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The extent of women's involvement in politics in the early post-World War II era has often been minimized, and the gender issues they faced are rarely acknowledged. Although many women returned to domestic roles after the war, many fought the gender related social and political inequalities in society. One of the most successful was India Edwards, head of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee. She convinced President Harry S. Truman to appoint more women to government and political posts than any proceeding president, and also encouraged women to take active roles in politics both at the ballot box and in the Democratic Party.

This thesis focuses on the significance of India Edwards during the Truman administration and examines her success in advancing the status of women. Also, this biography investigates those ideas about women's roles in society and politics

that influenced Edwards' service in the Women's Division.

Although the twentieth century women's rights movement was in a lull, India Edwards worked to expand the influence of women in government. Her efforts within the Democratic National Committee, however, did not go unchallenged by male colleagues. In 1953, she was compelled to resign as head of the Women's Division, which marked both her greatest defeat and the end of an era for Democratic committee women. Thereafter, committee women lacked the power or effectiveness that India Edwards had commanded. Women activists in the mid-1960s, therefore, adopted more radical tactics than those moderate strategies India Edwards had effectively employed to women's causes in an era that was essentially indifferent to women's causes.

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMAN IN THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION: INDIA EDWARDS, 1944 TO 1953

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INTRODUCTION

India Edwards was always a staunch supporter of the Democratic Party; a party that had a tradition of including women in its inner circles that extended beyond women's enfranchisement in 1920. During the 1910s, many Democrats realized the Nineteenth Amendment granting female suffrage would be ratified despite their large opposition to the measure. To regain female partisanship, the Party admitted women into the executive committee in 1919 and provided them with equal representation in the national executive committee in 1920, nearly five years before the Republican Party had done so.[1] Adopted by both parties, the 50-50 plan decreed that women would have equal representation at the state and local levels. This, hwever, was not always practiced by lower Party officials, and even in the inner circles of the national committees, women found they were often ignored and even resented.[2]

In addition to including women in the executive committee, the Democrats were also the first major party to establish a department in their national committee concerned with women voters through the organization of the Women's Bureau in 1916. The Republicans set up their Women's Division three years after the Democratic Party. In

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[1]Press Release, 27 September 1948, Box 38A, File 3, Student Research Files: President Truman's Response to Women's Issues, Harry S. Truman Library (HSTL), Independence, MO; and M. Kent Jennings, "Women in Party Politics," in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Louis A. Tilly Garlin Gurtin (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1990), 223.

[2]Elsie L. George, "The Women Appointees of the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations: A Story of Their Impact and Effectiveness" (Ph.D. diss., American University, Washington, D.C., 1972) 21, 23.

1921, the Women's Bureau of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) was dissolved and subsequently reorganized in 1922 by Emily Newell Blair. It was renamed the Women's Division and by the 1930s became a political power base and means of communication for the female side of the Democratic Party.[3] India Edwards would discover that her power resided more in her position as director of the Women's Division than in her position as vice chairman of the national committee.

Despite the attempts of the Democratic Party to sway voters, in 1920 the Republicans became the first political party to invite women "'into full partnership'" at a national convention. The Democrats followed suit in 1924 by welcoming women, "'to their rightful place by the side of men in the control of the government.'"[4] In 1916, the Republicans also became the first major party to have a female member in Congress, Representative Jeanette Rankin. In a similar vein, the Sheppard-Towner Maternity Aid Act of 1921, which set aside federal money to fund state managed infant and maternity health care, was proposed and passed by a Republican president, Warren G. Harding, and a Republican controlled Congress.[5] In addition, many supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment were Republicans, partly because the measure embraced many Republican ideals, such as liberty and individual opportunity.[6]

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[3]George, 20-21.

[4]Ibid., 18.

[5]Michael E. Parish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1940* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 25.

[6]Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues 1945-1968* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 19.

The Democrats, however, placed women up as candidates for the presidential and vice presidential nominations decades before the Republicans. In 1924, the Democratic party placed three women's names in the nomination for president and one for vice president, and in 1928, they placed another women in the bid for presidency. In 1952, the Party presented India Edwards' name for the vice presidential nomination, although the Republican Party still had not given any of their female leaders that honor.[7] Between 1920 and 1948, the Democrats appointed nearly a third more female delegates and alternates to their national conventions than the Republicans, and had more women on major committees at the national conventions.[8] Because many people had associated the Democrats with opposition to women's right to vote, the Party worked hard to increase women's roles in national politics during the decades following female suffrage.

During the 1920s, the Republicans controlled the executive office, but they appointed few women to prominent positions in government. After Franklin D. Roosevelt's election in 1932, however, more women were appointed to high level government positions. Roosevelt believed women were capable of handling policy-making positions, and he consequently became the first president to appoint a woman to his cabinet. Her selection of Francis Perkins as Secretary of Labor was largely the product of Mary Dewson's efforts. As head of the DNC's Women's Division, Dewson was responsible for motivating female voters and securing high profile female appointments.

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[7]Martin Gruberg, *Women in American Politics: An Assessment and Sourcebook* (Oshkosh, WI: Academia Press, 1968), 61.

[8]George, 96-97.

After Dewson retired in 1937, however, her successors at the Women's Division were not as aggressive and were ineffective at working for women's progress. It was not until 1948, when India Edward was appointed head of the Women's Division, that women regained their close ties to the oval office. And India was the only director to emulate Dewson's success at obtaining important government positions for women.

Although the era after World War II has often been portrayed as a time of indifference to women's status, India Edwards worked successfully to advance qualified women in all branches of government. As head of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, India persuaded President Harry S. Truman to appoint more women to government posts than any proceeding president. She was directly responsible for the appointment of women to ambassadorial posts and federal judgeships. She also influenced the selection of many female firsts, such as Georgia Neese Clark the first woman U.S. Treasurer and Frieda Hennock the first woman member of the Federal Communication Commission. As Truman's closest female advisor, India Edwards wielded a tremendous amount of influence at a time when politics was still considered a man's game. Her success was largely due to her loyalty to both President Harry S. Truman and the Democratic Party, as well as to her persistence and fighting spirit.

CHAPTER 1

INDIA EDWARDS, 1895-1944: A Political Woman in the Making

The oldest of two children, India Walker was born on June 16, 1895, in Nashville, Tennessee. Following a family tradition, India was named after her mother, India Thomas Walker, and her great-aunt, another "India." Because she was only four years old when her parents divorced, Archibald Walker, her alcoholic father, played virtually no role in her life. Raised in a large extended family, India lived with her mother, maternal grandmother, and younger sister in Nashville, and their house was in the same neighborhood as many of her cousins. She grew up in a middle class family with a standard of living that was above the average American family, although they were "far from wealthy."[9] As the older sister, India was frequently held responsible for the actions of her younger sister and also her cousins. She was, therefore, instinctively considered the leader.[10] Being reared as a leader imparted a sense of confidence to India that would prove essential in her political career.

India made "her first appearance on the political scene" while she clung to her mother's hand at a woman's suffrage parade in Nashville. Even though she was young,

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[9]India Edwards, *Pulling No Punches: Memoirs of a Women in Politics* (New York: G.L. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 13, 15, 14.

[10]Peggy Frank, "The Incomparable India," TM by Peggy Frank, Box 2, Publicity File, Papers of India Edwards, HSTL, 1.

she understood the point of the parade.[11] This parade also represented the influence of the mother's ideas on India about women's roles in politics and society.

As a single mother, India Thomas Walker might naturally have been attracted to the second generation of nineteenth century suffragists. Suffragist rhetoric had greatly altered since the days of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, when female suffrage was simply demanded as a basic right of citizenship. After 1890, suffragists did not abandon the argument, but supplemented it by pointing out the nation's need for women voters as both moral and social reformers. Suffragists predicted that women voters would act as effective agents of reform for national and local ills.[12] This moderate stance probably appealed to India Thomas Walker. Although self-reliant and independent, she also believed women belonged in the home, and trained her daughters in housekeeping, even when her family could afford to employ domestic servants.[13]

Despite the anti-suffragists' argument that women would abandon the home once they obtained the vote, suffragists claimed that women voters would not leave the home but enhance it. Although women had extended the boundaries of the home to morally influence and reform society even without the vote, suffragists insisted that the ballot would give women greater opportunity to use their moral superiority to better society and politics. When the Progressive era government implemented education, health, and

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[11]*Current Biography Yearbook*, "India Edwards," ed. Anna Rothe (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1949), 186.

[12]Glenda Riley, *Inventing the American Woman: An Inclusive History*, Vol. 2, *Second Edition: Since 1877* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995), 189-90.

[13]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 19.

welfare policies that had been considered the traditional responsibility of women, suffragists argued that women needed the vote more than ever to voice their views on social policy.[14]

As a woman's advocate, India Edwards would largely exemplify the moderate strategies of the second generation suffragists. She believed that their most constructive course was to work with men and uphold the domesticity of women. In all likelihood, she was influenced by her own mother's second generation suffragist views.

The mother's influence could also be discerned by her daughter's political liberalism and affiliation with the Democratic Party.[15] Though India Thomas Walker spent the first half of her life in the politically conservative South, she disdained southern views on gender and race. During the early twentieth century, most Southern Democrats opposed woman suffrage, and were especially outraged by the proposed "Susan B. Anthony Amendment," as it was known. It contained a clause that conveyed enforcement power to the United States Congress, which conceivably could protect the right of black women to vote. Southern Democrats feared the amendment would lead to federal intervention into all southern electorial processes and would enfranchise blacks, who had been progressively disenfranchised since the end of Reconstruction.[16] India Thomas

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[14]Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *American Historical Review*, 89 (June 1984): 634-35, 638, 640-42.

[15]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 16, 19.

[16]David Morgan, *Suffragists and Democrats: The Politics of Women Suffrage in America* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1972), 75-76.

Walker had always been opposed to Jim Crow, and her daughter consequently also supported racial equality and liberal causes generally.[17]

India Thomas Walker was also a Democrat in a mostly Republican family, and she remained a Democrat against her family's wishes.[18] Even though her convictions about gender and race issues contradicted the Southern Party's stance, as an adult India Edwards followed her mother in unyielding support of and loyalty to the Democratic Party.

As a child, India received little praise from her mother. Instead, her mother taught her to be self-disciplined and independent, and consequently India decided early in life to be honest and forthright always.[19] This resolve came about in part as a result of the many inquiries about her unusual first name. A new Sunday school teacher once asked why she was named India. Weary of this question and attempting to be interesting, she said, "'Because I was born in India.'" She fabricated a life there, mentioning the pet monkey and parrot she had brought back with her. When her grandmother, a strict religious woman, learned about this incident, she declared that India must wash her mouth with soap and drink a large dose of castor oil as punishment. The importance of honesty was thereby ingrained in India.[20]

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[17]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 170.

[18]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 16.

[19]Frank, "The Incomparable India,"1.

[20]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 16.

India's family moved often, residing in Nashville, Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis. When India lived in Chicago and was in elementary school, her mother remarried. Her new stepfather, John Gillespie, loved India "as dearly as he did his own two daughters." India showed her own affections toward her stepfather throughout her adult life by using his surname as her maiden name.[21]

After her family had left Tennessee, India still spent the summers in Nashville and never truly lost her southern background. She spoke with a twang and considered herself a "Southern Belle." With her deep green eyes, brown hair, and slender teenage figure, India attracted many beaux. During her visits to Nashville, she also had a great deal of freedom and often spent her evenings at dances that had "at least four boys to every girl." She also would sneak a cigarette when her aunts were not around. Because India was allowed such personal autonomy, it was no surprise that she considered Nashville home.[22]

India aspired to be a writer, a goal encourage by her high school English teacher. She hoped to leave St. Louis and major in journalism at Columbia University. Expecting her stepfather's permission, she was instead told she was too young and that New York City was too far. His alternative was to that she stay at home and attend Washington University. What he failed to mention was that her family could not afford the cost of Columbia due to recent financial problems. Deciding it would be Columbia or nothing,

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[21]Ibid., 17.

[22]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 14, 18-19, The observation about her twangy voice is from listening to two radio interviews of India, "The Democratic Radio Show, " DNC 1948 campaign and "Crossfire," 25 June 1952, Audio-Visual Department, HSTL. Her physical features are described in *Current Biography* (187) and are obvious from a photograph in Edwards' *Memoirs*.

India never attended college. Instead, she spent the next two years attending luncheons, playing golf, and entering dance contests. Just before World War I, India informed her parents she planned to move to Chicago and find a job. Because her stepfather had recently lost his job, they acquiesced.[23]

India's first job was as a private secretary, but that was meant to be temporary. Despite her lack of a college education, she was determined to become a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. Propelled by ambition, she found her chance during the visit of a friend from St. Louis. He introduced her to the Society Editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, who hired her to moonlight as a freelance reporter receiving $5.00 per assignment. A skillful journalist, she began covering mostly society assignments and writing enough articles to earn between $70.00 and $80.00 in a week.[24] Still unacquainted with Chicago's social elite, she assertively asked people their names at the opera and theater and society events she covered for the newspaper. She eventually quit her secretarial job and began to work solely for the *Trib,* as she and everyone else liked to call it.[25]

Leaving work upon marriage was a common practice among middle-class working women of that generation, and India left the *Tribune* to marry Second Lieutenant Daniel Sharp during World War I.[26] Married on December 22, 1917, India and Daniel moved to New York City, and he was shipped overseas less than two weeks later. Early

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[23]Ibid., 19,21.

[24]*Current Biography*, 186.

[25]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 25-26.

[26]William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 68.

in 1918, India obtained a job as a writer for *Vanity Fair* through family connections and phoned her mother with the news. Two hours later, *Trib* reporter Frank Carson called India and persuaded her to leave New York and return to the newspaper as the new Society Editor. She did not receive letters from her husband throughout the autumn of 1918, but was told by her friends that this was quite common. On January 16, 1919, she received a wire from the War Department that he had been gassed in the previous October and died in December.[27]

India's second husband, Jack Moffett, was also in the military when they first met. He later became a banker. Despite her mother's warnings that Jack had "no soul," she married him in March 1920.[28] This month proved to be important not just for India, but for the progress American women were making to secure the vote.

