

STATEMENT OF BERT RANDOLPH SUGAR
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2003

Senator McCain and members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, thank you for inviting me back again to testify...

Since the last time we foregathered to discuss the state of the union of boxing it has continued to be one of disunion, continuing on its merry, committing mistakes and misdeeds. For although boxing is a sport in its own right, it is also a sport in its own wrong.

And the primary culprits are those clowns in clowns' clothing, those sanctioning bodies called "The Alphabets"--shorthand for "The Alphabet Soups," a term I coined as editor of Ring Magazine back in the early '80s to describe organizations like the WBC, the WBA and the IBF, all dedicated to the belief that you can fool too many people too much of the time.

For references, I give you the WBC (without the Henny Youngman punchline: take them, please!) When Roy Jones Jr. announced he would leave the light heavyweight division, vacating his title, to campaign as a heavyweight for the first time, the WBC declared its light heavyweight title vacant and matched the two contenders for what they called a "championship fight"--collecting the necessary sanctioning fees, thank you! And although the fight was won by Graciano Rocchigiani and he was awarded a championship belt--which looked like it was made out of the broken Budweiser bottles

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found on the San Diego Freeway--and was listed in the WBC ratings sheets for several months as their "champion," when Jones returned to the light heavyweight division, the WBC changed their minds and their designation, taking away Rocchigiani's title, claiming it was all, and I quote, a "typographical error."

Then there is the WBA, which issued ratings which belonged in a Lewis Carroll fictional work with fighters leap-frogging over other fighters after they had signed with a certain promoter. When they were met with howls of indignation by other promoters and scathing criticism from the press, they mea culpa'd and changed them, claiming they had been, in their words, the result of "a computer error."

And, finally, there is that third wonderful "Alphabet," the IBF, which, after their head was convicted on several charges, up to and including arrogance, was placed under a government monitor by the court. But that hasn't stopped them. Only recently Tim Smith of the New York Daily News brought to light a "mux-ip" which occurred when a fighter, Sharmba Mitchell, won an "eliminator" bout, having paid the appropriate sanctioning fees for the 12-round championship-length fight, was passed over in their ratings by another fighter, Arturo Gotti, who, not incidentally, had won a 10-round fight without paying sanctioning fees. The reason given by the IBF was--get this!--that the head of the IBF ratings committee and the head of the IBF championship committee had not communicated with one another. And this is an organization under a government monitor!

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Gentlepersons (and I say that because Senators Barbara Boxer and Olympia Snowe are members of this august body), enough is enough is enough! Enough with "typographical errors." Enough with "computer errors." Enough with "non communication."

I remember, lo those many years ago, when my then-young daughter came down the stairs holding a newborn kitten in her hands after the cat had gone into her closet and given birth, saying, "The cat has just fallen apart." Well, today boxing has fallen apart. And this Committee must act, like all those king's men tried to do with Humpty Dumpty, to put it back together again.

And if, as has been said, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, we still need a road map. Here, I hope, is one...

First, as an oversight Committee, you shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the IBF is currently being run by a government monitor. Here you must become guardians of not only law and order, but order itself by monitoring the government monitor to insure that the IBF becomes a model organization. Only in that way can you inspire the necessary confidence in the boxing community that the government's Muhammad Ali Reform Act will be more effective than the government-run IBF is. And that what the Muhammad Ali Bill proposes to do, it will do.

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And, secondly, if those two other "Alphabets," headquartered in Mexico City and Caracas--probably located somewhere above charm and beauty schools--the WBC and the WBA, don't conform to your reforms, then initiate sanctions on these sanctioning bodies. For they come to the U. S. for the same reason Willie Sutton robbed banks, "cause that's where the money is." And when they do, if they don't conform, impound the sanctioning fees they collect from fighters fighting here. Then they, too, will pay more than attention.

To do otherwise and not give the Muhammad Ali Bill teeth means burying your head in the sand. And that can invite a very inviting target for critics.

--Bert Randolph Sugar