

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

December 11, 1950

Description: In the interview segment, ER interviews Newton Randolph, a representative of Save a Friend in Europe (SAFE) Imports.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Newton Randolph

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, we have another guest with us today that I think our audience would be very much interested in. He represents a rather unusual organization. His name is Mr. Newton Randolph. And the organization that he rec- uh, represents is an organization that goes under the initials of S-A-F-E. Uh just exactly sir, Mr. Randolph, what is uh, SAFE imports?

[Newton Randolph:] SAFE is the abbreviation of Save A Friend in Europe, which was founded about three years ago to enable Americans to send food packages to their friends and relatives abroad. We have since endeavored to help the small manufactures throughout Europe by importing some of their things and selling them by direct mail to the American public.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well--

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[ER:] What countries are in this?

[Newton Randolph:] We're uh representing principally the Western European countries: Germany, France, Italy, and uh all the Western countries actually.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well how does this help European uh rehabilitation?

[Newton Randolph:] Well I found during my stay in Europe that there were many small manufactures that didn't have quite enough to sell to the large stores that could make a hundred of this or fifty of those and we tried to take those on, things that didn't affect the American manufacturing-- uh business actually.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. I would think uh the um American public and maybe American business uh might not welcome this system of importing so much.

[Newton Randolph:] Well, we act- we actually import things they don't make here. We have uh old little German clock that children take apart. We have uh, hot plates that are not in-- haven't been in use here yet. [Elliott Roosevelt: Uh-huh]. And we think of things that the Americans should have and will like.

[ER:] That's interesting; you mean you really try to find things that um-um Americans don't produce?

[Newton Randolph:] That's right, yes. Mhm.

[ER:] Well now where, where do you have them on show? (2:03)

[Newton Randolph:] We have them on show at Forty Exchange Place and I've also opened a retail shop. I've hoped, hoped to uh pull a--build a chain of those across the country to show the people the actual things.

[Newton Randolph and ER overlap here]

[ER:] Where is your first retail shop?

[Newton Randolph:] It's at Sixteenth and Chestnut in Philadelphia.

[ER:] Oh, but none in New York?

[Newton Randolph:] No, I took that as a test for the rest of country. I felt it was a little more like Cleveland, and uh and Detroit and places. [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] These items uh-uh I understand uh are retailed at a very low price for very lovely gifts. How do you manage to keep the price so low?

[Newton Randolph:] Well, I want to make these available to the general American public and not just for the-- for a certain group of people. And we didn't price them according to any standards of uh or trying to cut price or anything, but took our, a small markup thing, we uh do a volume business, which we have actually. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] It pays for itself, but we don't get rich, that's the answer. [Newton Randolph laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] This is a, a-a commercial enterprise, but uh one with an idea of trying to be of help in the general rehabilitation program of Europe and also uh one of bringing Americans and Europeans closer together.

[Newton Randolph:] That's right, yes.

[ER:] Well, has, have you uh consulted the government and the government uh-uh I mean do you work, it's sort of the Marshall Plan in uh it's an implement, another side of the Marshall Plan isn't it?

[Newton Randolph:] That's right. I talked with Mr. Foster actually of ECA and uh, he was quite interested and I talked to some other people in his group, a number of them, but unfortunately just then Korea broke loose and uh, we abandoned the store plan.

[ER:] Well you're very uh um you're very young aren't you?

[Newton Randolph:] Well I wouldn't say so. [Newton Randolph and Elliott Roosevelt laugh]

[ER:] Uh--

[ER and Elliott Roosevelt overlap here]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well uh supposing uh we Americans wanted to, or-order gifts for our friends from you uh-uh where --where would we send our orders and when would those gifts be available to the people?

[Newton Randolph:] You send them to Forty Exchange Place, New York Five, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] and we endeavor to mail them out the same day. They're coming in at the- right now we're about two days behind, but we're working--

[Newton Randolph and ER overlap here]

[ER:] But how do we find out what you had?

[Newton Randolph:] We have a catalogue. We also have--we ran out of catalogues, we put out a pamphlet right now, showing the principle items, which we can send anyone.

[ER and Elliott Roosevelt overlap]

[ER:] Oh, I see.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh-huh. But there is another phase of your business and that is the phase of sending food parcels uh very similar to the European, I mean to care sending uh food parcels to uh a un- uh to Europeans, but as I understand it, yours are made up in Europe from surplus goods in the Western European countries. Is that right?

[Newton Randolph:] That's right, yes. (4:45)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And uh uh are you able to uh, to give us a story of how that works?

[Newton Randolph:] Well, I'd been European Director for CARE; I opened up a lot of countries for them and there were certain that-at CARE I thought was doing a marvelous job and I wanted to supplement their work by uh doing it perhaps in a little different way. I thought speed was the main thing. I've decided to use a voucher system whereby a person can mail a voucher to Europe, which will get there anywhere from two to five days, go into one of our depots and pick up his food immediately. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] We established those uh-uh throughout, oh there was forty I guess in Germany, and uh a few in Austria, and England, France and so forth, Italy, and it greatly facilitated the uh the uh pick up time.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, now I understand that you're able to get food parcels behind the Iron Curtain and nobody else can. How do you do it?

[Newton Randolph:] Well, we uh fortunately were there about, uh close to two years. We had uh, thirteen depots in the principle cities: Leipzig, Dresden and so forth.

[Newton Randolph and ER overlap here]

[ER:] You're not as young as I thought you were. How long have you been working?

[Newton Randolph:] Uh, I've been with, with uh, this sort of thing about four years. [ER: Oh, I see] I've been working about uh thirty. Uh [ER: Mhm.] actually we, we stated, I said uh almost two years, we were kicked out once or twice. They came in and uh they had come into a depot and confiscate everything and then come back the next day, put them up and say "I'm sorry." But we're finally uh pushed out about oh about a month and a half ago. They just wouldn't let us restock our depots. So we started mailing packages from Berlin into the Russian zone, and we-we're now sending them from uh Denmark in there, direct to the home of the beneficiary.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, Mr. Newton Randolph, I'm very, very sorry, but it looks as though our time is running out on this program today, but we've found it very interesting to have you here to tell about a new type of business, uh a business that's trying to coordinate the rehabilitation of Europe uh and to bring the peoples of Europe and the United States together. Thank you for being with us.

[Newton Randolph:] Thank you Mrs.-or Mr. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Thank you.

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Transcription: Megan Woods
First Edit: Isabel Maier
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