Less than a year after Congress had passed the woman suffrage amendment, Washington became the thirty-fifth state ratifying it on March 22, 1920. Only one more state ratification was needed for the three-fourths majority to become law.[29] Suffragist hopes centered on India's home state of Tennessee. Both suffragists and anti-suffragists flocked to Nashville, the state capital, to sway legislators in an intense and bitter ratification battle. Suffragists were tense with uncertainty. The Tennessee Senate ratified the amendment on August 13, but in the House of Representative, the measure rested in

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[27]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 28, 30, 34.

[28]Ibid., 35.

[29]Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Roger Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1923), 395-96, 341.

the hands of Harry Burn, the youngest state legislator, whose vote had not been secured by either side. After he received a message from his mother, he voted for ratification. The U.S. Secretary of State promptly proclaimed the Nineteenth Amendment enacted on August 26, 1920.[30]

With the long and difficult suffrage struggle behind them, India and other American women could now vote alongside men in all local and national elections. Women's rights advocates claimed the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment signaled a turning point in the struggle for sexual equality. They believed the vote would give women political leverage, as they would become a cohesive voting bloc. Women activists failed to find any one issue, however, that appealed to nearly all women such as suffrage. Consequently, women during the 1920s voted identically to men, and their low turnout at the polls convinced politicians that they could be indifferent to women as they did not markedly influence elections.[31]

Reconciling marriage and a career was a major dilemma for women in the early twentieth century. When India married for the second time, she eschewed the practice of most wives to quit their jobs and become full-time housewives. Still, India had for a long time been wanting to have a child and had even applied to adopt one. Four years after her marriage to Jack Moffett, India was finally pregnant. When she returned to work after

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[30]Anastasia Sims, "Armageddon in Tennessee: The Final Battle Over the Nineteenth Amendment," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheller (Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995), 335, 346-47.

[31]William Henry Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 29-36.

learning this news, she was so ecstatic that she "told the elevator starter, the lobby guard, the elevator operator and, of course, everyone in the local [newsroom]." She was compelled to leave the *Trib* immediately after learning about her pregnancy, as complications had forced her to spend at least one half of every day in bed. Her departure placed no financial strains on the family, however, as Jack owned a banking house. Her son, named John, was born October 8, 1924. A daughter was born sixteen months later. Following the family tradition, they named their daughter India, although she went by the nickname Cissy.[32]

In the following years, India's marriage began to deteriorate, and they grew more and more distant. India recalled later in life that "walking into a friend's kitchen one evening to find the friend and my husband in close embrace did not improve Jack's and my relationship . . . In fairness I must admit when I look back that I was not the best wife for a man who thought suburban living was great and whose idea of a pleasant evening was to play bridge with another couple." After this incident, India went to Phoenix to get over her asthma, which had afflicted her since the 1930 hay fever season. She also hoped to forget the untrustworthiness of her husband and friend.[33]

When she returned to Chicago in 1931, India was asked to return to the *Chicago Tribune,* and accepted despite Jack's opposition. She realized she could not turn down the job when the country was in the midst of the Great Depression -- after all, banking houses such as Jack's shut down everyday. Within three months of India's returning to

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[32]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 69.

[33]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 70, 36.

the *Tribune*, Jack's banking house was bankrupt, forfeiting both his and his mother's investments. For the next two years, India was the sole breadwinner for her two children, husband, and mother-in-law, and her job enabled them to avoid the impoverished state of many American families during the 1930s. Looking back, India remembered "that FDR's New Deal was not enough. . . I needed a personal as well as a national New Deal."[34] Her New Deal entailed a separation from her husband. In 1933, she forced him to move out with his mother, and she obtained a divorce in 1937. She, however, retained custody of her two children.[35]

Franklin D. Roosevelt's election in 1932 and his pledge of a "New Deal" generated confidence in the American people. India later recalled, "I think that my great interest in politics started with Franklin Roosevelt's first administration."[36] In Roosevelt's first "Hundred Days," Congress was bombarded with legislation proposals aimed at ending the banking crisis, aiding industry and agriculture, and providing Americans with jobs. In Roosevelt's administration, the federal government increased its impact on home and family and wrought a closer relationship between government and the citizen. The New Deal brought forth an unprecedented number of social reforms. And as social work was primarily a woman's occupation, women's opportunities in Washington, D.C. enlarged along with the liberal New Deal programs. A New Deal supporter, India

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[34]Ibid., 71-72.

[35]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 71-72; and *Time*, "National Affairs: Women," 60, no. 5 (4 August 1952):16.

[36]India Edwards, interview by Jerry N. Hess, 16 January 1969, Interview 112, transcript, HSTL, 1.

supported similar liberal programs when she became part of the Harry S. Truman administration.

Many women thought Roosevelt intended to produce a New Deal for them. After all, he was the first president to include a woman in the cabinet. His selection of Francis Perkins as the Secretary of Labor was largely due to the efforts of Mary ("Molly") Dewson, head of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee between 1932 and 1937. In charge of female patronage within the Roosevelt administration, Dewson was directly responsible for high profile women appointments.[37] When India became head of the Women's Division, she emulated Dewson. In fact, India was Dewson's only successor who equaled her achievement at securing women appointments.

Molly Dewson was part of a women's "network" that played an important part in expanding the influence of women in the Roosevelt administration. Comprised of such notable women as First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Secretary of Labor Perkins, and Congresswoman Mary T. Norton, "this network, which had its roots in a generation's common experiences in the women's suffrage movement, Progressive reform movements, and political and social welfare activities in the 1920s, flourished within the experimental climate of the New Deal."[38] These women constantly wrote each other with professional and personal encouragement and guidance and continually built the network by relaying news of any government or political job openings. Francis Perkins, as one example, used

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[37]Susan Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 165, 183.

[38]Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 12-13, 2.

her position to bring women into the Department of Labor and name them to key posts. Her successes included appointing labor activist Rose Schneiderman to the Labor Advisory Board of the National Recovery Administration and Mary LaDame as special assistant to the Secretary of Labor.[39]

As head of the Women's Division, Dewson had many advantages in the 1930s that India Edwards would not have later. In 1933, the Democrats were in power for the first time in twelve years, which meant abundant patronage, and the New Deal began to create many new governmental agencies that relied on social workers, a profession dominated by women. Dewson, therefore, had many more appointments to dispense to woman than Edwards would have. In addition, Roosevelt had had an opportunity to work with many talented women before becoming president. As a result, he approved of their participation in government and politics and appointed more women to top posts than any preceding presidents.[40]

The most important woman in the network next to Molly Dewson was Eleanor Roosevelt, who as First Lady provided women with access to the President. Her most well-known tactic was to seat friends next to him at banquets if they had a problem or project that he could help with. She also served as an inspiration to other women in the network through her active role in politics and her syndicated daily column "My Day."[41]

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[39]Ware, 68, 53.

[40]Ibid., 57-58.

[41]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 10.

Many women from the New Deal women's network continued to be involved in party politics when India Edwards became head of the Women's Division. When Francis Perkins was appointed to the Civil Service Commission during the Truman administration, she also aided India's efforts to promote the Democratic Party by speaking at public events. Also, Emma Guffy Miller, Pennsylvania Democratic National Committeewoman, wrote to India with support and advice between 1932 and 1970. Mary T. Norton, two years after retiring from Congress, even became the chair of the "Democratic Women for India Edwards for Vice-President" committee in 1952.[42]

India Edwards not only worked with some former members of Dewson's network, but she also learned from Dewson and adopted many of her strategies. As head of the Women's Division, both women tended to focus on social welfare and believed elections were won by creating an informed electorate between political campaigns. Edwards, like Dewson, worked hard to elect Democratic candidates and, therefore, placed women's issues second, although she stressed the importance of rewarding women campaign workers. Like Molly Dewson, India Edwards also courted the independent voters, especially women.[43]

But in the 1930s, India worked for a Republican newspaper and could not be active in the Democratic Party. Most of her Democratic colleagues on the newspaper staff feared displaying their political sympathies. By contrast, India "sported a huge Roosevelt

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[42]Mary T. Norton to Democratic Friend, "Democratic Women for India Edwards for Vice-President," Box 3, Vice-Presidency File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[43]Dewson's political ideology and strategies are discussed by Susan Ware in *Beyond Suffrage* (68-72).

button about five inches in diameter during the '32, '36 [and] '40 campaigns." When she was once informed that an article on Eleanor Roosevelt and her picture were to be removed from her feature page, she told the managing editor "remove them and start finding my replacement tomorrow, for I will not be working for the *Trib* any longer."[44] Neither the article nor she were replaced.

India's loyalties placed a strain on her relationship at one point with her future husband, film maker Herbert Threlkeld-Edwards. She first met Herbert during the 1936 election campaign while he was supervising the film activities of the Republican National Committee. Like his family, Herbert was a Republican and asked India to vote for his presidential candidate, Alfred M. Landon. She went to the polls on election day fully intending to follow his wishes. After entering the polling booth, however, she began to weep and remained inside the booth so long that a poll monitor asked if she was sick. "My belief in the principles of the Democratic party and Roosevelt's New Deal were so strong that even to please my lover . . . I could not vote Republican," she later remembered.[45]

In another incident that tested her partisanship, Herbert and India attended a New York opening for his documentary film *Kakan* before the two had married. Herbert was then chief of the international motion picture division for the Department of State. Robert Ripley of "Believe It or Not" was at the opening to help publicize the film. After the showing, Ripley invited a group of people to his apartment for a nightcap. He mixed

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[44]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 67.

[45]Ibid., 76-77.

drinks for everyone and then made a mean-spirited toast, "'Here's to the death of that s-- of a b-- in the White House.'" At this India exclaimed, "'I won't drink to that or touch a drop of your liquor. And how dare you, who make your living out of showing two-headed monsters and such, say a thing like that about our President? I'm leaving your home this moment.'" She stomped out, not knowing if Herbert would follow. He did though, despite the possibility of losing Ripley's backing. And Ripley did publicize Herbert Edwards' film, but not as enthusiastically as Herbert had hoped.[46]

After six years of courtship, India and Herbert were married in June 1942, six months after the U.S. entered World War II. India moved to the Washington, D.C. area, where Herbert lived to be near his film making job in the State Department. India had waited to get married because she wanted her son John to graduate with his friends from his Chicago high school. About five months later, John joined the Air Force on his eighteenth birthday. Cissy did not mind her mother's decision to marry Herbert and move to Washington. The year before India's marriage, Cissy attended boarding school in New Mexico to improve her study habits. In the winter of 1942, however, she moved closer to her mother and attended boarding school in Virginia.[47]

India took a leave of absence from the *Tribune* after her marriage. She decided that it was time to "settle down" and become a housewife.[48] After a few years in Washington, India and Herbert purchased a home, called Arden, near Harwood,

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[46]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 75.

[47]Ibid., 75, 80-81.

[48]Edwards, interview by Hess, HSTL, 2.

Maryland. It was "a lovely old farmhouse" built in 1824. Surrounded by 100 acres dense with aged trees, the house was white and had "a story and a half wide porch" that ran on two sides of the house.[49] In this refuge from the hustle and bustle of Washington D.C., the Edwards enjoyed the benefits of an affluent rural Maryland life.

A year and half after India's marriage, her son John Moffett, an Air Force bombardier, died in a flying accident. India was devastated by the death of her only son and desperately wanted to find some work to occupy her.[50] She was a member of the Women's National Democratic Club, which was "the leading forum for Democratic, Independent and many foreign diplomatic speakers as well as popular members from the media."[51] During the 1930s, the club was an organization outside the regular Party system and served as a communication center for many women active in the New Deal "network," including Eleanor Roosevelt, Molly Dewson, and Francis Perkins.[52] India easily made acquaintances with many of the political elite in Washington, D.C., and the country through the Women's National Democratic Club, but she longed for some meaningful work. A friend suggested that she become a volunteer worker for the Democratic Party. It was not until the 1944 Republican National Convention, however, that she finally felt compelled to do so.[53]

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[49]Lucia Brown, "Country Dream House Is a Tonic . . . so says Democratic Women's Leader." *Washington Post* 11 November 1949, 1(C).

[50]Edwards, interview by Hess, 2.

[51]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 266.

[52]Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 74.

[53]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 87.

India was forty-nine years old when she became actively involved in the Democratic Party, and her view about women's roles in politics had largely been shaped by her past. As a child and young woman, she had witnessed the struggle for female suffrage. Even though she grew up in a generation when women regularly encountered discrimination in politics, she was reared to be confident and independent. As a middle-aged woman, she observed many talented women in government and politics during the Roosevelt administration. Although India believed women should participate in policy-making and hold important government positions, she also believed women should be feminine and domestic. India's most effective tactic to advance women in government and the Democratic Party was to work with men, which she had been accustomed to doing as one of the few women on the *Chicago Tribune*'s staff. She had also gained valuable interpersonal skills as a journalist that facilitated her career as a politician and increased her success in obtaining top posts for women.

Notwithstanding her desire to advance women's causes, India placed the Party's interest before women's issues. She had acquired this stalwart conviction at a young age from her Democratic mother and was unswerving in her party loyalty even when it strained her relationship with her Republican third husband, Herbert Edwards. A supporter of New Deal programs, India worked to continue and expand those programs as part of the Truman administration. Because of her efforts to bolster Truman's Fair Deal and her loyalty to him, she would be his closest female advisor.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE:

India Edward's Rise through the Ranks

India Edwards first became active in politics after listening on radio to the 1944 Republican Convention. She was incensed by Representative Clare Boothe Luce, whose "GI Jim" speech proclaimed that "'the death of every American soldier was a sacrifice upon the altar of Democratic ambitions.'"[53] India believed Luce had no right to try to speak for the thousands of dead sons, including her own son John Moffett, who gave their lives in World War II. Upon hearing this speech, India feverishly paced the room thinking, "Now, I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to volunteer."[54] At 9:00 a.m. the next day, she went to Democratic Party headquarters in Washington and become a volunteer worker for the Democratic National Committee (DNC).[55]

India's first assignment, undertaken at her own expense, was as a volunteer helper at the 1944 Chicago Democratic National Convention. She first met Harry S. Truman at this convention where he was nominated as the Party's vice-presidential candidate. During the campaign, India wrote radio scripts, speeches, and other campaign material for campaign workers and state DNC committees. Shortly before the election, she again was

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[53]"Gal Who Goes Out for What She Wants," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Box 6, Addresses and Statements File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[54]India Edwards, interview by Jerry N. Hess, HSTL, 2.

