
HOW TO DEVELOP ADULTS' PHYSICAL EDUCATION (VOLUNTARY KEEP-FIT GYMNASTICS) ⁽¹⁾

By Pierre Seurin. Secretary General of the *F. I. E. P.* — *FRANCE.*

Twelve years ago, when the *F. F. G. E.* (*French Federation for Educational Gymnastics*) was attempting to popularize in *France* a health and recreational gymnastics movement for adults — known as «*voluntary gymnastics*» — we were successful in obtaining from the Executive Committee of

this Federation the approval of a text addressed to both educators and the public.

As an introduction to our subject, we think it will be useful to reproduce in full the first two paragraphs:

«I — Why voluntary gymnastics?

Physical education is organized only for young people. As a part of general education, its practice is not institutionalized

⁽¹⁾ *World Congress of Physical and Sportive Education*. 1966. Madrid, *SPAIN.*

and regulated except in the scholastic and university sector, principally belonging to the State. Beyond school age, physical activities are organized only on the sportive plane. (in Sports Federations supported by the State).

These sporting activities, undoubtedly of interest, embrace only a minority of Frenchmen as the number of sports spectators and even «armchair experts» should not illude people. Really the percentage of regular sports performers is infinitesimal.

There is, therefore, a considerable mass of non sportsmen, adults of both sexes and young people, who do not have rational physical activity which is indispensable for the maintenance and improvement of the physiological values which condition their health.

Now these physiological values — which evidently depend on various hereditary characteristics, but may be influenced by the action of a favourable or unfavourable environment — are diminished in our present-day civilized life by the following circumstances:

— Muscular activity is insufficient to bring into play particularly respiratory and circulatory functions; sedentary habits are, together with alcoholism, one of the principal social plagues of the day);

— the antiphysiological attitudes or unhealthy conditions in numerous professions;

— nervous fatigue which is a result of the stepped-up pace of living, etc.

On the other hand, it is proved that physical exercise, conceived mainly for health purposes, that is, selected in accordance with physiological goals (not exclusively sportive, artistic, etc., ones), and dosed out according to each individual's capacity, is an important health factor.

Greater health means greater happiness, less expense on the family level and greater social output.

Therefore, it is necessary to foster the practice of physical education to achieve better health. This is the main goal of «voluntary gymnastics».

II — Physical education for adults and young people who are not sportsmen

The years between 20 and 50 or over i. e. the period of family responsibilities and social productivity, are precisely those in which the human being needs especially to maintain or improve his resistance to illness and his physical qualities. Nevertheless, these are the years in which he most neglects to keep his health. Reasons invoked are numerous:

Lack of time... (they say there are more important things to do);

age and often fear of ridicule... (physical education and sports are for youngsters);

lack of interest in physical activity for which the schools failed to give the taste. Etc.

From the human and social viewpoint, our interest should be directed towards the mass of adults, not the stronger ones, but the weakest those who need help in order to increase their chances for good health.

Physical education should be introduced into the way of life as an important factor in general health and greater productivity.

Many adults feel the need for rational exercise as when a person feels the approach of physiological old age he notes the need to react.

In response, therefore, to both, a social and personal physical education for adults must be organized.

In such a field only volunteering can be admitted (thus the term «voluntary gymnastics») and it is an independent organization which is concerned mainly with physical education that can create and stimulate this movement for hygienic gymnastics.»

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This text is dated January 1954. Since that time the *F. F. G. E.*, which in 1964 became the «*Federation Française de Gymnastique Educative et de Gymnastique Volontaire*», has made a considerable effort to further this action. At the present time some 8,000 adults of both sexes, of all ages

and professions, are grouped in more than VG sections or clubs which once a week or oftener hold recreational physical fitness exercise sessions for their keep-fit and healthy entertainment.

The objective of our purpose is not to recall some data which are already evident:

— The need for the adult in today's mechanized civilization to take physical exercise;

— the need for body control and for a science of relaxation in the agitated world in which the nerves are under severe strain;

— the growing importance of leisure and the need for a healthy use of free time;

— the role of sport activities in leisure, etc.

All these themes have been fully examined in national or international conferences, and are the objects of intensive study.

Our aim is to determine — through the teachings coming from French achievements and from other countries — the *best means to put into practice* hygienic and recreational physical exercises for adults.

