

Queen of the Democrats

The United States, often characterized by anthropologists and visiting Englishmen as a matriarchy, actually boasts very few women in posts of strategic power. No woman sits in the Cabinet or with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. No woman presides over any basic industry. No woman bosses a major labor union or runs a national farm organization.

There is one woman who devotes twelve hours a day to redressing this imbalance: India Walker Gillespie Moffet Edwards, perhaps the least-known and most influential woman in American public life. The realm of private enterprise is outside her scope, but within her bailiwick Mrs. Edwards, an affable, energetic matron of fifty-four, has rung up an unparalleled score: In five years as President, Mr. Truman has appointed or reappointed women to ten top-level positions in government:

Treasurer of the United States Mrs. Georgia Neese Clark
 Ambassador to Denmark Mrs. Eugenia Anderson
 Minister to Luxembourg Mrs. Perle Mesta
 Federal Communications Commissioner Frieda B. Hennock
 Assistant Surgeon-General Lucille Petry
 War Claims Commissioner Georgia L. Lusk
 Civil Service Commissioner Frances Perkins
 Director of the Mint Mrs. Nellie Tayloe Ross
 Representative to the U. N. General Assembly Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
 Representative to UNESCO Mrs. Esther Calkin Brunauer

Of these appointees, the first five owe their selection and ultimate confirmation largely to the efforts of Mrs. Edwards. In addition, she has secured the appointment of the first woman Federal judge in the U. S. District Court for the District of Columbia, Mrs. Burnita Shelton Matthews, and



Mrs. India Edwards

has helped select nearly two hundred women as delegates, alternates, or advisers to international conferences.

Mrs. Edwards's springboard has been her post as Executive Director of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee. As such, she masterminds the electioneering activities of some sixty thousand female party workers and supervises the bulk of the committee's "educational" activities. So effective were her ladies in educating voters of both sexes in 1948 that even the most misogynic of Democratic politicians afterwards agreed she should have her pick of Federal plums. They probably assumed she would want to be Postmistress General, or possibly an ambassador. Instead, she has taken her reward in jobs for other women, which are, she feels, only the first installment on what is due her sex.

The government currently employs some 480,000 women; but only about

five hundred of these earn more than five thousand dollars a year. Of those who exercise some minimal authority, two hundred are in ECA and the Foreign Service, forty-two in the Labor Department, and thirty-six in the Federal Security Administration. Well down on the list are the Executive Office, with five women; and the Defense and Justice Departments, with four each. Congress has nine female members. "If," observes Mrs. Edwards tartly, "we had the same percentage of women as India has in her Constituent Assembly, we would have eighty-five Congresswomen."

Though Mrs. Edwards's earliest political memory is of hanging onto her mother's hand during a Nashville suffragette parade, she is no doctrinaire feminist. She does believe that "if there were more women in policy-making positions, there would be a better chance of settling problems amicably."

ably rather than by war”—a fairly traditional feminine attitude. But, untraditionally, Mrs. Edwards won't go to bat for women *as* women. The candidate has to be at least as well qualified as the available man—“and usually a damned sight more so.”

When a vacancy occurs that she has a candidate for, Mrs. Edwards is apt to be found at the President's elbow. “India,” commented one male admirer, “is a direct-actionist.” However, far from being a frustrated beldame working off her grudges against the dominant sex, India Edwards has experienced singularly little difficulty competing with men, likes them, and is liked by them.

Named India after her mother, Mrs. Edwards lived quietly in Nashville until she was ten. Then her widowed mother married a man named Gillespie, who worked for Cluett, Peabody, the shirt and collar firm. The family moved to Detroit for a year, to Chicago for another, and then to St. Louis. There a high-school teacher, who had “discovered” Fannie Hurst, decided he had another literary genius in young India. He urged her to enroll in the Columbia School of Journalism. Stepfather Gillespie said “No.” Girls of good family, he insisted, did not go away to college.

India's reaction was characteristic. She didn't defy her stepfather, nor did she mope in the parlor. She went off to Chicago and wangled herself a job on the *Tribune*. Freelancing at five dollars a story, she was soon costing the *Tribune* seventy to eighty dollars a week. Finally, as an economy measure, the paper put her on the payroll, at thirty-five dollars.

India's first assignments took her to wrestling matches and prize fights (“the woman's angle”), to the salons and offices of V.I.P.'s, and to the opera, where she helped the society editor. Ten months later the society editor left, and India got the job.