[55]India Edwards, interview by Joe B. Frantz, 4 February 1969, transcript, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (LBJL), Austin, TX, 4.

introduced to Truman in New York's Biltmore Hotel elevator as: "'The speechwriter who always includes your name in every speech she writes.'" India always ended her speeches with "'reelect Franklin Roosevelt as President and elect Harry Truman as Vice-President.'" Ironically, she was the only person at the DNC throughout the campaign who thought Truman would be the presidential candidate in 1948.[56]

The 1944 convention was important for women's rights, as the delegates adopted planks recommending that both an equal rights amendment (ERA) for women and a resolution protecting equal pay for equal work be submitted to Congress. Although women were already being pushed out of the defense sector and back to their roles as mothers and wives, support for these measures indicated that gratitude existed for women's contributions to the war effort. Such support for the ERA had not been possible at the 1940 Democratic Convention. Many Democrats feared the amendment would jeopardize the protective legislation that had been enacted on women's behalf, as the sex distinctions sustained by these laws would be viewed as discriminatory. First proposed two decades earlier by Alice Paul, head of the National Women's Party, the ERA was still considered by many Democrats as incompatible with liberalism, which advocated that government be deeply involved in the lives of individuals. This was especially true during the New Deal, when reform activity and protective legislation became closely linked with the Democratic Party. As the ERA espoused such ideas as individual opportunity and free enterprise, cornerstones of conservative thought, Republicans tended to be more receptive to the measure than the Democrats. Since the 1920s, the Republican Party also attracted

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[56]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 87, 89, 87.

more business and professional women who were inclined to support the ERA, and the Party endorsed the amendment at both their 1940 and 1944 conventions. Neither party, however, wholeheartedly supported the measure in the 1940s.[57]

Like many notable Democrats, including Eleanor Roosevelt and Francis Perkins, India Edwards was not an ERA advocate.[58] Truman, however, exhibited support for the ERA, when he told Emma Guffy Miller in 1944 that "'I am in sympathy with [the] fight for the Equal Rights Amendment because I think it will improve the standard of living.'"[59] His favorable view was probably a result of his appreciation for women's war work. Truman, as one example, issued the following statement for the 25th anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment: "In the total war through which we have just passed the home front has been no mere phrase, but truly a battlefront where women bore a major part of the struggle."[60]

World War II had created the need for more workers and forced employers to suspend their previous discrimination against women; even married women. Consequently, the female work force expanded by over 50 percent between 1940 and

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[57]Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce, *National Party Platforms 1840-1964*, 3rd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966) 403, 381-389, 393, 412; Harrison, 7, 19, 21; and Joan Hoff, *Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women* (New York: New York University Press, 1991) 209, 212-213.

[58]Harrison, 19, 21; and Edwards to Robert Hannegan, 20 November 1946, Box 2, General Correspondence 1946, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[59]Harrison, 21.

[60]"Statement by the President," 25 August 1945, Box 38A, File 6, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

1945, and women's occupational opportunities increased in highly skilled and highly paid industrial positions, which previously were the exclusive domain of men. When the end of the war appeared at hand in late 1944, women were urged to leave these higher paying "male jobs" to make room for returning soldiers. Women, primarily married women, however, continued to compose a large part of the work force, although many were again relegated to traditional female jobs, which afforded them lower earnings and little advancement.[61] Women's place in society, however, did not at this point appear to be regressing, as both 1944 Party platforms included equal pay and ERA planks.

After the Democratic Convention, party leaders moved the DNC headquarters to New York, which was customary in presidential elections. Asked to remain with the DNC while it operated there, India was assigned to the public relations department of the Women's Division's, where she could now draw from the DNC expense account as opposed to using her own funds. "Working night and day in the 1944 campaign . . . , she played an important part in the Democratic victory that year."[62] Her success as a politician can be attributed in many ways to her years as a newspaper woman. She had an exceptional talent for remembering names and faces and displayed initiative, making split-second decisions as an editor and reporter.[63] As a journalist, she had doubtless stayed abreast of critical political figures, policies, and events. Despite her work with the

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[61]*The Harry S. Truman Encyclopedia*, 1989 ed., s.v. " Women," by Susan M. Hartmann.

[62]Current Biography, 186.

[63]Frank, "Incomparable India," 2, 3.

Tribune, she was unprepared for the biased treatment women received in politics, and described herself "'as innocent as a new-born lamb.'"[64]

During the campaign, India first became aware of how much sex discrimination existed in politics. Many of her speeches during the campaign were written for Belle Roosevelt, the daughter-in-law of President Theodore Roosevelt. Plans had been made for Belle to accompany President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Chicago. As the trip neared, India asked Belle, "if she had been given any schedule or if she was sure she would be with FDR." India realized Belle was going to be replaced by some local Chicago politician; she was "a mere women after all." Belle's presence, however, would gain a great deal of Midwest support for FDR, as she was a relative of Teddy Roosevelt who was a popular figure there.[65] India, therefore, believed Belle's exclusion was both unacceptable and bad politics.[66]

India asked the committee public relations head, Paul Porter, if he was planning for Belle's presence. She tried to call him and dropped by his office, but his secretary told her that he was simply too busy to see her. Finally, she called and told his secretary, "'OK, I'll call Steve Early [FDR's press secretary] at the White House if I do not hear from Mr. Porter in five minutes.'" Three minutes later, Porter called from, "a Turkish bath establishment," and agreed that it was important that FDR appear in Chicago with Belle.

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[64]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 68 and Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok, *Ladies of Courage* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1954), 25.

[65]India Edwards in *Pulling No Punches: Memoirs of a Woman in Politics* (91) claimed that Theodore Roosevelt was popular in the Mid-West.

[66]Ibid., 91.

He promised to call Steve Early immediately to make arrangements.[67] This was just one of many instances when India was willing to be tough when she needed to be. As she once expressed it: "'If I didn't have the crusading spirit, I'd get the hell out and go home.'"[68]

After the 1944 election, India continued to volunteer for the DNC. On January 19, 1945, the day before FDR's inauguration, she was invited to a White House luncheon, which was organized to thank the campaign workers for their loyalty and hard work. This was the first time India visited the White House and the only time she met FDR. Eleanor Roosevelt, or "Mrs. R." as she called her, was also at the luncheon. India had met Mrs. R. several times during the '44 campaign, describing her as "so soft-spoken but so decisive and sagacious politically." India had hoped to take her daughter to meet the President and Mrs. R., but Cissy had gotten ill at the last minute. Cissy bade her mother, "'Go mother. And ask Mrs. R. to send me a kiss.'" When India told Mrs. R. this, "she gathered up the roses from all the tables, put them in my arms, and gently kissed my cheek."[69]

The next month, Mrs. Gladys Tillett, vice-chairman and women's director of the DNC, suggested India Edwards as a possible replacement for Lorena Hickok, who was resigning as executive secretary of the Women's Division.[70] By the spring of 1945, India

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[67]Ibid., 92.

[68]Roosevelt and Hickok, 290.

[69]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 92-93

[70]Gladys Tillett to Robert Hannegan, 28 February 1945, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

knew the DNC would give her a paid position, but thought they would appoint her as editor of *The Democratic Digest*. She was "totally unprepared" for the position offered as executive secretary. India's only hesitancy was that her husband Herbert was a civil servant filmmaker for the State Department. Her fears were assuaged, though, when she found out that this form of nepotism was permissible under the Hatch Act. Neither did she foresee any conflict of interests, for she thought she would operate "behind the scenes" as Hickok had done.[71]

The DNC had had equal representation of men and women within the national committee since 1920.[72] Despite the equal numbers, India quickly discovered that women were considered inferior within the committee. She, for example, tried repeatedly to arrange appointments with the committee chairman Bob Hannegan, but her efforts were stymied by his secretary, who "made it clear that Mr. Hannegan could not be bothered." Without the approval of the chairman, however, the Women's Division was unable to make plans or start any projects. This situation so agitated India that she sent a letter special delivery to his home declaring her resignation and the reasons behind the decision. That night, he called and told her that she, "need not worry . . . that he had no intentions of treating [her] as a second-class citizen." She replied, "'Tell your secretary.'"[73] This was not the last time that India had to deal with an insolent chairman. "Each had to be

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[71]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 94.

[72]Jennings, 223.

[73]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 94-95

educated about women politicians, some to a greater degree than others," as Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok noted. [74]

On April 12, 1945, just as India was bringing a speech to chairman Hannegan's office, his secretary received a call from the White House. FDR had died shortly before 3:30 p.m. The news of FDR's death brought intense grief to the committee office. "Losing FDR was only half the tragedy, they felt; having Truman try to succeed him was the other half." India, however, trudged down the corridor to every office saying, "'Stop behaving like this. Of course we all are heartbroken to lose FDR, but we belittle his memory to doubt that Harry Truman is capable of being a good President. Roosevelt chose him.'"[75] She would continue this blind loyalty for Truman throughout his presidency, and because of her loyalty, she would earn his respect and gain a great amount of political clout for herself.

As one of his first acts as president, Truman announced that the conference to found the United Nations was to take place as planned in late April. Representing *The Democratic Digest*, India went to San Francisco to attend the UN conference and afterwards helped organize a nation-wide tour to publicize its importance. "'It was largely through the public understanding, enthusiasm, and support aroused by such efforts as those exerted under the leadership of Mrs. Tillett and Mrs. Edwards that the charter was so promptly ratified.'"[76]

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[74]Roosevelt and Hickok, 26.

[75]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 92-93.

[76]Current Biography, 186.

As the head of the Women's Division, Gladys Tillett also worked to get more women in government and politics. In July 1945, she asked Truman to have a woman serve as a representative at the United Nations meetings. Truman asked Eleanor Roosevelt the following December to be an American delegate to the first U.N. General Assembly.[77] Tillett was not as successful securing female appointments as India would, because Truman regarded her as part of Roosevelt's team. And between 1945 and 1948, when Tillett served under Truman as the head of the division, Truman made only three Senate-confirmed female appointments.[78]

In the 1946 congressional campaign, the Women's Division adhered to Molly Dewson's conviction that elections were won between campaigns. The Women's Division believed it was the duty of DNC to ensure that Americans understood the administration's goals and accomplishments and would see how the Republicans were working to hinder its efforts. During the campaign, the Women's Division distributed Rainbow Flyers to inform voters -- a practice which Dewson started. Only one-page in length and printed on colored paper, each Rainbow Flyer dealt with a specific political or social issue.[79] India helped design and distribute Rainbow Flyers, and she believed the most effective one during the 1946 campaign dealt with the issue of price controls.

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[77]Gladys Tillett to the President, 3 July 1945, Box 38B, File 14, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[78]*Truman Encyclopedia,* s.v. "Women."

[79]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 102-104.

After World War II, President Truman faced the difficult task of reconverting the American economy from military production to consumer production -- a task he referred to as, "the toughest job in Washington." Truman realized the threat that inflation posed to the post-World War II economy. The market had only a small supply of many items yet consumers, who previously were forced to ration goods, were itching to spend the money they had saved.

During the war, the Office of Price Administration (OPA) was responsible for the controls on prices, but the OPA was set to expire on June 30, 1945. Truman wanted Congress to extend the powers of the OPA to prevent soaring prices. Business and labor, however, did not want these controls to continue, and Congress sent the President a bill that limited the OPA's enforcement powers. Truman vetoed the OPA bill on June 30, and with controls ended, prices, especially those on meat, rose rapidly.[80] Defending the President's veto, the Women's Division distributed Rainbow Flyers that stated "When You Vote on Nov. 5 Remember That It Was the Republicans in the 79th Congress Who Crippled Price Control and Gave the 'Go' Sign on Inflation."[81] Price control was an important issue for the Women's Division, considering that women voters were the nation's primary consumers. Pressured by consumers and businesses, however, the President signed a new and unsatisfactory OPA bill enacted by Congress.[82] This

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[80]Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994) 228-229.

[81]1946 Rainbow Flyer on Price Controls, Box 1, Democratic National Committee - Women's Division File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[82]Ferrell, 229.

campaign, however, would not be the last to use Rainbow Flyers or raise the issue of price controls and its relevence for women.

In addition to working on campaign material, India "'determined early that helping raise the status of women in our party was an important part of [her] duty.'"[83] She claimed that the first time she influenced an appointment was in October 1946, however, this probably occurred on January 9, 1947. India was attending a reception when Senator Arthur Vanderberg's wife, Hazel, brashly asked, "'What do you think of the appointment that will be announced tomorrow?'" Unaware of any appointment, India mumbled that she "thought it was fine." Hazel bragged "'President Truman told Arthur that . . . Marian Martin . . . will be just right as a Federal Communication Commissioner.'" Truman had named only one other woman, Eleanor Roosevelt as U.N. delegate, to an important post. Upon hearing that his only other female appointment was to be a Republican, India became convinced she must prevent the appointment from happening. Before dashing out of the reception, she whispered to her husband to meet her later at her office. First, she called Gladys Tillett and then the DNC treasurer, George Killion, but both believed it was too late to do anything.[84] In desperation, India decided to write Truman a letter telling him that, "Democratic women would be completely discouraged if [Martin] were given this appointment."[85] India's husband picked her up at the DNC headquarters before 10:00

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[83]Georgia Cook Morgan, "India Edwards: Distaff Politician of the Truman Era," *Missouri Historical Review*, vol. 78 no. 3 (1984): 301.

[84]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 97.

[85]India to the President, 9 January 1947, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, Box 38A, File 1, HSTL.

P.M., and they headed for the White House to drop off the letter. After failing to talk the guard into dropping it in the President's mail, she managed in a last attempt to talk him into leaving the letter on the desk of Truman's secretary, Rose Conway.[86]

The next morning, India scanned the newspapers for any appointments that were sent to the Senate. She was delighted to find no mention of Martin's appointment. It was not until July 1948, though, that India would get a Democrat, Frieda Hennock, appointed as the first woman member of the FCC.

India would later encourage Truman to nominate more women to key government posts, and he soon discovered that making female appointments was politically more feasible than addressing other women's issues. Truman came to regret his 1944 letter to Miller supporting the ERA and never again expressed his opinion on legislation dealing with gender. During the first two years of his presidency, women's groups were split between supporters of an equal rights amendment and supporters of protective legislation such as equity pay laws. Fearing the ERA would endanger legislation protecting female workers, the Women's Bureau and female labor organizations were, therefore, averse to it.[87] In April 1945, Truman received a letter from a group of trade union women, who had heard about his letter to Miller. Hoping the rumor was untrue, these women informed him how they "vigorously oppose it."[88] While the Women's Bureau and other women's

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[86]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 97.

