The Role of FIMS

Sadly, we have to report that BASM found at the Windermere reunion of colleagues from North-West Europe, that none of our national associations had received any communication from the FIMS officers between May 1990 and November 1991. As we go to press, that interval has extended into January 1992, with the biennial Council of Delegates due in Hong Kong in March 1992.

The NW European national sports medicine associations have combined to mount a censure motion on the FIMS Executive to seek explanation of this total breakdown in communication and to offer FIMS a central office run by the Netherlands Association on all our behalf.

Most of us would subscribe to the ideal of internationalism rather than any particular party line. For many years we have cherished the opportunity FIMS gave us to meet colleagues from the most unlikely lands and regimes in something bigger than each of us. Looking back on the FIMS, the observer may often have wondered how influence could be held by those whose sports medical and even clinical merits were none too apparent. The first major democratic disruption of the status quo ante occurred in the 1980 Council of Delegates at Rome where the officers were unceremoniously replaced because of their stumbling inefficiency. If bodies such as FIMS deviate too far from accepted norms in their group politics, then the only real victim is the organization’s own reputation.

Too much of FIMS’ effort has been dissipated in pursuit of protocol and position, too little in the delivery of services. Its present structure commands little respect and serves as a dire warning as to future conduct. For instance, as a result of the undignified in-fighting at Amsterdam the FIMS Commissions lost much momentum and credibility. The Scientific Commission, the supreme arbiter of FIMS’ scientific integrity, replaced distinguished scientists with a busy orthopaedist and now has a membership no longer drawn from merely scientific ranks. The Interfederal Commission, the link body between FIMS and the world governing bodies of sport, including AGFI, replaced Dirix and Komadel with a busy orthopaedist who promptly resigned only to be replaced by yet another busy orthopaedist – even lower on the Council election list. The Education Commission, endowed with handbook, syllabus and course structures, seems to have sunk without trace. The Liaison Commission is a law unto itself. Originally set up as a sort of excuse to pull some East European colleagues on to the life-raft, even its charms could not survive its sustained record of non-achievement to the point where formal resolutions were put for its elimination in 1982. These were simply ignored by the Latins in Brisbane when they voted to ignore the rules. Four years later similar feelings were most strongly expressed by the anatomist who, in fact, emerged as President of the Liaison Commission and who has subsequently used reams of print in the pursuit of yet another perfect but redundant structure!

As the idea of a controlling world governing body of sports medicine is self-evidently ridiculous at this point in history, the best thing we should seek is the abandonment of such pretensions. The geographical and professional needs of FIMS are frankly incompatible and we should restructure the new FIMS along sensible regional lines as a simple meeting forum for colleagues. This is a highly valid aim in such international activities as sports and medicine and we can do without political nonsense and ‘dirigisme’. It is not necessary to secure national nominees in offices – the true test of the dedicated professional’s commitment should be his acceptance of anonymity in service. NW Europe has shown the way by sharing office on an annual roster. The cause has risen above the individual office holders and the secretariat does as it’s told. Why should we not have a similar FIMS? It has been depressing to see FIMS over-reach itself in the pursuit of a status which its achievements cannot yet sustain. We need to walk before running. In the meanwhile, BASM should join forces strongly with its NW European colleagues to monitor the controlling ambitions of the European Commission before taking the power games of the Latin bloc in FIMS too seriously.

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