CHANGE THE CHARTER NOT THE GAMES

Kirsten Davies

[Assignment: Based on our current reading in the course, write an essay on the role of sport on the international scene--economic, social, and political.]

(1) The Olympic games are supposed to further the common international cause of friendship, peace, and mutual understanding between nations. The Olympic charter states that the Olympic games are not to be political. The Olympic games should not be nations competing against nations, and athletes should not be used to represent national political ideologies. This, however, is exactly how the Olympic games function today. In order to accomplish the goals stated in the Olympic charter, drastic changes would need to be made in almost every aspect of the games. National uniforms, national anthems, and the displaying of national flags would have to be eliminated and multiple sites would have to be used for each Olympics. I feel these changes would take a lot away from the Olympics. Instead of changing the Olympic games to agree with the Olympic charter, I feel the Olympic charter should be changed.

(2) Athletes dream of competing in the Olympics and for many of them being successful at the Olympic games is the only way they can "pay back" their country for all it has done for them. Most athletes are proud to wear uniforms with the name of their home country on them. These uniforms also make it easy for spectators to tell where an athlete is from. The raising of the national flags of the three medal winners and the playing of the national anthem of the country whose athlete has won the gold medal--these make the Olympics what they are. The anthem usually brings tears to the eyes of the athletes and this emotion is testimony that for athletes this moment of national glory is the best reward for their hard work. Watching the Winter Olympics this year and seeing the Olympic flag and hearing the Olympic theme when a member of the Unified team won a medal--for me this did not have the same appeal or magic as hearing the national anthem. It is also not the same for the athletes and they usually show no emotion as the Olympic flag is raised. The uniforms, flags, and national anthems are a part of the Olympics and should not be changed.

(3) If nations did not compete, we are unlikely to have team sports in Olympics. The need to practice together means that teams inevitably live together in and belong to a nation. Not allowing athletes to represent nations means the death of team sports in the Olympics. And eliminating team sports would be a mistake. Ice hockey, basketball, swimming, and track relays and other sports would be eliminated and so would a lot of talented athletes who play these sports. Athletes playing team sports have worked just as hard as athletes who compete as individuals and it seems unfair to bar them from Olympics. Athletes should not be punished for choosing a sport where they have to be a team player. Besides, team sports are important because they teach people to work together towards a common goal. Team sports also provide a wonderful variety to the Olympics. Without them the Olympics would be greatly diminished.
Finally, part of the Olympic spirit is to bring together people from all over the world in a spirit of friendly competition. Having multiple sites, because it would scatter athletes to different locations, would take away from the opportunity for this unique gathering of so many people from different parts of the world. Even though it is expensive for a country to host all of the events in the games, I believe that bringing athletes and spectators together is worth any amount of money. And since it is hard for a poor country to host the Olympics, the richer countries should help poor nations financially so that they can host all the events. This is a far better alternative than having different events at different locations.

I realize the Olympic games go against the Olympic charter, but I feel it is unrealistic and unnecessary to change the games. National flags, uniforms, and anthems add to the games and should not be taken away. And bringing athletes together to one site is a tradition. The games would not be the same if multiple sites were used. As they are run now, Olympic games are the best for everyone—spectators and athletes.