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Numerous persons and groups in various countries have become aware of this need for exercise manifested by adults. Along with generous and disinterested achievements by several Governments and educational Associations, true commercial enterprises often appear on the scene which, while rendering outstanding service, have found a propitious occasion for realizing substantial profits.

Thus, it is normal in a profit-oriented world where profit remains an essential aim, to develop skiing resorts, vacation villages and business organizations for active leisure (such as the «Club Méditerranée» in France).

As long as this active leisure is within the financial reach of a large number of people, such enterprises must be applauded. This presupposes, nevertheless, a sufficiently high standard of living... and offers a solution to the problem only during short periods of the year, i. e., vacation time itself, or still for some people privileged as regards fortune and homes who can go

sailing, mountaineering, tennis, etc., each week.

At any rate, these activities are not always sufficient to keep-fit.

It is necessary to have recourse to more complete physiological activities in order to achieve with greater guarantees a *general state of physical fitness*.

For instance even adults who are assiduous skiers, recognize the need for a *general physical education* which will prepare them for an activity more pleasant and less dangerous for their joints and muscles.

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It has often been thought, in all countries and all ages, since the birth of sports, that competitive sports offer the possibility of giving sufficient bodily training for adults. As a result, sporting clubs have created veteran sections which meet in championship matches.

Adult associations such as the «*Mutuelle Générale de l'Enseignement*» in France, have organized various types of competitions in different sport specialities.

This effort is undoubtedly praiseworthy, but it obviously can achieve limited results only.

In fact such an action faces serious obstacles:

a) *First of all, inconveniences of a physiological nature*: All effort in competitive sport is by its very nature, a maximum effort. It is difficult, if not impossible, to limit the effort when one is engaged in a struggle i. e. the sportive meeting even when, as is often fortunately the case, the outcome is of less importance, provided one has done one's best to win.

Hence fatigue, sometimes very serious, numerous strained ligaments, or other accidents affecting muscles and joints, that are an outcome of competitive sports among adults.

One must have a young system, i. e. a functionally supple one, to «work hard» during an hour.

Classic competitive sport is an activity for the young — and we believe one can be physiologically «young» up to 35-40 years

of age — but, with few exceptions, *competitive sports* (always a tough test) are not the best way to stay young.

This requires more carefully gauged, more calm, and more regular efforts.

b) *Inconveniences of a psychic order.* Competition classifies individuals, eliminating the weakest.

This classification is tolerable at the age of 10 or 20 — although at times it has disastrous psychic effects — but it is inadmissible at the age of 30 or 50 years or is considered as having no importance. In this case the basic motivation in competition, which is the assertion of one's superiority over another, disappears and the simple satisfaction given by recreative physical activity takes its place.

Interest in competition exists then only in a few individuals who in general were good sportsmen and who do not *have consequently to be won over to the cause of bodily exercises.*

The important thing is to appeal to *all others* to take part in physical exercise. We do not think that competitive sports is a truly effective way to attain this.

c) *Inconveniences of a social nature.* Events usually are scheduled at a time when all the members of the team are free to attend, i. e., saturday afternoon or sunday. This causes then numerous family problems.

Must the family be sacrificed for the sake of the team?

It's not always easy to find a solution for these problems and as a general result the sporting activity ends up as a sporadic and very limited affair. *The problem of physical fitness is not solved.*

We might recall the number of accidents and exhaustion which result from these matches, which at times considerably reduce professional output.

Competitive sportive activities, therefore, give only a very partial and we might even say a haphazard solution, to the problem.

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Other initiatives which have also given good results, are those known as «individual physical culture», either in specialized «phy-

sical culture halls», or through such social media as radio or T.V.

One might reproach the physical culture halls for being commercial enterprises, but as long as «they sell a good product», which is often so, we believe they are useful from a social point of view. But if they are commercialized — at a high price — they cannot solve the problem of *physical education for everybody.*

Physical education on radio and TV deserves our approval. It remains to know the percentage of people who follow these courses *effectively and regularly.* We don't believe they are many. This requires certain willpower, *since one is alone,* and this willpower is not commonly found.

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Might there be other more effective approaches to the problem? We are sure there are and believe, based on experience, that the «voluntary gymnastics» movement, as it is organized by the *F. F. G. E. G. V.* in France and other countries where we have studied (*Sweden and Poland* in particular) *offers the best formula.*

The «voluntary gymnastics» movement has been conceived, then organized and led by professional educators.

