

Oral History Interview

With

MRS. INDIA EDWARDS

Served as a volunteer in the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, 1944; Executive Secretary of the DNC, 1945-47; Associate Director, 1947-48; Executive Director, 1949-50; and as Vice Chairman, 1950-56.

Washington, D.C.

January 16, 1969

By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library  
Independence, Missouri

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#### NOTICE

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HESS: Mrs. Edwards, when did you first become interested in politics?

EDWARDS: I think I was always interested in politics, but I wasn't active in politics because I worked for a Republican newspaper, I was always a Democrat so it would have been a little difficult for me to have been an active political worker, but I think that my great interest in politics started with Franklin Roosevelt's first administration.

HESS: When did you first become associated with the Democratic National Committee?

EDWARDS: When I volunteered to work in the 1944 convention.

HESS: Can you tell me about that?

EDWARDS: I had left Chicago in 1942 when I married Herbert Edwards, who was working for the Department of State, and I moved down to Washington. I had had quite a long career as a newspaperwoman, and I expected just

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to settle down and be a housewife. My son by a previous marriage was killed late in December of 1943. He was just nineteen years old, was in the Air Corps, and I decided then that I would have to do something to occupy my mind and time fully. So I was looking around for things to do and I was thinking of going with UNRRA, in fact I was offered a position with UNRRA which was just starting up at that time. My husband was very much against my taking it, because he said the red tape of Government and I would never get along. A very close friend of mine from Chicago days, who then lived in Washington, was a volunteer at the Democratic National Committee, and she kept telling me that I ought to work for the Democrats. I would say, "Perhaps I will," but I kept putting it off. Then the Republicans held their convention in Chicago, ahead of the Democratic convention, and Clare Boothe Luce made a speech at the Republican convention, to which my husband and I listened on the radio in our living room (we then lived in Maryland). I became so infuriated that I paced up and down the room saying: "Now, I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to volunteer to work for the Democrats tomorrow morning,"

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and I did.

Mrs. Luce attempted to speak for "G.I. Jim." The implication was that if the boys who had been killed in the Second World War could come back they would say to vote against Roosevelt. I thought this was the lowest thing I ever heard of any politician doing. She couldn't speak for my son.

And so I went down to Democratic headquarters the next morning and volunteered to work if they wanted me, and they did. They seemed to be very glad to have me because I offered to work for nothing. They sat me down, had me writing--not speeches, I didn't start out writing speeches--I wrote biographies and news releases, things of that sort for about two weeks.

Then the Democratic convention came along. It was going to be held in Chicago, and the people at the committee said, "Oh, we wish we could take you out to the convention," because after all I had only been away from Chicago a short time so I knew all the newspaper people out there. But they said, "We have no money. We've allocated every penny we have for travel, but if you would come out, we'd be so happy."

So I said, "O.K., I'll come." I went and paid all

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my own expenses. And I really worked very hard all during that convention. It was very amusing because they didn't even give me a ticket to get into the hall, and the only way I ever got inside the hall was that my former boss, Colonel [Robert] McCormick, had a box and he invited me to use the box whenever I wanted it. I was so delighted that no columnist ever picked that up, because I thought it would look very peculiar. Here I was volunteering for the Democratic National Committee, and sitting in Colonel McCormick's box during the sessions.

HESS: That would be a little strange.

EDWARDS: But luckily none of the columnists ever saw it, or wrote anything about it.

HESS: When did you first meet Mr. Truman?

EDWARDS: I met him then in Chicago after he was nominated. There was a reception, as I remember, for him and Mrs. Truman and Margaret at the Blackstone, and I met him then, but just very casually. Then I met him during the campaign. In those days they used to move the headquarters to New York. I came back after the convention and settled down in Washington and the committee moved up to the Biltmore in New York, and

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they called me one night and said, "We really have to have you up here, but we can't afford to pay you."

And I said, "I'm terribly sorry, but I can't afford to come and live in New York for two or three months and pay all my own expenses."

And they said, "We'll give you a room at the Biltmore. Could you do it then?"

I said, "Yes, I could manage to feed myself."

It worked out very well because my husband in his work at the State Department had to go to New York quite a lot, so it wasn't as if I were leaving him neglected in Washington. So I went up and many times I never put my nose outside the Biltmore for five or six days at a time, because the office was there, and I was staying there.

HESS: What were your duties during that period?

EDWARDS: I was working in the public relations department of the Women's Division, and I started out writing news releases, biographies, but pretty soon I was writing speeches for various and sundry people.

You remember--you're too young so probably you don't--but in '44 it was very hard to travel; to go by plane you had to have a priority and train travel was

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difficult, too. So, not that I would have been doing any traveling anyway, but we were very dependent upon radio, and that's what I ended up doing for the Women's Division. I can't tell you--I used to know but I've forgotten, it's been so many years ago--how many hundreds of platters that we sent out. There were certain speeches that were very effective. For instance, Dorothy Thompson had made a speech that was wonderfully effective, and there were others. And I ended up in charge of all that. And many a time I would leave the Biltmore at 11 o'clock at night with my secretary and we would walk across to the American Express office, which was just nearby, carrying great armloads of these platters and mail them out, because they were used in meetings all over the country. And then I wrote quite a number of speeches. I met the vice presidential candidate, Mr. Truman, at that time. He came to the Biltmore one day.

I'll tell you an amusing story about that: Of course, I was not an experienced political speechwriter, but I was a trained writer, and had earned my living writing for a good many years. I always ended every speech with "Elect Roosevelt and Truman." It seems for quite

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a while some people on the staff wanted to get up the nerve to tell me that I didn't need to mention the Vice President, so finally one of them did tell me. She said, "India, you don't really have to mention Senator Truman. It's enough to mention Roosevelt."

I said, "I never heard anything to crazy in my life. I shall continue to mention Mr. Truman in every speech I write. The person who gives it can change it if he or she wants to, but I think the Vice President who is being elected this year will very probably be the President eventually." You had only to look at Roosevelt's face to know that the ravages of the office and illness and time had taken a great toll. Somebody told me--I don't know whether this is true or not--but someone is supposed to have told Senator Truman that I was the one who insisted that his name be included in every speech that we sent out.

HESS: Where were you on election night in 1944? Were you at the Biltmore?

EDWARDS: Yes.

HESS: Do you recall anything of interest that may have taken place that night?

EDWARDS: Well, I don't remember anything particularly

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interesting in that election, because we were all so certain of victory; everybody was. I don't think that any Democrat thought for one minute that Dewey was going to win that year. We were all sure that Roosevelt and Truman would be elected. But it was a different story in 1948.

HESS: In 1944 were you surprised when Senator Truman was selected as the Democratic nominee for Vice President?

EDWARDS: Well, I wasn't surprised, because I had not been involved enough in politics to really have any idea about it. I wasn't surprised, also, because I knew something about his record as chairman of the Truman Committee, and to me, he was a very fine Senator. But remember, I was outside the establishment, as it were, at that time.

HESS: Just as an opinion, how much influence do you think that Mr. Truman's chairmanship of that committee had on his receiving the Democratic nomination?

EDWARDS: Well, I would suppose, and this is only my judgment, which is really not worth very much because I know too little about it, but I would suppose that Mr. Truman's nomination was largely dependent on Bob Hannegan's work and his--what shall I say--finagling

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has such a bad sound, and I don't mean it that way--but I think Bob Hannegan was responsible for his nomination. But I think that President Roosevelt was willing to accept Truman because of the fine work he had done as chairman of the committee. That would be my own evaluation of it.

HESS: What do you recall of Mr. Hannegan's maneuvering?

EDWARDS: I wasn't close enough to know very much of what was going on, but that was what I understood, that Bob Hannegan had been the one who pushed for Truman when somebody wasn't acceptable. I've sort of forgotten what the details were. It had to be cleared with--who was it--Sidney Hillman. But I would feel certain that it was because of Senator Truman's reputation that President Roosevelt was willing to have him as Vice President, because I don't think Roosevelt knew him very well. I'm quite sure about that.

HESS: Moving on in time, what were your thoughts when you heard of the death of President Roosevelt?

EDWARDS: Well, of course, I was devastated, as everybody was. It was a terrible thing, but I don't think that anybody could say it was unexpected because certainly when he returned from Yalta he was a very ill man.

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I had only been at the National Committee a few weeks when President Roosevelt died. We were getting ready for a Jefferson-Jackson dinner, and I was doing some work on that. Fannie Hurst, the authoress, was to speak briefly at that dinner so I was going over Fannie's speech in the late afternoon when word came in that the President had died. I walked up and down the committee hall--we were in the Mayflower at that time, and all of our offices were on one corridor, and I was shocked at the way people were carrying on. Most of them were weeping and wailing and acting as if the world had come to an end. Of course, I was so new with the committee, and although I admired President Roosevelt tremendously, I didn't have the same feeling that the others had. I didn't feel that the Democratic Party was going to fall to pieces nor the country. I remember I put my head in office after office and said, "Stop this, stop this crying," because they really were, literally, weeping, and sobbing and carrying on, and saying, "Oh, what's to become of the country; what will we do?"

And I said, "We have a Vice President, and I know President Roosevelt wouldn't have allowed him to be

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Vice President if he hadn't felt that he was capable," because Franklin Roosevelt was smart enough to know that he was an ill man. I'm sure it was only because I wasn't a part of the Rooseveltian group that thought about him as if he were God practically. I didn't feel that way. I felt he had been a great President and had done magnificent things, but felt sure that Harry Truman wouldn't be where he was if he weren't capable of carrying on.

HESS: And shortly after that I understand that you attended the United Nations Conference in San Francisco. What stands out in your mind concerning the events of that time?

EDWARDS: Well, it was a great experience. Of course, it was very interesting. The Women's Division for a number of years had published a magazine, the *Democratic Digest*, and I went out as a representative of the *Democratic Digest*. And that was sort of fun because--can I ask you a question? Do you want me to go into detail and tell little incidents?

HESS: I certainly do. That's the life's blood of oral history.

EDWARDS: Mrs. Tillett (Mrs. Charles W. Tillett), had been

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very active in promoting meetings all over the country on the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. I had worked with her on that, when I first came to the committee as Executive Secretary of the

Women's Division, and we had held over a thousand meetings over the United States--I don't mean we had been at them, but we had promoted all these meetings. Mrs. Tillett was Vice Chairman of the Committee and Director of its Women's Division so she was the one who planned them, but I helped her. So, she naturally thought that she ought to go to the United Nations Conference. She kept going over to the State Department to make arrangements. Every time she'd go she'd ask me to go with her and she would talk to various people over there. But they couldn't possibly allow a politician to go, this would be just too impure and too dreadful! So she got nowhere. Finally, she said, "Well, we ought to have someone there to cover for our magazine, the *Democratic Digest*."

And they said, "It would have to be a professional writer, we couldn't accept a politician!" So they finally agreed that they would give me credentials to go. They assigned me a place on the special train that was going out. I had a bedroom, so I said, "Gladys, why don't

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you come and go, too? Nobody will know. Then when you get out there, I'm sure you won't have any trouble."

So, Gladys bought tickets and she and I shared a bedroom all the way across the continent. She wasn't sure but what some State Department official would see her and say, "Mrs. Tillett, we didn't invite you to go on this trip." Of course, I had official badges to show that I was going as a correspondent. So, we had great fun and it was a very interesting trip.

There were a lot of foreign correspondents aboard, but the thing that sticks out in my mind the most is the fact that in spite of meat rationing we had great, big, thick steaks about two inches thick, and lamb chops, and oh, the most wonderful things. I don't know how they managed to provide them, but they did.

