

SPORT LEADS THE WAY

ANTHONY STEEL

Secretary, Campaign Against Race Discrimination in Sport

IN the last issue of 'Africa South', my colleague Dennis Brutus, Secretary of the South African Sports Association, gave an account of the fight being waged by the non-European sportsmen of South Africa for international recognition. In his references to the outcry caused by the omission of all except white athletes from the South African and Rhodesian teams at the Empire games in Cardiff last July, Mr. Brutus mentions the establishment of the Campaign Against Race Discrimination in Sport, and this article deals with the contribution that the Campaign hopes to make towards the recognition by South Africa of the international principle that *the only criterion for judging a sportsman is ability and keenness*, and not the colour of his skin.

The first step in establishing our Campaign was to gain the support of distinguished British people, so that it would have a considerable status. The first to lend their names as sponsors were Fenner Brockway M.P., J. P. W. Mallalieu M.P. (both Labour), Jo Grimond M.P. (Liberal), E. Bullus M.P. (Conservative), J. B. Priestley, Prof. A. J. Ayer (Professor of Philosophy at London University), Sir Julian Huxley, the Archbishop of York, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, and the Chief Rabbi. We then felt able to approach leading British sportsmen with the suggestion that they sign a letter which would be sent to the 'Times', condemning the colour-bar in South African sport, as reflected at the Empire Games; and calling upon all sportsmen to work to persuade the international federations controlling each sport to adopt the Olympic principle. Twenty great sportsmen, known to millions all over the world, signed the letter published in the 'Times' on 17th July 1958, two days before the start of the Empire Games.

The next step was to circulate leading British Sports Clubs asking them to pass resolutions urging their national associations to raise the question of the adoption of the Olympic principle in their appropriate international federation; and in the soccer world at least, we gained considerable immediate support. Many leading clubs such as Bristol Rovers, Hull City, West Ham United, and Dundee United passed such resolutions; and indeed the Bristol Rovers resolution was signed by all the first eleven,

the reserves, the chairman, manager, assistant manager, secretary, masseur, coaches and trainers! A wonderful gesture!

The next objective of the Campaign was the meeting of the International Olympics Committee at Munich in May, 1959. A letter instancing the flouting of the Olympic principle by South Africa and calling upon the I.O.C. to apply its own charter sincerely, was circulated amongst outstanding people all over the world. Such disparate figures as the Archbishops of York and Cape Town, Maurice Chevalier, Trygve Lie, Alberto Moravia, Bertrand Russell, Jean Borotra, Sir John Hunt, and Emil Zatopek signed the letter. In all, 21 great names appeared on the letter, which was sent together with a memorandum to M. Otto Mayer, the Chancellor of the Olympics Committee, who placed the matter upon the Committee's agenda. All national Olympic committees were sent copies of the letter and memorandum.

At the meeting of the I.O.C., India, Egypt and the Soviet Union strongly supported the memorandum sent by the South African Sports Association and by this Campaign. To avert the possibility of expulsion, the South African official representative gave an undertaking (since confirmed by the South African Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association—SAOCGA) that his association would do all it could to further the interests of non-white sportsmen in the Union, and would certainly have no objection to their inclusion in future South African Olympic teams, if they were good enough. The Union Government has since stated that it would not withhold passports from non-white sportsmen so selected. Much remains to be seen. At present all the sports associations affiliated to the SAOCGA are exclusively white ones. Will their rules be altered to admit enthusiasts irrespective of race? Will open trials between sportsmen of different races be arranged? Whatever happens, however, the SAOCGA has on paper committed itself to the principle that sports representation should be on the basis of merit, not pigmentation. We will follow this undertaking up in every way possible, to ensure that non-European sportsmen in South Africa who reach Olympic standards are selected for their country. The principle has now been conceded, and this represents a reversal of the whole political and social trend in the Union.