[87]Harrison, 9-10.

[88]Trade Union Women to the President, 20 April 1945, Box 38B, File 15, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

groups were working to defeat the ERA, the National Women's Party and other equal rights organizations supported the ratification of the amendment, especially after their victories at the 1944 National Conventions. On September 21, 1945, Truman displayed his new sentiment towards the amendment, when in his daily appointment book he wrote that a meeting with Emma Guffy Miller and other ERA advocates was "a lot of [hooey] about equal rights."[89]

Expressing no public opinions on the two measures, Truman watched as the two factions of women fought amongst themselves. Early in 1946, both houses of Congress voted favorably on the ERA, which encouraged its opponents to step up their efforts to quell the amendment. In June, former DNC Women's Division head Dorothy McAllister asked Truman's Press Secretary Charles Ross to have Congress debate the "Federal Equal Pay Bill" before debating the ERA. She declared that equal pay would "take many Senators 'off the spot' of the controversial equal rights for women issue," while still displaying the Party's commitment to equality.[90] The equal pay bill was not debated first, and the next month a Senate majority voted for the equal rights amendment. The measure failed, however, to obtain the two-thirds majority needed to pass.[91]

The ERA's defeat can not be attributed to the efforts of its opponents or to its supporters but to a desire to maintain motherhood, as the *New York Times* perspicaciously

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[89]The President's Appointments, 21 September 1945, Box 38B, File 12, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[90]Mrs. Thomas F. McAllister to Mr. Ross, 23 June 1946, Box 38B, File 16, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[91]Harrison, 22.

declared.[92] Both Harry Truman and India Edwards expressed views that supported the *Times'* claim. In 1948, Truman was asked by the Women's Bureau to speak at a conference titled "The American Woman, Her Changing Role: Worker, Homemaker, Citizen." In his remarks, he asserted the order should be changed so that "homemaker" was placed first.[93]

Likewise, India claimed that she cherished her role as mother and wife as sincerely as she did her newspaper and political careers, and she consistently portrayed herself as a dedicated housekeeper to the public. In this manner, India legitimized her claims to advance the women's status in public life by implying that women would not necessarily need to leave their homes if they became active in politics. Like the suffragists, she argued that women would enhance home life by expanding their roles to improve public welfare and ensure world peace. And in the *Washington Post*, India professed she was "by nature a homemaker;" a fondness for the traditional homemaking role that was displayed by most American women at this time. [94] After the war in fact, more women were getting married and having more babies than before the war, often many in the desire to return to normal family life. Many families had been separated during the war as husbands, fathers, and sons were sent overseas to fight for their country, while those left behind took up their

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[92]Ibid., 23.

[93]*Truman Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Women."

[94]Brown, *Washington Post*, 1(C).

jobs. Secure and stable marriages and family life, therefore, appeared more attractive after the war to both men and women.[95]

Although the ERA was not passed by Congress, the possibility of its success still lingered. In 1947, opponents of the ERA decided to find an alternative measure favorable to all women's groups. The Bill on the Status of Women prohibited discrimination based on sex but considered any distinctions "justified by differences in physical structure, biological or social function" acceptable. The bill was supposed to promote equal treatment - the goal of the ERA -without relinquishing protective legislation. The bill would also establish a commission to study the status of women and recommend appropriate legislation, but the commission's report would be greatly influenced by its members, who would be chosen by the president and approved by a consevative congress.[96] Uncertainty about what the commision would conclude about women's status prohibited the bill from gaining any substantial backing from either ERA supporters or the Democratic Party's male leaders.

Truman turned to female political appointments, therefore, to appease opposing groups of women on the ERA issues and reward female Party leaders in the process. Also, he could avoid offending any male political leaders, as he had the final say in all appointments and consulted them before agreeing to select a female. Truman discovered that appointing women to prominent places in government and politics was a much more

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[95]Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982) 25, 164-165.

[96]"The Road to Equality," National Commission of the Status of Women in the U.S., Box 38B, File 16, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

convenient and politically advantageous route than supporting such controversial measures as the ERA and equal pay legislation.

In February 1947, India Edwards was promoted to associate director of the women's division of the DNC, although she also began fulfilling the duties of the executive director. The newly appointed executive director, former U.S. Representative Chase Going Woodhouse, decided to take a vacation and charged the bills to her DNC expense account instead of tending to her DNC duties. India, in retrospect, thought Woodhouse was more concerned with getting reelected to Congress than with helping the party. India also had another reason not to like Woodhouse. India heard from Catherine (Kay) Falvey, who later became her chief field worker, that Woodhouse planned to recommend that the Women's Division be dissolved. On January 2, 1948, India wrote the new DNC chairman, Howard McGrath, that:

> The feminine howl that would go up over the country and the political hay the Republicans and Wallace-ites would make of the abolishment of the W.D. [Women's Division] would have repercussions that would be felt next November by us in a most unpleasant way. I am sure. I have some definite plans about how the W.D. should rebuild its organization so as to work effectively this year. . . . The thing now is for you to decide how important the women's vote is and then get the Women's Division in shape to win that vote. . . . If you are satisfied with the present Director . . . I'll bow out gracefully for I cannot work with her. . . . I WANT THE DEMOCRATS TO WIN UNDER YOUR LEADERSHIP.[97]

On the same day, she wrote to McGrath's assistant, Gael Sullivan, asserting that, "I'm so

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[97]Edwards to Howard McGrath, 2 January 1948, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

darn tired and discouraged as of this moment that I'd welcome the chance to stay in the country and forget politics. Could I? I wonder."[98]

McGrath also wanted Woodhouse out of the DNC, but preferred that she resign. Woodhouse would not leave unless she received another position. McGrath asked India to find a new post for Woodhouse, and it was arranged that she would be an economic advisor to the allied military governor of Germany.[99]

On April 20, 1948, India was appointed to replace Woodhouse as executive director. As head of the Women's Division, India now had a powerful political base to facilitate her work on the behalf of women. She also had the support of chairman McGrath. The day after her promotion, she wrote him a letter stating "if ever you feel that you made a mistake you won't have to suggest more than once that I resign." His response was "The only mistake made was the change should have been made sooner."[100]

Between 1944 and 1948, India's political career ascended rapidly from voluntary worker to the executive director of the Women's Division of the DNC. Her rise through the ranks was facilitated by a number of factors. First, her career as a journalist provided her with the interpersonal and literary skills which were essential for a successful career in

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[98]Edwards to Gael Sullivan, 2 January 1949, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[99]Commission on the Bicentenary of the House of Representatives, *Women in Congress, 1917-1990: Chase Going Woodhouse* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1991), 266. In India Edward's *Memoirs* (100), she thought Woodhouse was sent to Germany to encourage German women to participate in politics.

[100]Edwards to Howard McGrath, 21 April 1948, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

politics. Second, she was not only a hard worker but assertive, persistent, and confident (Truman once described her as a "rough-and-tumble politician").[101] Third, she established her loyalty to Truman and the Democratic Party early in her political career, and as head of the Women's Division, she discovered this loyalty aided her effectiveness at advancing women in government.

India also understood the controversial nature of gender issues and, like many women of her generation, refused to call herself a feminist - the word was still tainted with notions of free love and political radicals. Instead, she portrayed herself as a woman who upheld domesticity, which aided her effectiveness as both a politician and an advocate for women. In 1946, she wrote chairman Hannegan a letter which stated, "I am not a feminist and I am not for the Equal Rights Amendment (as written) but I am an advocate of the school of thought that advises against under-estimating the power of a woman."[102] Even in 1946, however, India advocated a, "'full partnership politically, economically, and socially for women," although it was not until later in life that she changed her attitude and supported the ERA. [103] She believed women wanted the "best of both worlds" and that, "'in politics, as in marriage and business, women get pretty much the treatment they are willing to accept.'"[104] Aware of the discrimination that existed in politics, India realized

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[101]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 213.

[102]Edwards to Hannegan, 20 November 1946, Box 2, General Correspondence 1946, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[103]Georgia Cook Morgan, "India Edwards: Distaff Politician of the Truman Era," *Missouri Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 3 (1984) : 295; and Edwards, *Memoirs*, 269.

[104]Gruberg, 36.

that she must apply moderate yet persistent strategies to women's causes -- strategies which were acceptable to President Truman and male party leaders. As head of the Women's Division, she would persuade Truman that female appointments demonstrated the Democratic Party was working for gender equality and would thereby increase Democratic female partisanship.

CHAPTER 3

THE QUEEN MAKER: India as an Advocate for Women

India Edwards immediately exercised her new influence as executive director of the Women's Division. Less than a week after her appointment, she wrote a letter to chairman McGrath requesting four top posts for women. She wanted a woman on the Federal Communications Commission, one as Ambassador to Peru, another as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, and one as Assistant to the White House.[105] Only one of the four posts, however, the FCC, ever came to fruition. As a FCC commissioner, Frieda Hennock the first women to be appointed to the FCC and one of the first major female appointments made during the Truman administration. Her appointment, which was confirmed on June 20, 1948, occurred only two months after India became head of the Women's Division.[106] Claiming that women were tired of being "political stepchildren," India felt that female appointments could be used as a weapon against the Republicans to attain women's votes.[107] In early July 1948, she publicly announced that the goal of the Women's Division was to bring out the women's vote, especially the votes of independent women.[108] Although she encouraged women to take a more active roles in politics, India

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[105]Edwards to McGrath, April 4, 1948, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers HSTL.

[106]George, 264.

[107]Edwards Papers, Box 6, Addresses and Statements File, HSTL.

[108]Current Biography, 187.

did not challenge traditional gender roles. Instead, she developed innovative political techniques to reach women voters, which appealed to their traditional roles as wives and mothers. As she once stated, "The place of many women, especially mothers with young children, may still be in the home, but women's place on election day is at the polls."[109] Also, India believed women, as homemakers, were most concerned with "peace, price[s], and a place to live," and in 1948, she focused primarily on the Republican indifference to price controls.[110]

Campaigning against the Republicans, she became aware of her public speaking skills. She gave an opening night speech on July 12 at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. Jam packed with delegates and with no air-conditioning, the convention hall was reached a sweltering 93 degrees.[111] This was India's first televised national political convention and her first major address. Undoubtably, she had stage fright.

Designed to appeal to women voters, her speech tackled the issue of high prices. Standing firmly before the delegates at a height of 5 ft. 7 in., India wore one of her many famous hats, which she often created herself. India immediately announced that her speech would address the "state of the American pocketbook." From a large hat box, she released a balloon and said, "So the Republicans loosened price controls, just as I am

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[109]Edwards, "Women's Role in Politics," *The Butcher Workman*, Box 38A, File 9, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[110]Report by India Edwards, 20 October 1948, Box 38A, File 1, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[111]David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) 636.

loosing the strings on this box. . . . Now you see what happened when the lid on prices was lifted. Prices flew up - sky high."[112] From a grocery bag, she jerked out a slab of beef to illustrate soaring prices. Waving the steak, she "cited its 1948 price of a $1.10 a pound in contrast to its 1946 price of 46 cents."[113] Acording to India, the crowd was energized by her speech and the photographers yelled so often for "just one more" picture that India thought the steak must have cooked under those television lights.[114] India afterwards proceeded to pull various other grocery items from her bag and also brought a young girl on stage to compare the price of her shoes in 1946 to its price in 1948. At the end of her speech, she asserted, "As a Housewife and mother, I appeal to all American women to join together to bring down the cost of living. You can do it! Register. Vote. Elect Democrats."[115]

In a program known as her "housewives-for-Truman" campaign, India employed traveling trailers, automobiles, and station wagons to demonstrate the impact inflation had on household items. The "trailers" traveled through New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Illinois, Maryland, and Michigan, and were usually escorted by the local police. Her field workers often bought groceries in the local community and compared the current prices to the prices in June 1946 -- two weeks before price controls ended. Paul Fitz

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[112]Edgar C. Brown, ed., *Democracy at Work: Official Report of the Democratic National Convention* (Philadelphia: Local Democratic Committee of Pennsylvania, 1948), 49.

[113]Current Biography, 187.

[114]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 118.

[115]Brown, 54.

Patrick, New York Democratic state committee chairman, told India, "You really should hear the 'raves' it gets from our county chairmen."[116]

In addition to her "housewives-for-Truman" campaign, India helped design the Democratic Record Show, which aired in the afternoon on ABC radio every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for the four weeks before election day.[117] These half-hour broadcasts began with the "Missouri Waltz" and played other music throughout the program. The broadcast starred a prominent Democratic woman, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, former head of the Negro Division of the National Youth Administration, FCC Commissioner Frieda Hennock, and U.S. Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas.[118] Each show delivered a "political wallop" to demonstrate the poor record of the 80th Republican controlled Congress. As one example, Nebraska Republican Senator Kenneth S. Wherry, was quoted in the show for boasting, "'I'm the fellow that knocked out meat controls.'"[119] The show's success was attested by *Variety* magazine that wrote, "'The Democrats may not be matching the Republican air-time coin, but they came up Monday with the most novel radio pitch in election campaign history.'"[120]

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[116]Report by India Edwards, 9 November 1948, Box 2, Housewives for Truman File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[117]Report by India Edwards, 20 October 1948, Box 2, Housewives for Truman File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[118]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 117.

[119]Jack Redding, *Inside the Democratic Party* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1958), 239-240.

[120]Report by India Edwards, 9 November 1948, Box 2, Housewives for Truman File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

The Democratic Radio Show and "housewives for Truman" campaign were creative programs designed to attract housewives, who were plagued by such problems as inflation and housing shortages. By urging women to vote, India encouraged women to expand their participation in politics. As a politician, however, India realized the limited nature of women's political power and did not identify herself as a feminist. She knew she could not discuss such controversial women's issues as the ERA, and instead, she designed programs which placed women in the home. In the process, she accommodated the male members of the Party and gained substantial support from them in her attempts to place women in high government offices.

During the 1948 campaign, polls indicated that Truman would lose the election. He faced a formidable Republican candidate, Thomas E. Dewey, and the Democratic Party had lost leaders from the right and left before the national convention had even commenced. Progressive Party candidate Henry A. Wallace had attracted Democrats from the far left, while many respectable Party leaders were attempting to draft General Dwight Eisenhower as their presidential candidate.[121] Also, conservative southern Democrats had threatened to bolt from the Party, as Truman supported many civil rights measures. When the national convention adopted a civil rights plank, some southern Party leaders responded by forming their own party, called the "Dixiecrats," and nominated South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond as their presidential candidate.[122] Despite

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[121]Robert Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman*, 1945-1948 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 388.

