

STRAIGHT TALK

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Sitting on the Mexico fence

BUSY in Mexico City this week are Irish sportsmen and women who are representing Ireland in the Olympic Games. Among them are four people some of whose credentials for being there could hardly be more doubtful. They are the alleged Irish fencing team.

It appears that fencing in Ireland has been monopolised by a "self-perpetuating clique" as Prionsias Mac Aonghusa called them.

In the past weeks they have withstood challenge after challenge, and by brass-necked boldness have refused to answer the very just claims of Laurence Gough, an Irish fencer, who, it is reliably said, could knock the socks off any of the Mexico minions.

Nineteen-year-old Gough, you see, threatened to upset the fencing appletart by telling the truth. He is the country's best fencer, and was not afraid to speak his mind. He is not in Mexico, however, and if the Irish Amateur fencing Federation have their way, he will never again fence in Ireland. He was suspended and subsequently expelled from the association without trial or notice: this puts paid to his hopes of competing in or for Ireland as this Federation controls the sport in this country.

When a body purports to represent Ireland internationally, the formation of this representation is a cause for public concern, and a body who is responsible for its formation is responsible to the public it represents.

Therefore, I want answers from the fencing bodies to the following questions:

- (1) Why is the whole Olympic team from one club?
- (2) Why did two of the selectors select themselves for the Irish team?

member on the Olympic team, was that place not filled?

(5) Gough's qualifications are superior to at least two of those on the team. Why is he not on that team?

(6) As the Olympic Council subscribes towards the team, why should they wash their hands of this shabby affair?

- (4) Why, having got the long-sought permission for a fifth