

Much light still to be thrown on Gough case

Irish Times Reporter

THERE IS MOUNTING CRITICISM in Dublin sports circles of the Irish Amateur Fencing Federation's allegedly unfair treatment of Laurence Gough (University College, Dublin). Selectors ignored the talented youth when nominating to the Olympic Council of Ireland a team of four to go to Mexico City, and subsequently the executive committee suspended him from the sport for life. The I.A.F.F.'s action has been denounced by the student's mother as "curious."

Mrs. Mairead Gough of 46 Upper Mount street, Dublin, says in a letter to *The Irish Times*: "At the Irish Open competitions on June 1, 2 and 3rd last there was a flagrant violation of Rule 610, as a result of which my son was eliminated.

"The F.I.F. rule states that members of the jury must fulfil their functions with complete impartiality and the most scrupulous attention. A substitute must immediately be found for the president or for any other member of the jury when the organising committee think that for any reason whatever, even without any question of good faith, such action is necessary — either on technical grounds or to maintain the good order of the competition.

"At the Irish Open Laurence Gough objected to the president, who, however, refused to step down. The organising committee did not insist that he should. I was then informed by the chairman of the Irish Amateur Fencing Federation that a council meeting to deal with the controversy could not take place until the beginning of Trinity's academic year, to enable the council members from the Trinity club to attend."

"Yet on August 6th my son was charged, tried and sentenced by this council — without his knowledge and in his absence. He was expelled."

Mrs. Gough queries how it came about that there was no difficulty about calling an urgent council meeting to expel her son but there was a delay in summoning one to investigate his grievances.

Laurence Gough himself has now issued a long statement summarising his complaints.

"According to the Irish Amateur Fencing Federation's own rules I was qualified to go to Mexico," he insists. "I have been informed by the Olympic Council of Ireland that under their charter there can be no interference in the internal affairs of a national sports body.

"A request by me to the Irish

Amateur Fencing Federation to stage Olympic trials has been ignored. So now I am appealing to the public, whose money is being used to send two selectors and two other fencers to Mexico. One of the latter two fencers is son of a member of the Olympic Council of Ireland.

"The Salle Duffy club is strongly represented in the I.A.F.F.'s selection committee, and, of those picked to go to Mexico, three are from Salle Duffy. The fourth man has been a Salle Duffy member for eight years".

Gough claims that the following circular was issued by the Irish Amateur Fencing Federation on April 17th, 1967, as a guide-line for the selection of Ireland's fencing teams (with particular reference to the Mexico Olympics of 1968:

"... Home form alone will not be sufficient basis... Those to be considered should... take part in at least three competitions abroad... (and) obtain a placing in a competition abroad".

Does this mean that to qualify for an international honour one had to have good foreign form from April of last year? No, Gough has now discovered.

"I was informed by the chairman of the I.A.F.F. on Saturday last that one could have qualified as far back as 1964", he says. "This is absolutely ridiculous. Perhaps the Federation is making allowances for those fencers who are captives of past successes".

He adds that as far as he knows only one of the four men named for Mexico secured a place in a competition outside Ireland during the past 17 months.

"I have asked the chairman of the Federation to let me see the official reports from Paris of any foreign competition in which Ireland fencers have been placed during 1967 and 1968", he says. "This request has been refused".

"I now demand a public enquiry where the records of the men going to Mexico can be verified and where I can secure justice".