It was a job she was to hold, off and on, for twenty-two years, expanding it into control of the whole woman's page. The “off” period is accounted for by her marriage to John Fletcher Moffet, an insurance broker, which later ended in divorce. From 1924 to 1931 she retired from journalism to bring up their two children, India and John. The “on” period is less comprehensible:

India was an unabashed Democrat on a paper that regarded itself as the fountainhead of Republicanism. When reproached with this anomaly, publisher Robert R. McCormick merely grunted: “Hell, if she can stand me, I can stand her.”

McCormick and she stood each other until 1942. In that year India left her job to marry again. She became the wife of Herbert T. Edwards, who was Chief of the Division of International Motion Pictures at the State Department in Washington. A year later her nineteen-year-old son, John Holbrook Moffet, an Air Force flier, was killed when a student he was instructing froze at the controls of a training plane.

John's death was a deep shock to Mrs. Edwards, and for several months she was absent from public life. Then Clare Boothe Luce arose at the Republican Convention of 1944 to mourn aloud the death of “G.I. Jim,” to attack the man “who promised peace—yes, peace—to Jim's mother and father,” and to declare that “Jim has taken the rap for everyone, from the man in the White House down to the man around the corner.”

India Edwards snapped off the radio nearly hard enough to break the on-off switch. She did not sit down and pen a letter to the *New York Times*. She did not complain to or about Mrs. Luce. Tight-lipped, she went down the next morning to the Democratic National Committee and offered her services as an unpaid volunteer.

“Politics,” said Robert Louis Stevenson, “is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary.” Mrs. Edwards had voted regularly, but she had never studied political science, run for office, helped anyone else run for office, or performed party work on any level. But she did have two decades of experience on a tough metropolitan newspaper, and the will to work sixteen hours a day.

She was put to work at a typewriter, hammering out “releases.” She graduated to speeches, radio scripts, interviews, and reports. When the 1944 campaign was over, she was offered

the post of Executive Secretary of the Women's Division of the Democratic Party. By February, 1947, she had become its Associate Director. On April 20, 1948, Chairman J. Howard McGrath appointed her Executive Director—the job she now holds.

Mrs. Edwards had made it a condition of her acceptance that someone else would handle oratory for her. By convention time, she was ready to overcome her rostrum-shyness; she figured nobody would say what she wanted said, in the way she wanted. Equipping herself with a market basket of edibles, a balloon (labeled PRICES), and a small girl, she took over the microphone—and the Democratic Convention. She produced a rather bloody piece of steak. Two years before, under OPA, it would have cost forty-six cents; she had paid \$1.10 for it in Philadelphia that morning. She practically undressed her urchin aide in comparing the 1946 and 1948 prices of slip, pinafore, socks, shoes, and hat. Before she had finished—thanks to the microphones and television cameras—she was something of a national figure.

In the campaign that followed, India Edwards introduced other techniques. “Housewives for Truman” sallied forth in “Truman Trailers” to stump their states. Congressmen who at first looked askance at such undignified tactics were soon making speeches from the trailers. Solemn political harangues were junked in favor of soap operas

selling the Fair Deal painlessly to housewives. Instructions and exhortations to the field went out as “Mimeograms” marked “For Your Immediate Attention.” Campaign flyers and “Rainbow Dodgers” were re-written with F.D.R.'s old admonition in mind: “Make it simple

enough for the women to understand—and then the men will understand it.”

Uneasy during the 1946 fiasco, when, she felt, the party failed to speak out clearly on the issues, Mrs. Edwards enjoyed 1948 thoroughly. Washington is full of prophets who, they say, “knew all along that Truman would win.” But India Edwards appears to have been one who really did. She went through the campaign, from its soggy



beginnings at Philadelphia to its startling end at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, with almost mystic confidence.

There have been times, however, when India Edwards was ready to quit cold. One of them came when she was still a volunteer. For days she had tried to get through to Paul Porter (then a party Janizary) to obtain clearance on a radio script. He was too busy. She left messages. He never called back. Finally she strode into the antechamber of his office, seized the nearest of his secretaries, and exploded. Her ultimatum: He could phone her in five minutes, or she'd put on her hat. He phoned.

Mrs. Edwards had no more trouble with Mr. Porter. But she had to go through the same business with former Party Chairman Robert Hannegan. A tiff became the start of a friendly and effective relationship. From then on, Hannegan's office and his time were hers to command; and when McGrath took over, he received a long and earnest briefing by Hannegan on how to treat Mrs. Edwards.

