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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 12, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JIM CANNON

FROM:

JIM CONNOR *JE 6*

The attached article from the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR dated August 12 was returned in the President's outbox with the request that it be forwarded to you for your information.

cc: Dick Cheney

Attachment:

Article entitled:  
OLYMPIC problems that need to  
be met before 1980

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Jim Cannon

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info.

# Olympic problems that need to be met before 1980

By Larry Eldridge

It's never too early to look ahead toward the next Olympics, so as we close the books on Montreal it is already time to think about 1980. And the first thing a lot of people are thinking about is how to cope with the multitude of political and social problems that beset the games so regularly nowadays.

One old idea which surfaced again during this year's troubles was to use the Olympic flag and anthem instead of those of the individual nations. At first this might sound like a good idea for curbing the rampant chauvinism at these quadrennial celebrations, but in actuality it might be one of those solutions that is worse than the problem.

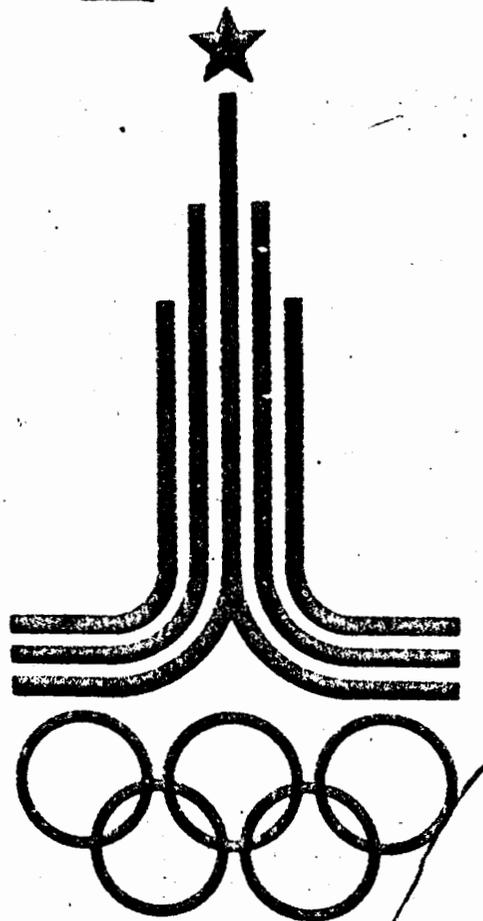
Anyone who has been at the Olympics knows what a moving and memorable mo-

## Game plan

ment it is when his country's team marches in, or when an athlete from his nation wins an event and they raise the flag and play the anthem. The athletes feel this too. Many of them (including some now starring in the pro ranks) have told me that playing for their country was the No. 1 thrill in their entire careers.

Take all this away, and the Olympics would become just another big track meet, swimming competition, or whatever. Anyway, the problem doesn't lie with flags or anthems. There's nothing wrong with an athlete competing for his country as well as for himself. It's just that certain nations, like the Soviet Union starting shortly after the war and East Germany now, have made such an obsession out of winning medals that they have perverted the whole Olympic ideal.

The United States isn't exactly blameless either, for while it doesn't have state-supported sports programs its officials and media types can wave the flag with



Symbol for 1980 Olympics

anyone — and let's not forget that they were the ones who started the whole problem by making such a fetish out of counting medals.

Somewhere along the way all of these countries lost sight of Baron Pierre de Coubertin's original concept that "the most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part."

Unfortunately, no one has yet found a way to stop a country from ignoring that ideal — and once this happens its rivals can seldom resist the temptation to try to

keep pace. I think the answer, though, is to cope with such distortions as best we can, not try to change the whole format.

For one thing, the U.S. Olympic Committee could try a little harder to improve its own programs instead of just rationalizing all failures on the grounds that Eastern European-style sports assembly lines don't fit the mold of a free society.

Obviously it wouldn't be feasible to try to set up such a system in the United States, but this doesn't mean — as the USOC seemingly would like us to believe — that national development programs are some sort of communist plot.

Countries like Austria, Switzerland, and France spend millions each year on their skiing programs with an eye toward the Winter Olympics, illustrating quite clearly that you don't have to live in a regimented society to develop a strong national team in a particular sport.

While the USOC wrestles with this problem over the next four years (and according to some of its own athletes, if something isn't done quickly American teams face potential disaster in Moscow four years hence), the International Olympic Committee has its hands full trying to find solutions to the various delicate political problems confronting it.

High on the list, is the "China question," which threatened for a while to wreck the Montreal games. Sentiment has been growing to allow mainland China and its 800 million people into the Olympic movement, but so far a majority of members has stopped short of fulfilling Peking's demand that Taiwan be simultaneously kicked out.

"Solving this problem is uppermost in my mind," IOC President Lord Killanin said in his post-Olympics press conference, but he did not indicate that he had as yet come up with any solution.

"What happened here (Canada's last-minute refusal to let Taiwan compete as the Republic of China), highlighted the question," he said.

Taiwan's withdrawal and the boycott by 30 African and Arab nations once again raised the question of letting athletes compete under the Olympic flag if for some reason they can't compete for a country. This came up poignantly in Montreal when sprinter James Gilkes of Guyana made just such a request after his country pulled out. Many people thought this was a chance for the IOC to establish an important precedent enhancing the sporting aspect of the Olympics and making them less nationalistic, but Gilkes' application was rejected.

Killanin, questioned sharply about this decision at his press conference, said the IOC had been "emotionally anxious to do the best we could," but had been prevented by technicalities from making any other decision.

The question is also being raised already as to how the IOC will react if the Soviet Union in 1980 follows Canada's lead and tries to bar or place restrictions on countries with which it is not friendly (Israel and Chile are the leading candidates).

Killanin reaffirmed at his news conference that the Russians have given assurances they will go by the IOC's rules, and when pressed with a hypothetical question about what would happen if they didn't he said: "If promises are not fulfilled, the Games will have to be withdrawn or cancelled."

One can only hope that the IOC somehow resolves the China question without sacrificing a member in good standing (Taiwan), finds a way to prevent last-minute boycotts like the one in Montreal, decides to let athletes compete under the Olympic flag in special situations, and lets the Russians know in no uncertain terms that despite its wishy-washy performance in giving in to Canada, any failure to abide by the rules in 1980 will cause cancellation. If it accomplishes even some of these things, the four years between Olympics will have been productive ones.