

Norwegian sportswomen move forward

In Norway, women have taken their destiny into their own hands

They have equal rights with men and they are determined

to make the most of them.

The results are convincing and

not only because the government

led by Gro Harlem Bruntland

contains nine women out of a total of nineteen ministers.

Women have been pushing ahead in sport for a long time.

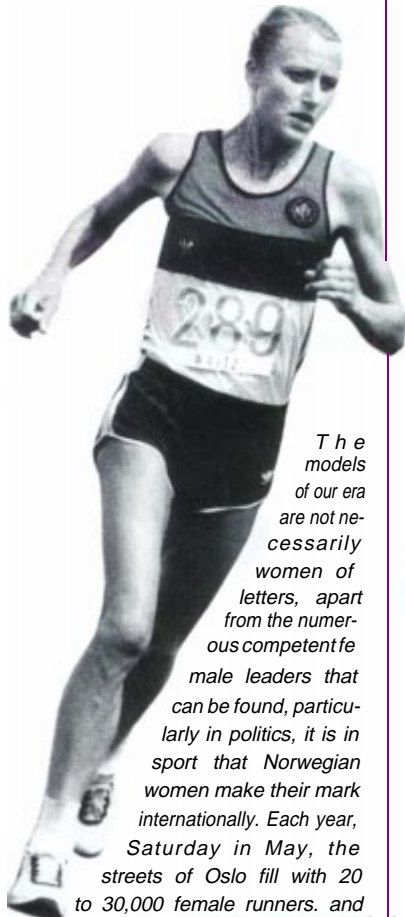


On the occasion of the Games in Lillehammer, the Equal Status Council and the "Forum of Olympic Women, in collaboration with the LOOC, mounted an exhibition on **Women and the Olympic Games from Chamonix to Lillehammer**, with the aim of portraying the sportswomen, Olympic champions and others, who during the Winter Games have contributed to achieving equality for women in sport.

Norwegian women have participated in the Winter Games since they began in

1924, and even before that some ice skaters competed in Antwerp. Since then their numbers have increased considerably. The interest of the exhibition lies in the way sport is put into perspective with the social conditions of the time. It shows what was expected of women at different periods of the century and the barriers they encountered, and highlights how what was unthinkable at one time could become commonplace a few years later. Women had to fight for a place in top sport, as they did for everything else. The exhibition gives the dates of the results they obtained and some of their victories. This succession of smiling and lively portraits, supplemented by the typical commentaries of the era, obliges onlookers to take a salutary step backwards. It helps visitors appreciate the diffi-

**GRETE WALTZ
THE MODEL OF
NORWEGIAN WOMANHOOD**



The models of our era are not necessarily women of letters, apart from the numerous competent female leaders that can be found, particularly in politics, it is in sport that Norwegian women make their mark internationally. Each year, Saturday in May, the streets of Oslo fill with 20 to 30,000 female runners. and in his crowd can be seen Grete Waitz, the marathon queen. She doesn't run to knock a few seconds off her time, but rather to encourage as many Norwegian women as possible to run at least five kilometres. No-one is timed in this women's sports event. The fastest are allowed to start at the front, and probably race against each other, followed by the rest of the pack. In all modesty, Grete Waitz has made it known that she stands by those fighting for equality of the sexes, but because of her sporting achievements this support has had an enormous impact on women's participation in sports in Norway.

culties that existed. and which continue to exist, if not in Norway then elsewhere; difficulties that are specific to women. It also highlights the amount of positive work they have accomplished for sport in the country. Being a woman and an elite athlete has always been a subject of debate, a debate which can re-open at the drop of a hat. The tragic death of the Austrian champion Ulrike Meier during a competition, although it attracted sympathetic remarks, has not escaped calling down judgments on her supposedly unthinking attitude as a young mother.

Seen through this exhibition, much of what has happened over the course of the century may seem strange, or provoke a smile, as if it were something from another planet. But at the time it was serious! The photos and press cuttings are pieces of evidence that deserve to be studied, particularly by young boys and girls. Mentalities have evolved considerably, men's mentalities as well as women's. But an exhibition like this still makes its point, since the old reflexes have not completely disappeared, and reappear regularly with astonishing ferocity.

Images of athletes - and women.