After we got to San Francisco, Gladys Tillett was made one of a group of people they still continue at the United Nations to be observers from non-governmental organizations. So Gladys was all right after she got out there. She was able to go to the sessions and be very active. She had done more to promote the idea of the United Nations than probably any other women in the United States and yet the State Department wasn't

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going to allow her to go because she was a politician.

It was a very interesting occasion. I stayed during the entire conference, and the President came out at the end.

Then a rather amusing thing happened to me. I stopped in Chicago on my way back to Washington and spent several days. I gave a party at the Tavern Club for a lot of my old friends in Chicago whom I hadn't seen for several years, and they were all enthusiastic about President

Truman. They were all Republicans. I came back to Washington, saying, "This man can't be as good as I hope he is, because all my Republican friends think he is wonderful.

HESS: Did they express any opinions at that time as to why they thought he would make such a good President?

EDWARDS: Oh, they thought he was going to be very conservative and entirely different from President Roosevelt. You see, he hadn't been President very long. He hadn't really had time to do anything, and they judged, I think, that because he came from Missouri that he was going to be entirely different. Of course, there were a lot of Democrats, you know, who didn't want him nominated in 1948.

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There were quite a lot of very prominent Democrats who were working to replace him, but I felt all along that if we repudiated President Truman, we were repudiating the entire Roosevelt administration, and there wouldn't be a chance, at least in my opinion, for any other Democrat to be elected. President Truman was supporting, carrying on the Roosevelt programs and the New Deal, in fact, he had started a Fair Deal of his own, so I thought that the Democrats would be committing suicide if they didn't run him.

HESS: Who did the non-Truman persons think would make the best replacement?

EDWARDS: I think that most of them were for Eisenhower.

HESS: Do you recall anything in particular about the so-called non-political trip that Mr. Truman took in June of 1948?

EDWARDS: I didn't go on that trip, so I really don't know very much about it.

HESS: Do you have any other thoughts about the situation in the Democratic National Committee between 1944 and 1948, which we are now up to? What was taking place down there?

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EDWARDS: Howard McGrath, of course, became chairman when Bob Hannegan left and that's when Gael Sullivan came in, I guess he was called the executive director or something of that sort. The committee had a very good program. Gael Sullivan was a really good man, and Howard McGrath I thought very highly of but I personally don't think that we should ever have a Senator as chairman of the national committee.

HESS: Such as we have now?

EDWARDS: Such as we have had since day before yesterday. It is absolutely impossible for a man to do both jobs, and do them properly. If he's a good Senator he can't be a good chairman



and vice versa, because being chairman is a full-time job. I think that Senator [Fred R.] Harris is going to regret having taken it. If he gets a grade A executive director, then that man is going to take it away from him. Or if he puts somebody in who isn't good, well then he's going to suffer, and the party's going to suffer, and the whole country.

HESS: Gael Sullivan was executive director of the committee from February of '47 to May of '48. Do you know why he left the staff in the spring of 1948?

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EDWARDS: Well, my understanding is that he was asked to leave.

HESS: How effective was he?

EDWARDS: He was good, he was really effective. He did some splendid things during the period that he was there, holding regional meetings and things of that sort.

HESS: Organizational type...

EDWARDS: Yes, and I thought he was very effective.

HESS: All right, moving to '48. I believe that a few of the Democratic National Committee staff members attended the Republican National Convention in 1948 just to see how things were going. Did you go over there?

EDWARDS: No, I was not one of those.

HESS: What do you recall of the events that transpired at the Democratic National Convention that year?

EDWARDS: I remember that one very well, because I was planning all the women's activities and was very much in the center of things, so I remember a great deal about it.

HESS: Let's discuss that for a few minutes. Just how do you go about that? Just what would be the activities that you would be planning for the women?

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EDWARDS: Well, as I remember we had a School of Politics. I asked every Cabinet wife who would speak (there were a few who would not), to talk briefly about her husband's department and his work. For instance, Eda Brannan talked about what Charlie was doing as Secretary of Agriculture, and Ann Chapman talked about what Oscar was doing as Secretary of the Interior. Of course we did not ask the Secretary of State's wife nor the Secretary of Defense's, because those two are never invited to do anything politically. Neither is the wife of the Secretary of the Treasury.

HESS: I believe Mr. Krug was still Secretary of the Interior.

EDWARDS: Was he? Then it was that his wife wouldn't do it, so Ann did it. Oscar then was Under Secretary. The women were very much interested in this session. They were all very brief speeches. I think also on that program I got Perle Mesta to tell why she had switched from being a Republican to a Democrat.

HESS: Do you recall what she said? What was her reason?

EDWARDS: Oh, because the Democrats were more interested in people and because she liked the Trumans so much. Then I got a public speaking teacher to come, and she

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had a series of three classes for any women who wanted to come. There were a lot of women who attended those classes. Then we had quite a number of women speakers that year, in the convention itself. They used to have longer--I don't know if they were longer conventions, but they had longer sessions.

HESS: They lasted most of the day, didn't they?

EDWARDS: Yes, and well into the night. My goodness, President Truman wasn't nominated until what, two or three o'clock in the morning. So there was a lot of time to fill. There were quite a number of women, without looking it up I wouldn't be certain who they were, yes, I know--Helen Gahagan Douglas spoke and Gladys Tillett, and Mary Norton, and Frances Perkins, and I spoke, also.

HESS: What did you speak about that year, do you recall?

EDWARDS: Yes, I certainly do. You may remember, price controls had just been removed by the 80th Congress, and I took high prices as my theme. I had a woman on my staff who was awfully good at helping me plan my speech. It was really my husband's idea. I was not a speaker. When I worked for the paper I wouldn't go out and make a speech for anything under the sun,

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and as women's editor of the paper, I used to be invited all the time to make speeches, but I never would go.

In fact, the *Tribune* used to get rather cross about it, because, you know, they wanted me to do it. It was good promotion if I would. The only time I ever did it was when the Medill School of Journalism of Northwestern University asked me to come and talk to the students. I said no I wouldn't do it, but I was given to understand by the managing editor that I would have to do it, so I did. I must have made a pretty good speech, because after that they had it printed and used it as one of their textbooks. I had to speak for something like two hours. It was awful. I was unconscious during the entire time. Luckily, I had written it for I didn't know what I was saying.

Anyway, I was worrying about what I was going to say at the '48 convention, and my husband said, "Why don't you have some props, and give a television speech?" This was the first convention that ever had been televised, you see. When I chose my theme of high prices this woman on my staff, Ella Roller, took

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on the job of getting together all the things that we used as props. We kept it quite secret. We didn't let anybody know what we were going to do until finally Jack Redding found it out. Usually they put the women on at odd times, you know, but when Jack heard what I was going to do he said, "She has to be on at a prime time. This is going to be a knockout."

I had one of those paper shopping bags, and I had a pound of round steak, and I made the mistake of not cooking it. We had the prices which Ella had been able to get, the price of round steak before the 80th Congress removed controls and the price that day when she bought it in Philadelphia. I had a loaf of bread, a quart of milk, and I guess, a pound of coffee, a pound of sugar, and just a few things like that. Then we had a little girl whom the Philadelphia politicians had gotten for us, and she was a sweet little darling, about three or four years old. We outfitted her that day with shoes, socks, panties, shirt, slip, and dress, and had the price of everything.

My speech was how the 80th Congress had taken the lid off prices. I had a big hat box and I raised the lid, releasing a big balloon that went way up

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just as prices had done. I said, "They could have kept control of it. They could have pulled it down if they had wanted to," and I pulled the balloon down. I gave the price of the meat, holding up the piece of steak and the blood ran down my arm. The photographers kept yelling, "Hold it up again, India. Hold it up again." It was dreadful. I should have had sense enough to cook it, but I never thought about it. Then one of the men, it was probably Neale [Roach], lifted the little girl up on the podium where she could be seen. She was the cutest, little curly-haired girl, and I gave the prices of all her clothes; what they were that day and what they would have been before. It was a very effective speech, if I do say so.

HESS: Neale Roach was the manager, I believe, of that convention, is that correct?

EDWARDS: Yes, of course, certainly he was the manager in '48, and he was right there on the platform.

HESS: How effective a job did Mr. Roach do overall?

EDWARDS: Oh. I think that Neale always did a very good job, very good.

HESS: We have referred to it, but just how great was the danger that the Democratic Party might not renominate

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Mr. Truman that year?

EDWARDS: Well, there was great danger right at the convention, but that was not Eisenhower. The Eisenhower bubble had burst, I would say, by that time, at least insofar as I knew. I think there were some people who came to the convention, some delegates who were still talking about Eisenhower, but I don't think that was very serious. But you know Barkley came very close to getting the presidential nomination that year.

HESS: Can you tell me what you recall about that?

EDWARDS: Well, I wouldn't want to say, because I don't recall enough, but I just know that I was very worried for there was talk that his people, the people who were for him, were out trying to round up enough votes for him.

HESS: I understand that Mr. Leslie Biffle was engaged in that activity.

EDWARDS: Mr. Leslie Biffle was certainly one of them, and he was engaged in that same activity in '52 also. And there were others, too.

HESS: You mentioned about releasing the balloon, do you recall the releasing of the pigeons?

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EDWARDS: Yes, but I didn't have anything to do with that. Don't blame that on me.

HESS: Whose idea was that?

EDWARDS: That was Emma Guffey Miller, the darling old lady of the Democratic Party. She today is ninety-five years old and still has all her buttons. She was the national committeewoman from Pennsylvania, so she had this brilliant idea of bringing in the pigeons. It was perfectly awful. I was sitting next to Mrs. Truman on the platform and she had on a lovely black silk suit. Of course, the poor pigeons were scared to death, and I don't think any of them really got caught in the fans but there was danger they would. We didn't have air-conditioning, and there were these great fans up high, and the poor pigeons were fluttering all around the fans. One of them—splat--right in Mrs. Truman's lap.

HESS: Wasn't his fault at all, was it?

Who came up with the idea of calling the special session of Congress in 1948?

EDWARDS: I don't know who that was. I wouldn't be surprised but what that was Clark Clifford, but it probably was the President himself. I'm not sure.

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don't really know.

HESS: Did you ever hear if that was cleared with the leaders of the party before it was announced?

EDWARDS: I would doubt it. I never heard one way or the other. I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't.

HESS: Is that or isn't it a little unusual for a President to take an action like that without prior consultation with the leaders of the party?

EDWARDS: I don't think so, not in a case of that kind. I would feel--of course, President Truman having been a Senator would be very particular, very punctilious about doing the right thing, but I think that in a case of this sort, at least that would be my feeling, that it was all right if he didn't clear it with them. It had to be a complete surprise, you know.

HESS: And it did seem to be.

EDWARDS: Yes.

HESS: Mr. Truman stated that the two principal reasons that he was calling the Congress back into session was their failure to do anything about high prices and housing. We've mentioned high prices, but what do you recall about those two issues in the campaign?

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EDWARDS: They were two of the big issues. President Truman told me afterwards, in fact, it was when he and Mrs. Truman were taking a trip to Europe, their first, maybe their only trip to Europe, I can't remember. But anyway, the Stanley Woodwards went with them. I don't know what year it was, I've forgotten, and my husband and I went to see them off in New York. We were sitting in their stateroom having champagne before they left, and the President and I were talking alone off in one corner and he said, "You know, you really made the keynote speech at the '48 convention, high prices, that was the thing." And of course he pounded on the 80th Congress all the time, not just about high prices, but about everything else.

