

TALKS BY MRS. ROOSEVELT

July 14, 1937

Description: In the series finale, ER has a conversation with author Hendrik Wilhem Van Loon.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt and Hendrik Wilhem Van Loon.

ANNOUNCER:

The Pond's Program ... with Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt!

BARR:

This is Virginia Barr of the Pond's Company speaking from New York and bringing you Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Her guest this evening is an old friend ... Dr. Hendrik Van Loon. Mrs. Roosevelt and Dr. Van Loon have chatted together often at the White House and Hyde Park, and now they're going to talk to you ... informally and casually, on subjects of interest to them, and they hope, of interest to you.

First, may I say a word of thanks for all the letters you have been writing. I always say one of the nicest things about my job with Pond's is going over the morning sail. This morning there were letters from 11 different states – the two Dakotas, Oklahoma, Georgia, Arkansas, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, South Carolina, Missouri, Colorado. Every woman had either a question to ask about the care of her skin, or just a friendly thank you greeting. Women everywhere find that regular treatments with Pond's Cold Cream do wonders for their skin. This simple Pond's method, invigorates as well as cleans the skin. It is known and used not only in America – but around the world! Get a jar of Pond's Cold Cream, and start to keep your skin soft and smooth and fine this famous way.

And now I have the honor to present – Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt!!

(ABOUT 8 MINUTES FROM MRS. ROOSEVELT)

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Good evening!

On this series of broadcasts, I have talked to you on many different subjects. And this evening, I am really at a loss to tell you just what the subject is, I asked Mr. Henrik Van Loon to come and chat with me. I have known Mr. Van Loon for many years – and I'm sure you know well his histories, books and sketches and that you have heard him on the many very interesting programs he has been doing. I have a few questions I want him to answer, and he threatens to ask me a few.

MR. VAN LOON:

Thank you Mrs. Roosevelt. I am very happy to be here¹ It's very kind of you to ask me to be on your broadcast.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Mr. Van Loon, you have covered civilization rather thoroughly in the various studies you have made of it, and with all that background, what would you say now is the next step for us to take to better the present situation?

MR. VAN LOON:

Just which situation do you mean?

MRS. ROOSEVELT: (LAUGHS)

I don't blame you for asking that question. I was a bit vague. What I really mean is what are men and women the world over to do and think now, that will perhaps help to make their individual and collective lives more secure, more useful and more enjoyable?

MR. VAN LOON:

I'm afraid I'm not very good at settling such large questions. But somehow or other our present day civilization reminds me of a clock. And furthermore that clock seems to have run down, and apparently nobody knows where the key is.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Have you an idea where it might be?

MR. VAN LOON:

Perhaps it's in your pocket – perhaps it's in mine – or maybe there's a duplicate key in everyone's pocket.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

You mean that if we all did a little more seeking we could find the solution to our lives ourselves?

MR. VAN LOON:

Certainly there's a great deal of truth in that.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

You once made the point that we worry a great deal about passing laws to prevent difficulties between groups and nations. Yet very little effort is made to ~~make over the human beings to whom those laws must apply.~~ change us from the selfish manners many of us are into unselfish human beings²

MR. VAN LOON:

That's true, I did say that, but I want to tell you right now, that history has taught me never to trust too much any sort of human blue print. Man is a completely illogical being.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Well, you must have some sort of a rough plan.

MR. VAN LOON:

I have, yes, but it stands engraved on the earliest stones of Babylon, and on the oldest role of papyrus, in the Pyramids. ~~I am afraid that at the present time all of us are so busy trying to make the world over by means of definite laws, that we forget that any law is after all merely the embodiment of the will of a great many citizens. What I am worried about is this — can we ever make over the laws until first we make over the citizens?~~ and it reads that salvation can only come through the individual. Therefore even the best of laws will be of little avail unless first of all the private citizen has suffered a change of heart. Do you think that can be done?³

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I'm very much afraid we can't.

MR. VAN LOON:

I have had the honor of knowing you for many years, Mrs. Roosevelt, but this is the first time I seem to be the optimist and you the pessimist. I don't believe you can do everything by education.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I don't believe you can do anything without it! I have a rough plan of my own, you know. I contend that before we can do anything about the understanding between nations we must do something about the understanding between individuals. And that I believe, is entirely a matter of education. ~~The men and women who make up one nation must learn about the people of other nations before they can understand them. Emotional judgements are very dangerous, and where there is a lack of education, there is very apt to be a great deal of emotional thinking.~~ After all a little boy who learns fair play in sports has begun his education for peaceful living in a group.⁴

MR. VAN LOON:

That is true but I happen to know boys rather much and surely⁵ You can't turn a Dachshund into a Borzoi by education.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

No, but you can turn each dog into a better Dachshund and a better Borzoi. But now we're talking about the human race not animals. You're not comparing them, are you?

MR. VAN LOON:

No. But they have one thing in common ... Character that can be developed.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Character is a word that we do not hear everyday ... these days.

