

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

February 7, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about whether the United States needs war in order to be prosperous. In the interview segment, ER discusses international affairs with Senator William Knowland.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Senator William Knowland

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother I have here a question from Mr. Nathan Millmen of the Bronx who lists his age as that of seventy-three years old. His question is, "Must we have war to keep up prosperity?" He has preceded this question with a complete history of the depressions following each war since 1812, pointing up that there is prosperity during the wars then depression.

[ER:] That's always so, because the readjustment um is always a period of uh things being out of kilter so to speak. Um we don't have to have war to have prosperity, eh in fact we've been doing quite well in this country uh in the period uh since the last war. We did learn a little something about depressions evidently, eh but you will always have prosperity during a war, but it's a false kind of prosperity. It's a prosperity that comes because everybody is employed either in the army, uh and their money is coming home to the people at home, or um they are employed in uh-- (1:24)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Defense?

[ER:] Work, which is largely government work. The difficulty about that type of prosperity is that uh it is not productive. Um, the things which are made are immediately used up and destroyed. And, uh there is nothing uh coming out as something further to turn over, do you see? So what you do is take out of the people uh constantly, through taxation, through um oh hidden taxes of a great many different kinds, um money enough to carry on the interest of the debt which is piling up all the time, and carry you through the period of the war. Then, at the end of the war you've got to come back, and you've got to come back--that's one reason why they always beg people to save money during a war--because you have to come back to a productive industry. First you have to have the period of changing [ER clears throat] over, as you have to when you're getting ready for a war. You have to change your factory machinery from uh war production to peacetime production. The same machinery doesn't uh-uh produce a plow, a tractor, uh and a um--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Tank--

[ER:] [Clears throat/coughs] guns, do you see? It has--they have to retool and redo a number of things. That takes a little time. So you're not producing in that time. Then you have to begin to readjust people who come back from the army, back into civilian employment, and um at a time when a great many plants are wondering how much money people are going to have to buy things, so shall they employ at top uh levels, do you see, and produce at a level when they don't know just how much people are going to be able to absorb of these things that are now civilian things. Now people want them. If they've saved their money--eh because they've been going without them for a-- the period of the war, they will be able to buy. And that will help you tide over that period before people are readjusted and the bulk of employment is again in private um peacetime industry.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes--

[ER:] But all that period is a period of readjustment. It depends on how much courage the employers have, how much faith they have in the people being able to earn and to buy. How quickly it's done. And sometimes, you get hitches in that. It takes a lot of good management on the part of government and good management on the part of-of uh industry and even on the part of farm people and so forth. Because during the war they often um sit and-sit and--essential foods will always be bought but others may not be bought in the same quantity. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And they can't be produced because they don't have a market for them, and perhaps the essential foods that are needed both here and among our allies take up more of our um production possibilities. So even on the farm you are changing, you see, and you have to have a vision and courage and quite a-a good deal of guidance. And it has to be wise guidance. And I don't think people realize quite that um all these things don't just happen. They have to be planned and arranged for, and there have to be a whole variety of things that mesh together: government programs, and um financing, and taxation, and um uh industrial uh planning. [Elliott Roosevelt: Uh-huh.] So this isn't just such an easy thing, but certainly impossible to say eh that war brings a real prosperity. It's really only a temporary um--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] So, of course, prosperity?

[ER:] Yes.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, getting back though to his question, "Must we have war to keep up prosperity?" I want to ask you a question. You've already stated that war uh um brings on a false prosperity and produces things that bring no return. Now, uh if following a war we had a program whereby we invested money in the same way that we do in time of war, true we're investing uh our taxes of the next many years, uh because we have to pay uh interest on that.

[ER interrupt/speaking at same time] Pay on the debt--definitely.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But why can't we uh envisage in this country the gains to be gotten from investments in productive things that not only pay their own way in the way of paying interest from what they actually do in the work--in the daily work of our lives, but also retire debt. For instance, I have in mind the Holland Tunnel, which runs under the Hudson River. As I understand it, the Port Authority of New York, which operates the Holland Tunnel, long, long time ago paid off in full plus interest all of the bonds that were required to build the Holland Tunnel, but today the money still comes in, and that is productive. That is going toward the maintenance and caring of the whole Port Authority program. And it's a non-profit organization run by government. Now, the same thing can be done with dams. Uh, we build these big electrical plants. They sell their power to industry, to farms, to raise the entire income level of the-of the people of the United States. They are all self-liquidating. (7:51)

