

THE ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

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Description: In this segment, ER discusses the industrialization and economic advances of the American South and the corresponding changes in the region's politics and race relations.

Participants: ER

(00:02)

[ER:] Thank you, Anna. Apparently, it's time we began overhauling our ideas about the South. The South today is not what it was twenty years ago, ten, or even five years ago. Its progress, in fact, has been so dramatic that it is strange it has received so little notice. Only in the past few months have Northern newspapers and national publications begun noting and reporting upon what is happening there. But those of us who've watched it remember when all this began and are glad that perhaps the South is not going to be economic problem number one very much longer. As *Life* magazine puts it in a recent editorial, "Just about the biggest and best news in the United States is to be found in the South." The news is that the South is waking up and going places. [quote could potentially end after the second sentence rather than the first]

The biggest change has been in the growing industrialization of this region, formerly a one or two crop agricultural area. Smokestack shadows are falling over land which formerly knew only cotton and tobacco, tobacco and cotton. The textile industry in particular is growing. And as southerners will tell you, it is a natural and logical industry for the South, which has the raw material at hand. The area is beginning to develop its own livestock industry and a diversified agriculture, leading the way to a generally improved southern diet. Not the least of the important innovations is the southern transplanting of a vine from the Orient: the wonder-working kudzu vine, which serves the triple purpose of enriching and revitalizing the soil, providing grazing fodder for livestock, and helping to stop erosion.

Politically and ideologically, too, the South is changing. As in one area of Tennessee, where youthful ex-GIs literally threw the rascals out. The poll tax pattern in some areas is crumbling, and the Negro, by Supreme Court order, has a free vote, even though in many places it is still attempted to deny him this right. But one judge, Judge [Waties] Waring of Charleston, stronghold of the South, has said the Negro shall vote as long as it is the law.

A very hopeful thing is the report of southerners themselves, for the change and betterment must come largely from within. It's true, of course, that the South, generally speaking, has long had a chip on its shoulder regarding the pious attitude of other sections of the country toward it. You can hardly wonder, since most of us who criticize the South on racial matters had very little better to point to in our own areas of the country. I think it's all to the good that the South is getting a little praise for a change. You can hardly wonder at its formally testy temper under constant criticism, and the holier-than-thou attitude of the rest of the country.

Let us note too that a southern senator is one of our most courageous upholders of civil and human rights. Senator Frank Graham, who's been president of North Carolina's state university at Chapel Hill for the past fifteen years, is a grand person. It's true that Senator Graham was not elected to his office, but he was appointed by the governor of North Carolina. The Tennessee Valley Authority, too, has done much to reinvigorate southern life and will do more. We have Mr. [David E.] Lilienthal to thank for that. Perhaps

we will still have him guiding us in atomic energy, I hope so at least. And we haven't begun to realize how much more can happen in the Tennessee Valley area. Three years ago at a news conference, Senator [Claude] Pepper of Florida predicted, "We'll have a new South in ten years, a vastly different South in five." Events have borne the senator out, most happily for the South and for all of us. There's much to be done, of course, in the South as elsewhere, and that I know is a vast understatement. But meanwhile it's good news from the South and good news for all of us, for a more prosperous and vital South cannot help but benefit the nation as a whole. Now, back to my daughter Anna in Hollywood.

(04:53)

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