It was conceived as a generous social work to be undertaken.

It has been methodically planned, without any commercial preoccupation and with a clearly defined *educational goal,* by militants knowing well scientific, technical, and pedagogical problems relative to physical exercises.

It has been methodically planned, with-
 ral countries. We cite, for example, *Sweden* where there are more than 300,000 volunteer gymnasts out of a population of 7 millions, and among the «people's republics» where the movement is strongly encouraged by the State, *Poland* where some 1 million adults benefit from active leisure thanks to an organization like the *T. K. K. F. (Society for the Popularization of Physical Culture).*

We shall examine rapidly the reasons for these achievements and then the obstacles which still continue to block the development of this action in many countries. In this way, we believe we shall lay down the ideal theoretical conditions that allow to reach the objective of «gymnastics for everyone».

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Psycho-physiological data

Numerous inquiries (*Sweden, Bulgaria, Poland, France*, etc.), stated precisely the motives behind adult participation in leisure physical activities. Keeping in mind variants in age and grouping, according to surroundings and ages, these motivations can be classified in the following order, as representative of «average opinion»:

1. Recreation. An evasion from professional worries.
2. Satisfaction of the need for movement (we live in the century of the «armchair man» and sedentarity).
3. Satisfaction deriving from participation in group activity.
4. Concern for health, welfare; esthetic concerns.
5. The pleasure of *improving the body*, as seen in progress of our own «performances».
6. Pleasure derived from competition. To affirm oneself in relation to another.

Certainly gymnastics for adults should first and foremost seek to *meet their needs*. This is the «sine qua non» condition for success, inasmuch as it is a question of a purely *voluntary* gymnastics, i. e. freely performed.

This principle led the organizers of the V. G. movement to search for the technical and pedagogical forms and material conditions which would allow to best satisfy such needs.

Technical and pedagogical data

A *serious work* is needed to rapidly bear fruit in the field of physiological improvement.

This requires competent teachers. The V. G. movement is directed by State physical education teachers, itself a guarantee. But the training of *specialized V. G. instructors* (who will at times work without salary) is becoming increasingly necessary. This was for instance undertaken a long time ago by the *Swedish Gymnastics Federation* at its *Popular School in Lillsved (Sweden)* at present has more than 6,000 V. G. instructors). The *F. F. G. E. in France*, supported by the *Ministry of Youth and Sports*, has been training V. G. instructors since 1954 in courses at the *C. R. E. P. S.*

Voluntary gymnastics sessions must be pleasant, i. e. according to a lively and smiling pedagogy which would combine play with «serious work». Experience has proved that the most austere forms of physical education (one calls it sometimes «constructed movements» which is a mistake in our opinion) are at times the most necessary ones because they are more effective and easily accepted by adults if they are placed in the framework of an animated, gay lesson.

Techniques which have been neglected, perhaps because they are not widely known, must be brought into play:

— Regular use of rhythmic forms with tamborin and piano accompaniment;

— relaxation exercises;

— exercises for the mastery of apparatuses: balls above all, clubs, ropes, hoops, medicine balls, etc.;

— simple ball games, folkloric dances, small but varied relay competitions constitute, together with rhythmic displacements, the core of general functional training exercises.

— Above all avoid *selective competition*, true matches with imposed duration which place definitely made-up teams against one another. Only those sportive games in which the rules can be modified to meet needs and can be stopped as the players begin to tire, etc., should be used.

— *Collective sessions* are recommended (of at least 10 participants) to meet the typically human need to work in a group,

to be a member of a group in which social differences are lost and the worries of everyday life are forgotten.

In this collective activity it is well to avoid, as much as possible, exercises which might accent differences in individual ability, for example performance exercises.

The hierarchy of the «strong» one and the «weak» should not be replaced in physical education sessions by that of the «champion» and the «mediocre» performer. The participants should *live in common* an activity which is useful and pleasant for everyone, and not oppose one *another* in comparisons of physical ability which are generally disagreeable.

It is also a good idea for the V. G. Club to guide its members to spend their free time outdoors in the mountains, sailing, camping, etc., as a necessary supplement to the weekly sessions of physical education.

