REPORT OF LORD COHEN OF BIRKENHEAD'S ADDRESS
AT THE ASSOCIATION A. G. M.

by

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The Association was singularly honoured to have as guest lecturer at the A. G. M. Lord Cohen of Birkenhead - President The Royal Society of Medicine. President The General Medical Council. The following is an edited version of Lord Cohen's paper which was delivered in a most masterly and eloquent manner.

THE PHILOSOPHIC ASPECTS OF SPORT, LEISURE AND MEDICINE.

It was not always realised that three centuries ago in the social history of our country sport occupied a very important place not only in the richer classes but also amongst the masses.

The rich hunted, at first, stags, then the fox. They shot at first with bows and arrows and then with guns. They had their jousts and their tournaments. They fenced because it was a training, an apprenticeship, an enduring which was so common a part of the parliamentary history of that time. The masses too had their sports. They wrestled; almost throughout the country there are local rules of wrestling which are extremely interesting. They played football, but not with teams of eleven a side, but between whole villages, with a hundred people on each side, which didn't perhaps allow for the finer aspects of strategy in football. They fought with swords and they boxed with their bare fists. Lord Cohen suspected that one of the constituents of their sport was the sadistic pleasure of observing pain in others, this was particularly the case in some of the activities such as cock fighting. It was important to remember that before the Industrial Revolution people exercised at their work - they tilled the soil, they hewed trees they built with bricks and so forth. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution most people were left much worse off from the point of view of exercise and sport, than they had been in the earlier part of our social history. Reflecting on the hours of work which were undertaken not only by adults but by children of the ages of seven and eight who were working in mills from the early hours of the morning until late at night, it was not surprising therefore that they were quite exhausted and unable to take exercise or indulge in sport. These were of course the expressions of the poverty of the age, with large families, family responsibility, and they were also,

and this is important, the outcome of the Religious teaching of the time. Whether the teaching was in fact inspired by the need to create wealth, the creators of wealth being the poorer masses of the population is a matter for debate. What is true however is that work was stressed as a virtue - that mankind earns its bread by the sweat of its brow, and it will be recalled that then, as now, the cry of the Roman Catholic Church was 'Laborare est orare' - To work is to pray, and it is anybody's guess as to what the purpose of that was.

Following the Industrial Revolution and the creation of machinery with its consequent creation of wealth, there was for decades no thought of leisure or sport on the part of the majority of the population of this country and it is known how their health declined. They had neither the time nor the energy for play and their expectation of life was rarely beyond forty years of age. The leisured classes, of course, still indulged in their sports, they lived on the productive work of the masses. Gradually as the nineteenth evolved the situation changed. With the introduction of the Education Act of 1870, University education was gradually introduced into this country. The vast mass of people began to appreciate the pleasures of reading, they developed cultural tastes, and as education improved and technological advances occurred, machinery gradually replaced manpower. Gradually more and more perfect instruments were discovered or invented which tended to replace manpower to such an extent that even before the days of what is now regarded as the introduction of automation, it was possible for three or four people to do the work of a hundred. Today the vast majority of people have an occupation which gives them adequate leisure. Their working day is perhaps during five days a week only half of their waking time, and they have two days at the weekend which can be devoted, if they so wish, to leisure or activity which is healthful, healthgiving and sport.

Leisure can be used in many ways, some spend it in privateness and dissolution. Today, far too many people spend it looking at T.V., or looking at sport, though looking at sport or being a spectator may not necessarily be bad. A recent Social Science survey of a large number of people of so called working and middle class, showed that nearly 75% of their evening was spent watching T.V., this has now become the opium of the people, and perhaps it doesn't present all the opportunity that we would wish for happiness and fulfilment. What are the main ways in which the educated sensible person can occupy his leisure?. Obviously it does give one the opportunity for cultivating the arts, for advancing one's own knowledge. This is also important to remember as the impression may have been given that the leisured classes of the older times indulged in little other than sport. The fact is that the leisured classes included some of the most profound scholars and scientists of their day, and those

which were neither scientist nor scholar used their wealth in patronage of the poorer people who appeared to have the qualities that were necessary for advancement. It could be argued that without the old leisured classes, mankind might never have emerged from its barbarism.

Contribution sport may make to leisure.

What does sport offer? - Obviously it offers the possibility of exercising the body, of improving muscular strength, but also of improving muscular co-ordination, and this is a mental matter and not a physical one. It also offers the opportunity for using one's mind in other ways, particularly in strategy in sport which is now what really wins races. All sports activities as well as having a beneficial effect on oneself as an individual, are in fact a microcosmic reflection of all the struggle and the drama and the responsibilities of life itself.

The first point needing emphasis is that sport pursued in its right aspects does mean that we are not simply individuals, but members of society, and that society itself has aims which are not simply gainful to the individual-

'For when the one great scorer comes
To mark against your name,
He writes, not that you won or lost,
But how you played the game'.

