

Olympic boycott discussed

by Martin Chernenkoff

The Physical Education department held a forum yesterday at noon to discuss the question of the 1980 Summer Olympics boycott. In attendance were Dr. Harvey Scott, Dr. J. Redmond, Ken Porter (director of the Journal International Track Meet) and Dr. Jean Liebner. Dr. Lindsey of the PE dept. acted as mediator. Steve Paproski, minister of fitness and sport had been expected but was called to the opening of the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N. Y.

Dr. Scott spoke first, setting the stage by bringing out the key issues. He challenged the premise that the boycott is to enforce the Olympic ideals.

"What are these Olympic ideals?" he asked. He questioned why the Olympics had continued in 1964, 1968 and 1972 despite the U.S. presence in Vietnam. He questioned the effectiveness of the boycott and talked of the possible demise of the Games. Are they worth saving? Are there alternatives to boycotting?

Dr. Redmond followed by giving a historical perspective on

the boycott. He began, "politics pervades everything, including sport." He listed troubles at every Olympic games. The Olympics which were cancelled due to war: 1916, 1940, 1944. After the wars, in 1920 and 1948, both Germany and Japan had not been invited to compete because they were "warmongers."

The 1936 Olympics in Berlin were a Nazi showcase. Russia had invaded Hungary in an Olympic year (1956) and still competed in Melbourne. Similarly, in 1968, they invaded Czechoslovakia, as well as competing for gold in Mexico City. Redmond quoted Russian literature, "It (sport) will be used as an instrument to gain world supremacy," when he talked of the Russian return to Olympic competition in 1952. Previously, the Russians had not participated since the revolution.

Ken Porter, a coach of "Olympic athletes, Olympic hopefuls and non-Olympic athletes" opposed the boycott. He denounced the attitude of "(the) athlete as a foot-soldier of the politician, . . . a punitive extension of foreign policy." The Olympic Games must be saved

because they foster "international understanding."

For example, he said, "Name a Kenyan, a living Kenyan person, but not an athlete. Think of a Romanian name. It (probably) won't be the president." More importantly, the Olympics are a "focus of international sport" serving as the world championships for several sports. Our entire physical education program is aimed at preparations for the Olympics. The "loss of (this) focus" would seriously hamper sport and sport programs in Canada.

Dr. Liebner reiterated much of what had already been said and proposed an alternative to boycotting. Because a total boycott would be misrepresented to the Russian people, she proposed a flag boycott. Send our athletes to Moscow but deny Russia the use of our flag and anthem. Instead use the Olympic flag. This, she said, had three benefits. The "Olympic competition would continue;" it would be a more "visual protest;" and "more nations" would be willing to participate in such an action.

The crowd of 250 gave all four speakers a hearty round of applause.

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