[122]McCullough, 695.

Truman's slim chances for winning, India continued her unfailing support, and her loyalty was a rare commodity to Truman with so many Party leaders deserting him during the election.

India had followed Truman's lead in choosing the issue of price controls. During the 1948 campaign, Truman's political strategy reflected to a large extent a memoranda originated by James H. Rowe, Jr., a well-known Washington lawyer -- a memoranda which Clifford Clark has often been credited for initiating. The memo urged Truman to focus on voters in western and farm states and attract the labor and minority vote. Rowe also suggested that Truman denounce the Republicans, especially the Republican controlled 80th Congress, for their inaction on domestic issues such as inflation, housing, and public education.[123] During the Democratic convention, Truman announced his intention to call Congress into a special session to address a wide range of domestic issues, including his anti-inflation programs. In his nomination acceptance, he declared the Republicans had endorsed a platform at their convention which included, "'a lot of things I have been asking them to do that they have refused to do when they had the power."[124] Also, Truman identified himself as a strong liberal who sought to extend and expand the social and economic programs of the New Deal, which was later dubbed the "Fair Deal."[125]

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[123]Ibid., 590-91.

[124]Susan M. Hartmann, *Truman and the 80th Congress* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971), 194.

[125]Ferrell, 275.

India supported Truman's liberal Fair Deal agenda and followed his campaign strategy in her efforts to sway women voters. Committee chairman McGrath was not as optimistic, and he told India, "'Everybody knows that Truman doesn't stand much chance of being elected, . . . so you're foolish to be killing yourself the way you are.'"[126] Although others thought she was crazy to support the President, she knew instinctively that Truman would be elected. Her travels on the Whistle Stop Campaign Train only further convinced her, for she was absolutely amazed and heartened by the large cheering crowds that showed up at each stop.

Truman's railroad tour commenced on September 17, 1948 and ran sixteen-days. He gave 100 speeches while traveling some 9,500 miles. Three more Whistle Stop tours followed, with the final train trip ending on October 31 in Independence, Missouri.[127] Occasionally, India gave a five-minute speech before the President appeared on the platform.[128] India was also charged with hosting the female guests who would ride to the next stop or ride through their state. On a typical day, she was busy from 6:00 a.m. to midnight entertaining guests, giving speeches, and dashing through the last eight rail cars to her guests and the press. In addition to her duties on the train, she also had to fly back East occasionally to attend to her duties as executive director of the Women's Division. Appearing exhausted one morning, she asked the President's doctor for some "soda

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[126]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 115.

[127]William Bray, "Recollections of the 1948 Campaign," Box 25, File 1, Student Research Files: 1948 Presidential Campaign, HSTL.

[128]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 120.

mints" to cure her indigestion. He responded, "'No mints for you. I've . . . wondered how long you could stand the pace you have set for yourself.'" He prescribed a large dose of Brandy and a day of complete rest. She slept from San Diego to Phoenix. The next morning the President warned, "'Take it easier from now on. We're only half through the campaign.'"[129]

During the train trip, India also persuaded the President to give a radio address for Democratic Women's Day, the most important fund raising day for Democratic women. The Democratic Women's Day also marked the anniversary of women's admission on September 27, 1919 into the executive committee of the Party, which was before the Republican National Committee admitted women and a year before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.[130] Introduced by India, the President made his speech as the train neared Los Angeles. Although he acknowledged women's advancement in public life, the speech was primarily addressed to housewives and their anxiety over high prices.[131]

One morning during the Whistle Stop tour, Truman invited India to join him for breakfast to demonstrate his respect for India's persistence and fighting spirit. The Trumans occupied a small car at the back of the train, which was not plush accommodation by any means. Their car would have been filled by this time with the

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[129]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 121, 112.

[130]Jennings, 223.

[131]Press Release, 27 September 1948, Box 38A, File 3, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

flowers and gifts that were presented to the President at each stop.[132] India expected to find Truman's car full of politicians and affluent community leaders, but found that even his daughter Margaret was absent. Truman and his wife Bess, who he liked to call 'the Boss,' were pleased to have India join them. At the end of the meal, the President confided in India that, "'Sometimes I think there are only two people in the whole United States who really think I am going to be elected and both of them are at this table. But the Boss is not one of them.'"[133] India confidently replied, "'That's enough.'"[134]

As election time grew near, India was overcome by tension, especially on election night. That night the campaign workers held a "Victory Party" at Baltimore Hotel in New York. India described the celebration as more like a "wake," since the election results indicted a close race. When Ohio went for Truman, India exclaimed, "Now, we're in." Full of skepticism, Jim Farly, who had been FDR's advisor, yelled, "It's too late, it's too late."[135] Around 11:00 p.m., Molly Dewson, the former head of the Women's Division, approached India and whispered, "'I know you cannot be as confident as you appear, but you are a good sport and I admire you for it.'"[136] Jack Redding, head of the Public Relations division of the DNC, would later recall that India was "almost incoherent" and

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[132]William Bray, "1948 Campaign," 3.

[133]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 7.

[134]Joan Cook, "India Edwards Dies; Advocate of Women in Politics Was 94," *New York Times*, 17 January 1990, B10.

[135]Edwards, interview by Hess, HSTL, 79.

[136]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 100.

with good reason[137] The day before the election, the odds were still against Truman. The Gallup Poll predicted Dewey would win by 49.5 percent of the popular vote while Truman would scrape up only 44.5 percent.[138]

India did not sleep that night and was depleted by noon the next day when the Republicans conceded Truman's victory.[139] Upon hearing the Republican's announcement, committee chairman McGrath called the President and said, "'Congratulations, Mr. President. But before I talk to you I want to let a person who has been certain all along that you would be elected and who has worked very hard in the campaign, speak to you. Here she is.'" India was completely surprised and shaken as McGrath handed her the phone. In a feeble voice she said, "'Dear Mr. President," and burst into tears.[140] Giving her the opportunity to speak first was one of the greatest tributes that a fellow male politician could extend to his female counterpart.

Credit for Truman's election has been attributed to many different groups, primarily labor and minorities. According to newspaper reporter Frank Sweeney, the credit also belonged t American women, particularly the Women's Division of the DNC.[141]

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[137]Redding, 23.

[138]*Emporia Gazette*, "Reveals Why the Gallup Poll Turned Bad Guess," 3 November 1948.

[139]Edwards, interview by Hess, HSTL, 80.

[140]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 110.

[141]Frank Sweeney, "Women in Washington Spotlight," General Correspondence 1949, File 2, Edwards papers, HSTL.

After all, women had a million and a half more potential votes than men in 1948.[142] When the polling ended in Mid-October, however, women voters indicated they favored Dewey as their candidate by 48%, Truman by only 36.5%, and Wallace by 5%, which left 10% of American women undecided.[143] Polling ceased while many Women's Division programs were still in progress, such as the "housewives-for-Truman" and the "Democratic Radio Show." On election day, many women decided not to vote. In fact, 45% of women either did not vote or voted for third party candidates. The Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan found that 29% of women voted for Truman and only 26% voted for Dewey; a drop of 12% from the last pre-election poll.[144] Considering Truman's close election, India's campaign techniques appeared successful at persuading at least some women, primarily Republican women, into voting for him.

India certainly believed her campaign efforts had an effect on American women and stated, "I believe that women of the country . . . played an important part in this election. I know that Chairman McGrath agrees with me that most of the credit goes to President Truman, but we women feel we play[ed] a large part in electing him."[145] The President also expressed similar views. Shortly after the election, some of India's female

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[142]Press Release, 27 September 1948, Box 38A, File 3, President's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[143]Stacy Van Der Tuuk Benson, "India Edwards and American Women in Politics 1940-1977" (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1995) 46.

[144]Ann Arbor, "Did Women Elect Eisenhower?" *U.S. News and World Report*, 8 May 1953, 45.

[145]1948 Press Conferences, Box 38A, File 1, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

friends such as First Lady Bess Truman and her daughter Margaret Truman gave a reception for her. One guest, however, was quite a surprise and joy to all. The President "crashed" the reception from a side door of the Carlton Hotel and gave a short speech giving women credit for helping him get elected.[146]

India continued to support Truman when he presented the Brannan farm plan and his health insurance plan to Congress in April 1949. Although the word "socialism" was flung at many of Truman's Fair Deal programs, India stood by his side by writing and speaking about his programs. [147] In a press release, she stated, "[Women] have heard wild stories attacking the health insurance program as socialized medicine, . . . [and that] it would bankrupt the nation. Of course this is silly." Under her supervision, the Women's Division's adopted the President's agenda as part of its between election campaigning, because she believed that, "President Truman's Fair Deal program vitally concerns women."[148] India continued to support his programs even though the DNC chairman told her, "'Stop talking about the President's health plan. Don't say another word about it.'"[149] In return, Truman became a valuable ally in her efforts to place women in high offices.

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[146]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 126.

[147]Ibid., 129-30.

[148]DNC Press Release, 2 July 1949, Box 3, Press Releases File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[149]Edwards, interview by Hess, HSTL, 38.

Presenting a person's name for nomination can be a difficult and complicated process, and much painstaking work is involved in securing a qualified candidate. India had an advantage, however, as Truman's closest female advisor, and her success was to a large extent due to her loyalty and belief in him. A second advantage was the network she organized which consisted of "women already in government, hostesses, reporters, secretaries and friends, who relayed any hints of job openings."[150]

When a vacancy arose, India first tried to find out if a woman was willing to consider the job. Instead of just sending a list of women to the President, as her predecessor Gladys Tillett had done, India tried to find a well qualified woman who was perfectly matched for the job. This proved to be a successful tactic. Only three women had been appointed to important senate-confirmed posts before India became executive director as compared to twelve during her tenure.[151] Truman did not know many professional women and did not have the time to find a woman who was best suited for a job opening. India, therefore, did the background work for him by keeping a list of qualified women whom she categorized "as social worker, diplomat, administrator, or other governmental positions."[152]

When a name was presented to Truman, his first step was usually to consult the man that the woman nominee would be working for and make certain he could work with a female. In 1949, when India heard of a Supreme Court vacancy, she asked the President

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[150]Morgan, 302.

[151]Harrison, 54.

[152]Morgan, 302.

if he would consider Judge Florence Allen of Ohio. After looking into the matter, he informed her that Chief Justice Fred Vinson and the other justices were not willing to work with a woman. As the President explained: "'The justices don't want a woman. They say they couldn't sit around with their robes off and their feet up and discuss their problems.'"[153]

Besides checking with co-workers, India also cleareed a nominee's name with the cabinet and the chairman and vice-chairman of the DNC before it was sent to the Senate. Sometimes India would have to get Truman to override the unfavorable opinions of certain cabinet members. Her nominees were always educated, capable, and endorsed either by the U.S. Senator of their own state or by their state DNC committee head. India often had to "give a little shove" to get the backing she needed. When contacting anyone such as government and Party officials, who could affect her nominee's success, she acted tactfully, aggressively, or patiently depending on the personality and views of the individual she was working with.[154]

The process of securing a female appointment occasionally took a long time, as was the case with one of the two key female diplomatic appointees. In January 1949, Eugenie Anderson first expressed her interest to India in the post of U.S. Ambassador to Denmark. Following India's suggestion, Anderson immediately went to Washington D.C. to meet with President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson to discuss her

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[153]Harrison, 56-57.

[154]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 171-72, 186-87.

qualifications.[155] The President, however, did not place her name for nomination until mid-October 1949.[156] The appointment process for Pearle Mesta selection as Minister to Luxemburg, however, was not as lengthy, although her notoriety as a great party thrower made many people wonder if she was well-suited for a diplomatic post.[157] Some people have even speculated that she was named as result of her large contributions to the Party.[158] In a letter to India, however, Truman expressed his satisfaction with both these appointments when he wrote, "No mistake was made when they [Eugenie Anderson and Pearle Mesta] were appointed."[159]

India was regularly on the hunt for job vacancies. Looking back, she recalled, "'Sometimes I felt like a ghoul. I'd read the obits, and as soon as a man died, I'd rush over to the White House and suggest a woman to replace him.'"[160] This was exactly how India got the first woman, Georgia Neese Clark, appointed as the Treasurer of the United States.

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[155]Eugenie Anderson to Edwards, 10 January 1949, Box 2, Correspondence, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[156]Peggy Lamson, *Few Are Chosen: American Women in Political Life Today* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), 173.

[157]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 172-173

[158]Lamson, 170.

[159]Truman to Edwards, 31 July 1950, Box 38A, File 6, Truman's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[160]Cook, *New York Times*, B10.

One June morning in 1949, India read about the accidental death of U.S. Treasurer William A. Julian. Upon reading this, she went directly to the White House to ask the President if he would consider a woman for this position. He said that she must have an understanding of banking and that the Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snyder must also accept her. Mrs. Clark was the national committeewoman for Kansas and was also a banker. Both Truman and Snyder were pleased with her credentials.[161]

The President asked India if she would call Clark about this prestigious honor. When India called, she asked Clark if she were sitting. When Clark responded "no," India said, "'Well, sit down before I talk to you, for you are going to be shocked almost to death.'" Then India told her that she was selected to serve as the U.S. Treasurer.[162] Although Clark was overwhelmed and overjoyed by this prospect, she was still hesitant. "'First I'll have to call and clear it with [the state committeeman],'" Clark said. "'Nonsense," India responded, "would he call you?'"[163]

When, on October 14, 1949, India heard that the President was to send a list of twenty-seven judges to the Senate the next day; a list which contained not one woman nominee, she spun into action. That night, she sent a letter to Truman, the new DNC chairman Bill Boyle, and Attorney General Howard McGrath. She told McGrath, "I could not sleep tonight if I felt that I had not done everything I could to have at least one woman

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[161]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 187.

[162]Ibid., 187.

[163]Lamson, 173.

among the twenty-seven."[164] India also sent a letter to Don Dawson, a member of the White House staff. Dawson, who was in charge of patronage, was a "great ally" to India.[165] Her letter in part read, "I do know I am right to predict that there will be a bad reaction to twenty-seven new judges and not one a woman."[166] Her persistence paid off. The next day Burnita Shelton Matthews' name was among the list of nominees, and the Senate confirmed her appointment on October 19, 1949.