It may be argued that professionalism in some sports has destroyed this image, even if it has, this is to speak of only a few. Sport in its best sense should grip everyone, it does in fact grip a large number of our younger generation. It has become a mass movement which has starved from increased leisure.

Occupation as a factor in sport and leisure.

In earlier times people exercised their souls their minds and their bodies in doing a job of work which required skill and craftsmanship, and had a defined end and a product which they were able to see, and receive satisfaction from. Modern labour rarely has a meaningful and complete end, it is so often fragmented with no specific aim in view. This clearly must be boring and frustrating and cannot indeed exercise body or mind. The same is true of our higher executive positions, which although requiring academic and technical knowledge are sedentary occupations with little in the way of physical activity. These people generally, take little advantage of their leisure time to correct the disabilities which may result from their lack of a mental and physical activity. A short time ago there was published in an American Journal an analysis of the

leisure activities of the American people generally. Nearly 2/3 rds of them spent a great deal of time in watching television, $\frac{1}{4}$ read newspapers for most of their leisure time or they read books, or they went pleasure driving and listened to records. Sport was not amongst the ten most frequent leisure activities - what might now be called the "Top Ten".

The contribution sport may make to the social life of the Community.

Individual sport is no longer concerned solely with an individual activity. Almost all sport allows self expression and it allows it in a corporate way. Sport promotes social contacts, it fosters self assurance, and it does give the opportunity for enterprise in todays world which is dominated by such uniformity imposed by the radio, television and the press, by holiday camps where everyone does much the same thing at the same time, or by holiday cruises where all of them do almost the same thing all the time. Sport allows for the possibility of hero worship, and this is important despite the Russian political outlook.

It is of course not only through sport that desirable personal attributes may be achieved, but it can be argued successfully that sport is the most universal method of achievement. Earlier mention was made of the spectators, they are after all an essential element in sport, just as is an audience in the theatre. People go to the theatre to see the play, every dramatist and every actor will agree that without an audience the play is incomplete, and sport without an audience is in fact incomplete. For the audience itself there is this good feature, that the spectator in sport, as does the audience in the theatre, tends to identify himself with what is going on, on the field, with the players or the team. Anyone who has any knowledge of medicine, particularly the psychological aspect knows that this identification is in some respects good, particularly if it is only as team sense of catharsis of the purification of the soul.

Another aspect of sport which is of great interest is that sport is beautiful, this the speaker said, he would like particularly to stress, as it was rarely stressed. The beauty of form, the beauty of pattern, the beauty of movement which is seen in sport, in for example ice skating, gymnastics, diving, dance and so forth, there is a remarkable expression of the most beautiful continuity of movement. It is sometimes said that the kind of beauty one sees in sport is momentary. The composer who writes a few bars of notes on paper will go down in history whilst there are instrumentalists to play those bars. The poet who writes a few lines on a scrap of paper, his name too goes ringing down the ages. The artist who paints a picture, the sculptor who models a piece of sculpture in stone or marble will last until the rains wash it away. They, it

is said, have the great gift of being eternal, whereas the sportsman is like the actor or the pianist, or the doctor, only a momentary passing or fleeting phenomenon. This surely is untrue, when looking at a picture one sees momentary beauty, when looking at sport which is being done in its best way, one sees momentary beauty, beauty of movement and form. This difference which is so often stressed is an untenable one, both have beauty in its highest form.

The Humanistic and Sociological functions of Sport.

Sport has most important humanistic and sociological functions which both modify and enrich mans experience, this of course is true mainly of amateur sport and not professional. There is a danger that professionalism, now-a-days is endangering some aspects of sport, particularly the greed for money which is not only on the part of the players but also on those that manage them, when thinking of the humanistic and sociological aspect made by sport one thinks of the great international competitions particularly the Olympic Games. Sport has a world wide acceptance, which is essentially independant of National social customs and of political ideologies. It is also, probably the only human activity which is wholly independant of language. Of course a play in French can be enjoyed if one understands only a few of the words, and sometimes even if one doesn't. A film in a foreign language may be the same, but one doesn't achieve the same appreciation as in the way that one gets virtually complete satisfaction in sport without the knowledge of language which so commonly is a bar to understanding.

Some specific aspects of Sport in relation to Health.

Women - Do women run the risks with regard to sport?

Only within the last half century have women taken part extensively in sport, and yet millions now rightly enter games for sport, exercise and so on. The present generation of women is stronger; and look when they are mothers and even grandmothers, younger, than in any time in the past. The fact is, that there is nothing in the physiological function of women, except perhaps in the later stages of pregnancy, which will in any way affect her suitability for sport. Many of the records in the Olympics are held by women from girls at the age of 13 to grandmothers, and at anyrate sports-women do not age earlier than men.

Age. - Obviously younger people can undertake sports which are barred from the older generation, which is no reason when one gives up sprinting and

running, and so forth, why one should'nt undertake the less strenuous sports such as walking, swimming, golf and tennis, these are all suitable for older people.

The effect of sport and its alleged strain on the heart.