[ER:] But of course that was the whole thing that lay back of the Tennessee Valley Authority. And that's why we could save millions of loss every year, if only eh our people would insist on having just what you suggest done in the valleys of many more of our rivers: the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio. Why do we lose year after year from floods millions of dollars just because we won't think far enough ahead to invest the big sum, get the return, and have it gradually paid back into the--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well another thing I remember--

[ER:] People

[Elliott Roosevelt:] When--many years ago, father had an idea of a series of express highways across the United States and North and South uh, which would take uh all of the interstate trucking and all of uh the

tremendous volume of traffic, take the load away and they could be made self supporting and uh retiring in the same way that you have tolls highways. And uh, it seems to me that there are thousands of different things that can be productive by their vary nature.

[ER:] They require both imagination, though, and planning, and uh a willingness on the part of the people uh to put their money into that sort of thing and pay the-the taxes on it. Now--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But you don't have to pay the taxes! Because they-- outside of the initial cost, [ER: You have to pay--] they bear their own--they bear their own debt reduction and the interest and you will have no cost to the American taxpayer--

[ER:] You have to buy the bonds originally.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Originally you do.

[ER:] You have to buy the bonds.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] We are--

[ER:] That's what we have to get the people to do.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] For instance, right after World War II, we were in a situation where we had uh hundreds of millions, in fact, billions and billions of dollars lying idle in the banks of the United States for lack of investment. Those are the places that th- that money should be put to work. There shouldn't be an idle dollar-- [ER: I agree with you.] in a time of peace in the United States.

[ER:] I agree with you. Couldn't agree with you more. But you've got to um--I think we--perhaps, what we need is some financial experts to come and tell us why we're wrong because we are just laymen.

[Elliott Roosevelt: Alright.] and we don't know and we might get some of the financial experts to tell us why we're wrong!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I think what --- that's a very good suggestion. And I think in answer to Mr. Nathan Millman's question, from the--which he has sent in from the Bronx, I think we will go ahead and try to get uh financial experts on these topics who will come on and discuss on our program these very subjects. But now I see we have to go on to another part of our program and another interview so we have to come to an end right now.

(Break: 10:45-10:55)

[ER:] As an introduction to my guest today, I'm going to quote from a recent speech he made before the Senate of the United States. He said, "The debate now going on in Congress and throughout the country is necessary for a clarification of the issues. In a free society, the people and their elected representatives must know the facts in order to make sound judgment. If they are treated as adults they will respond as such. But all men of good will who believe in a free world of free men should be striving for is to find areas of agreement, upon which we can find a high degree of unity in meeting the challenge which threatens our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." To hear more of his views on current issues, I'm very happy to present to you the Republican senator from California, Mr. William F. Knowland.

[William Knowland:] Mrs. Roosevelt I'm delighted to be with you uh today to discuss some of the problems facing us in the field of international affairs.

[ER:] Well, I think you were very kind to come and I'm going to begin right off, [ER laughs] because it's very valuable time to ask you certain questions. Senator, I understand the United States Senate passed two resolutions on Tuesday, January twenty-third, in which they expressed certain attitudes with respect to the United Nations handling of the China problem. Would you explain these resolutions for the benefit of our listeners?

[William Knowland:] Well yes, Mrs. Roosevelt, the two resolutions related to the declaration uh by the United Nations of the Chinese as aggressors, the Chinese Communists as aggressors, and stated that it was a sense of the Senate of the United States that they should be so designated. That was passed unanimously. The second resolution uh related to the admission of Communist China into the United Nations. A roll call was had on that resolution and it was declared the sense of the Senate that Communist China should not be admitted, and this was by a ninety-one to nothing vote in favor of the resolution. (13:18)

[ER:] Well, those uh, those resolutions are very important resolutions and um [ER clears throat] I think they express the feeling which is prevalent of course um in the United States uh--

[William Knowland:] I think they do something else, if I might uh interrupt at that point. I think it uh indicates that the American people uh, when finally their righteous indignation is aroused as my New England grandmother used to say many years ago, can unite regardless of partisan affiliation and face up to an issue. I think these two resolutions were rather significant that uh--not a single dissenting voice was raised either on the Democratic or the Republican side of the isle. And we received a high degree of unity on this question. I hope that some of our friends and some of the potential aggressors overseas will recognize that while we may have partisan differences of opinion, that uh when the American people finally get to understand the problem they can uh unite very rapidly.