Most appointments went smoothly, such as Georgia Neese Clark's, but sometimes dirt was flung. According to India, one of the worst attacks occurred when she suggested Dr. Kathryn McHale as one of the three members for the Subversive Activities Control Board in 1950. When McHale had not been confirmed with the two men from the list of nominees, the White House repeatedly inquired into the holdup. Finally, Democratic Senator Pat McCarren told the President to withdraw her name; she would not be confirmed without hearings which would reveal she was a lesbian. With the onset of the Cold War, attacks against homosexuals became closely linked to the anti-Communist hysteria that gripped the nation. Although McHale was not a lesbian, the accusation against her represented the "marked sexual overtones" that accompanied the rise of the Second Red Scare. Women were expected more than ever after World War II to adhere to the norms of white middle class society by either working in traditional female jobs or

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[164]Edwards to McGrath, 14 October 1949, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[165]Edwards, interview by Hess, HSTL, 66.

[166]Edwards to Don Dawson, 14 October 1949, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

remaining in the home.[167] McHale, as a single woman and college professor, did not conform to the appropriate roles for women.

Truman decided to find out if McHale wanted her name withdrawn, and asked India to talk to her.[168] India informed Dr. McHale about the accusation and the consequences of her decision. If McHale withdrew her name, it would appear she was trying to conceal she was indeed a lesbian. If she fought the indictment, she could have her reputation forever damaged. She asked India, "'Does the President wish to withdraw my name?'" "'No'" India responded, "'he does not unless you want him to . . . he will stand by you . . . Do you want to take time to make a decision?'" McHale promptly answered, "'No, I can make that decision now . . . I will fight such a vicious lie with all the strength that I have.'" In the end, the Senate conducted no public hearing, and confirmed McHale's appointment to the board.[169]

India's effort at getting women into important government and political positions was so well recognized that she was often referred to as Washington's "Queen maker."[170] Writing about India's success at advancing women, two contemporaries noted:

> Because of her, Harry S. Truman has appointed more women to top jobs than any other [preceding] president: nineteen in key national posts, 200 others as delegates, alternates, or advisors to international conferences,

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[167]Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 244.

[168]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 189-90.

[169]Ibid.

[170]Tris Coffin, "India Edwards: Queen maker of Washington," *Coronet,* April 1951, 124-128.

Eugenie Anderson as ambassador of Denmark, Georgia Neese Clark as Treasurer of the U.S., Frieda Hennock, member of the Federal Communications Commission, and five women Federal Judges.[sic][171]

Although Truman's total record on senate-confirmed female appointments outstripped President Franklin D. Roosevelt's appointments, Truman's appointments of women who were the "first" to occupy that post were only nine compared to eleven during FDR's administration.[172] In office for twelve years while Truman was in office only seven years, FDR consequently had more opportunities to select women appointees. As the first Democratic president in twelve years, FDR had more appointments to dispense. Also, his New Deal programs created new government agencies that relied heavily on social workers, a profession dominated by women.[173]

India was not only concerned with getting more women appointed to high government offices, but also worked to end discrimination against women. In 1950, she wrote Truman about the exclusion of women in the White House Correspondents Association from the association dinner and asked that he look into it.[174] A year later, she informed the President about the State Department's and defense agencies' "males only" policy when they sought civil servants such as historians and political scientists, and she

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[171]Morgan, 305.

[172]Harrison, 58.

[173]Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 57-56.

[174]Edwards to the President, 2 February 1950, General Correspondence, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

asked, "Don't you think that something should be done to do away with such unfair discrimination, especially at this time?"[175]

Although India worked on women's behalf, she maintained that her most important role was to ensure that Democratic candidates got elected - especially when certain Republicans, particularly Senator Joseph McCarthy, began to engage in malicious and corrupt campaign practices. Within India's own senatorial district, Democratic incumbent Millard E. Tydings was running against the Republican candidate John Marshall Butler in the 1950 election. The previous spring and summer, Tydings headed a committee which investigated McCarthy's accusations that Communists had infiltrated the State Department. The committee concluded that McCarthy had committed a "'fraud and a hoax . . . on the Senate,'" and his charges, "'represent[ed] perhaps the most nefarious campaign of half-truths and untruths in the history of this republic.'" McCarthy decided to take revenge on Tydings by aiding Butler's campaign. McCarthy's staff engaged in a "'despicable 'backstreet' type of campaign,'" and in one instance handed out a "four-paged tabloid" with a altered photograph of Tydings standing next to Kansan Earl Browder, the former head of the Communist party. Tydings had never met Browder, and the photo was really two separate photographs fused together.[176]

After Butler's victory, Tydings filed a complaint with the Senate, and India encouraged Senator Clinton P. Anderson to propose an investigation of Butler's campaign

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[175]Edwards to the President, 15 January 1951, General Correspondence, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[176]David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 168-169, 216.

practices at the beginning of the next congressional session. She spent Christmas break calling every Democratic Senator, asking them to support the proposal. To India's pleasure and astonishment, the Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections of the Committee Rules unanimously voted to pass Anderson's motion.[177]

The investigation lasted between February and April, but the committee did not publish its findings until late summer. By early May, India was in Geneva, Switzerland, as the U.S. delegate to the World Health Organization conference. During her stay in Geneva, she sprained both her ankles while looking up at a Cathedral. After a week long hospitalization, she decided to visit Italy, Germany, and France, although she had to hobble through Italy on two canes.[178]

Returning to the U.S. from abroad, India learned that the investigating committee concurred with her views on the Butler campaign. Issued in August 1951, the report stated, "we vigorously denounce such acts and conduct and recommend a study looking to the adoption of rules by the Senate which make acts of defamation, slander, and libel sufficient grounds for . . . the purpose of declaring a Senate seat vacant." As a result, Butler's campaign manager was convicted of violating Maryland's election laws. The report also involved Senator McCarthy, his staff, and some top executives of the *Times-Herald* newspaper in Washington, D.C. And, the committee asked that an investigation of any other unethical activities by Senator McCarthy be conducted, but that action did not

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[177]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 134-35; and Oshinsky, 214-215.

[178]Edwards Papers, Box 8, Newspaper Clippings File, HSTL.

occur until years later.[179] This was not the last time she and Senator McCarthy crossed paths.

India combated Republican dirty politics, but this, and everything else she did, was for the good of the Democratic Party, which she deemed above such dishonesty. Her honorable approach to politics, hard work, and dedication to the Party were greatly appreciated by President Truman. As a token of his appreciation, he selected her as vice-chairman of the DNC in 1950, and she met with the President once every two weeks in that capacity.[180]

In October 1951, when chairman Bill Boyle resigned due to ill-health, India became acting chairman. She began to meet with Truman to discuss the qualities needed in a new chairman, when one day he asked, "'I am thinking of asking a woman to be chairman. What would you think of that?'" The question alarmed India. Neither party had ever had a woman chairman. In the 1920s, both parties developed the tradition of having a female vice-chairman and a male chairman, and this practice had not been altered. Therefore, she said, "'I would not think very highly of it.'" "'But,'" the President added, "'when I tell you the woman is yourself, would you feel different?'" She replied, "'No, Mr. President, I wouldn't.'" "'Why not?' he inquired; 'you would be a good chairman . . . you deserve this honor.'" India then admitted, "'I do not think the men of our party are ready to have a woman chairman. They would not work with her the way they would with a man.'" Truman retorted, "'They would work with you that way after they

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[179]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 135-36.

[180]Frank, "Incomparable India," 7.

discovered as I have, that you operate like a man.'" She refused to give in and declared, "'There isn't enough time before the 1952 Presidential election for them to discover that. Mr. President, you know I would be so busy protecting my rear I never could move forward.'" The President accepted her position. Later India would look back on this decision with much regret, especially considering all the events that would soon unfold within DNC.[181]

A week later, on October 30, 1951, India read that Frank McKinny was named the new chairman. None of the other committeewomen were informed about his selection, and India was understandably outraged that she had received no hints. "Tight-lipped she marched into her office that morning without even taking off her hat, dictated her resignation . . . and sent a copy to the White House."[182] The letter addressed to Mr. President explained, "I am resigning because it is borne in upon me too poignantly and unhappily that the Vice Chairmanship is an empty title and that women's status in the Democratic Party and the Committee has not risen . . . Democratic women worked hard and long to have an elected rather than appointed vice chairman . . ."[183]

The National Committee was currently in town for a meeting to go through the motions of electing a preselected vice-chairman and chairman. Some disgruntled committeewomen responded to their exclusion from the decision process by holding their

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[181]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 140-43.

[182]Roosevelt and Hickok, 28.

[183]Edwards to the President, 31 October 1951, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

own meeting the next day, and they began to write a resolution draft which declared that their woman vice-president should have, "a voice and vote in all policy matters in the Democratic Party . . ."[184] Before they finished, Truman called the committeemen to learn why the women had been left out of the decision making, and the male committee members admitted that it was "an unfortunate oversight." India remained with the DNC as acting chairman, and at the DNC meeting that day, she coldly presided over the election of Frank McKinny.[185]

Although India could not depend on all the Democratic party men, she knew she could rely on the President. This was probably one reason she worked during 1951 and 1952 to get Truman to run for reelection. She also believed that he was the only man who could win the presidency for the Democrats. Truman, however, disagreed. Two years earlier, Truman wrote himself a personal memo which stated, "'In my opinion eight years as president is enough . . . . I am not and will not accept the nomination for another term.'" He realized the presidency had been hard on his family and that Bess did not want him to run again.[186] And, his chances for being reelected were slim to none due to his

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[184]Edwards Papers, Unsigned Resolution, 31 October 1951, Box 2, Correspondence File, HSTL.

[185]Roosevelt and Hickok, 28.

[186]Robert J. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1949-1953* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982), 17-171.

declining popularity. In December 1951, only 23 percent of the American public approved of his work as president.[187]

In early 1952, India and the President had discussed Adlai Stevenson as a possible candidate if Truman should not run. Truman had not openly declared his intentions, although the pressure to do so was mounting. At the Jefferson-Jackson Dinner on March 29, 1952, the President pulled India and Vice President Alben Barkley aside and whispered, "'I am going to announce tonight that I am not going to run for reelection.'" India mistakenly thought it was just a joke. After hearing the President's announcement, however, India quickly turned to Adlai and said, "'You have to run.'"[188]

Although India could not wholeheartedly support Stevenson until the national convention chose him, she did give him advice on his campaign to win the nomination. That she was unable to actively campaign for candidates prior to the convention proved both a blessing and a curse. That year, certain members of the distaff side of the Party had begun to suggest India as a candidate for vice-president.

In June, former U.S. Representative Mary T. Norton formed the Democratic Women for India Edwards for Vice-President committee. Shortly afterwards, India admitted, "'I am beginning to get VEEP fever.'"[189] India's bid for office, however, was not favorably viewed by all Party women. Eleanor Roosevelt told India, "I most certainly

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[187]Gallup, George, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-71 (New York: Random House, 1972)*, 1032.

[188]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 155.

[189]Edwards Papers, 18 July 1951, Box 9, Newspaper Clippings File, HSTL.

would not accept the nomination if it were offered to me. I doubt there is any chance for any woman at present."[190]

In late June, India realized the futility of her nomination when the Business and Professional Women announced Judge Sara Hughes as their Democratic candidate for the vice-presidency and Margaret Chase Smith as their Republican candidate.[191] After this, she backed away from any attachment to the idea that she could actually win. Recognizing women's capabilities, she saw no reason a woman should not be nominated. other than the fact that the American public would not elect a woman candidate. She viewed her nomination for what it really was, a gesture that indicated she was an accomplished politician and that the Party respected her.[192]

The Democratic National Convention took place in Chicago that year. "Those who watched the Democratic convention on television were certainly aware of the 'India for Veep' campaign."[193] During the final session of the convention on Saturday, the nominees for the vice-presidency were placed before the convention. After India's speech the previous Tuesday, she again sprained both her ankles, so for the remainder of the convention would have been staggered around the convention hall.[194] On Saturday

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[190]Eleanor Roosevelt to Edwards, 4 April 1952, Box 15, Correspondence File, 1947-1977, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[191]Roosevelt and Hickok, 67.

[192]WGHV Radio Interview, 29 July 1952, Box 3, Vice-President File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[193]Roosevelt and Hickok, 68.

[194]Edwards Papers, 26 July 1952, Box 11, Newspaper Clippings, HSTL.

morning, July 26, one distraught Florida supporter for India's nomination asked the Sam Rayburn, "'Is it true that India is going to withdraw her name?'" He told her, "'You're damn right she is going to withdraw. If she hadn't agreed to, I wouldn't let her name come up in the first place.'"[195] When the press asked India about the nomination, she responded, "Stop kidding me boys . . . I know and you know that it's a nice compliment . . . You know and I know I'm going to decline and the boys out there -- the masculine end of the party -- they would be shocked to death if I didn't'"[196]

After India's name was placed for the vice-presidential nomination, Mrs. Thelma Parkinson Sharp of New Jersey withdrew India's nomination by stating, "She appreciates the support of the men and women and wants them to know that she is pleased with the nomination of Senator Sparkman."[197] Judge Sarah Hughes' name was then placed for nomination and similarly withdrawn.

At the Republican National Convention, only a "half-hearted little speech," not a nomination, was given on behalf of Margaret Chase Smith's candidacy for vice-president, and many people at this time thought India and Hughes were the first two women ever placed for nomination on a presidential ticket.[198] The 1924 Democratic Convention, however, was more generous to women; "three women received one or more votes for the

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[195]Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews, *Running as A Woman; Gender and Power in American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 252.

[196]Edwards Papers, Box 15, Speeches and Press Releases, 1948-1958, HSTL.

[197]William J. Bray and Venice T. Spraggs, eds. *The Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention* (np: National Democratic Committee, 1952) 571-72.

[198]Roosevelt and Hickok, 68.

presidential nomination and Mrs. Leroy Springs . . .was formally nominated and received 38 votes. In 1928, Nellie Tayloe Ross received 31 votes on the first ballot for vice president."[199] In spite of these nominations in the 1920s, recognition of the endeavors of women politicians at a national convention would not occur again for another twenty-four years until the 1952 Democratic Convention.