Mrs. Edwards has no doubt learned a good deal from Mr. Truman. It is equally true that the President has learned a good deal from her. He was startled by her vigor at first, then settled down to knowing her, liking her, and (more significantly) trusting her judgment. She finds him inflexible in matters of party discipline and the chain of command. On his part, he never ceases to be surprised at her capacity to say what's on her mind in two minutes or less, and get out when she's through.

The President's confidence has

helped Mrs. Edwards endure the pace her job demands. In 1949 she flew into twenty states on speaking engagements; she is dated up through September for more talks all over the country. Two or three days of every week she is "on the road." She and Mr. Edwards own a century-old plantation house fifteen miles from the capital, but they spend most of their time in their two-room Washington apartment.

Since the 1950 elections are a good nine months off, and the 1952 showdown a couple of years away, the party's campaigns are still technically in the warm-up stage. What life will be like for her and her division when the race really gets hot, Mrs. Edwards would rather not ponder. She is under no illusions as to her capacity to deliver "the woman's vote"—for the reason that no such thing exists. Unless a candidate goes out of his way to insult females *en masse* (as Willkie did with an ill-considered crack about Madame Perkins in 1940), the women, Mrs. Edwards agrees, can be trusted to vote almost identically with the men.

The Gallup poll of September 11, 1948, showed 36.5 per cent of the men favoring Truman—and 36.5 per cent of the women. The Crossley poll of September 1 had forty per cent of the men lined up for Dewey—and forty per cent of the women. The pollsters may have had their little differences with the voters in November; but no one has ever proved that they erred in sizing up the sexes.

Why women vote like men is something else again. To Frank Kent, of the Baltimore *Sun*, the answer is easy:

"The net effect of the women's vote has been to give to most married men two votes instead of one." India Edwards could be pardoned for claiming it's exactly the reverse: Before she married him, Mr. Edwards used to vote the straight G.O.P. ticket. Now he's a steady Trumanite.

Women, Mrs. Edwards maintains, vote as citizens, not as women. They vote like their men because they're subject to the same economic and cultural pressures. They vote together as inhabitants of the same slum or the same mansion, as Alabama Negroes or as Boston Irish, as vassals of King Cotton or as dependents of coal.

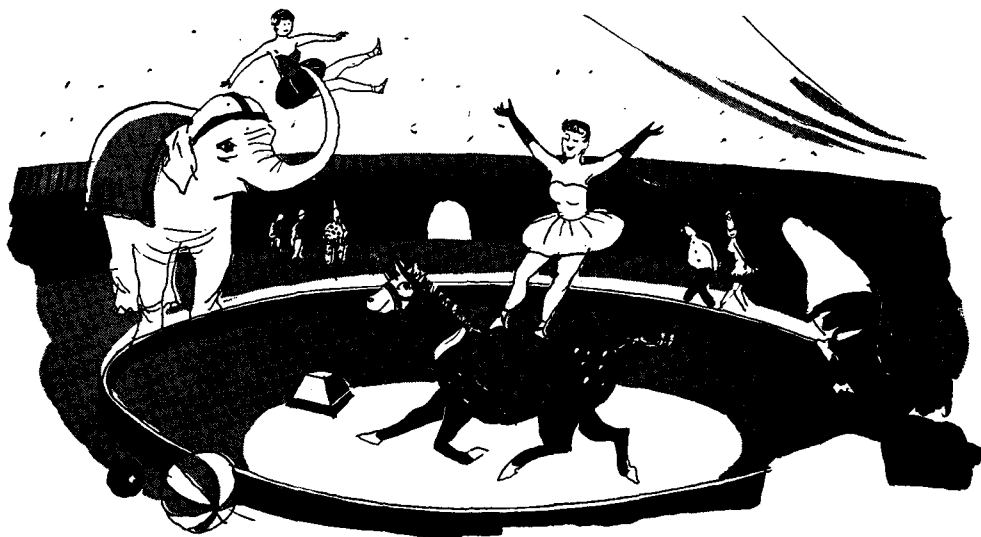
Yet, even though there is no "women's vote" India Edwards's usefulness to the party is the proven capacity of her Women's Division to bring out the Democratic vote, masculine and feminine. There are certain issues, she believes, that matter deeply to women, and these she intends to hammer on throughout 1950: peace, the high cost of living, the price of medical care.

That doesn't mean, declares Mrs. Edwards, that women will vote one way and men the other on ECA, the Brannan Plan, or medical insurance. It does mean that women may swing the family vote to the party they think the more genuinely concerned over such matters.