And then, I don't know whether I should include this or not, but I'm going to because I think it's so interesting. He said, "You also struck the right issue in the '52 campaign, but," he said, "the candidate that year didn't have sense enough to pick it up and follow it."

HESS: What issue was he referring to?

EDWARDS: I spoke in 1952 at the convention about the Korean war, and I said how just a war it was, and that if the

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women of the country would only understand it, that they would support it. It was a very brief speech. I didn't write it until very early in the morning of the day I delivered it. I got up about four o'clock in the morning and wrote it in the Blackstone Hotel. I felt very strongly about it. I said in that speech that I spoke as a widow of a soldier who had been killed in the First World War.

I was married to a young man just two weeks before he went to France in 1918, and he was killed very shortly after. And then a few years later I was married to Jack Moffett and had two children, and it was his son, John H. Moffett, who was killed in the Second World War.

So I said I spoke not only as a widow of a soldier in the First World War, but as the mother of a soldier who had been killed in the Second World War, and that I felt, and I did, that President Truman was right on Korea, that he had to do what he did. It was a very emotional speech, because I felt it so deeply.

Someplace I have the telegram he sent me. He saw it on television. He was in Washington, and he wired

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me and said, "You have made the best speech of the convention." And he told me this again that day on board ship and he added: "Adlai Stevenson would never touch it," and of course it was true. He never mentioned the Korean war. He stayed as far away from it as he could.

HESS: In your opinion, why did he do that?

EDWARDS: Because he thought it was unpopular and instead of trying to explain it or trying to make the American people understand why President Truman had taken the step he had, he just tried to ignore it and act as if it wasn't there. Of course, I think Stevenson should have been elected in 1952.

You know this country has never, except with Ulysses Grant, we've never put our military heroes upon pedestals and elected them to the highest office in the land, and I don't think that Eisenhower should have won. He's a charming man; I don't know anybody alive who has more charm than he does. I've known him for a great many years, but, my Lord, as President he was a nothing. It just broke my heart to see what Adlai Stevenson did in that campaign, because as I

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say, I think he might have won, with a good campaign.

HESS: What could have been done to pull that one out of the fire?

EDWARDS: Well, maybe he couldn't have done it. It might have been asking something that he couldn't do, maybe he couldn't change his nature to that extent, but there were so many little things that he did that were so stupid, I think. I'll tell you one. It's almost unbelievable.

I had learned very early--and as I say, I was never a speaker, I knew nothing about public speaking, but when it came to the '48 campaign, I had to speak; nothing would have kept me quiet. There were things that I wanted to say. I learned from President Truman, I watched him, and I saw that when he made a speech that they never wrote on the last third of the paper so that he never had to drop his eyes. So, that's the way I had my speeches written. Adlai used to have his go clear to the bottom, just as far down as they could possibly get. So I told his secretary, Carol Evans, one of the first times we went out on the campaign, "Carol, don't write the Governor's speeches that way. Write them so they just cover about two-

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thirds of the page, so he can turn the page over without dropping his eyes."

She said, "Oh, I'm so glad you told me. I never heard that before."

I said, "I learned it from President Truman. It makes all the difference in the world."

So she did one that way and Adlai just raised Cain. He wouldn't have it, wouldn't do it that way.

We were always hard up for money, the Democrats always are. The money spent on television was limited, of course, it wasn't nearly as much as the Republicans had to spend for Eisenhower, and they kept buying time for Stevenson at big thirty-minute rallies, and all one saw on television half the time was his bald head. When he dropped his head one hardly could hear what he was saying.

I was traveling with him most of the time, and after the first rally where they bought television time, my husband called me that night at the hotel where we were, and he said, "For God's sake, India, show Adlai how to have a speech written." Because on the television all you saw, half the time, was the top of his head, as he was reading. Now that's a silly little

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thing, but those little things matter terribly.

HESS: He received some criticism in the press because there were those who thought his speeches were on too high a plane, too intellectual and didn't appeal, to or didn't reach the understanding of the common man. What do you think about that?

EDWARDS: Yes, I think that's true, because I think Adlai at heart was a philosopher and an editor more than a politician. In fact, I don't think he was a politician at all. He'd be writing on a speech two minutes before he got up to deliver it, changing words and fixing it up, so that each

one would be as perfect as possible, but it would be in a great many cases above the heads of many in the audience.

HESS: In your opinion, what was Mr. Truman's evaluation of Mr. Stevenson in '52? Just as an opinion.

EDWARDS: Well, I always felt that I had a lot to do with President Truman first thinking about Adlai as a presidential candidate, because I used to see the President a lot and I knew Adlai quite well, and we really didn't have very many people around in 1952 who it seemed to me stood a chance of beating Eisenhower, and it was quite clear that Eisenhower was

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going to be nominated. I never thought for a minute that Taft would get the Republican nomination. So I used to talk to the President about how good I thought Adlai was, and he was a good Governor, he was a very good Governor of Illinois. And I think President Truman started out by feeling that Adlai would make a fine candidate, but I think he got very disgusted with him because Adlai was so, you know, undecided about whether or not he wanted to run, and I think President Truman is the kind of man, you either are or you aren't. Either you're willing to make the effort or you're not. But I think in the end that President Truman probably felt that we had nominated the best person that we could in '52. This was my own opinion.

HESS: Two other names that were mentioned in '52 were Fred Vinson and Averell Harriman. Is that correct?

EDWARDS: Well, Fred Vinson didn't stand much chance. I don't think anybody much was working for him, or thinking that he would run....and Averell Harriman, well, he had people working for him, he had quite a large organization. I worked for Averell Harriman later, in 1956. I was co-chairman of his committee that

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year, but in 1952 I really felt that we needed somebody new. And I thought Adlai had that newness and was the kind of person that would appeal...I tell you now frankly that I was almost glad he wasn't elected.

HESS: Why?

EDWARDS: Because when I watched his campaign I thought that maybe I was wrong, that he wouldn't have been a good President?

HESS: Why?

EDWARDS: He was so indecisive about things. You know, you can't be like that. You have to be able to make up your mind and then go to it. Between 1952 and 1956 I had the feeling that Adlai was trying so hard to accommodate the South that he really lost a tremendous amount of



appeal to me. I didn't want to see him nominated in 1956, in fact, I didn't think any Democrat could defeat Eisenhower in 1956, but I do think that Stevenson could have been elected in 1952. When you think that he started from practically nothing and got as many votes as he did, there wasn't a terribly wide spread as I remember, between them. I used to know those figures, but I couldn't tell you what they are now.

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I've forgotten. But he got, if you counted on his getting all the hard and fast Democratic votes that any Democrat would get, then he did pretty well, with the others and the Independents, so that if he had just done a little bit better and if he had put a little more zip into his campaign. He was too urbane. He never made people feel that he really meant to get in there and fight, and I think a President has to do that. I think he's got to. And yet, I loved Adlai Stevenson.

HESS: Why do you think that a man, such as Mr. Truman, who is known as a very decisive person, I would suppose, a very forthright person, would support a gentleman such as Mr. Stevenson who vacillated just a little bit?

EDWARDS: Well, I don't think he knew that Adlai was as vacillating, any more than I did. He wasn't as a Governor. When it came to hard decisions as a Governor, he made them, and maybe he would have as President. But as a candidate, I must say this, that Adlai really did not want to be a candidate. I mean I know that.

HESS: Did you ever discuss that with him?

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EDWARDS: Yes.

HESS: What did he say?

EDWARDS: Oh, he said that he did not want to run, and he said, "You know my marital situation," (I knew his wife quite well). He said, "My boys are of an age where it could ruin them if I went into the White House. And what's more, India, I don't know why you would want to support me, because you're a true liberal, and I'm not."

And I said, "You are, Adlai. You always have been as Governor. You always have made liberal decisions," and that was true.

I knew his record as Governor very well. I wasn't living in Illinois at that time, but I made it a point to look into it. But he never thought of himself as a liberal.

I don't know. I just think that maybe his heart wasn't in it. Maybe he always felt right from the start that Eisenhower was going to win and there wasn't much point--I don't know.

HESS: Do you know why he left his headquarters in Springfield, and didn't move it to either New York or Washington?

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EDWARDS: Well, of course, he did have headquarters here in Washington, as well as in Springfield. But he made Steve Mitchell chairman of the DNC and that practically insured his defeat. Stephen Mitchell knew no more about politics than--we could walk out here on the street and pick up any intelligent young boy and he would know as much as Steve Mitchell knew about politics.

HESS: Why was he chosen?

EDWARDS: Well, there was a lot of talk, and believe me, it was only talk, about corruption in the Truman administration. Really, the Republicans had blueprinted for us what they were going to do way back right after Truman was elected in '48. Various Republicans began making speeches, and I used to get those speeches and clip them from papers and the *Congressional Record*, and show them to the chairman. And I would say, "There it is. Corruption is going to be the big thing." The Republicans said so, they didn't make any bones about it. You think anybody ever paid any attention to me? Why, they acted as if I were a half-wit, and even my darling President Truman, when I told him that corruption was, going to be one of the big

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issues, he said, "But India, there is no corruption in my administration."

I said, "I know it, you know it, but the man in Oregon, the man in New Mexico and the man in Utah--in all the states--voters have been sold a bill of goods through the press by the Republicans that there is corruption." And I said, "Nothing's being done about it," and nothing ever was done about it.

And so I think that Adlai wanted to get as chairman somebody that he felt was completely honest, and I think Steve Mitchell was and is completely honest. But you know, that's not the only qualification that's needed for a chairman.

HESS: They have to have something else besides that, don't they?

EDWARDS: Yes.

HESS: And just before that time, President Truman had appointed Frank McKinney as Democratic National Committee chairman. What was your opinion of Mr. McKinney?

EDWARDS: Well, I made a great effort to admire Mr. McKinney and to like him but I grew to believe that his critics were at least partially right.

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President Truman offered me the chairmanship of the committee before he asked the committee to elect Frank McKinney. In October, I would think it was early October, it was just after Bill Boyle was out.

HESS: Full chairmanship of the committee?

EDWARDS: Yes. And I used to see the President quite often. I used to have to see him very often because I was the one who carried the programs that were unpopular and that the chairman didn't want me to touch. But the President always wanted me to do it. They were the President's health program, which you know now is the law of the land, Medicare, and the Brannan farm plan, and a lot of that has been adopted. The chairman would say to me, "Stop talking about the President's health plan. Don't say another word about it. Don't mention the Brannan farm plan."

And I'd go over to see the President. I'd say, "The chairman wants me to stop talking about these things, how about it?"

"India, I want you to continue to talk about them."

And, of course, I used to see him a lot about the appointment of women and so on. So, I saw him soon

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after Bill Boyle left and he said, "India, I'm thinking of making a woman chairman of the committee. What would you think of that?"

And I said, "I wouldn't think very well of it."

I think I'm quoting the exact words. He said, "Well, if I told you that the woman is sitting here opposite me, would that change your opinion?"

And I said, "No, I still wouldn't think it would be the proper thing to do."

And he said, "Why not?"

And then he said some very complimentary things about the work I had done over the years. And the fact that when Bill Boyle was ill, and he was ill a great deal of the time when he was chairman, he said, "You've been running the committee." Well, anyway, he was very complimentary. And he said, "There never has been a woman chairman of either one of the major parties, and I think you deserve it, and I would like to see you have that honor."

Now, I'm sure that the President meant what he said, but I also think that my good name had a good deal to do with it. My reputation as a person of integrity. But I said to him, "This is October. Next

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year we have to elect a President"--and of course, this was before President Truman had said he wasn't going to run, and I said, "I don't think the men of the party are ready to have a woman chairman."