India's nomination for vice-president marked the pinnacle of her political career. After the Democratic convention nominated Adlai Stevenson as its presidential candidate, Stevenson appointed a new DNC chairman, Steven A. Mitchell, who reduced the power of the Women's Division and worked to drive India out of the DNC. During the last four years, however, India had successfully worked to advance women's place in government and politics and received the title 'Queen maker.' Her influence in Truman's administration was so well recognized that *McCall's* named India as one of the ten most powerful women in Washington.[200]

Many Americans, however, did not approve of India's efforts on behalf of women. According to a 1945 Gallup Poll, only 32 percent of Americans agreed that not enough capable women were holding important jobs in the federal government.[201] India was working for women's causes in a period that was largely indifferent to women's causes. Historically, women have not been successful at their attempts to win elective offices.

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[199]Gruberg, 61.

[200]"Washington's 10 Most Powerful Women," *McCall's*, Box 13, Publicity File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[201]Gallup, 548.

Between 1945 and 1952, women composed less than five percent of both members in the congress. As India stated, "'a woman must be better qualified than a man if she is to win,'" and she consequently did not work to get women into elected offices. [202] As she expressed it: "'If the party backs a woman you can be pretty sure they do it because they think it's a lost cause but they know they have to have *some* candidate.'"[203] India felt that despite the discrimination that existed in politics, "women too often give in too easily."[204] She also admitted that there were some government positions in which there were no women with the training or experience necessary for the position.[205]

In many ways, India's moderate approach to women's issues reflected the conservative times in which she operated. When the economy recoverted to peacetime after World War II, women lost many of the occcupational oppertunities they had gained as a result of the war. Women were encouraged by such popular literature and women's magazines to return to the home in the years following the war. Influential social theroists Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg blended domesticity with Freudian psychology in their in 1947 book *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*. They argued that women should return to their traditional roles as mothers and wives and condemned feminism as a disease

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[202]"A Women Must Be Better Qualified Than a Man to Compete," 4 July 1949, Box 10, Newspaper Clippings, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[203]Lamson, xxiii.

[204]India Edwards's response to questions submitted by *Atlanta Journal*, 4 January 1952, Box 3, Press Releases, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[205]DNC Press Release, 2 July 1949, Box 3, Press Release File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

caused by "penis envy."[206] This conviction that women's highest value is the fulfillment of their femininity was referred to by Betty Friedan in 1963 as *The Feminine Mystique*.[207] Because of the conservative views about women's role, India was compelled to use campaign techniques that focused on the women's role as homemaker. Her willingness to identify herself with conventional female roles made her more acceptable to male Party leaders, and she, therefore, was more successful in her attempts to secure high level government positions for women than if she had identified herself as a feminist and a women's rights activists.

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[206]Evans, 238-239.

[207]Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963), 43.

CHAPTER 4

THE END OF AN ERA: Integration and India's Resignation

The new DNC chairman was young Chicago lawyer Steven A. Mitchell, who had previously served as a consul to the congressional investigation committee. In the summer of 1952, three state committeemen, Calvin Rawlings, David Lawrence, and Jack Arvey, visited the newly elected chairman to welcome him to the committee and to tell him how lucky he was to have "such a damn smart politician" as India as his vice chairman. "'Do you mean India Edwards?'" Mitchell asked. Then the men proceeded to praise her abilities but realized that Mitchell looked somewhat irritated by this.[208]

The entire national committee met for the first and only time in 1952 to plan for Stevenson's campaign in Springfield, Illinois. At the meeting, India suggested that they take a different approach and spend more money on television. Many other committeemen agreed, but Mitchell suddenly rose from his seat across the table from India and said, "I have to return to Washington," then he quickly left the room. The Washington staff had planned to leave together later that afternoon, so India followed to learn what was troubling him. When she inquired as to why he was leaving, he indignantly responded, "'I'm not needed when you're here.'"[209]

Mitchell's personal contempt and the ineffectiveness of Stevenson's campaign were becoming for India. Staying in Columbus while on her way to give a speech in

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[208]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 203

[209]Ibid., 199-200.

Indianapolis, she wrote Adlai Stevenson that she feared he was not gaining votes and outlined some ways in which he could improve his campaign. India had always considered Mitchell as "naive and impractical," therefore, she wrote at the end of the letter that, "if only you had made Wilson chairman of the committee and kept Mitchell in Springfield where he would not be dealing with so many people."[210] She decided to wait before mailing the letter, as it was a major charge against Mitchell. She never sent the letter, although she would bitterly regret this decision.

During Fall of 1952, India began to encounter a number of obstacles that hampered her campaign efforts. Also, Mitchell continued to display his contempt for her. In one instance, he failed to introduce India at a DNC dinner in October when he was presenting other DNC officials.[211] After the election, which was a disastrous Democratic defeat, a young committee employee dropped by India's office to say goodbye. When he entered her office, he shut her door and said he wanted to apologize. "'Why, John,'" India asked, "'What troubles did you cause me?'" Whereupon he confessed that the chairman had told him to put every possible hurdle in her way. India states in her memoirs, "I could fill pages with Mitchell's actions to keep me from being effective." [212]

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[210]References to India Edwards's view of Mitchell are in *Time*, "National Affairs: Democrats," 19 October 1953 (26), and Edwards discusses her letter to Stevenson in her *Memoirs* (201).

[211]Eleanor Smollar to Mr. Mitchell, 10 October 1952, Box 38A, File 4, President's Response to Women's Issues, HSTL.

[212]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 198-200.

India asked Mitchell after the election why he disliked her so intensely. Without hesitation, Mitchell said, "'Well, first of all, it was apparent from the start that you wanted my job,'" India laughed and informed him that she had turned down the chairmanship in October 1951. He added, "'you always get a better press than I.'" India answered, "'Yes, and I always will.'" Finally, he told her, "'You acted as if you were meeting me for the first time when I came to the committee,'" Unprepared for this comment, India replied, "'I'm sorry if I offended you by that . . . Did I meet you some place in Illinois?'" Apparently, he had met India several years earlier at a dinner in Washington.[213]

On election day 1952, a larger number of women voters turned out at the polls than in 1948. Although women voted just the same as men, many politicians believed women elected Dwight Eisenhower.[214] Many of the male Democratic politicians, therefore, blamed the distaff side of the Party for their defeat. Mitchell exhibited this disdain for the Party women when he announced the integration of the women's division into the rest of the committee on January 27, 1953.[215] Democratic women would no longer have a separate budget, programs, staff, and administration, but instead would be theoretically "working shoulder-to-shoulder with men."[216] The female Party leaders also lost their magazine, *The Democratic Digest*, which was turned over to private publishers

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[213]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 202.

[214]Roosevelt and Hickok (29) mentioned how more women voted for Eisenhower than men. Ann Arbor in *U.S. News and World Report* found that slightly more men voted for Eisenhower than women, although his election was a general swing.

[215]Edwards Papers, Box 15, Newspaper Clippings, HSTL.

[216]Roosevelt and Hickok, 29.

and sold for subscription. The change eventually led to the magazine's extinction. The Women's Division would also now be called women's activities, and as its director, India had lost much of her power. India had no control over change as she was, " not consulted."[217] Eleanor Roosevelt articulated the frustrations of the Party women when she wrote, "'it is not integration when women are simply told that a decision on policy has been made without them having been included in the discussion at every level.'"[218]

Just as the DNC was abolishing its Women's Division, the Republican National Party (RNC) appeared to be expanding the power and influence of their female members. Bertha Adkins, the head of the RNC women's division and assistant to the national chairman, told the press about her plans to prepare material for women voters and hold national and regional conferences for Party women, and it was also rumored that the RNC women's division would have its own magazine.[219] Adkins was also successful at persuading President Eisenhower to appoint women to high level positions. In fact, he named twenty-two women to important Senate-confirmed posts, which exceeded President Truman's record. [220] Shortly after his election, Eisenhower selected a new RNC

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[217]Edwards to Leisa Bronson, 6 April 1953, Box 2, Correspondence File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[218]Morgan, 301.

[219]Roosevelt and Hickok, 32.

[220]Harrison, 62.

chairman, Leonard Hall, however, he dissolved the women's division of the RNC as one of his first acts.[221]

India tried to accept the "integration" of the women's division as gracefully as she could. As a Democratic stalwart, she always held the party unity above her efforts to advance women; this was especially true after the Democratic defeat in 1952. In a speech entitled "Coordination of Women's Activities," India claimed, "Both the chairman and my statements are optimistic . . . but perhaps not taking into account the long, hard road to be traveled before true integration is achieved." She agreed with the theory behind integration, although she did not believe that the men and women of the committee were ready it. She acknowledged "In some places Democratic men and women already work as partners, but [sic] in others women are used as window-dressing or as doorbell ringers and envelope stuffers with no voice in policy-making."[222] It seemed clear integration was to disempower women while it claimed to grant them equality. Despite the problems with integration, India was still able to keep her humor. At a DNC meeting on April Fools Day, she announced her plans to issue the following press release:

> ' . . .the DNC unanimously passed a resolution this morning endorsing the new policy of integration . . . that henceforth Nat'l Committeemen and women have equal authority and that there be two co-chairmen, a woman and a man, on every committee instead of a man chairman and a woman vice-chairman, as is the custom now. . . . [They] will share policy-making, fund-raising and all other activities in which they engage as they perform their work of leading the

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[221]Roosevelt and Hickok, 33.

[222]"Coordination of Women's Activities," Box 6, Addresses and Statements - 1953, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

Dem. Party to victory. . .' End Quote. April Fool.[223]

Everybody at the executive meeting laughed except Mitchell, because they knew his integration plans were not as egalitarian.[224]

India was also facing another difficult crisis. With the Republican victory in 1952, India claimed that Senator Joe McCarthy began to boast "that the first person they were going to get rid of was India Edward's husband." According to India, the Senator used his influence to get top men in the information division of the State Department to try to force Herbert to resign. After several months of "petty tricks," Herbert submitted his resignation on April 15, 1953.[225] When India explained her husband's resignation to the press, she said, "'Every time they looked at him, they saw not his gray hair and brown eyes but my old gray hair and gray eyes.'"[226] At this time, she was 57 years old.

Herbert's resignation symbolized his willingness to refashion his own life to please India. For her, he had already "changed his politics (from Republican to Democrat), his religion (from Episcopal to Presbyterian), and his name (from Threlkeld-Edwards to Edwards: India thought the hyphen was "ridiculous")."[227] India realized her success in politics was largely due to her husbands support and encouragement. India expressed her

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[223]Informal Remarks of India Edwards, 1 April 1953, Box 2, General Correspondence, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[224]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 202.

[225]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 195.

[226]"India Edwards Quits her Job," Box 1, Director of Women's Activities File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[227]*Time*, "National Affairs: Democrats," 19 October 1953, 26.

appreciation in her memoirs, *Pulling No Punches*, by beginning her dedication with the tribute: "To Herbert, my dear husband, a mature man whose loving understanding and cooperation made possible my activity in politics and so this book."[228]

Herbert's resignation came just when India was facing Mitchell's attempts to oust her by destroying of her power base -- the women's division. According to *Time*, "'India was sure that he was trying to get rid of her.'"[229] India, however, put on a public facade, declaring that integration was a step forward. In May 1953, she hinted that she might resign to join her husband who was already in retirement and to open the way for new blood.[230] The committee was dealing with internal conflict throughout the summer of 1953, as other committee women, as well as India, objected to integration. In fact, Alabama committee woman Lennard Thomas, wrote India that, "If I ever see him [Mitchell] again I shall congratulate him on his excellent job of freezing out the women."[231]

Tired of fighting with party leaders, India decided to sell her house, Arden, and to resign once she found an adequate replacement. She, however, had trouble finding an woman who would work with Mitchell. Mitchell suggested she choose Katie Louchheim, who had worked in the Labor Division of the DNC during the 1952 campaign and was

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[228]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 5.

[229]*Time*, 19 October 1953, 26.

[230]*Washington Post*, 10 May 1953, Box 9, Newspaper Clippings File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[231]Mrs. Lennard Thomas to Edwards, October 16, 1953, Box 1, Director of Women's Activities File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

described by *Time* as, "the bouncy wife of a Washington financial consultant."[232] Despite the fact that India disagreed wirh Louchheim on women's role in politics, India relented to enable Katie to be appointed director of women's activities. India submitted her resignation to Mitchell in mid-September, and despite his public regrets about her leaving, "the cordiality of their exchange was only letter-deep."[233] Mitchell had succeeded at destroying India's influence in the Party. Just as India had expected, he was able to get the "feminine clinging-vine" type of committee woman (Louchheim) to replace her. India's inaction, however, had helped him achieve his goal.

When India resigned, she received letters from many state and national committee men and women, from businesspersons, civil servants, and government officials, who expressed their appreciation of her work on and her presence within the DNC. McHale's told India, "You may know, as I do, that women in and out of the party recognize your ability full well, and many of the men."[234] Some of the more well-known who sent letters included Eleanor Roosevelt, U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver, and U.S. Judge Marion Harron (India also helped Harron get reappointed).

India had used her position as the head of the Women's Division to enlarge women's roles in government and politics. Her resignation, however, marked her greatest defeat as a politician and symbolized the end of an era for Democratic woman. Committee

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[232]*Time*, 19 October 1953, 27.

[233]*Time*, 19 October 1953, 26.

[234]McHale to Edwards, 19 October 1953, Box 1, DNC Activities File, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

women thereafter lacked the influence and power that India had exerted, and her successors in the women's activities made no attempt to restore the division's former power or to mobilize women's voters in the manner India had done. Even when Democratic presidents triumphantly reemerged in the 1960's, the female side of the party found they had little influence in the oval office. Future Democratic presidents relied on members of their White House staff, who were almost exclusively male, when they chose female candidates for high ranking positions. Because Democratic women had lost their close ties to the White House, they no longer depended on the president's approval. Women activists in the mid-60s, therefore, adopted more radical tactics than the moderate yet immediate strategies India Edwards employed.