The Republicans have no intention of letting Mrs. Edwards monopolize the women's loyalty. That is evident in, among other things, the efforts to boom Senator Margaret Chase Smith (R., Maine) as a candidate for Vice-President. The Old Guard may not prove overly serious about this when the 1951 convention actually rolls around, but it must appreciate the outraged flurry the move provoked in Democratic circles. Mrs. Roosevelt announced that the country was not yet ready for a feminine President; Mrs. Edwards, swallowing hard, agreed.

This belated Republican attempt to board the feminist bandwagon, as Mrs. Edwards not too objectively regards it, reminds her of the Woman's Suffrage Anniversary Parade held a few years ago in New York. All those suffragettes—approximately five hundred—who had taken part in the original 1919 protest march were urged to form ranks again. Some 1,200 turned out.

—BEVERLEY BOWIE





Morrison of New Orleans

*The reform mayor has picked up a lot of votes—
along with some non-reform practices and cohorts*

The victory last month of Mayor de Lesseps Story Morrison in New Orleans's Democratic primary gave three striking proofs of the city's political health, and raised several important questions about the mayor himself as his second term was assured.

First of all, the voters seemed to have passed this particular examination with a cleaner bill of health than they have had in some time. Not only did more of them turn out for the primary, which of course is the decisive election in one-party Louisiana, than have ever done so before in the city's history. They also succeeded in burying both the "white supremacy" issue, which a small-time opportunist had tried to bring to life, and the state's Long machine, whose candidate, Charles Zatarain, was beaten by a two-to-one majority.

The primary vote established thirty-eight-year-old "Chep" Morrison as the most powerful public figure in Louisiana, where politics is a major industry. It also highlighted the problem of how much practical compromise a "reform" politician has to make to keep himself in office. Morrison, who piled up a record 120,000 votes against 65,000 for four other candidates, definitely proved that his victory was no fluke.

He won not only a personal triumph, but gained control of six of the seven seats on the city's Commission Council, which holds both legislative and executive power. The seventh seat will go to the winner of a runoff primary on February 28. The Morrison candidate is favored.

Morrison is a relatively unique type in Louisiana politics: He persists in

making clean government a central issue. But most observers agree that his latest victory depended largely on a sensible adjustment to political realities, and so his career provides a good case history of an individual pursuing a successful course between ideals and practical politics.

Physically, the young mayor is highly personable. His head is small for his medium-sized, well-proportioned body, which remains trimly athletic-looking despite the mayor's lack of opportunity for exercise. His dark, flashing eyes suggest an almost indefatigably dynamic personality.

Morrison is an able, tireless talker, but a poor listener, who usually seems to be planning his next remarks as he waits for others to complete theirs. He is as sensitive to criticism as a Geiger counter is to uranium. Newspapermen who have criticized even minor phases of his administration have been accused of "flyspecking the program" and have summarily been reported to their publishers, who nearly always take Morrison's side in such controversies.

The mayor's youth was spent in New Roads, Louisiana, one hundred miles upriver from New Orleans. When his father died, the family was left to shift for itself, and young Morrison immediately began shifting very energetically indeed. He worked his way through Louisiana State University, where he received his law degree, by selling silk hosiery and performing various odd jobs. Despite this full schedule, he didn't stint his New Orleans social activities. He later married Corinne

Waterman, who had been a New Orleans debutante.

Critics who referred to him as a "playboy" and "debutante's delight" when he became mayor in 1946, were presently confounded by a strenuous executive who worked twelve to sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, and never seemed to tire. All his moves are marked by a singleness of purpose that he apparently developed during his lean years at the university.

Although he entered politics in 1940 as a state representative in the reform administration of Governor Sam Jones, Morrison's practical political education seems to have taken place largely in the past few years. In the four years since he first won the mayoralty by the slimmest of margins, he has developed from a somewhat wide-eyed standard-bearer of reform into a skillful political operator. Billed as the reform candidate last month, he was able to preserve the stance of an independent while picking up the support of an array of professional vote-getters who delivered majorities in several sections of the city that had previously been impervious to the blandishments of "good government."

Morrison's new political assistants, by adding their thousands of ballots to the durable core of some sixty thousand reform votes, were responsible for building a slim Morrison majority into a landslide. As a result of this amalgam Morrison has had to become, politically, all things to all men. The mayor himself has, with characteristic candor, described the adjustment he has made:

"You can't continue to give the people good government without winning