He said, "They would be after they had worked with you for a while."

HESS: To be chairman of the national party would have been quite an honor. Have you in the years since had any regrets that you didn't take him up on that offer?

EDWARDS: Yes, it was a bad mistake that I made. The thing was that I really didn't think that the men were ready, and I told the President that. I said, "I feel that if it were a year earlier, then I might be willing to run the risk. But it is too close to a presidential election, and if anything went wrong they'd blame it on the woman." He said, "Well, they can work with you just the way they would work with a man."

The President was always very kind, and he had told the reporter for the *Saturday Evening Post* and various people who had been to see him, when they were writing stories about me, "I treat India the way

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I treat a man. She never cries, she never carries on that way." He also said, "I'm sure they would like working with you just as well as with a man."

And I said, "I'm not sure about that. It would take too much time. And I'll tell you Mr. President, if I were chairman of the committee, I would be so busy protecting my rear I could never look forward."

He loved that and he understood it. He said, "I guess you're right." So, it was shortly after that that he appointed Frank McKinney. There was a lot of criticism of Frank McKinney in the press and so on and so forth. He worked hard but I wasn't sorry to see Adlai Stevenson let him go after Adlai was nominated.

But I must say that Frank was one thousand percent better than Steve Mitchell. Frank McKinney knew something about politics, and Steve Mitchell didn't know anything. And that may well have contributed to Adlai Stevenson's defeat in '52, having divided headquarters as he did, with Wilson Wyatt in charge of the Springfield headquarters. Now, I personally think that Wilson Wyatt is a good politician, but Steve Mitchell was in charge in Washington. And Steve, I'm sure he considered Wilson Wyatt and me his enemies rather than

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the Republicans.

I always blamed myself very much. I showed very little perspicacity and really not as good sense as I should have had, and as I think I ordinarily have shown, in that when Steve Mitchell became chairman that I didn't recognize immediately the kind of man he was. I just took it for granted that he would know that I was on his team, and that the one thing in the world that I wanted was to see Adlai Stevenson elected, and that I would do anything that I could to help. But I shouldn't have done that. That was all wrong. I tried to deal with him the way I had dealt with Bill Boyle and with Howard McGrath and with Gael Sullivan and with President Truman, just man to man, you know. And that wasn't the way to deal with Steve Mitchell. I should have been sweet and clinging and utterly feminine, always asking his advice, because this is what he wanted.

When the campaign was over, I went into his office one day, and I said, "Steve, it's perfectly apparent to me how much you dislike me. I don't really care. It doesn't bother me one way or the other, but I'm very curious to know why, because I could have been of

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great help to you in this campaign but you never gave me a chance."

And he said, "Well, it was always so apparent to me that you wanted my job."

And I said, "My dear man, President Truman offered me the chairmanship last October, and I had sense enough to turn it down." He smiled. I'm sure he didn't believe me.

He said, "And another thing, if you didn't want my job, why did you sent your three friends to me immediately after I was elected by the executive committee," (he wasn't elected by the full committee, just by the executive committee) And he continued: "Then why did you send your three friends to me and have them suggest to me that you could be of great help to me?"

I said, "I don't know what you're talking about. I didn't send any friends to you. Who were they?"

He said, "You know who you sent."

I replied, "I didn't send anybody to see you, Steve. I really am at a loss to understand you." I didn't know, I'm sure--let's see, that was in 1952, I didn't know until at least ten years after that

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what he was talking about.

One time, here at a national committee meeting--although I had nothing to do with the committee, they always invited me to come to the meetings, Cal [Calvin] Rawlings and I had worked very closely together, and he said to me this day, "You know, India, I think that Jack [Jacob M.] Arvey and Dave Lawrence and I did you a great disservice back when Steve Mitchell was elected chairman of the committee."

And I asked, "What was that?"

He said, "After the meeting Steve said, 'Now you know, I know very little about politics. I'm going to have to depend greatly on you three; (they were the three big men of the national committee), I hope you're going to be willing to come down here and consult with me any time I need you, and that you will be at the other end of the telephone all the time,' and we all said we would be."

And then Cal said he spoke up and said, "You're very lucky in that you've got here as the vice chairman a really good politician. She can be of enormous help to you." And he said Steve stiffened up and said, "You

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mean India?"

And Cal and Jack and Dave all said, "Yes." Cal then told me, "We saw then it wasn't a very welcome idea, that he didn't care for it." Of course, that's what he was talking about. He thought that I had sent them. And I didn't know anything about it until as I said, at least ten years had passed.

Then I said to Steve, "Why did you dislike me aside from that. If you thought I was trying to get your job [which I said I wasn't] why did you dislike me so?"

He said, "Well, you always got a much better press than I did."

I said, "Yes, and I always will. There's no question about that."

HESS: You mentioned Colonel Arvey, and in '48 he was one of the Eisenhower supporters, is that correct?

EDWARDS: I don't remember. I don't know whether he was or not. And I certainly wouldn't want to say so if I wasn't sure.

HESS: Back to the events in 1948, what effect did you think that J. Strom Thurmond and the States' Rights Party would have on the election?

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EDWARDS: Oh, I wasn't a bit worried about that.

HESS: Why?

EDWARDS: Because we could afford to lose some Southern States and it wouldn't make any difference and that's exactly what happened.

HESS: Why did you take that view, though? It seems to me that the Democratic Party has always tried to placate the South, hold the South in...

EDWARDS: Oh, I know, but the time had come when we didn't have to do that any more. And President Truman certainly did not do it in 1948. And if he had he would have lost the election. He would have lost the North. He had to win in the North. He had to carry Ohio, Illinois, California, of course, he didn't carry New York State, but he almost did, and Pennsylvania. But if he had put himself in the position of kowtowing to those narrow-minded southerners, he would never have been elected.

You see, I traveled with him all during most of the campaign and I used to be on the train--I've forgotten the dates, but we were out, I would say, during all of October and a lot of September. We started out right after Labor Day I think. I had something to do with

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Mrs. Truman and Margaret also being along all the time. I don't know that they would have thanked me for it, but I was after Howard McGrath all the time, telling him that the President had to take his wife and his daughter with him. So I sold Howard and Bill Boyle, who ran the campaign train, on the idea. Then it was suggested that I should go along, too. It was really the first time that a woman had ever gone on the--President Roosevelt made a few trips--of course, in his condition he didn't make very many trips, and they never before had had a woman politician on a campaign train, and I went along to look after the women, and I did.

But as I said, I had been in the newspaper business a good many years, and I was supposed to know something about reporting and I used to get off the train at the stops and I would circulate among the people and I just knew the President was going to be re-elected. There wasn't any question about it. I would get back on the train and go back in the press car. I knew all the newspapermen and women on board, and I would say, "You goons should have sense enough to get off the train and circulate a little bit." They

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would sit in the press car and listen to the speeches over the loudspeaker system, and I said, "If you'd see the reaction of the people, you'd know that they are going to vote this man into office."

We would go into little, tiny towns, just stop for a few minutes, and I tell you, I think everybody in the town would be out, and people from miles around. They wouldn't have been coming just to see a President they were going to vote against. They wanted to see what kind of a guy he was. And they went away adoring him. And they loved seeing the way he introduced Mrs. Truman as "The Boss." They loved Margaret. It got so every place--you know, Margaret never would get up very early in the morning so when we'd have early morning stops Margaret wouldn't be there. Then they'd call, "We want Margaret."

It was really great fun. I remember one time I was having breakfast on the train with the President and Mrs. Truman. I didn't ordinarily, but they invited me to breakfast one morning, and

the President said, "You know, sometimes India I think there are only two people in the United States who really think

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I'm going to be elected President. And they're both sitting at this table and one of them is not my wife."

HESS: He thought you and he were the only two.

EDWARDS: The only two at the time.

HESS: What other duties did you have on the campaign, what comes to mind when you look back on those days?

EDWARDS: Oh, well, of course, I had tremendous duties, great responsibility, because I had planned the entire Democratic record show, that series of radio shows that we had that we bought time for. They were a great success, and I was really nasty about that. I insisted upon planning them exactly as I wanted for I knew exactly what I wanted. Jack Redding and I used to fight like a cat and a dog because he wanted to run it. I said, "You can't do it; I won't have it. If necessary I'll go to the President, because you have no conception of what it is I want to put over." The advertising agency had to handle it, but I made them hire a woman writer, and I said, "I insist upon having the veto on every show. No platter is to be finished until I have okayed it." I would fly to New York about every five or six days and spend a day there.

HESS: Do you recall who they hired to write those?

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EDWARDS: Margot Gayle was the name of the woman whom I had them employ. She was a professional radio writer. She was also active in Democratic politics. I wasn't going to hand that series over to a bunch of men, because that wasn't the idea of what we wanted to do. They were really very good shows, very successful. Of course, Jack, afterwards was quite willing to admit that they were very successful. But he didn't have a thing to do with them.

Jack Redding was one of those who didn't think that the President was going to be elected. I don't know whether you know it or not, but Jack Redding--I really had to laugh when that book of his came out. You know, he never spent one day on the campaign train, not one hour. I pled with Bill Boyle for them not to kick Jack Redding upstairs when they did. In fact, I think I was responsible for keeping him quite a long time after the President wanted them to get rid of him, because I said the committee had a big investment in him, which it did. I said, "You kept him all the time where he wasn't of any real value, and now when he can be of some value, you're going to let him go. It's just ridiculous.

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HESS: Why did they want to let him go?

EDWARDS: Because the President knew that he [Redding] didn't think Truman was going to be elected. Howard McGrath didn't think he was going to be elected, either.

HESS: Did you hear him say so?

EDWARDS: He said so to me.

HESS: What did he say?

EDWARDS: He said to me one day, "India, we're operating a holding operation. Everybody knows that Truman doesn't stand a chance of being elected, so we're just operating a holding operation. You're foolish to be killing yourself the way you are."

I said, "Well, I don't happen to agree with you. I think he is going to be elected," and now Howard's dead, so perhaps I should not tell this but I think President Truman must have known that.

HESS: That he felt that way?

EDWARDS: I think he must have. I've never discussed it with him, but I think he must have known. But I tell you, Howard McGrath was a wonderful man to work with. Nobody could have been better than he was, as far as I was concerned. He really was a very nice man. I know there was one time when something came up and I

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said, "Howard, you've got to get on the plane and get right out to the presidential train and tell the President that he must do thus and so."

And Howard said, "Well, I'm not going to do it."

And I said, "Do you mind if I do it?"

He said, "I don't care what you do. You can kill yourself if you want to. The way you're working you will, but I'm not going to do it."

Well, I did it, and oh, when I think about it now I am appalled at the way I used to advise the President.

HESS: Do you recall what the issue was?

EDWARDS: Yes, but I am not going to tell you. But I used to offer advice on many occasions during all the years I worked for the committee.

I believe I will tell you about the incident that I made reference to.

There was a story in the papers that President Truman had thought of sending Fred Vinson, who I think was then Chief Justice--I don't know whether he was Chief Justice then or not, I'm not sure about that, in '48, he was, wasn't he--and he thought of sending him to Russia to talk to Stalin. And the papers played this

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up as a dreadful thing. That's when I went in to Howard and I said, "This is something you can't telephone, you can't trust anything, you've got to go in person, right now, in an hour, get out there and urge the President to say, 'Yes, I did think of it, and I would do it if it would do any good.'" I said, "This will make a big hit with the women, he must not repudiate it."

Now, I don't know whether the President would have repudiated it, he might just have ignored it and not said anything, you know, let it go by. But I felt it was terribly important for him to say, "Yes," that he would do it, and he did.