— Finally one must be attentive to *measure out physical exercise* of each one, avoiding stiffness and fatigue. This is not always easy and requires great competence on the part of teachers and instructors.

Material data

It is necessary to have a suitable location. It should allow continuity and regularity in work.

One should avoid waste of time and limit displacements. The ideal organization therefore, would be achieved in the *work premises* or near one's home.

A clean, sufficiently spacious, well-ventilated physical education hall equipped with dressing rooms and showers, is indispensable.

We believe it is *absolutely necessary* to organize V. G. *Clubs* or *Sections* as social cells and meeting places.

This is the only way to ensure the continuity of the G. V. movement, interest the gymnasts themselves in the life of the movement, and consequently permit its growth.

The grouping of these clubs into a national state supported *National Federation*,

is likewise necessary in order to act affectively on a social plane.

This is what is being done at the present time in our country thanks to the *F.F.G.E.G.V.* and the *Ministry of YOUTH and Sports*.

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Many obstacles still stand in the way of «gymnastics for everyone», where we have placed our hopes and is one of our principal concerns.

The greatest ones stem from the *lack of interest in physical activity* on the part of most adults, and sometimes from the *failure of public authorities to understand the importance* of such a task.

The lack of interest in adults can undoubtedly be the result of a serious defect in education. For many reasons which we will not take the time to recall here, the School has failed in its essential mission with regard to physical education, that of giving the need and the *taste* for bodily activity.

Indifference or lack of understanding on the part of authorities is obviously linked to what we have just said and is also a result of a *false sports* policy which attaches excessive importance to competitive sports and the training of champions to the detriment of efforts in favour of the mass of potential adult performers.

This problem has been studied several times by us (cf. articles in *L'Homme sain*).

Both obstacles are very serious ones.

If we wish to obtain results — achieve our dream — real educators must unite themselves on a clear and simple plan of battle.

Without opposing competitive sports, which have a human and social role to play, nor professional sport which, as all professions, may have their particular merit, let us henceforth direct our main efforts to the cause of «gymnastics for everyone».

«*Physical education for everyone*», «*mass sports*», *free time physical activities*» (in play grounds, the seaside, the mountains, etc.), these are our true goals.

LOS PROBLEMAS ACTUALES DE LA EDUCACION FISICA Y LA POLIVALENCIA DEL PROFESORADO, EN MEXICO

Por Adolfo P. Acosta. Delegado de la F. I. E. P. en MEXICO.

Mucho se ha discutido sobre la importancia de la Educación Física como disciplina pedagógica en la escuela y como mera práctica voluntaria individual. Desde alguno tiempo nos hemos podido enterar del axioma que representa su magnífica influencia en el proceso evolutivo físico y anímico de nuestros educandos. Sin a veces dar crédito a las obras y pensamientos de antepasados ilustres y de científicos contemporáneos, hablamos sin embargo de la solidez de los principios que la justifican y hacen imperativa su enseñanza en los centros educacionales, a todos, muy particularmente a dos niños.

Estamos seguros que pocos serán los que ignoran su imperiosa necesidad. Sin embargo su aplicación ha sido problemática, aunque continuando teóricamente en los programas que los autores nada hacen para su cumplimiento.

Se la busca cuando existen compromisos deportivos. Pero eso hace suponer que los beneficiarios serán pocos. El incentivo parece ser magnífico y el mismo Gobierno se dispone a cooperar. Habrá entonces que aprovechar la oportunidad. Pero estos compromisos también aceptan la deformación de ciertos principios, pues lo más importante es entonces el deporte (que indudablemente tendrá que sacrificar a los débiles) y no la Educación Física que se destina a todos. Ahora bien son los más débiles que sobre todo necesitan de ella.

De todas maneras y mientras no se acepte otro medio más pedagógico, más cultural, más científico, habrá que conformarnos con una Educación Física orientada hacia el deporte en sí y no al Hombre. Porque no es, en realidad, el deporte quien necesita de la Educación Física, sino la Educación Física que debe integrar el deporte como medio placentero para cumplir ple-

LES PROBLÈMES ACTUELS DE L'ÉDUCATION PHYSIQUE ET LA POLYVALENCE DU PROFESSORAT, AU MEXIQUE

Por Adolfo P. Acosta. Délégué de la F. I. E. P. au MEXIQUE.

