

**Speech Given by Alderman Edward M. Burke  
Chicago City Council Meeting  
Wednesday, September 9, 2009**

Mr. President. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Council.

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, wrote - *You will never do anything in this world without **courage**. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor.*

He wrote that sometime between 360 and 320 B.C. By that time the Olympic Games that had both mystified and inspired the Ancient world had already ended after enduring for some four centuries. The Olympics and the Olympiad - the quadrennial interval in which the games were held at Olympus - were just a memory. No one was alive who had ever seen the games. But the legend and the mystery lived-on in the hearts of the Greeks.

So powerful was the ethos of the games that when they were held, as athletes gathered from around the ancient world a truce was observed among every warring nation, known as the *aye-KIR-ee-ahm*. During the Olympics there were no enemies, only competing nations; rival athletes, not enemy troops. Visitors and athletes traveled in peace and safety to the Games. Wars were suspended; legal disputes and the use of capital punishment forbidden during the games.

This morning, I rise in favor of the ordinance before us concerning the 2016 Olympic Host City Agreement and suggest that perhaps we adopt among ourselves a Chicago version of the *aye-KIR-ee-ahm* - the Olympic truce.

Not since Mayor Carter Harrison the 1st (Chicago's first five term mayor) fought to secure the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, has a mayor been more determined; more far-sighted; or more courageous than Mayor Richard M. Daley in pursuing his vision for Chicago.

I stand today, not only to urge the members to unanimously support the 2016 Olympic Ordinance; but we should also honor his courage and his fortitude in moving the City forward to this great moment in our history. But, of course, what else would we expect from a Chicago mayor?

The remarkable thing about monumental events in life is that often they do not appear all that great to those whose vision is more narrow or whose imagination is less alive. It is just a fact of life. It is the on going struggle discovered when the cautious and the trivial engage the adventurous and the courageous.

One hundred and sixteen years ago, how could anyone have imagined the full measure of the 1893 World's Fair's success? Do you think Carter Harrison, Marshall Field or Potter Palmer imagined that 27 million people would come to Chicago? Who could have predicted what would happen when Bertha Palmer revealed the works of the French Impressionists to Chicagoans and visitors to the Fair? Did any one see the modest Art Institute of Chicago, then, becoming, home to, the largest collection of French Impressionists outside of Paris today? Who knew what would unfold when people saw their first light bulb; their first Ferris Wheel, their first moving picture; their first sound recording or their first Vienna hot dog? - or cracker jack or Pabst Blue Ribbon beer/ Juicy Fruit Gum or Shredded Wheat.

The Fair, arguably was the most significant event in **Chicago's** history, from **1893 until today**. Why - because, as history tells us, - *In the great World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, we find the blueprint for modern America.*

The influence of the Exposition extended far beyond the confines of the World's Fair. Trends which originated in Chicago in 1893 and many of the ideas introduced here went on to shape the very landscape of modern America and the world. Its legacy is wide-ranging, from

movements in popular and high culture to changes in the nation's power structure and the lasting influence of commerce and technology. It is impossible to bring 27 million people together and not create a huge difference. At the Fair Americans came together; they engaged each other; they had an experience of America that had never occurred before. They proved that Chicago was more than a "Windy City," as a New York columnist, Charles Anderson Dana, pointed out when Chicago business leaders overwhelmed U.S. officials by the sheer power of their words. And all of this occurred less than 25 years after the Great Fire of 1871 when 3/5 of the Central City was wiped out. That was a real economic development.

Mr. President. Ladies and gentlemen of the Council. The fifth Star is ready. We have sought and shaped fairness and equity for the 2016 Chicago Games. Like our predecessors from more than a century ago, we have the opportunity to act with determination on behalf of Chicago and its people. We have the opportunity to act beyond the limits of our own imaginations; beyond the confines of our partisanship and cynicism, no matter how well-meaning it appears. There is little nobility in skepticism here.

Of course, neither the Fair, nor the 2016 Games could ever come about without the partnership between Chicago government and Chicago business - a public and private sector partnership that galvanized the movement for the fair and in our own time our hopes for the games. But it has always been our unique urban energy that has ignited our Chicago character, then and now.

Were those leaders, then, brighter and more adventurous than us?

In 1890, were they more sophisticated and urbane than us?

Were they more in touch with the spirit of the age than us?

Were they less cynical? Better team players? Did they have a larger sense of ownership of Chicago commerce?

What kind of inventory will history catalogue of us?

Will they unearth the inability to make great plans in us?

Will we be seen as unworthy of an epic international event?

Will we be perceived as parochial, and petty by the forces of world history?

What did they see in 1890 that today some cities of this proposal are blind to?

Mayor Carter Harrison took command of the fair. Who could disagree with that? And Richard M. Daley has taken command of the Games for us. Chicagoans should be grateful that he did.

When the news is announced in Copenhagen in just weeks, I hope that the mayor, Pat Ryan and the delegation will feel the good will and the support of all Chicagoans; and each of us. No matter what the outcome, they have helped us all to feel pride in our city. I hope the dream will be real; I hope that it will come to pass. I hope each one of you will vote in favor of the ordinance and open the door for a great moment in Chicago history, larger than you or I; larger than all of us together. It will be an event commentators will speak of long after our names have been lost to history.

Mr. President, I hope that when the IOC makes the announcement - you will remember the oath that Special Olympians proclaim each time they compete. They are words that were spoken on a hot July day in 1968 – by Special Olympians led by the Late Eunice Shriver, they are words of hope! - *Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.*

Regardless of what happens in Copenhagen Pat Ryan and the remarkable group of professionals he has assembled can take immense pride in what they have accomplished

If this was a Northwestern football game at Welsh Ryan Stadium the ball would be on the one yard line 4<sup>th</sup> and one – Lets send Mayor Daley, Pat Ryan, Lori Healey and their delegation to Copenhagen with a unanimous vote of confidence to cheer them on to get the ball over the goal line.