HESS: And did you go out to speak with him?

EDWARDS: I certainly did.

HESS: Do you know where that idea came up, the Vinson mission to Moscow that never came off?

EDWARDS: No. I never knew anything more about it than that.

HESS: Harking back to the convention that year, what do you recall of the Hubert Humphrey and Andrew J. Biemiller plank that was put through?

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EDWARDS: Well, of course, I recall quite a lot about it. And the President was not there, of course, at that time, he was in Washington, and I don't know how he felt about it. As it turned out it was the best thing that ever happened to him. It was a great thing, really, and it was quite a fight. I approved of it.

I'll tell you something, I think this might be a good place to say, for instance, one of the reasons why I think that Steve Mitchell was a calamity for the Democratic Party. I've already told you that I asked him very soon after the election why he disliked me so much and found out, and I said to him, "I know you'd like to get rid of me. You'd like to have me leave the committee as soon as possible, but I am an elected official just as you are, and I'm going to leave sometime fairly soon, but it will be when I am good and ready, not when you want me to go. I'm going to stay on until I am ready to leave." So I did resign in October of 1953. And the thing that brought about my resignation at that time was that I went to a Southern regional conference that we held, and the national committeemen and women and state

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chairmen and state vice chairmen from the Southern States came in. The conference was in Birmingham, and they were supposed to report on what they had been doing since the '52 election.

Steve Mitchell and I sat side by side at a table in a room with these people assembled, there were maybe nine states represented, and every single one who spoke, did not say one word about any kind of organization work that they had been doing in the months since the election. All they did was damn Harry Truman. I never heard such language used about a man as these Southerners, Dixiecrats, used about President Truman. I sat there, getting more angry every minute. I was not presiding, I, of course, as vice chairman was just sitting beside the chairman, and Steve Mitchell smiled and let them go on. If I had been presiding I would have said, "Excuse me, that is not what we're here for, and you don't talk like this about a former President of the United States, and the leader of our party."

But he didn't stop them, and finally a man from Mississippi made the most scurrilous remarks about Truman and then he told in great detail about how they had

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tried to get Howard McGrath, when he was chairman in 1948, to come to their hotel suite so that they could talk to him about the situation, but that Howard McGrath said he'd be glad to talk to them, but they must come to his suite. He was perfectly justified in doing that, but that they wouldn't do. And so they never got together. And so this schism developed and some of them southerners had walked out of the convention. The Mississippian said, "And I want to say, Mr. Chairman, that I feel that we now have a chairman who wouldn't treat us like that."

Steve said, "No, you certainly haven't. I would crawl on my knees over broken glass to meet you." And that made me sick at my stomach and I got up--I was sitting in a straight chair--and I turned my chair around and turned my back on him and sat like that the rest of the meeting.

HESS: Did he ever comment on that?

EDWARDS: No, and I never mentioned it to him. But we had a dinner that night out at some country club, and this dreadful man from Mississippi, sat--it was a rather narrow table--opposite me, and I never spoke to him. And finally he leaned across and said, "Miss India, we're going to have a

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Jefferson-Jackson dinner sometime soon and I do wish you'd come and speak to us."

And I said, "I wouldn't come and speak to you if you offered me ten million dollars, and you know very well you don't want me, either. You and I are miles apart in our ideas. I can't even bear to talk to you this much. So, let's consider the conversation at an end."

HESS: On the subject of civil rights, there are those who say that Mr. Truman's actions and pronouncements on that subject were designed from the standpoint of political expediency, and that he wasn't serious when he seemed to be backing such measures. What are your comments on that statement?

EDWARDS: I think some of both might be true. I mean, I think that President Truman is a very shrewd politician, but I think he's a completely honest man, and I think that he may well have started backing the civil rights movement as political expedient. After all, remember where he came from and his family. It could be that his support of civil rights started that way, but I am sure that he came to believe fervently that Negroes should have equal opportunity, just as I felt that

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Lyndon Johnson did.

They used to laugh at me in 1960 when I would say that Lyndon Johnson was a liberal. Well, Lyndon Johnson is a real liberal. He's proven that. I had much too much respect for President Truman to ever think that he backed the civil rights movement as strongly as he did just as a matter of political expediency.

HESS: What effect did you think that Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party was going to have on that election?

EDWARDS: Well, I was worried about that. I think that, of course, is what took New York from President Truman, but I didn't think Wallace would have much effect any place except New York.

HESS: What do you think could have been done to counter Wallace's attraction to some of the liberal elements?

EDWARDS: I think that everything that could be done was done. I mean, I don't see where anything more could have been done.

HESS: At the time that you were traveling on the train, did you help on any of the speeches?

EDWARDS: No, no. Sometimes I talked to Clark [Clifford], but I can't say that I really helped with any of the speeches.

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HESS: Do you recall how those speeches were written on the train, who worked on the speech drafts?

EDWARDS: Oh, there were so many people, apparently, who were writing. Of course, Clark was the main one. I really can't remember who the others were. They were mostly cooped up in bedrooms, up in the front of the train, or in the back of the train, I've forgotten which. I know the President used to try them out on Mrs. Truman before he gave them.

HESS: Did she help with criticism and with wording?

EDWARDS: I think she probably did. Now, I never saw her do it, but I think he relied on her very greatly and on her judgment. I just want to tell you that there is one of the finest human beings I've ever known in my life, and I think one of the best politicians.

HESS: Mrs. Truman?

EDWARDS: Yes, she really was wonderful, and he did rely on her to a great extent.

HESS: Looking back on those days, what were the major speeches that were given when you were present? Were you there when they went to Madison Square Garden, or when they went out to Harlem?

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EDWARDS: Yes, yes, and over to Brooklyn.

HESS: Over to Brooklyn?

EDWARDS: I remember Tallulah Bankhead at, I guess it was Madison Square Garden, wasn't it?

HESS: I'm not sure.

EDWARDS: Yes, I know it was. She made quite a speech for us, for the President.

I remember more the sort of extemporaneous speaking that the President did in that campaign from the back platform than I do the more formal, written speeches. When he would get out there on the back platform and just talk is when he really made the greatest impression.

HESS: How much attention did you pay to the polls that year?

EDWARDS: Not any more than I do any year.

HESS: How much do you usually pay attention to them?

EDWARDS: I just think that they are absolutely unreliable when it comes to the election of a President, and I think they are vicious. I wish there were some way they could be prevented, because I think that they affect people, and I don't think they are accurate.

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I don't believe in them at all. I do believe in polling on opinions and on various things like that, but I just think that the sampling is not great enough, and I don't think people necessarily tell the truth, I don't think they even always know what the truth is when they answer. So I just don't believe in political polls and I do think, as I said, that they are vicious.

HESS: How important did you think the so-called Negro vote was going to be that year?

EDWARDS: Well, I thought it was important. I thought it would be very important, particularly in view of the plank in the platform. I thought the President had to uphold that in order to--as I remember, there were only 15,000,000 or something like that who voted, maybe less, but even so, it's very important in the big cities.

HESS: Were there any special efforts made by the Women's Division to attract the votes of Negro women?

EDWARDS: Well, for the very first time in the history of the committee I had a Negro as one of my top assistants. Always before the committee had had what they called

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"The Negro Division," and I said, "I won't have that." I said, "We are going to have an integrated Women's Division." All the Negroes worked together in--I think they called it the Negro Division in the '44 campaign. In '48 I got Mrs. Venice Spraggs, a brilliant, wonderful Negro woman, who worked for the *Chicago Defender*, and she took a leave of absence and came in as one of my chief assistants. I also had a Negro secretary as well as a white one.

HESS: Were there any other minority groups that were watched with any particular interest?

EDWARDS: I think we watched them all. I did a good deal of work with minority groups at that time. I've forgotten the name of the man who handled that.

HESS: Michel Cieplinski.

EDWARDS: Yes, and he arranged several meetings for me. I talked to a large group of editors of foreign newspapers, for instance, at a meeting that Mike arranged at the Advertising Club, I think that was the name of it, in New York. We got reams and reams of publicity on that, and then I spoke at several meetings, I've forgotten what they were, some Polish celebrations, some Czech, I don't remember, it was so long ago. Yes,

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we did quite a lot, and I am told that we did more work with minorities in that campaign than has ever been done since.

HESS: Are there any particular issues other than civil rights that would appeal more to a member of a minority race than it might to other people. In other words would housing appeal more?

EDWARDS: Oh, yes, I think housing, and education.

HESS: Medicare?

EDWARDS: Yes, I think all those things, because most people in a minority group are poor people, and anything that has to do with raising their standard of living, I think, is very important to them.

I'll tell you one amusing thing that happened. I was having a news conference about something or other, I don't remember what, in the '48 campaign. One of the reporters said, "Is it true, Mrs. Edwards, that President Truman has given instructions that no one is ever to mention Governor Dewey's military record, or rather lack of military record?"

I said, "Yes, that's true. We have all been asked not to."

And this reporter went on and said, "What do you

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think made President Truman give an order like this?"

And I said, "Well, I guess just his innate sense of decency, what else?"

And that made every newspaper, I think, in the United States. I found out afterwards that Fred Blumenthal, who worked in the public relations division had planted the question, which I thought was very funny. I said, "Fred, you were taking a terrible chance. I might not have said anything that was..."

He said, "I knew you would."

HESS: He knew you'd come up with something newsworthy. On September 27th, 1948, the President's recorded remarks on Democratic Women's Day were broadcast over the American Broadcasting Network. The President spoke on high prices and how the 80th Congress had forced them on the public. Do you recall that?

EDWARDS: Oh, indeed, yes. He did it from the train, and I was sitting there beside him.

HESS: You introduced him.

EDWARDS: Yes. Yes, I remember that very well.

HESS: That was sort of a traditional thing, with the President speaking on Democratic Women's Day.

EDWARDS: It used to be, it isn't anymore, they don't do it

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anymore: But it was in those days. It had started with President Roosevelt, because Democratic Women's Day had been suggested by Mrs. Roosevelt. The first year that I was with the committee after Harry Truman had become President, I asked George Killion, who was then treasurer, for money enough to either buy some time on the radio for Democratic Women's Day or to have some platters made and send them out around the country, but that wasn't as satisfactory as having the time, and George said, "No, certainly not."

I said, "O.K., that's all right. I'll have a program just the same."

He said, "What will you have?"

I said, "Well, I'm going to ask the President to play the piano, and Margaret to sing."

George said, "I'll bet you would at that."

I said, "Of course, I intend to. If you won't give me the money, what else can I do? I've got to have a program for the women."

And he said, "Do you think he'll do it?"

I said, "Oh, I wouldn't be a bit surprised but what he'd do it."

He said, "All right, what will it cost. Let me

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know."

HESS: Did you get the money out of him?

EDWARDS: Oh, indeed, yes.

HESS: Why was that dropped in later years?

EDWARDS: Well, Democratic Women's Day was really a fundraising thing, gimmick, and it used to be when it was started that they gave a third of what they raised to the Democratic National Committee, a third to the state, and then the local organizations kept a third. But times



change and in about 1954 they began having "Dollars for Democrats" instead. They still have Democratic Women's Day in certain places, but they don't make much of it; they don't plug it the way we used to.

HESS: Did you receive any assistance in your efforts from some of the White House staff members? We've mentioned Mr. Clifford, but perhaps Charles Murphy, and Charlie Ross?

EDWARDS: Oh, what would we have done without some of those people? I couldn't have done anything without Don Dawson. He was my great ally. He was, you know, in charge of the patronage. Don and I worked very closely together. And of course, Charlie Murphy, when he

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succeeded Clark Clifford, and Ken Hechler, who is now a Congressman from West Virginia, and oh, so many whose names I can't even remember.

