



# A WOMAN CAN BE PRESIDENT

by Sen. John F. Kennedy

*A distinguished senator assesses the possibility  
and predicts it could happen —  
even during this century.*

**W**ILL WE EVER HAVE a woman President of the United States?

Impossible? Fantastic? A fictional dream which cannot be realized in the foreseeable future?

On the contrary, I believe the chances of someone's daughter growing up to be President are not at all impossible—even during this generation!

The possibility of a woman President should be considered neither unlikely nor disastrous. The more important question is: *When will this occur, how, and under what conditions?*

I strongly believe that a woman will be elected President only when she is *not* looked upon as a woman. Don't misunderstand: I don't mean that her sex would be concealed or ignored. But it would have to be considered irrelevant to her qualifications for the office just as are her religion, maiden name, or shoe size. Women who are nominated for the Presidency just to advance the cause of women's rights—or to demonstrate their parties' recognition of the female sex—are doomed to failure.

Why? Because the Presidency requires broad representation of—and outstanding leadership for—all groups in our population. It requires an outlook which emphasizes not only traditional "women's issues"—equal rights, world peace, education, child health and welfare—but also foreign and military affairs, labor relations, and other fields.

The first woman President—just because she is a woman—will have to be an extraordinary one! She may require the leadership of a Joan of Arc, the stately compassion of a Queen Victoria, the political sagacity of a Clare Boothe Luce, the determination of a Sister Kenny, and the courage of a Helen Keller.

Is there such a woman anywhere? Or is there any chance that there ever will be? Of course there is!

Today I see growing evidence that more and more American girls are acquiring this type of all-embracing outlook. And recent national surveys indicate that women are as concerned as men about important domestic and world issues.

The past generation has seen a dramatic revolution. Increasing thousands of women, whose mothers or grandmothers weren't even permitted to vote, have served well in nearly every type of elective and appointive office—except the Presidency and Vice-Presidency. But succession to them is only a logical step forward, an extension of a trend which in the past 40 years has brought women from political serfdom to the highest councils of government.

Public opinion has kept pace with this changing trend, too. Since 1937, the public attitude has changed from nearly 2-1 against, to roughly 5-4 in favor of a woman President! "On few issues has the public turned about so completely," reports Dr. George Gallup of Gallup Poll fame.

Actually, several women already have been nominated for the Presidency by minority parties. In 1872 Victoria Claflin Woodhull and in 1884 Belva Lockwood represented the "Equal Rights Party." In 1952 Ella Linea Jensen was the nominee of the "George Washington Peace Party." But none of these women had any mass support, and their candidacies provide no worthwhile guide to future women really running for President.

The important thing is that today the ability of women to direct rugged political campaigns, administer vast executive departments, display brilliant legislative leadership, and handle difficult foreign, military, and domestic problems has shattered the old stereotype of female political inferiority and executive weakness.

Women are now a "majority" group, so we should stop considering them a "minority." Today 54 million women—nearly 5 million more than men—are eligible to vote.

Women also do more campaign work than men. From personal experience, I know how women can be the key to political victory. They hold teas, mail literature, ring doorbells, register voters, and make speeches, raise money, and plan campaign strategy.

This phenomenal growth of women as a political force is even being reflected in our national conventions. Women now play a far more important role at them, so we may some day break the tradition of an all-male Presidential ticket. In recent years, several hundred women delegates and alternates have attended each convention, serving on important committees and making major addresses.

The traditional belief that a woman's place is in the home, raising children and darning socks, is more and more being recognized as a preference which permits individual variations.

So I am confident that some day our major parties will nominate and elect a woman to the Vice-Presidency—and then to the Presidency itself!

*(Family Weekly does not necessarily endorse Senator Kennedy's political views but presents the above article because of the nonpartisan yet highly interesting opinions it expresses. Readers are invited to submit their views on this subject, in 300 words or less. Letters must be postmarked no later than July 6. If we print your letter, you will receive \$25. Letters must be signed, but names will be withheld on request. Letters cannot be returned. Address President, Family Weekly, P.O. Box 2152, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N. Y.)*

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