On a beaucoup discuté sur l'importance de l'éducation physique comme discipline pédagogique à l'école et comme simple pratique volontaire individuelle. Depuis quelque temps nous avons été informés de l'axiome qui représente son influence magnifique dans le processus évolutif physique et spirituel de nos élèves. Sans croire parfois aux oeuvres et pensées d'illustres ancêtres et d'hommes de science contemporains, nous parlons pourtant de la solidité des principes qui la justifient et rendent impératif son enseignement dans les centres éducatifs, à tous, très particulièrement aux enfants.

Peu de monde ignore sa nécessité impérieuse, nous en sommes sûrs. Cependant son application a été problématique, bien qu'elle continue théoriquement dans les programmes, dont les auteurs ne font rien pour son accomplissement.

On la recherche quand des compromis sportifs existent. Mais cela fait supposer que les bénéficiaires seront en petit nombre. Le stimulant paraît être magnifique et le Gouvernement lui-même est disposé à coopérer. On devra alors profiter de l'opportunité. Mais ces compromis acceptent la déformation de certains principes, car le plus important est alors le sport (qui devra indubitablement sacrifier les faibles) et non l'Éducation Physique qui se destine à tout le monde. Or ce sont les plus faibles qui en ont surtout besoin.

De toutes façons et pendant que l'on n'accepte pas un autre moyen plus pédagogique, plus culturel, plus scientifique, nous devons nous conformer avec une Éducation Physique orientée vers le sport en soi et non vers l'Homme. Parce que, en réalité, ce n'est pas le sport qui a besoin de l'Éducation Physique mais c'est l'Éducation Physique qui doit intégrer le sport comme moyen plaisant

namente su alto cometido eugénico, físico, psicológico y social.

Creemos que la forma de ver a la Educación Física en que totalmente se deforma su valor, está en relación con la preparación cultural de quien o quienes deben suministrarla.

En el deporte lo único resultado útil para la humanidad no es el triunfo en sí, sino la enseñanza moral, física y espiritual que resulta de los medios empleados; sólo así podrá ser útil al Hombre.

Es un pueblo sano, mental y físicamente, lo que necesita la Nación, no solo para el resguardo de la integridad nacional, sino para evitar las grandes sumas presupuestales destinadas a los hospitales en detrimento del trabajo creador.

No podremos arguir que el deporte competitivo sea un mal nacional; el podría ser el resultado de la salud del pueblo. Pero, primero es la Educación Física de todos y que, gracias a ella, podríamos también llegar a la vejez en mejores condiciones físicas o, por lo menos, retardar sus efectos.

Pero quien podrá, práctica y teóricamente, defender estos principios?

Hay quien lo haga en forma esporádica, pero sus ideas son rotundamente aplastadas por quien las confunda con las técnicas deportivas, el pasatiempo de los resultados de las competiciones o con ideales políticos, sindicales y económicos.

Es menester que las nuevas generaciones, inclusive los mismos Gobiernos, obtengan un bagaje de conocimientos que les permitan comprender la Educación Física.

Los alumnos de la enseñanza secundaria deberían ser sujetos, no únicamente a la práctica de la Educación Física, sino también a su teoría que vaya a la par de otras disciplinas que forman el tronco cultural del educando, como las matemáticas, la geografía, etc. Esa teoría comprendería también conocimientos higiénico-profilácticos,

pour accomplir pleinement sa haute mission eugénique, physique, psychologique et sociale.

Nous croyons que la manière de voir l'Éducation Physique, dans laquelle on déforme totalement sa valeur, est en relation avec la préparation culturelle de celui ou de ceux qui doivent la fournir.

Dans le sport le seul résultat utile à l'humanité, n'est pas le triomphe en soi, mais l'enseignement moral, physique et spirituel qui résulte des moyens employés; uniquement de cette façon il pourra être utile à l'Homme.

C'est un peuple sain, moral et physiquement, que la Nation nécessite, non seulement comme garantie de l'intégrité nationale, mais pour éviter les grandes dépenses budgétaires destinées aux hopitaux, au détriment du travail créateur.