[ER:] Well, of course, I think too that these--we're taking into consideration uh moral values very greatly and uh, that has an appeal always to the people of the United States, I think.

[William Knowland:] Well, I think--

[ER:] I wish we always uh thought of the moral values, as well as the other values involved! Sometimes I think we forget them! [ER Laughs]

[William Knowland:] Yes. Well, that is quite correct. Certainly, in the Congress of the United States uh when the aggression took place in Korea on the twenty-fifth day of June, an overwhelming percentage of the members of both the House and the Senate recognized that the United Nations must take some action at that point to stop aggression. Otherwise uh every little nation on the periphery of the Soviet Union would feel that they had no hope from the United Nations in the event of aggression.

[ER:] Cause otherwise-- the United Nations would go the way of the League.

[William Knowland:] That's correct and that action was taken. The thing that has been difficult I believe for those in Congress and throughout the country to understand is how the movement of some North Korean communists across the thirty-eighth parallel could be aggression, and then--and that should be determined by the United Nations in less than a day's time. When uh it has now been two and a half months that the aggression by the Chinese communists has taken place across the Yalu River and they're still debating as to whether or not it should be termed aggression. That's, stripped to its bare essentials, is the doctrine that if you're a big enough aggressor and a successful enough aggressor, you're not called an aggressor. In other words, you condemn the small aggressor, but condone the large aggressor. And that's

in its essentials is a doctrine that might makes right and I don't think you can rally the moral forces of the world on any such doctrine. (16:28)

[ER:] Well, I know you've supported many of our government's foreign policy stance in Europe and have differed sharply with the administration in our foreign policy in the Far East. Will you explain your attitude in regard to our foreign policy?

[William Knowland:] Uh, yes Mrs. Roosevelt, I have supported the--our foreign policy in uh Europe, the United Nations, the ECA, the North Atlantic Pact, the Greek/Turkey SHAPE [acronym for Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe] program, and the Arms Implementation Program because it seemed to me that uh it made sense to both the Congress and the American people. We were endeavoring to rehabilitate a war-torn Europe, recognizing that if there should be a political and economic collapse, into that vacuum would flow the forces of communism. It was necessary to give um economic aid to help rehabilitate them. We soon found out however that the economic rehabilitation alone was not sufficient because in every soft spot, in Greece and Turkey and at Berlin, we were being pressed by the Soviet Union to see whether they could occupy those places without too much cost to themselves. And it was necessary to uh bring forth the North Atlantic Pact and the Arms Implementation Program. We were trying to close the door to communism in Europe so that we could maintain a free world of free men. Uh while we were doing that in Europe, it has seemed to a great many of us that we were leaving the other door wide open in Asia, uh that the forces of communism were moving and uh some of the policies that we had followed encouraged them to move. Uh, many of us believe that if all of Asia is lost, it will be most difficult to stop uh the movement of communism in Europe and certainly, uh if it is the ideal of the United Nations and the United States to maintain freedom, we shouldn't draw the color line and the uh--whether it be the Indonesian or the Indian or the Chinese who wants to remain outside of the Iron Curtain, or the Philipino or the Japanese, uh that is just as important--his freedom is just as important to him as the freedom of the European is to the European and I don't believe that we can be disinterested in human freedom in Asia uh and uh, at the same time, uh pretend to be interested in it in Europe. (18:55)

[ER:] Well you are saying of course what a great many of the representatives of um India, and um of Asiatic countries have said; they frequently accuse us of being more interested because people are white in Europe and therefore less interested in um Asia.

[William Knowland:] But I don't, but-

[ER:] I-I would like to just um-- if you'd tell our listeners, in your opinion, what would be a reasonable and successful Far Eastern policy in view of the present situation in the Far East?

