

# EDITORIAL

## *But A Heart Beat Away*

On the threshold of electing our 41st President (or re-electing our 40th), we face not only the traditional questions of party and platform, but the possibility a woman will become vice president. Some strong men quail at the prospect of a woman, any woman, standing but a heartbeat away from the Presidency. Even some females express concern that one of their own might be called upon to occupy the Oval Office.

Does history justify these concerns? Not even the mists of 2,000 years shroud the fact that Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, after being driven from her throne by her brother, was reinstated by no less a power than Roman Emperor Julius Caesar. Historian Will Durant says of Cleopatra, "She was an able ruler and administrator, effectively promoted Egyptian commerce and industry, and was a competent financier even when making love."

Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra in the third century, stationed her armies all over the Near East, in Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. So successful was she as a ruler that her name has come to signify a powerful, ambitious woman.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, Queen of England from 1558-1603, her country's domination by foreign religious and political influences was terminated. England's growing sense of nationality and unity was strengthened. The English fleet's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 brought to a conclusion Spain's supremacy at sea and commenced the ascendancy of the British Empire. Domestic peace and prosperity, growth as a naval power, initiation of England's colonialism, and a general spirit of expansion which reflect in both geographical and literary explorations of the period mark Elizabeth's long reign.

Queen Victoria, who sat upon the English throne from 1837 to 1901, brought many reforms to England during that nation's Industrial Revolution. Changes in agricultural procedures introduced in 1846 lowered food prices for ordinary

people. Liberating legislation of 1867 extended voting privileges to many factory laborers and, in 1884, established universal male suffrage. England, under Victoria's reign, achieved the zenith of her power.

On today's political stage, we have watched Mrs. Indira Gandhi, daughter of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, rise to step into her father's shoes. Chosen first in 1966 and reappointed after general elections in 1967, Mrs. Gandhi's political career has been erratic and her popularity has risen and fallen with tides of domestic strife within her troubled nation. Considering the immensity and complexity of problems India has faced over the past two decades, Mrs. Gandhi's leadership has been remarkably astute.

Nor should we overlook the decade, beginning with her appointment in 1969, during which Mrs. Golda Meir served as Prime Minister of the State of Israel. Mrs. Meir's contributions to world peace, to ecumenical understanding, to a saner political climate in the Middle East, and to the welfare of the people of her country were such that we could wish they might prevail today.

Not all women who have ruled have been leaders such as these. Not all decisions made by even these were the wisest that might have been reached. On the other hand, the same can be said of any of their male counterparts. The point is not that Cleopatra, Elizabeth I, Victoria, Golda or Indira were superior to men; only that they were equally as competent and, under their leadership, people of their nations have known measurable improvement in their general conditions of living.

Gender of running mates of Presidential candidates, this year, should be of less concern than competency. Once elected, yes, one will stand but a heartbeat away from the Oval Office.