

PRESIDENTIAL WOMEN : TWO PORTRAITS



ous and enthusiastic, as they proved at the Games in Calgary, when thousands of volunteers of all ages and from all walks of life welcomed, guided, assisted and served their Olympic guests as if they had been their own.

Mrs Letheren intends to pursue and develop the system of Olympic education in schools set up by the previous president, Mr Roger Jackson, extending it to the entire population. In a century in which information is disseminated so easily, quickly and imperfectly, Mrs Letheren's task will be a difficult one, because she wants the information to be good, effective and beneficial.

Mrs Letheren is convinced that a determined and motivated woman always achieves her objectives. "It is not an easy task to be a woman and to be encouraged to go ahead. I certainly believe that the system still today in sport does not encourage women", she said last June in Barcelona, adding: "You personally have to put the

GETTING THINGS DONE

by *Marie-Hélène Roukhadzé*

When she stood for election to the presidency of the Canadian Olympic Association, Mrs Carol Anne Letheren had two main priorities : to get more Canadians interested in the Olympic Movement, with all that it implies, and to get the association more involved in the international Olympic and Sports Movement.

However, this programme, so simple it might almost seem banal, since it is the aim of virtually every NOC, is not so simple to implement. In this case, mobilizing young people shaken by the recent scandal involving cheating by a Canadian world champion was bound to be far from easy. But the people of Canada are gener-



Mrs Carol Anne Letheren, elected President of the Canadian Olympic Association at the beginning of last year, was co-opted as an IOC member at the 96th Session.

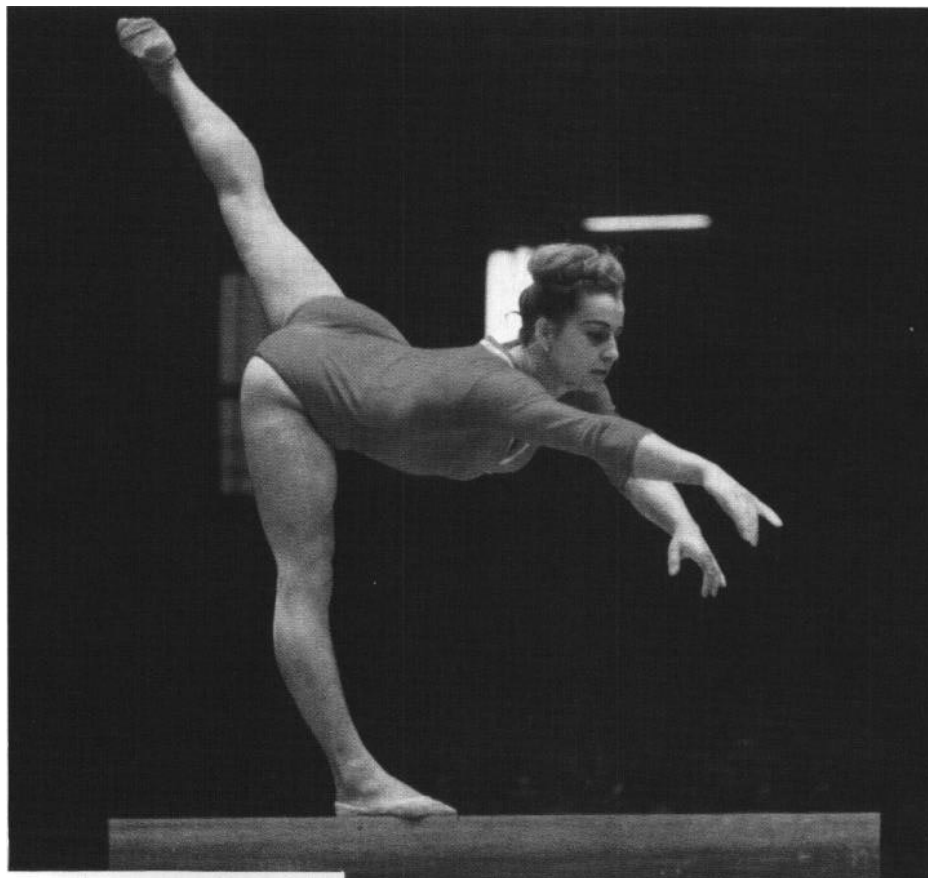
effort in and encourage yourself, but once you have shown that you are confident and that you can do the job, you find the support." The future did not take long to prove her right, as, three months later, she was co-opted member of the IOC in Canada. It now remains for her to pursue her efforts to help the Canadian Olympic Association to play a larger role on the international scene by co-operating with other NOCs and exchanging with them tried and tested programmes which have already borne fruit.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

Suddenly in the news and at the heart of events, Mrs Vera Caslavka, adviser to President Vaclav Havel since January 1990 and

President of the Czech and Slovak NOC since April 1990, shares her life among three spheres. The first is her family: "I want to be a good mother to my children, I want to bring them up to be honest and generous people who will contribute to our country's development", she says eagerly, adding at once: "Under the pressure of the events of 17th November 1989, I have been obliged to accept a political role". Had she vaguely dreamed of playing such a role? Yes, in a way. Picture life as a chessboard over which you pore, trying to work out all the possibilities and their consequences, says Mrs Caslavka, now faced with her second sphere of activity, as adviser to President Havel. She devotes herself body and soul to the task, forgetting her health and glowing with an inextinguishable passion, the desire to complete

Vera Caslavka was an outstanding gymnastics champion before becoming President of the Czechoslovakian NOC.





“A National Olympic Committee wholly independent of the State authorities was set up in April 1990. The decision has been taken but it will take time to build the whole thing up. The crisis of sport in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic is nothing new”, she continues, “people have been talking for years about our lack of international success. But failure in sport is tied up with general failure. Now that the NOC is independent, it will have to find means to survive. It is not easy. Too many people still think as they did under the influence of totalitarianism and don’t know how to take initiatives or to use democracy, which is completely foreign to their way of thinking”. Mrs Caslavka, who confesses that the immensity of her task sometimes seems to be beyond her capacities and her personal strength, immediately adds “but those of us working with President Vaclav Havel are conscientious people with a fighting spirit. We shall not let ourselves be discouraged”.

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successfully whatever she sets out to do. “When I was an athlete, I learned to tap the courage every sportsman or woman needs to succeed. I learned to be a fighter and to accept responsibility for my acts. I also learned to lose a thousand times without losing heart.” A good training which gives any athlete who can do it an invincible force. Thus armed, Mrs Caslavka has practically buried herself in her work as adviser, which covers the social sector, health, youth, sport and education. All the President’s advisers are intermediaries between him and the public; in addition to the myriad problems to be solved, they have to pass information from the grass roots to the top and vice versa. Sport is the “third string” to Mrs Caslavka’s bow. “I regret having to put it in third place, but everyone must understand that the State has to solve economic and social problems first of all. Overnight, we have had to question a whole way of thinking, ideas which are dear to us because they have been with us all our lives. They were instilled into us at school and we respected them. The development of sport depends on how we cope with the legacy of forty years. All sectors are ailing.”