[William Knowland:] Yes, I think in the uh first place that we must recognize that it's just as important to draw a line against communism in Asia as it was in uh Europe. Uh I have uh been in the Far East three times, came back uh last November. Uh I found that uh people in various sections of the Far East have no desire to get taken behind the iron curtain. I think that is true of the people in Japan, it's true of the seven and half or eight million people on Formosa, it's certainly true of those in the Philippines. While I did not get to South East Asia or India on this trip, I have been there and I'm convinced that those countries fundamentally do not want to be taken behind the iron curtain. The question then arises as to whether communism in Asia can be stopped by passive resistance alone. I do not believe that militant communism can be stopped by passive resistance any more than it can be stopped in Europe. The great danger in the present Indian position and that of uh some of the other member of the United Nations is that uh they have not been willing to assume their responsibilities with the United Nations in a collective security system. India, as you know, has not sent a single soldier, sailor, or airman or warship or airplane to uh help stop aggression in Korea, which was the first great test as uh under our collective security system. Uh, I have found that uh those in the Philippines, and in Formosa and in Japan do not want to tie uh their

chances of survival to the passive resistance system of Mr. Nehru and India. Uh if you are willing to throw the small nations of Korea and Formosa to the wolves so to speak, where do you draw the line? How can you arouse the moral conscience of the world to guard uh India or uh Pakistan or any other nation uh if you have uh yielded Korea and Formosa to international communism?

[ER:] Um, I think we have to break off just for a minute and come back and there are some things I want to ask you on that point, uh but we have to have a station break and let our sponsors have a word in between.

(Break 21:57- 22:09)

[ER:] Now Senator, now as we come back to this question, I want to ask you certain things. I'm not posing as an expert because I have never been in the Far East but I have read a great deal about it and talked to a great many people and I'm desperately interested in the freedom of peoples throughout the world and um I have felt that there was, in this area of the world, a-a nationalist movement, a desire for freedom among people, some of whom have been colonial peoples controlled by outside nations from far away, some of whom had had--were restless under a dictatorship of their own, a type of dictatorship, perhaps not what they felt was a sufficiently democratic government. It's hard for us to judge, often what that is, so that the line of--I-I-I feel sure that this trend has been used by the communists very often um to confuse the whole situation; I'm sure they've sent in agents and stood up uh revolution wherever they could so as to make it more difficult for the forces of law and order, and for what we really would usually do, which is to try and help raise the standard of living and thereby um bring a certain amount of order and peace into a community. Eh uh, so that I think we are faced with a difficult situation because from my point of view it's unthinkable to make people accept uh a leader or a form of government that um they haven't chosen themselves [ER laughs] [unclear word] and I personally uh would be very much opposed at the present time to um accepting um a communist government which I don't think uh we can say really represents the Chinese people as a whole. But I also um would be anxious to foster the uh--in whatever way it's possible--the freedom of peoples throughout the world and their own choice of what they wanted, even if it meant that uh they had to be left alone for a while [ER laughs] to choose what they could--what they finally would do. What is your feeling on this question which seems to me complicated and I am sure it's complicated for many reasons?

[William Knowland:] Yes. Well of course this whole problem is a very complex problem and uh like other parts of the world there are no simple solutions to it. My own observation is that uh there is no doubt that there is a national feeling in Asia of the people wanting to be free and I think that colonialism is dead in Asia [ER: [Unclear, may be "uh-huh"]] and I think that some of the nations have not yet awaked to that fact. Uh we have the same stirrings of desire to have independence that these people have in Asia and I think we should be sympathetic towards that desire to end colonialism and to permit the nations to be free. The basic question, however, uh seems to me to be whether or not uh you can have freedom in a real sense under the Soviet Union or its satellites and with the connection of the international Cominform, I think that is a different brand of colonialism, if I may use that expression. I do not believe that we have done as good a job in Asia in presenting our point of view as perhaps uh should be done, not only through Voice of America but through many other methods which would be open to us. For instance, where in the entire history of uh Russia, under the tsars or under communism, do you see anything comparable to the United States having set the Philippine Republic up as a free and independent nation or uh in fact where Britain set up India and Pakistan as free and independent nations and uh Burma. And where the uh Dutch after some of the delay have uh finally consented to the setting up of the United States of Indonesia. Now these are practical demonstrations of uh the desire of the west to cooperate with the east in uh arriving at independence. And yet we know in the satellite states of Eastern Europe, in Poland and Czechoslovakia and Hungary and Romania and Bulgaria, that where the Soviet Union has gone in and exercised a type of control, that those people have lost their freedom. Uh some of them

thought that you could operate with a coalition with communism, Mr. [Jan] Masaryk well possibly thought that it was possible; uh he forfeited his life as a result. [Stanislaw] Mikolajczyk, [1901-1966. His name contains special characters that should be coded into the final transcript] the democratic leader of Poland, had to flee for his life from his country. And I have never felt that coalition with communism uh would work any better in Asia than it has in Europe and I have very strongly felt that once these nations come under the domination of uh communism that they will lose a real chance at freedom. Therefore, I again come to the point that I think that you must uh be prepared to stop communism in Asia as you did in uh-uh Europe so that these people will have an opportunity through peaceful pursuits and economic help to raise their standard of living and take their places among the family of nations. If you uh sit back as India is doing, on the basis of uh not resisting this type of aggression, the people of Asia may never get their opportunity to be really free. (27:55)