Nous ne pouvons arguer que le sport compétitif soit un mal national; il pourrait être le résultat de la santé populaire. Mais en premier lieu il y a l'Éducation Physique de tous et que, grâce a elle, nous pourrions aussi atteindre la vieillesse en des conditions physiques meilleures, ou, tout au moins, retarder ses effets.

Mais qui pourra défendre, théoriquement et pratiquement ces principes?

Il y a ceux qui les défendent d'une façon sporadique, mais leurs idées sont catégoriquement ruinées par ceux qui les confondent avec des techniques sportives, le passe-temps des résultats des compétitions ou avec des idéaux politiques, syndicaux ou économiques.

Il faut que les générations nouvelles, inclusivement les Gouvernements eux mêmes, obtiennent un bagaje de connaissances qui leur permettent de comprendre l'Éducation Physique.

Les élèves de l'enseignement secondaire devraient être assujettis, non seulement à la pratique de l'Éducation Physique, mais aussi à sa théorie, parallèlement aux autres disciplines qui forment le tronc culturel de l'élève, comme les mathématiques, la géographie, etc. Cette théorie comprendrait aussi des connaissances hygiéniques-prophylactiques,

fisiológicos, sociales, aplicados a la Educación Física.

Nuestros alumnos salen de las escuelas sin saber siquiera la definición de la Educación Física y los maestros, a quienes debe inclusive prepararse para su enseñanza, como se les prepara para las demás asignaturas, necesitan más que conocimientos casi exclusivamente deportivos.

Se necesitaría un Curso de 4 años para asimilarlos a los otros maestros lo que haría posible el intercambio de alumnos y maestros con naciones más avanzadas.

El profesor de Educación Física que solo se ocupa de la parte práctica de ciertas técnicas en actividades deportivas populares, no es suficientemente considerado socialmente.

Hay la tendencia administrativa de reducirle los honorarios y alejarlo de funciones directivas donde es reemplazado por funcionarios menos competentes en la materia en causa, pero cuyos estudios son más desenvueltos y alcanzan mayor prestigio.

El actual profesor de Educación Física sin ninguna otra preparación («univalente») puede quedar inutilizado por accidentes a que está expuesto, cuando podría contudo ser aún útil si se hubiese preparado además en otra especialidad que tuviera relación con la Educación Física, por ejemplo la Biología, las Ciencias Naturales, la Higiene o las Lenguas Extranjeras que servirían también para facilitar la consulta de artículos y libros extranjeros, y la colaboración internacional. Esta «polivalencia» está ya en práctica en más de diez *Institutos Superiores de Educación Física de Europa*.

physiologiques, sociales, appliquées à l'Éducation Physique.

Nos élèves quittent les écoles sans même connaître la définition de l'Éducation Physique et les maîtres, auxquels on doit préparer pour son enseignement, comme on les prépare pour les autres matières, ont besoin de plus de connaissances que celles presque exclusivement sportives.

On aurait besoin d'un Cours de 4 ans pour les assimiler aux autres maîtres ce qui rendrait possible la permutation d'élèves et de professeurs avec les nations les plus avancées.

Le professeur d'Éducation Physique qui s'occupe seulement de la partie pratique de certaines techniques dans les activités sportives populaires, n'est pas suffisamment considéré au point de vue social.

Il y a la tendance administrative de réduire ses honoraires et de l'éloigner des fonctions directives où il est remplacé par des fonctionnaires moins compétents dans la matière en cause, mais dont les études sont plus développées et atteignent un plus grand prestige.

L'actuel professeur d'Éducation Physique, sans aucune autre préparation («univalent») peut rester inutilisé par des accidents auxquels il est exposé, quand il pourrait cependant être encore utile s'il avait été préparé aussi dans une autre spécialité ayant des rapports avec l'Éducation Physique, par exemple la Biologie, les Sciences Naturelles, l'Hygiène, les Langues Étrangères qui serviraient également à faciliter la consultation d'articles et livres étrangers et pour la collaboration internationale. Cette «polyvalence» est pratiquée en plus de dix *Instituts Supérieurs d'Éducation Physique de l'Europe*.

Le Bulletin de la F. I. E. P. fera de larges références aux Congrès et Cours Internationaux d'Éducation Physique patronnés par la Fédération, et aux Pays où ils se réalisent.



The F. I. E. P. Bulletin will refer largely to International Congresses and Courses of Physical Education patronized by the Federation, and to the Countries where they take place