Lord Cohen said that having looked very carefully into this question there was no evidence that games cause severe or permanent damage to a normal heart. He thought the temporary collapse at the end of races was very temporary and not infrequently had a psychological element. Perhaps it is not without significance that spectators collapse more often than players. On the other hand it is essential of course that one should ensure that those who undertake sport, strenuous games particularly, should be mentally fit, but the opinion as to medical fitness must be sound.

Those who have practised medicine for many years often see young men of the age of 18,19, looking flabby, hunchbacked and so forth, and they tell one, that they were examined at the age of 5 or 6, and told never to play games because they had heart disease. On examining their heart, taking electrocardiograms, all that one finds which is abnormal is perhaps a short systolic murmur at the apex. These in fact are quite normal heartbeats and that it is thought to be abnormal, only, because doctors too often forget that normality is not a single description of an organ or of its response to various activities, but is normal within a range. These are normal hearts, and the result is, that so many of these young people are not only physically disabled in many ways, but are psychologically suffering from the consequences of their having been prevented from having taken games.

Disabilities may of course prevent the undertaking of some games, but certain disabilities do not prevent participation in sport, the process of Dr. Guttman emphasises this strongly, after all the Paraplegic Olympics are perhaps the most outstanding example of people who have grave disabilities in one way, yet are able to carry out sport exercise with the main active part of the body. Connelly who was perhaps the greatest Hammer Thrower of his time and Olympic Gold Medallist in 1956 had a birth injury of his left arm, but this did not prevent him becoming a very great Hammer Thrower, and there are many similar examples. This triumph over disability is an example of triumph of mind over matter, and it emphasises once again that sport is simply not a matter of muscle and brawn, but it is also a matter of mind and brain. Sport does not only demand a discipline of the individual himself but also a collective discipline, of the rules, and form, based on the rules which are responsible for the team activity, and if only this could be introduced into the wider fields of National and International policy we might well harness the vitality of more people and contribute to their freedom and length of survival.

Human beings are the result of two variables, one is the result of their inherited constitution and the second is their environment. Inherited constitution can rarely be modified, but environmental factors can be modified, the impression of the individual the conditions under which he lives, his housing, the cultural customs of the society in which he lives, determine to a large extent whether or not he takes exercise or indulges in sport. In recent years there has been a very marked improvement in the growth of individuals, and children of 12, are at least, an inch taller than they were only twenty years ago, they are more active and they have the opportunity of indulging in sport in their schools. They are fitter, healthier, live longer, and gradually they are increasing control of their bodies by training, and so the athletic records are broken year by year, for women as well as men. Despite this increase in our size and our longevity, there is still not yet sufficiently widespread fitness. One aim of an Association such as the B.A.S.M. is to try and ensure that, not only the few are fit, but even that these are much fitter than they were, and capable of breaking many more records, but also that there should be a sufficiently widespread fitness, because, when one takes into account the number of young men being recruited for the Services, and when so many of them are unfit to take an active part in the work of our Forces, we know that some of the factors such as alcoholism, oversmoking which do exist are too widespread. We have not educated our youth and children properly. The importance of academic achievement has been stressed, we have not stressed sufficiently the importance of achievement of the right standard of Health, that it is important to take exercise that it is important to take part in sport, that those who live sedentary lives run risks which are not run by those who are active. Exercise must also be continuous, too often on reaching the age of 40 - 50 many are very active in their professional activities, and however much exercise or however much one participated in sport earlier, begin to fall off, this is bad. One must continue if one is to maintain one's life expectancy. Although man has created with his technological skill some of the most remarkable instruments which have been known, which enable him to do remarkable things, he spends too little time on his most important instrument which is his body, in many cases they receive less attention and more abuse than his motorcar. The way to prevent this is for an Association such as the B.A.S.M. and others, to undertake Health Education to show not only what healthy living can achieve, but also to try and persuade people to act in such a way that they are following the rules of living. It is also important of course that the Government should take a larger hand in providing appropriate facilities for sport and exercise and should make financial contributions to that purpose. This aspect of the problem it will be recalled is dealt with in one of the less publicised Wolfendon Report of 2-3 years ago, and that its main recommendation - The Sports Council has not been prevented by the Government.

In a debate in the House of Lords just over 2 years ago the thesis which has been presented, the harmony of Sport and Leisure which gives rise to the victories over disease, and to accepting that Health is something worth achieving, not only the health of individuals but that of communities and Nations, was stressed by Lord Exeter in words which certainly cannot be bettered. He said "If we push on with help to Amateur Sport, I believe we shall do a great deal for the youth of this country, we shall bring much happiness and pleasure. At the same time we should root the sort of calibre that we want to find in our citizens. Not only that, but by taking our active part in this field, we should in the International field too, be able to play a part in one of the greatest experiments that has ever taken place successfully so far, in the integration of the ordinary people of the world. Surely if we achieve well in this we shall have made a real contribution to the only sure foundation of that building which is the Prayer of Mankind 'Peace and Goodwill among Men'."