HESS: Matthew Connelly?

EDWARDS: Matt Connelly. Oh yes, Matt, of course, was the appointments secretary, and Matt and I were always fairly good friends, but I didn't have occasion to ask for the same cooperation from him that I had from the others.

HESS: Did you get good cooperation from Donald Dawson?

EDWARDS: Oh, it couldn't have been better. Don was wonderful.

HESS: Was he quite effective as personnel manager?

EDWARDS: As far as I could tell, he certainly was.

HESS: What in your opinion were the biggest issues in the '48 campaign?

EDWARDS: Well, I think that the do-nothing 80th Congress, and all the things that the Congress had refused to do, which encompasses a great many things, high prices, housing. I mean, prices, of course, are so high now, that it seems kind of funny. Today I bought a pound of round steak, which was \$1.19. I remember that in 1948, when I used the pound of round steak at the

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convention, I believe that we had paid something like 89¢ for it that day, which was terribly high over what it had been. But salaries have gone up too, incomes have gone up in the years since then. I think that all of those things, the conservation issues were terribly important. The Republican 80th Congress had just shut down on everything. As I remember there was no foreign policy in '48 that was of paramount importance.

A great many places that I would go with the Trumans, we would leave the train and go to a--of course, nobody spoke but the President when he spoke from the train, but we would go to a hall

or an auditorium or a hotel ballroom and many times I would be asked to make a brief speech. It's kind of hard to make a brief speech when the President is there. It's sort of embarrassing really. What I used to do was, when I found out that they were going to expect me to do a little warming up before the President spoke, I would ask them--I guess they would all think I was a little crazy--I would say, "Would you mind going by a drugstore or any place that's open and letting me buy a bar of Ivory soap?" I would go in and buy a bar of Ivory soap. I had the prices of all the different size cakes of soap, before

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price controls were lifted. I also had the prices of the essential oils and fats and things that went into the making of the soap. Now, Proctor and Gamble was a closed corporation so that I did not have any stock prices or any thing of that kind, but I could make a three or four minute speech just with a cake of soap in my hand, as to how high prices had gone up. In some town in West Virginia, I think it was Charleston, I paid the highest price I'd ever paid any place across the country, and I bought soap in many, many places. I've forgotten the exact prices now, but say I paid 23¢ for a cake of soap which had been about 17¢ before. These prices are probably not correct, because I don't remember. But it was something like that. So I waved this cake of soap and said how inexcusable it was, which it was. There was no reason in the world for that soap to have gone up that much. The national committeeman of West Virginia called me a few days later after I was in New York, and he said, "I want to tell you that every bar of Ivory soap disappeared from the shelves the day after you spoke. Proctor and Gamble called them in or something."

HESS: You were shaking up the company.

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Did you think that there were any issues that might have seemed more important to women voters than to men?

EDWARDS: Well, I thought the high prices were terribly important to the women. You know, we had trailers out, "Housewives for Truman."

HESS: I understand you organized that, is that right?

EDWARDS: Yes. One member of my staff would go out, and then the rest on the trailer would be local women. The idea was that they were going to live on the trailers, that was my original idea, but that didn't prove feasible, so they used to stay in hotels and motels and the trailer was fixed up, all decorated on the outside. The states provided their own trailers. We provided the props that were inside, and they had very much the same kind of thing that I had had at the convention showing the difference in prices, and the women would crowd into them and look at the things, and look at the comparisons of prices. I organized it and it was my idea, but I'll tell you, if I hadn't had the wonderful staff I had, we couldn't have done these things. I had a wonderful staff in 1948.

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HESS: How important do you think the Taft-Hartley veto was to Mr. Truman's victory in 1948?

EDWARDS: I should imagine it was very important in labor ranks.

HESS: Do you think that an issue like that would appeal less to women than it would to men, a labor measure?

EDWARDS: Yes, unless the woman was the wife of a union member. I don't think that otherwise it would matter very much.

HESS: To the overall spectrum of womankind, high prices would be the most important issue.

EDWARDS: I think so.

HESS: Jack Redding in his book, *Inside the Democratic Party* states that Creekmore Fath, Gael Sullivan's assistant had proposed that the *Democratic Women's Digest* be taken over by the publicity division and converted into a general political vehicle for the committee. What do you recall about that episode?

EDWARDS: Oh, I recall plenty about that. That wasn't the first time. The men of the publicity division had been trying to get hold of the *Democratic Digest* long before I ever went with the committee, and they had never been able to do it, and yet Creek brought that

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up and I caught it and he didn't get it.

After the defeat in 1952, Clayton Fritchey, then with the committee, I don't think he was the head of publicity, I think Sam Brightman was head of publicity, Clayton was something or other, I don't know what they called him, but he had some fancy title. Clayton decided he wanted to run the *Democratic Digest*, and I'm ashamed to say that by that time I guess I was just so tired I couldn't fight anymore, and I let him have it.

What a mess they--well, of course, they lost millions on it, and finally they had to stop publishing it. It was such a good magazine when the Women's Division published it. Clayton tried to make it into a political *New Yorker*. Well, it just wouldn't work, you couldn't do it.

What the *Democratic Digest* was, and I sent the entire file to the Truman Library, they have a set from the very first issue through to the end, all indexed. It was of great value to the people in the party. For instance, I often saw men making speeches, just reading from the *Democratic Digest*. In the early days, this is before I was with the committee, they used

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to sell the *Digest*, and then because of the Corrupt Practices Act or something of that sort, they couldn't sell it. And so, theoretically we sent it to anybody who contributed a dollar to the committee, but actually we sent it to anybody who wanted it, because our theory was, and I hope the committee is going to come back to having this philosophy again, they have not had it for some time, that it is a service organization, and that the Democratic National Committee has no reason to exist except to run the convention and to be of assistance to the people out in the states between conventions. If you're going to make them pay for every piece of paper that you send them, why, you're not going to send them many, because they don't order if they don't have the money.

We used to get out rainbow flyers on issues, and we used to try to service the people who were to win the election. But since 1952 they started in and charged for every single thing. It may be because television is so expensive that they feel they can't afford to spend much on printing. But at the national committee meeting the other day they talked as if there were going to be a change of attitude. I hope so.

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HESS: A point that we have touched upon, but in the 1948 campaign, Mr. Truman spoke out far more against the 80th Congress than he did against Governor Dewey.

EDWARDS: Oh, he practically never mentioned Dewey's name.

HESS: Why was that decision made, do you know?

EDWARDS: Well, now that, I would suppose, was a decision that was made by him and his top advisers. It was certainly a very smart decision.

HESS: Why?

EDWARDS: Well, because he had nothing to attack Dewey on, really. Truman was very fortunate, as it turned out it was very fortunate that the Republicans won in '46. Truman might not have won in '48 if he had not had that Congress to attack. And he slashed them, believe me.

HESS: Were you present at any of the times that Governor Dewey spoke?

EDWARDS: No. I never heard Governor Dewey speak.

HESS: Looking back, were there any major mistakes, any strategic mistakes in campaign strategy on the part of the Republicans?

EDWARDS: Well, of course, in '48 I think their overconfidence was their greatest mistake. They were so completely

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confident that I don't think it ever entered their heads that Truman was going to win, and so I just don't think they bothered very much about anything.

They had had a very brilliant woman at the head of their organization for women in 1946. She did a magnificent job that year. You remember in '46, you don't remember in '46 because you were too young, but anyway, they used the slogan "Had enough?" Marion Martin was very good and she capitalized on that; she organized the women and I think Marion Martin deserved a lot of credit for the victory that they had in 1946. And they fired her, Taft didn't like her. Well, she was tough, and I'll tell you, you have to be tough to survive in a political game. If you're not, you're going to be a namby-pamby nothing, and you might as well not be there.

HESS: As Mr. Truman says: "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen."

EDWARDS: I must tell you about the letter President Truman wrote about me one time. It was after Averell Harriman was Governor of New York, and a friend of mine called me one day and she said that Senator [James] Mead had resigned as director of the Washington office of the

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New York State Department of Commerce, and she said, "India, you ought to have that job. You could do it."

I said, "I don't know whether I could or not. I don't know what is involved."

She said, "I'd love to see you have it and I know Averell Harriman would appoint you if someone would just suggest it to him."

I said, "Well, I'm not going to suggest it to him." I had worked for him in 1956 and this was in 1957. So I wrote President Truman and I said, "I don't know exactly what that job involves, but you probably do, and if you think I could do it, and Jim Mead is leaving, perhaps you wouldn't mind writing Averell a note and suggesting it to him. Because I would love to have a job."

And so the dear President wrote him a note. I think I can almost quote it word for word. He sent me a copy of it. I thought this would be the end. I didn't think I'd ever hear from Averell again. It said:

Dear Averell.

You know what a fine job India has always done. She is a rough and tumble politician who knows most of the answers, and I think she would make a great director of the

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Washington office of the New York State Department of Commerce.

And I laughed when I got the letter and I said to my husband, "I don't know that Averell wants a rough and tumble politician." But anyway, Averell called me as soon as he got the letter, and he said--he didn't tell me that President Truman had written him, he acted as if it were his own idea--"It just occurred to me that maybe you would take this job." Wasn't that cute?

HESS: Yes. Would you characterize yourself as a rough and tumble politician?

EDWARDS: Well I don't know exactly but I know I'm tough. Lots of people, politicians and newspaper people particularly who have come to my home and--we used to live twenty-five miles in the country and when *Life* was doing a story on me they sent two men out and they spent a couple of days at my house; all said, "But you're so feminine; you're such a homemaker." They must have thought I was an old battleaxe or something of the sort. But I tell you, you have to be tough.

HESS: What is your definition of a politician, and what is your definition of politics?

EDWARDS: Well, I think politics is the art of running the

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government, and some place I read that politicians are the secular priests of our form of government, and that if they neglect their duties, that the entire democratic system falls to pieces, because everybody in a democracy can't be attending to politics.

I think it's a very high calling myself, and I want to say that I have found just as much, and maybe even more, honor and integrity among politicians as I have among newspaper people. Those are the two groups I know best.

I think that it's very sad the disdain with which people regard politicians but I think it's changing. I really think it is changing for the better, but you know that there is a great feeling of disdain among average persons for politicians. And I think that's very sad, because I think that politicians are necessary and needed in our form of government. What would happen to us, how would it operate if it weren't for them?

HESS: Could you tell me about the events of election evening in 1948?

EDWARDS: Oh, that was the greatest night: The committee had a party at the Biltmore as they used to do--I don't

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know what they do anymore, they do things differently now. And a lot of people were sitting around as if it were a morgue, a wake is what I mean. As a matter of fact, Howard McGrath and I had an inside room with desks, sort of an office where we could go, and Jim Farley was in there, and when Ohio went for Truman I said, "Now, we're in."

I'll never forget Jim, his glasses down on his nose, and he said, "It's too early, it's too early."

And Howard said, "Oh. India, we all know how you feel, but..." He really did not concede victory until twelve o'clock the next day. Truman really had won hours before that. And Molly Dewson, probably the smartest woman politician I ever knew, she was vice chairman, came in with Roosevelt in '33, and was vice chairman until Gladys Tillett took over in '42, I think it was. Molly came from Maine, and she was a typical salty Maine person. She was quite elderly by 1948, and she came down that night to the Biltmore and I'll never forget when she left about eleven o'clock, she put her arms around me and leaned over and kissed me and said, "Oh, India, you're a great sport. You know as well as I do that he doesn't

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stand a chance, and yet here you are acting as if everything is O.K."