[ER:] Well I agree with you. I have um-um I-I had a talk with Nehru when he was here and uh he told me um that they could not afford uh to arm, but that he did not feel, um because he felt there was so much to be done on an economic level for the people of India and that he did not feel arming was um an essential because he did not think anyone uh would attack India and in any case. Um you uh-- people could not be conquered if um you did not conquer their soul. Well, I know the oriental feeling for time is very different from ours, but it struck me that they might not conquer a people's soul but in the meantime while you were going through that period, the body may have some pretty hard times. [ER laughs] (28:55)

[William Knowland:] Well I think that is true, and as Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru and others uh undoubtedly their souls were not conquered when they were in prison but nevertheless, like a people, they may be imprisoned and not be able to carry on in our normal idea of what the free way of life amounts to.

[ER:] Well that uh, that troubled me very much. I mean I realize that we have much to learn in a spiritual way from the peoples of the Far East. I think they have gone forward in--along spiritual lines, perhaps where we have gone forward along industrial and mechanical uh lines. And I'm not at all one of the people who thinks that it's all a one way street, that have everything to give and nothing to receive [ER laughs].

[William Knowland:] No, I-I quiet agree with that.

[ER:] I'm sure that we have uh values that we can acquire with our intercourse [William Knowland: Yes.] with that part of the world and I think we should always be humble in our approach to peoples. But, I agree with you entirely that um the present uh attitude of India is very difficult for most of us to understand and seems to me um very uh hard on the people of-of India themselves because it doesn't threaten their freedom. And--

[William Knowland:] Don't you agree uh too, Mrs. Roosevelt, that uh as an example: if uh all of Korea should be lost, and the island of Formosa should go behind the iron curtain, uh that undoubtedly pressures would come against the people of Japan. Uh it looks as though in the not too distant future some of these same pressures will go into South East Asia to uh not only Indochina, but uh Burma and Siam. Now we have seen that the Chinese communists were moving into Tibet and it is not beyond the realms of possibility, within the next few years, that India herself may find uh a two-prong movement against her borders, and whether or not at that point uh the Indians could feel quiet as sanguine on the general situation of being able to uh-uh resist by passive means the forces of uh global communism remains to be seen. But I believe they weaken their position before the world if today they refuse to uh stand with the nations that are trying to build a collective security and one year from now are asking those same nations to help them resist this uh aggressive communism. (31:36)

[ER:] I think uh--I think it is very unfortunate for India if she does not take the stand with the other nations um on the moral issue of aggression. I think that is a most unfortunate uh thing if it should happen. I hope that what she is now doing does not mean that she will not take the stand because I think it would hurt her very much if she did not take it. Um, I hope it means simply that she hopes to be able to bring about um some peaceful way of handling the Korea situation and feels that temporarily enacting um in this manner, she may be successful. Um I uh--the wisdom of that of course uh we differ perhaps on, but nevertheless I'm hoping that that lies back of her present attitude um as-as to feeling that communism uh should not uh extend, I don't think there's any difference in our feeling that uh it's very unfortunate to have communism extend anywhere its influence and its power. Um, as to the way of preventing that, uh I think there are differences of opinion that are possible um and I think partly um one of our troubles is that we are not quite clear um as to-- and-and [unclear] have quite good deal of difficulty in ascertaining how we accomplish certain things, while we're quite in agreement as to the desire to accomplish them! [ER laughs] Now just in closing as we only have a minute, I'd like to ask you what you believe the future status of the United Nations will be as an international body in its ability to preserve law and order?

[William Knowland:] Well that question I think will hinge pretty largely, Mrs. Roosevelt, on what action the United Nations takes in this matter of aggression. If they fail to stand up to the moral issues involved, I think their moral position will be greatly undermined throughout the entire free world.

[ER:] Well I am very glad to have had you with me today sir, and I am grateful to you for coming because I feel it very important for the American people to have clarified as much and as often as possible the thinking of the important legislators who are responsible for so much of the action of our country and its leadership. Thank you. (34:27)

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