movement has been well chronicled.

This sheds some light on the emergence of television revenue as the primary source of IOC income between 1960 and 1966. Its central focus is the

conflict between the IOC, the International Sport Federations (ISFs), and the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), over to the distribution of television money. The unbridled pursuit of a sizeable share of Olympic television money by the ISFs and NOCs distressed Brundage. “[The ISFs and NOCs] all seem to forget,” said Brundage, “that the Olympic Movement has reached its present exalted position without money.” He concluded that his colleagues had forsaken their commitment to amateur sport and the Olympic ideal.

During the years between 1960 and 1966, Brundage and the IOC attempted to pacify the ISFs and NOCs. Brundage was constrained by the fact that both the ISFs and NOCs played integral roles in the staging of Olympic festivals. The process involved in the formulation of a distribution plan which mollified the IOC, ISFs, and NOCs, consumed six years of discussion marked by periodic backbiting among the groups. The development of the “Rome Formula” resulted in a major influx of money to the IOC’s Lausanne headquarters and challenged Brundage’s concept of pure amateurism and Olympism.

The investigation of this significant chapter in the financial history of the IOC was based on an analysis of IOC archival documents and Brundage’s personal papers.