I said, "Well, it's going to be, Molly. I'm not putting on an act. I know that it's going to be all right."

My husband left the party and went up to bed in the Biltmore. Of course, I stayed up all night, and didn't go to bed until after Howard conceded that Truman had won, at noon the next day. But I'll never forget, I had on a black lace dress, long, and somebody had sent me two orchids and somebody else had sent me one, and if there's anything in life I despise it's purple orchids, but I had to wear them, because of the people who had sent them to me. So I had these three purple orchids and I looked like a DAR for sure. They must have been a little wilted the next morning, and along about nine or ten o'clock, somebody grabbed me and wanted me to come on television, because I was saying that we were in, Truman was in, even though Howard hadn't admitted that we were. I must have looked awfully queer on that television show at that time of the morning in a black lace dress...

HESS: And your purple orchids.

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EDWARDS: But let me tell you a wonderful thing Howard McGrath did. When he finally put in the call, and Jim Farley stayed all that time too, when Howard put in a call for the President, I think it was to Kansas City, not Independence, about twelve noon, he said, "Congratulations, Mr. President," or something of that sort, and before he said another word, he said, "But now I want you to talk to the person who really had faith all the time, and who knew you were going to win." And he turned the telephone over to me. And what do you suppose I did?

HESS: What did you do?

EDWARDS: I burst out crying.

HESS: A very feminine reaction.

EDWARDS: I'm not a crying woman, though, but I mean--the tension was just, you know, built up. Now that shows you what a nice man Howard McGrath was. I don't know how much you know about politics but that's very unlike...

HESS: ...most politicians.

EDWARDS: Yes.

HESS: You have been credited with being responsible for the appointment of several women to major government

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posts, and with pointing out the necessity of such appointments to President Truman and to the chairmen of the Democratic National Committee. Could you tell me about the role of the development of women in government, and if you would, a little of what you see as your contribution in that development?

EDWARDS: Well, of course, President Roosevelt appointed some women to government posts, and to serve on commissions and things, but remember that President Roosevelt had Eleanor Roosevelt right at his elbow all the time, and they knew many professional women. So I think that was quite understandable and I know that Mrs. R. was always urging him to appoint women. But when President Truman became President, at least this is the way I analyzed it, I would doubt that he and Mrs. Truman knew any professional women.

During the time that Gladys Tillett was running the Women's Division, which during the Truman administration would have been from April 1945 when he became President, until 1947, I think it was (I sort of forget dates), she'd go over to see the President and talk to him about appointing women to office, and she'd always take me with her. And we'd leave and she'd

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say, "Now, don't you think he sounded very encouraging? Don't you think he's really going to appoint so-and-so to such-and-such an office?"

And I'd say, "No. Gladys, I don't. I don't think he has the slightest idea of appointing her."

And she'd be so disappointed, and he wouldn't appoint her. I said, "Gladys, you don't go about it the right way. He doesn't know any of these women. You are treating him just the same way you would President Roosevelt, and you can't do that, he's not the same man. He doesn't have the same background."

So, later when I became the head of the Women's Division, I would approach it in a different way. I would pick a woman who had all the qualifications, and I would stress the qualifications she had, not the fact just that she was a woman, and I can honestly tell you that President Truman would consider any woman who was qualified for any job. He had no prejudice whatsoever



against women. He was simply marvelous about appointing them. But if he'd say no, as he did sometimes, I'd say, "O.K. I'll come back with another one." He appointed an awful lot of women.

After the '48 campaign, Bill Boyle, as you know,

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was very active in the '48 campaign, he ran the train, and Bill Boyle came to me after the '48 campaign and said, "The President is so appreciative of all you did. What would you like?"

I said, "I don't want a thing. There's no job that I want. I'm perfectly happy to stay here at the committee if he wants me to. If not, why, I'll leave, but I don't want a job. What I really would like is a lot of jobs for a lot of women."

And Bill said, "Well, go to it."

So I did. I worked hard on it. We got good women, women who were well qualified, and I always thought that it was because President Truman had such a smart wife that he was willing to admit that there was no sex in brains, or in ability, because he really was great. I tell you we would have had a woman on the Supreme Court if it hadn't been that Fred Vinson vetoed it.

HESS: Who?

EDWARDS: Florence Allen. Florence Allen was the first woman ever appointed to be a Federal judge, by Franklin Roosevelt, and when there was a vacancy on the Supreme Court I went over and talked to the President

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about appointing Florence Allen to the Supreme Court and he said, "Well, I'm willing. I'd be glad to. I think we ought to have a woman." And he was perfectly sincere. He really did feel that we should have women serving more and more. He said, "But I'll have to talk to the Chief Justice about it and see what he thinks." Then he had Matt call me and I went over to the office and he said, "No, 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."

I said, "They could if they wanted to."

Also I tried to get a woman on the staff at the White House. There were no women except secretaries.

HESS: In which position?

EDWARDS: One of the assistants.

HESS: Administrative assistants?

EDWARDS: Something like that, you know, to handle women's affairs and things like that. I thought it would be a wonderful thing to have a woman there.

HESS: Why didn't that go over, do you know?

EDWARDS: Yes, I know why it didn't. Matt Connelly objected. I had a woman all picked, she'd been in the Wacs, and she was a good politician from Massachusetts.

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HESS: What was her name?

EDWARDS: Catherine Falvey. Catherine would have been very good, I thought, over there, and I thought it would be a fine thing to have. And so I talked to the President about it, and he said, "I am willing, but I'll have to discuss it with Matt and the boys and see how they feel." Now, I'm not blaming it on Matt. He said, "Matt and the boys." I know Don [Dawson] wouldn't have objected, because I talked with Don about it, and Don said he thought it would be a fine idea.

HESS: Did you talk with any of the other staff members?

EDWARDS: No. So it never came about. However, after Joe Short, who succeeded Charlie Ross as press secretary, died, President Truman appointed his widow, Beth, to be correspondence secretary. Later, Eisenhower had a woman, Anne Wheaton, as assistant press secretary. And President Johnson had Esther Peterson as Consumer Advisor and later Betty Furness in the same post.

HESS: As you know, Mr. Truman did not have any women in his Cabinet, whereas Mr. Roosevelt did. Did you make any efforts to get a lady Cabinet member?

EDWARDS: No. I can't remember that I ever talked to him about it. There wasn't any opening, first of all. I

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never went in and talked about just appointing "Mary Smith" to some office.

Now this is where I thought that Gladys made a mistake. She would just go in with a list of women, not for specific offices.

I would go in and say, "Frieda Hennock for the Federal Communications Commission, she has every..." I think she was his first appointment. Maybe Georgia Neese Clark as the treasurer; was the first appointment. But I would pick one woman for a certain vacancy that I knew existed, because you can't expect a President to be worrying about appointing "Dorothy Jones" or "Mary Smith" or this one or that one to some office if he doesn't know what office is available or anything of that sort. You've got to pin it down.

And there never was, during his entire time, there never was a vacancy in the Cabinet itself. I think the only Cabinet changes were when Krug went out, and Oscar Chapman was there ready to step in. Now you wouldn't go in and try and put a woman in, I mean in a case like that I wouldn't do that. I did try to get some women in the Little Cabinet, and he was always willing. It was never because he wasn't willing. It

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was because some man objected, and he wouldn't go against the Cabinet officers.

HESS: Did you concentrate on any particular department?

EDWARDS: I got him to appoint Edith Sampson, a Negro woman, to our delegation to the United Nations. That was wonderful. When he decided to do it he said, "India, would you like to call her and tell her about it?" You know, that was terribly nice of him. And she must have done very well because Dean Acheson asked for her again. She was a lawyer from Chicago. But I tried to always suggest women who were qualified.

HESS: Did you feel that you met more resistance in one department than you would in another? Which department gave you the worst time?

EDWARDS: I don't remember any particular one.

HESS: Would there be a department that cooperated more than the others?

EDWARDS: Well, certainly John Snyder was very cooperative. John was wonderful, in Treasury. But I don't remember that there was any department that was difficult. Dean Acheson in State and Frank Pace in Army were very cooperative. I remember though that when I was trying to get a woman on the Federal Trade Commission, there

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never had been a woman on any Federal commission until President Truman appointed Frieda Hennock to the FCC.

I was a regular ghoul, I used to watch the death notices and rush in with my woman, because you know, there would be a dozen men for every job. And so somebody died on the Federal Trade Commission. That was a natural for a woman, and I asked the President if he would appoint Sarah Hughes, who later was made a Federal judge by Kennedy, and he said, "Yes," he would.

Most people don't understand how difficult it is to bring in all your lines and tie them all together to make it possible for a woman to be appointed. She must be approved by the national committeeman, the national committeewoman, by the Senators, if they're Democrats, I mean it's really quite...

HESS: You have to touch a lot of bases.

EDWARDS: Yes, and so he said, "How about the Texas Senators?" So I called Lyndon and asked him how he would feel about it and Lyndon said that he would be delighted, he thought that would be just fine. I called dear old Senator Connolly (he was alive then), and I said I would

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like to come down and see him. I knew I couldn't talk to him on the telephone about it. So I went down to see him and I told him what I wanted and I said, "The President is quite willing to appoint Sarah, if you will endorse her."

He said, "Well, I won't endorse her. What are you trying to do, Miss India, are you trying to get a woman on every commission in the United States Government?"

I said, "Why, Senator Connolly, you couldn't be more right. That's exactly what I'm trying to do. But," I said, "you're thwarting me."

He said, "Well, I won't do it. I think we should have a man."

I said, "O.K. All right. I won't argue with you, but I think you're making a great mistake." And so I went on back to my office, and in about two days he called me and he said, "I've been thinking about it, and I guess in this case it will be all right."

I had called Sarah Hughes first and asked her if she would take the appointment. That's another thing, I never would ask the President to appoint anybody that I wasn't sure would take the appointment, because women

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have a great many hurdles that they have to overcome before they can accept appointments. You know, if they have children, husbands, they can't always pick up and leave home. I had called Sarah and had said, "Will you take this?"

And she said, "Yes, if you can get it for me, I'll be delighted." So, I was pleased. And the day that the appointments were going over to the Senate, Don had told me they were going over on this certain day, that morning Sarah called me and said, "I've been thinking about it and I don't believe I'll take that appointment, India. It is only for two years,"--it wasn't a full six-year appointment--"I think I won't take it."

I said, "The work I've done on this! It's all set. It's ready to go to the Senate today." Oh. I was really angry.

She said, "I'm sorry, but I've thought it over and I've decided not to take it."

So, I called Don and I said, "Take Sarah Hughes' name off the list."

He said, "If you can come up with somebody else, another woman, I can hold this until five o'clock this

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afternoon. If you can come up with another name that the President will accept." Now, that's the kind of cooperation I got from him.

So I went over the whole list of people I knew and I came up with a name of a Missouri woman who was a lawyer--it was necessary to have a lawyer--a man wouldn't have to be a lawyer, but with a woman you'd have to have a lawyer--and I knew the President knew her, and so I called and asked if the President--I didn't speak to him myself, but got Don to ask him--if he would accept the name of Louise Grant Smith. And he said, "Yes," if I could get the political clearance, that he'd take her. And so I got busy on the long-distance telephone, and I couldn't get the national committeewoman in Missouri to endorse her.

HESS: That was one base that you couldn't touch.

EDWARDS: I couldn't. They had to put a man in.

HESS: We mentioned Frieda Hennock, and later, as you will recall in the administration, she was unsuccessful in obtaining a judgeship in New York. What was the difficulty there?