Chapter 5

THE GRAND DAME OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY:

India's Activities at the End of Her Political Career

India retained her position as the DNC vice chairman., but did not attend to the daily activities of the DNC headquarters. As vice chairman, however, she was required to make monthly trips to Washington. Because her daughter, son-in-law (John L. Williams), and three granddaughters lived in California, she and Herbert moved to Santa Monica after her resignation as head of the women's activities. Less than a year later, the Edwards moved to New York, and she became a member of the Women's National Chairmanship of the American-Korean Foundation Campaign and a development consultant for the New School for Social Research.[235]

When the new DNC chairman, Paul Butler, was elected in 1954, India decided she also wanted to be more active in the women's activities of the DNC. After an executive meeting in New Orleans, she told the press she would use any new power she could acquire "'to strengthen the hand of Katie Louchheim and the women out in the States, where you have men who would like to ignore women.'" Louchheim, who once told India that, "'more women only diminish your importance,'" did not appreciate India's newfound interest in women's activities. "'I don't need any protection.' Louchheim responded, 'I have all the authority and support I would want. . . . Women are not being pushed around by the Democratic National Committee or in the States, either.'" India

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[235]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 210.

denied any interest in reassuming her former position as head of the women's activities, but she still wanted to have a hand in its policy-making. [236] She was unable to be involved in women's activities. As Louchheim and India did not see eye-to-eye on women's issues, India left the DNC in 1956, but remained active in politics throughout the 50s and 60s.

In July 1956, she was appointed as co-chairman of the Harriman for President Committee. Between 1957 and 1958, she took her first civil servant position as the Director of the Washington office for the New York State Department of Commerce.[237] Although India was asked to serve on the John F. Kennedy campaign committee in 1960, she was convinced he would make a poor president. Believing Kennedy lacked experience and maturity, she declined the offer. Instead, she joined the Lyndon B. Johnson camp, and was selected as a co-chairman of the Citizens for Johnson National Committee.[238]

While campaigning for Johnson's presidential nomination, India probably made the worst mistake in her political career. The press kept bringing up the issue of Johnson's health and his heart attack in 1955, so India decided the public should also be aware of Senator Kennedy's health problems. At a press conference about a week before the national convention, a reporter brought up Johnson's heart attack. India responsed "Well, what about Jack Kennedy's health? . . . He has, as I understand it, Addison's Disease, and

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[236]In her *Memoirs* (158), Edwards tells how Louchheim did not like "more women," and Edwards attempt to have more say in the women's activities is discussed in "Katie versus India: A Feud?" *Evening Star*, 7 December 1954, Box 9, News Clippings, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[237]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 211-213.

[238]Edwards, interview by Frantz, LBJL, 16-17.

has to have cortisone all time or else he goes into a coma." Robert Kennedy refuted India's statement at a press conference that same day. Because Johnson was also upset over the disclosure, the Citizens for Johnson National Committee was instructed to say nothing more about the issue.[239] At the national convention, Kennedy was nominated with Johnson as his running mate, and India decided to follow Truman's advice to, "be willing to get into the fight and elect a Democrat regardless of what the final decision is or who is nominated."[240] She sent Kennedy a letter congratulating him on his nomination and offered to aid his campaign.[241] Less than three weeks before the election, she sent Kennedy another letter of apology. The letter read in part: "The problem to me is not whether it was true or not for certainly I believed it to be true or I would not have said it, but that in either case it was not the right thing for a Democrat to say about a man who might be the nominee of our Party for the presidency."[242]

Despite India's falling-out with Kennedy, he appointed her to serve as chairman of volunteers for the Inaugural Committee. And, "In spite of snow and frigid temperatures, the 1961 Inaugural of President John F. Kennedy and Vice President

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[239]Ibid., 23-25.

[240]Truman to Edwards, 25 May 1960, Box 3, Correspondence with Harry S. Truman, Edwards Papers, HSTL.

[241]Edwards to John F. Kennedy, Box 1, 1960 [Convention], Papers of India Edwards, LBJL.

[242]Edwards to Kennedy, 15 October 1960, Box 2, [Office of Women's Activities, DNC], Edwards Papers, LBJL.

Lyndon B. Johnson was the greatest financial success of any inaugural in our nation's history."[243]

Although the President thanked India for her hard work on his inauguration, she and women party leaders in general were largely ignored by Kennedy's administration.[244] Margaret Price, who was the only Democratic committeewoman with any influence in Kennedy's administration, found that many of her recommendation fell on deaf ears. Vice-chairman of the DNC and head of the women's activities, Price had advised Kennedy to make more women visible in both his campaigning committees and in his administration through high-profile appointments, neither suggestion was followed. As Edwards explained it: "'there was no one at the DNC . . . who had any influence . . . when it came to women's affairs."[245]

India, however, refused to let Democratic women be slighted by the President. When Price accepted Kennedy's decision not to address the 1962 Campaign Conference for Democratic Women - a conference of three to four thousand women - Edwards sent

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[243]"1961 Inaugural Committee," Press Release, 19 April 1961, Box 1, 1960 [Convention], Edwards Papers, LBJL.

[244]Harrison, 80.

[245]Ibid., 73-79.

him a letter threatening to cancel it.[246] In the face of threatened retaliation, the President agreed it was important for him to support the women party leaders by addressing the conference.[247]

Kennedy, nevertheless, did form the "President's Commission on the Status of Women" in 1961 and appointed Eleanor Roosevelt as chairperson. The commission's report, although conservative, detailed the inequalities in women's lives from discrimination in employment to the lack of child care facilities. In response to the report, Kennedy issued an executive order prohibiting sexual discrimination in the civil service hiring practices, and he also supported the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Although a staunch supporter of women's advancement in 40s and 50s, India was curiously absent from the committee.

After Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963, India discovered she had a much louder voice in the executive branch due to her friendship with the Johnson. In 1964, he appointed India as a National Defense Executive Reservist and as Special Consultant to the Secretary of Labor.[248] Also, India continually wrote the President with suggestions for female appointments. In 1964, she recommended that he appoint Edith Sampson, former UN delegate, to the UN Commission on Human Rights and mentioned the absence of a female in the upper ranks of the Peace Corps and the Office of Economic

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[246]Edwards to Kennedy, 8 August 1962, Box 2, [Office if Women's Activities, DNC], Edwards Papers, LBJL.

[247]Harrison, 81.

[248]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 139, 234.

Opportunityto the President.[249] In 1968, Johnson wrote India that, "Your warm friendship and wise counsel have sustained me through the years."[250] Journalist Elizabeth Carpenter, who worked to advance women in government and politics, recommended that Johnson replace Price with India. Carpenter believed Price was too unwilling to press her views as far as women's issues were concerned. India had lees success, however, at promoting women in government than she had had in the Truman administration.

In 1968, India accepted the most distressful position of her political career. She helped organize the Democratic national convention, while she temporarily replaced Margaret Price, who was terminally ill with cancer. Due to her reappearance in the political limelight, the press noted that women would have a louder voice at the convention, and the *Dallas Morning News* proclaimed that India was the "Democrats Grand Dame."[251]

The previous fall, when Chicago was chosen as the site of next Democratic convention, Jerry Rubin, head of the Youth International party, proclaimed, "'see you next August in Chicago at the Democratic national convention. Bring pot, fake delegates' cards, smoke bombs, costumes, blood to throw and all kinds of interesting props.'" Plans

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[249]Edwards to Johnson, 9 November 1964, Box 2, [Office of Women's Activities, DNC], Edwards Papers, LBJL.

[250]Johnson to Edwards, 22 April 1968, Box 34, White House Confidential Files, Name File, LBJL.

[251]"India on Top Again," *Washington Post*, 29 March 1968, Box 11, News Clippings File, Edwards Papers, HSTL; and *Dallas Morning News*, 26 July 1968, Box 3, 1968 Convention [Clippings],Edwards Papers, LBJL.

for a demonstration were being plotted by the New Left and directed by the National Mobilization Committee Against the War in Vietnam. Rennie Davis was placed in charge of the project and worked closely with such radical leaders as Tom Hayden, leader of the Students for a Democratic Society, and Jerry Rubin.[252]

During the convention that August, the city of Chicago became an armed police state. As India recalled, "'I bitterly resented the fact that they searched my purse every night before I was admitted to the amphitheater.'"[253] India was able to take comfort nevertheless in the fact that two of her granddaughters, India, who was 17, and Challen, who was 18, served as her pages during the convention. Also, India was able to organize a luncheon of 2,000 women to honor nine outstanding "Women Doers" for their service to the Party.[254]

While the convention proceeded, however, the anti-war protesters marched up and down the street near Lincoln Park and Grant Park, which was across the road from the Hilton Hotel. From India's tenth-floor suite at the Hilton Hotel, she watched the protesters who were greatly outnumbered by the Chicago Police and the National Guard. The demonstrators chanted slogans such as "Hell no, we won't go" and "Kill the pigs," and some protesters waved Viet Cong flags while others threw rocks at the police and

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[252]"Strategies of Confrontation," *Chicago Daily News*, 9 September 1968, Box 3, 1968 Convention [Clippings], Edwards Papers, LBJL.

[253]*Wheeling West Virginia News Register*, 13 October 1968, Box 2, [Women's Activities Relating to DNC], Edwards Papers, LBJL.

[254]"This One's the Most, India Edwards Says," Chicago American, 22 August 1968, Box 3, 1968 Convention [Clippings], Edwards Papers, LBLJ.

private cars as they passed by. Armed with tear gas and shotguns, the Police attempted to keep order with as few injuries and arrests as possible. Because they had a difficult time distinguishing between innocent bystanders and violent demonstrators, many injuries resulted.[255] Crying in her room every night, India knew the election was already lost.[256] She could not understand what the hippies were trying to accomplish, and the police's treatment of them disgusted her. "'Most of them were just overemotional kids," India stated, "and I think Mayor Daley maybe did go a little too far.'"[257] The convention actually did aid the election of the Republican candidate Richard Nixon, as the public linked the Democrats to those who demonstrated against the convention and advocated revolution in America.[258]

The convention was the last time India was actively involved in politics. After 1968, she basically limited her political activities to fund raising. Her husband Herbert died in late 70s, and her daughter Cissy died in 1979.[259] In 1984, however, India served as a delegate for Gary Hart at the national convention and witnessed an event she had not expected to see within her lifetime -- the nomination of the first woman, Geraldine

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[255]"Strategies of Confrontation," *Chicago Daily News*, Edwards Papers, LBJL.

[256]Edwards, interview by Hess, 103, 105.

[257]*Wheeling West Virginia News Register*, 13 October 1968, Box 2, [Women's Activities Relating to DNC], Edwards Papers, LBJL

[258]Edwards, *Memoirs*, 243, 248-51

[259]Cook, *New York Times*, B10.

Ferraro, as the Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate.[260] On January 14, 1990, at the age of 94, India Edwards died at the Fircrest Convalescent Hospital in Sebastopol, CA.[261]

During her long and prosperous life, India Edwards successfully expanded the influence of women in government and politics. After World War II, she served as a conduit between women activists and President Truman and tried to work on their behalf during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. She never made any aggressive demands for women but instead tried to accommodate the male Party leaders. India maintained, in fact, that the best compliment she ever received was when Truman told her that, "you operate just like a man."[262]

India did not resemble the new feminists who emerged in mid-60s. Women activists in the 60s and 70s were much more vocal than India about women's causes. Although India claimed not to be a feminist during her most formidable years as a politician, the women's liberation actively worked to raise women's consciousness about the pervasive discrimination that existed in their lives. They no longer worked just to get more women appointed to high level positions as India had done, but they demanded sweeping judicial and legislative changes. When congress finally passed ERA in 1972, women activist fought aggressively and unsuccessfully for its ratification throughout the 70s. Despite the successes of the women's liberation movement, women's gains at

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[260]Deborah Andrews, ed., *The Annual Obituary 1990* (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1991), 20.

[261]Cook, *New York Times,* B10.

Edwards, *Memoirs*, 160.

attaining high policy making positions in government were no more significant than those India had achieved in an era that was essentially indifferent to women's causes.

CONCLUSION

The product of an independent, suffragist mother, India Edwards believed that women should be active participants in government and politics and familiar with current issues. She educated women about the Democratic Party and was unyielding in her own partisanship, which was patterned after her mother. India also demonstrated her independence and strong will early in life. After graduating from high school, India pursued a career as a journalist, even though this was a male dominated profession for her generation. Although she did not attend college, her determination landed her a job as news reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. First as the society editor and then as editor of the women's page, India spent the next two and a half decades working as a Chicago journalist, excluding a seven year retirement she took to raise her two children. In 1942, she left the newspaper permanently to marry Herbert Edwards and shortly after entered her career as a politician. During the 1944 presidential campaign, India became a volunteer worker for the Democratic National Committee, and by the end of the 40s, she had risen through a series of prominent positions within the DNC to become executive director of the Women's Division.

As head of the Women's Division, India used her assertiveness and persistence to become an effective agent for women's progress, when many women of her generation were backing away from such actions. Despite the contributions women made in World War II, the twentieth century women's rights movement was at one of its lowest ebbs.

Women were divided between supporters of equal rights and supporters of protective legislation -- it was a division that largely stifled women's political action. They had lost the substantial gains they received during War World II, when many women were employed in highly skilled and highly paid industrial jobs. Because these were traditionally male positions, women were encouraged to abandon these advances as the economy reconverted from wartime to peacetime in order to make room for the returning GIs. Although women remained in the work force, they were largely employed in sex segregated positions which afforded them little opportunity for advancement.

Aware of the sexual discrimination that existed in politics, India employed moderate strategies to women's causes in an attempt to accommodate the male Party leaders. Identifying herself with traditional female roles, she consequently refused to call herself a feminist, as did most women activists in this era, and used campaign techniques that upheld women's domesticity. Because she promoted women's place in the home, she was acceptable to fellow male politicians. She, therefore, secured their support for her endeavors to obtain prominent positions for women in government.

India was also a loyal supporter of President Truman and the Democratic Party, which facilitated her success as an advocate for women. During the 1948 campaign, she actively worked for Truman's election, even though many Americans believed Truman would lose. In addition, she was respected by the male Democratic leaders for work on behalf of the Party, especially as she held the Party's interest above her efforts to advance women in government. In turn, she discovered that she had valuable male allies in the party when she worked to place women in high level positions.

Although she was still active in politics during the 60s, India was not considered one of the women activists of the women's liberation movement. She found her moderate strategies were no longer appropriate as they had been during the conservative times in which she had operated. This new breed of women activists employed radical tactics to women's causes. Instead of working for female appointment as India had done, they pushed for sweeping changes on women's behalf, such as the Equal Rights Amendment and the right to abortion. Initiated in 1963 by President Kennedy, the Commission on the Status of Women provided women liberators an advantage that India did not have when she was head of the Women's Division. Because the report outlined the types of discrimination women encountered in their public life and the work place, Americans more readily recognized the inequalities in women's lives. Edwards success and effectiveness at securing a more prominent place for women in politics, therefore, is quite remarkable considering the difficulties that surrounded women issues in the post-World War II era.

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