



Proinsias Mac Aonghusa

# Straight from the Shoulder

By PROINSIAS Mac AONGHUSA

[The "Go Slow" policy of the sorters in the General Post Office in Dublin, affected deliveries of letters and other matter for insertion in the "Munster Express" in this issue. This week's contribution of "STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER" did not arrive in consequence of the general "Go Slow". The following was dictated over the telephone to us on Wednesday evening, so that readers would not be disappointed over its non appearance:]

## POTENTIAL OLYMPIC FENCING GRIEVANCE

An injustice to one is an outrage against all society. I think most men of good will would accept the truth of that statement. I also think that when an injustice is done to some young person or to someone who may not be in too strong a position to defend himself the crime is all the greater. For some weeks I have been keeping an eye on the development of one of the nastiest pieces of injustice I have seen for a long time. It concerns the young fencing champion, Laurence Gough.

Laurence Gough is reputed to be the best fencer this country has produced in a long time. To prove this is easy; he has won time and again in international competitions. But he will not be one of those who will represent Ireland on the country's Olympic team. Not only that but Laurence Gough will never again fence in Ireland for this young boy had not alone not been picked for the team but he has been expelled from the Irish Fencing Federation. He was expelled without a hearing and without his being told what charges were against him. Later he was informed he had brought the Federation into disrepute. Apparently his crime was to talk to newspapers and to protest against what he believes to be grave irregularities in the way fencing is run in Ireland.

It appears that there is doubt if international fencing rules are kept in Irish fencing. It also appears that fencing here is run by a small self-perpetuating clique who will accept no criticism and who will act ruthlessly against anyone who dare suggest they may be wrong. Laurence Gough spoke out against this clique. His bravery in trying to reform fencing in Ireland resulted in swift and merciless action. Secret trial without the accused being present or being made aware of what charges were made against him . . . sportsmanship how are you! It is probable that the Federation violated its own constitution in the way it dealt with Laurence Gough, and it is practically certain that if he were to sue them he would be successful. Natural justice was denied him and his case would likely be upheld in any court of law.

I am told that the selectors for the Olympics saw fit to select some of themselves to represent the country. What do you think of that? I am also told that the qualifications of some of them to represent their country at the Olympics are open to some doubt insofar as they may not have won, within the proper time period, the necessary number of international contests. However, that is their affair. I could not care less about their internal monkey business; what concerns me is the injustice to Laurence Gough. It is scandalous that a small body of interested persons can destroy the athletic career of a young man in so brutal and casual a manner; it is also scandalous that a so-called appeal committee should gloss over this rank injustice and not understand the fundamental principle involved.

Perhaps in the normal way people who act in this dastardly manner should be ignored. But these people purport to represent Ireland in sport. In a few weeks' time they will go to Mexico and purport to represent Ireland there. This is not good enough. And it is not good enough for the Irish Olympic Council to take a Pontius Pilate attitude to the affair. Insofar as the Olympic Council accept the fencing team offered by the Federation it can justly be said a heavy personal responsibility in it at this point and I hope he will try to do something about it.

Those who acted so brutally and so ruthlessly against Laurence Gough may be fine men and women in their personal lives. Yet they see nothing wrong in crucifying this boy when they meet as a group. How strange people can be.

Can we do anything about this matter? Very little. I fear, except this: refuse to contribute anything to any fund for the Irish Olympic team until such time as this scandal is rectified.

I have deliberately refrained from mentioning anyone's name or names in connection with this sordid affair! but that doesn't mean that I do not have the names of those involved and also very full file on fencing in Ireland. (Is leor nod don eolach!)

A real is all a  
wise man needs.