

It started on the way to the forum

by Wes Oginski

"What is wrong with the Olympics, for every year they are held, something goes wrong," said Ian Newhouse, one of the many athletes who did not attend the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games.

"There is too much nationalism."

Newhouse was a part of a one day conference, a week ago last Saturday, discussing the connection between politics and sport, sponsored by the Alberta Chapter of the Canadian Association of Young Political Leaders.

The Politics of International Sports focused on the acquisition and organization of international sports events. This is a timely topic, in that Canada has hosted two such events in the past five years, and will host another two in the next seven.

The conference also attempted to assess the influence of politics in the conduct of these sport events, and the consequences of these politics on the individual competitor.

Politics/Sports — the Relationship Defined

Dr. Gerry Redmond, from the U of A, and Ed Davis, a Calgary Olympic Development Association (CODA) board director, discussed the history of political involvement in sport.

Redmond traced this relationship back to the ancient Greek Olympic Games. Though competitors were allowed to travel freely, their city-states would remain at war. The athlete was also expected to fight when they were not competing.

Canadian politics become involved best at the level of the Commonwealth Games.

"This use of sport was to create a link between Britain and her colonies," said Redmond.

"These trophies are also used to create national unity," he added.

Davis spent his time showing how a country will demonstrate its ambitions and beliefs through its athletes.

"Athletes often reflect the image of the citizens themselves."

"Commencing with the early rise of Germany," Davis explained, "the Germans used the glamor of athletes to train them for war."

"Sport arenas are magnificent forums."

In this same period, the French and British looked on sports as gentleman games. That is, until World War II.

"By organizing physical exertion, Britain and France kept soldiers and citizens in shape," said Davis.

Canada has not made up its mind about how they wish to

become involved with sports according to Davis. There is a strong attraction between both spectating and participating.

"We must very seriously think of restructuring international games because as it stands it is not conducive to everybody," said David.

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Politics of the 1988 Calgary Olympics Bid

"Early on we recognized we had five hurdles to overcome (to obtain the '88 Winter Olympics)," said Bill Warren, vp of Sports, C.O.D.A.

These were: convincing the

municipal government to have the Games; getting help from the provincial government for the bid and staging, and for obtaining sites outside of Calgary; convincing the Canadian Olympic Association to accept the bid; convincing the federal government; and convincing the International Olympic Committee.

The original organizers of the Calgary bid are sensitive about the city's attitude.

"The role of the municipal government in our bid was minimal," he said. "They would have us believe through the press they were involved more than they were." Out of a \$2 million investment, Warren estimates the city government donated \$50 thousand.

"Internationally, we've found there wasn't very much government politics...but there was a tremendous amount of sport politics," said C.O.D.A. executive vp of Tripartite Relations, Jack Wilson. "Where we did get involved with international politics was with the Eastern block countries," he said.

Though the Calgary contingent had to solicit support, they decided not to do so directly.

"We relied on getting to know the I.O.C. members," Wilson explained. "We did not ask them directly to support us."

"There were no deals," said Wilson.

Politics and the Competitors

Frank Van Doren, another

athlete, joined Newhouse in explaining how they as athletes felt about the boycott by Canada at the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Canada boycotted the Games in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

"After you have done six years of that (training) and having your main goal of making the Olympic Games taken away from you," Van Doren said, "when it happens, you realize sports and politics mix."

"I wrote a letter to Abbie Hoffman (director of Sports Canada) supporting the boycott," he said.

"I went with the boycott and agree with it as a non-violent demonstration," Van Doren said, but as an athlete it still hurts.

Even so, six months after the Olympics, Canada made a major grain sale to the Soviet Union. Russian tankers were still using Canadian ports.

Dr. Anne Hall, of the U of A, discussed the political organization of women in international sports.

"The first thing that has to be decided, is if women want to

become involved in the male sports world," she said.

Eventually they will be strong enough to lobby and get action, like the obtaining a women's marathon at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. This is the first long distance running event for women at the Games.

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