EDWARDS: Let me think. The President, I think, named her to a judgeship. Well, it was something in her private

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life, a scandal that some of the members of the Judiciary Committee brought up. And when I say "scandal" I'm not sure that's the word I ought to use, but it was something. And she, I think tried to fight it, which she really shouldn't have done. In fact, I had advised her not to try for the judgeship, because I knew this thing would come up. But I'll tell you something, an incident that I think is of interest, although I don't think I'll use the name.

The President named a woman to a new commission that was being formed. She was a very fine woman, a "Miss." I think there were three people on the commission, and he named two men and this woman. The Judiciary Committee passed the two men, and then they did nothing about her for months and months. They finally said they were going to have hearings on her. They hadn't had any hearings on the men.

Don called me over to the White House, the President asked him to, and told me that the chairman of the Judiciary Committee had said that she was a lesbian, and that if the President persisted in going ahead with that appointment, that they were going to hold public hearings and going to bring this out. And Don

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said, "The President says for you to handle it in any way you think best. You do what you feel is the proper thing."

I said, "I'm going to her and talk to her about it. I think she's the one who has to make the decision. Is the President willing to go ahead?"

He said, "Yes, the President will go ahead." You know, there's just nobody in the world like Harry Truman. So I went to see her.

Now, this wasn't a very pleasant thing to do, to say to a woman, "This Senator says you're a lesbian, and that he's going to hold public hearings on your nomination." I said, "The President is willing to stand by it. What do you want to do? If you say, 'Withdraw my name,' that doesn't mean that you're guilty, it only means that you don't want to be mixed up in this mess. But I felt that you had to make the decision. I couldn't."

She said, "If the President is willing to stand by me, I will go through with it. Because it's an absolute lie."

And so they sent word to the Senator, whom the President disliked and whom I hated, and naturally they

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never held any hearings and they approved her and she served until she died. Now that's the kind of dirt that goes on sometimes when a woman is appointed. And if you don't have somebody like Harry Truman...

HESS: ...to back you up.

EDWARDS: Yes. And another woman whose appointment had been made originally by Roosevelt, and her term of office had expired, and she was up for reappointment. She had done a magnificent job, the record was right there in black and white, she was a judge on the tax court, and so I went to see the President about reappointing her, and he said, "You talk to John Snyder about it."

So I went over to see John, who was an old friend of mine, I had known him long before he went in the Cabinet. And John said that there was, oh, all kinds of rumors about her. Well, if you could see her, she's the worst old maid you've seen in all the days of your life, I mean, it's just perfectly ridiculous talking about her having affairs and that kind of thing.

HESS: She just wasn't the type.

EDWARDS: And John said he didn't see how he could

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recommend her. And I said, "John, I know this is not true about this woman. It's absolutely ridiculous."

John's a fine man. He said, "India, if you can get to the bottom of it, and if you can prove to me that this is not true, why, I'll recommend her reappointment to the President."

So I told her. I said, "Now, listen, there's somebody out to get you. I don't know who it is, but you may know."

So she found out who it was, and it was somebody she had ruled against and they were determined to get her out. Anyway, that worked out all right. We finally got that one settled, and John recommended her and the President appointed her for a second sixteen-year term.

HESS: Of course, this is sum and substance of what we have been talking about, but just how much more difficult is it for a woman to get a job than for a man to get the same job?

EDWARDS: Well, it's a great deal more difficult, a great deal more difficult. She has to be better qualified. You take a man and a woman, you know, in most cases, even if she's better educated, has better natural

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qualifications, the man will get the break.

And as I say, for instance, we had to have a lawyer on the Federal Trade Commission, the men on the Federal Trade aren't all lawyers, but we wouldn't stand a chance of getting a woman on the Federal Trade if she wasn't a lawyer.

And then when she gets the job the spotlight is on her, not quite as much now as it used to be because there are more of them. President Johnson has appointed a great many women to office. And another thing, just by the nature of being women it's hard for women. Women have families, husbands, and it's very hard to find a woman who is free to engage in public service. I don't think there will ever be a chance of there being fifty-fifty. I mean, as many women as men.

HESS: In our discussion today, we've covered several of the people who held the position of chairman of the Democratic National Committee: Robert Hannegan, J. Howard McGrath, Frank McKinney and Stephen Mitchell, but I'd like to ask a few questions about William Boyle, Jr. Just how effective was Mr. Boyle as chairman of the Democratic National Committee?

EDWARDS: I think that Bill was a very good politician.

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He was certainly loyal to the President, devoted to him. Bill was ill a great deal of the time that he was chairman. He was really quite ill. I don't know what the dates were, but he was away from the committee very often in the hospital. I think that that did harm to him.

I think that Bill had some people working for him at the committee and in his law firm who were really bad characters. A couple of them, I think, went to jail, if I'm not mistaken. I think they did Bill great harm, but I don't think that Bill himself was mixed up in it. At least, I had great respect for him. And there certainly is one thing, you could absolutely rely on his word.

HESS: As a lady who has had ample opportunity to observe the Presidency, do you think that there are any ways that it should be changed. Are there things that demand too much of the President's time and attention, in your opinion?

EDWARDS: Yes, I think that it's very hard on a President to do all the ceremonial things that he has to do, he's expected to do social things, and at the same time carry this terrible burden, and it's getting worse all

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the time, you know. I just don't know what the answer is, unless he can turn over more to the Vice President. But it seems to me that the job has grown to such magnitude that it's almost impossible for one man to handle it.

HESS: Where would you place Mr. Truman on the scale from a liberal to a conservative?

EDWARDS: Well, I consider him a real, true liberal, not a crazy one, a kooky one, but a real liberal.

HESS: How would you define liberalism and conservatism, liberal and conservative?

EDWARDS: Well, I think that my definition of a liberal is someone who realizes that you never stand still. It's impossible to stand still. You're either going to move forward or you're going to move backwards, one or the other, and it seems to me that a liberal is one who is always moving forward, looking ahead, willing to take a chance, maybe going into unknown waters, but always moving ahead.

HESS: What in your opinion were President Truman's major contributions during his career?

EDWARDS: Oh, well, of course, the decisions he had to make; the Point 4 program--I think that was one of the

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greatest things that has ever been proposed by any President. And the aid program, NATO, all the great decisions that he had to make. Most of them were in foreign policy, most of them had to be at that time.



But the thing that seemed to me to be so great about him was that he studied everything. I was always just absolutely astounded at his knowledge, because when you come right down to it, you would never say that Harry Truman was a widely-educated man, you know, and yet he had the greatest fund of knowledge about more different subjects. It was astounding. He would look at every side of whatever was presented to him; he would make a tremendous effort to understand it, and then he would make a decision and stick by it. I think he'll go down in history as a greater President than Franklin Roosevelt, I don't think there's any question about it. That's my opinion. I think he was, reall--I admit that maybe I'm prejudiced--but I know a lot of people who think so.

HESS: That brings up a question. Thinking back to the Presidents, Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, how would you evaluate those men as to their effectiveness, and then as men?

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EDWARDS: Well, of course, I couldn't evaluate Franklin Roosevelt very well as a man because I did not know him well enough. I only knew him very slightly. I think that he was a great President in that he was willing to try new things at a time when we could well have gone one way or the other. But I don't think that from what I've been able to learn from people who worked very closely with Roosevelt, which I did not do, I don't think that he had the same basic integrity that Harry Truman had. I think that he did a lot of things out of expediency, many more than Truman did. The way he used to play one person off against another, this must have been awful for the people who were concerned, you know, just almost heartbreaking. But I think that certainly Roosevelt was a great President.

But when you come right down to it, I think Harry Truman, frankly, I think he'll go down in history for the decisions that he made. He made some small mistakes, but I can't think of any major ones that he made. And there wasn't anything small or mean about him, not at all.

Now, Jack Kennedy. I don't think Jack was President

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long enough so that you could possibly have any real evaluation of his ability as a President. I was not for him in 1960. I was after he was nominated, but I didn't see anything in his past to recommend him to be President of the United States. He really was a playboy as a Congressman. But he did better as President than I would have supposed that he would do.

I think Lyndon Johnson is the tragic figure of the ages. Because this man had everything. He had the experience, he had everything to make him, really, maybe our greatest President, everything but the ability to make people have confidence in him, that's really what it comes down to. And I think it's just one of the saddest things in the world. I could weep when I think about it.

HESS: Why do you think he lacked that ability?

EDWARDS: I don't know. I know him very well. I just don't know. He cares about people; he really does, but, well, I don't know. It's going to be very hard for me when I have the oral thing that Mr. [Joe] Frantz has been calling me about, because if Lyndon Johnson's going to see it...

HESS: The oral history transcript for the Johnson Library?

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EDWARDS: Yes, yes.

I think that Lyndon Johnson became a liberal--when I say a liberal, I hate these terms, but I don't know what else to use--but kind of late in life. And I think that he lacks some of the basic qualities that, say, Harry Truman has.

HESS: We have a few more inches of tape, Mrs. Edwards, what do you recall about the events in Chicago this past summer and the Democratic National Convention?

EDWARDS: Well, there were many things that happened in the convention itself that were noteworthy. For instance, some of the rule changes that are going to be made, are just magnificent. If it had been normal outside the convention hall, I think that convention would stand out as a milestone in Democratic political history, but because of what happened outside the Hilton Hotel, I think the whole thing was just a nightmare. Of course, I don't think they should have ever had the convention in Chicago. It didn't require any great perspicacity or brains to know that there was going to be trouble of one sort or another.

HESS: Do you think they would have had the same trouble

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in Miami?

EDWARDS: They couldn't have. It would have been impossible. The people that were infuriating the police couldn't have gotten in front of the hotel. They couldn't have done it in Chicago if it hadn't have been for that great open space, Grant Park. It was only because there was that park where they could assemble, five or six thousand of them. And so I don't think they could have had such trouble in Miami. I don't know what's the matter with our leaders sometimes.

Hubert Humphrey is supposed to have said that he wanted to change the locale of the convention and that he had tried to persuade Johnson to do it. Well, I don't know anything about that. I suppose it's true. I'm sure that if Hubert said it, it's so. But why didn't he say it openly at the time? I mean there are times when you have to speak out. It could have been changed. I know very well that he didn't really try very hard to get it changed, because I was working with some of his people and begging them to have him do something about it, and they said, "He can't afford to lose the Illinois delegation." Well, what good did the Illinois delegation do him anyway?

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HESS: He lost Illinois anyway.

EDWARDS: Sure. And I mean there are times when you have to be a leader. And this is the thing about Harry Truman. It seems to me that when the cards were down, when it was necessary to be a leader, he was.

HESS: How detrimental to the Democrats' chances for election do you believe the events in Chicago were?

EDWARDS: Oh, I cried, as I say I'm not a crying woman, but I cried every night there, and said to myself, "We've lost the election." I think it is a miracle that Hubert Humphrey did as well as he did.

HESS: Do you have anything else to add on Mr. Truman, the Truman administration, or the Presidency?

EDWARDS: Well, I just hope that President Nixon is not going to be so stupid as to try to undo any of the accomplishments of the last eight years, because they are so tremendous on the domestic--and of course, all of them were started in the Truman administration. This is the thing that is so wonderful, but they've been brought to fruition since Lyndon Johnson became President. Lyndon Johnson--I personally think that Lyndon Johnson's part in the Vietnam war and his unpopularity in history is going to be forgotten to a large extent.

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And I think his domestic accomplishments are going to be the things that will stand out. I'm not an historian, but I hope I'm right about that, because I think he did such a magnificent job.

HESS: Thank you very much for your time.

EDWARDS: Thank you for staying so long.

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