MR. VAN LOON:

You are right, but I think that before we can have a better world we shall have to listen to a great many words we no longer hear every day. When I was very young, I used to smile complacently at my good grandmother who fed me Dutch molasses and proverbs. The molasses was good for the constitution and the proverbs were good for the soul. Perhaps your own Dutch grandmother did the same.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

My grandmothers were not Dutch, but I remember now the first proverb I ever learned was ... "A Stitch in Time Saves Nine!" or "Satan Still Finds Work for Idle Hands to do". She saw to it that hands were not idle and I also learned that a gentle woman could be stern if truth not obeyed⁶

MR. VAN LOON:

~~Yes, those dear old ladies — our grandmothers — had a certain amount of wisdom, and incidentally they had character too.~~

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

~~I think one of our troubles today is that we so often forget to take into consideration the character and the wisdom of the past.~~

MR. VAN LOON:

~~There are certain fundamentals that are almost laws of nature, which I think we sometimes forget. One is — that the weal and woe of the world begins and ends with the individual. His responsibility is infinitely more important than mass responsibility. The individual is often only too willing to leave the future of the world to the not very tender mercies of some impersonal law. But the world is not run by economic considerations. It's run by almost undefinable spiritual wishes. If we could get at that imagery — call it the dream life of the individual if you will ... if we could modify the accent, to use a musical term, we might get a slightly more harmonious performance than our unfortunate ears are allowed to hear at present.~~

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

~~That's an interesting point of view. I have felt that the dreams men dream are as important as their actual experience. How do you feel about it?~~

MR. VAN LOON:

You give me courage Mrs Roosevelt to okay your grandmothers instructions + speak the Truth.⁷ I know this is crass heresy at the present moment. If I really⁸ wanted to be in touch with the spirit of the times, I should evaluate reduce⁹ everything to the full dinner pail, hours of labor, and¹⁰ wages and appurtenances. But I feel strongly enough to maintain my own position because on the whole I think history is on my side. Not the history which approaches everything merely from the economic angle, but the history of the average simple man and woman who go through life not asking too much, never questioning very much, and yet, having a very definite knowledge of what they want. Now I do not think we shall ever be able to do very much unless we can make them want certain things beyond these which have to do with the mere economic problems of their existence. And that the average man + woman in spite of these economic needs are least of all influenced by problems that go beyond their economic needs.¹¹

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

But you know, I'm an entirely practical person, and while you minimize somewhat the importance of the economic element in life, I believe that at least a minimum of economic things must be within the grasp of every human being. He must have them within reach before he can begin to dream dreams, or the more important things of life in the dreaming of dreams is out of the generation.¹²

MR. VAN LOON:

By economic things I gather you mean automobiles, and goods¹³ ~~laws and a comfort here or there~~ — but as you and I know, the men who have influenced the history of the world most had very little part in such things. They had no need to make a last will and testament.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Why not?

MR. VAN LOON:

Because they had nothing to leave anyone, except their own spiritual dreams.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Those they had already written in men's souls.

MR. VAN LOON:

Yes, and that message has endured regardless of all the economic systems that have followed each other¹⁴ in such rapid succession.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Can we have such men today?

MR. VAN LOON:

That's what the contemporaries of Pontius Pilate asked. Contemporaries asked it also in the time of Buddha and Confucius – and yet the answer is all there. Those men, the dreamers, survived, and the makers of economic schemes lie buried in the nameless sands of ages.

But now, Mrs. Roosevelt, you've been asking me a great many questions, and we've talked rather seriously for your Wednesday night listeners. I'd like to ask you a few questions, about yourself and some of your doings.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Just now, Mr. Van Loon, I'm doing nothing but living out of doors as much as possible, mixed with some reading and writing but if you insist on asking me questions, I will try to answer them, though first Miss Virginia Barr has a word to say.

(INSERT MIDDLE COMMERCIAL)

MIDDLE COMMERCIAL

BARR:

Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

If ~~you~~ I¹⁵ were ~~to~~ asked¹⁶, ~~me~~ what single skin fault women ask me most about, I should say it was blackheads and blemishes. Blemishes usually follow blackheads and both have the same cause.

This morning as I read over my mail there was one letter I thought I'd like to read to you. It comes from a girl in Princeton, Illinois. She says: "I never knew how to keep my face from having horrid blemishes and blackheads. I tried all sorts of expensive things, but they were always hard on my face. Then at last I found your wonderful Pond's Method! Now I get compliments whenever I go to dances and parties. I tell all my girl friends I use Pond's Cold Cream. I usually find they go and get some too".

Now, here's the Pond's Cold Cream treatment women say fights off those common skin faults. This is the way they use it to invigorate their skin: First clean your skin with Pond's Cold Cream. Just smooth it on. Then wipe off. Now pat on more Pond's Cold Cream. Pat it in briskly, to stir the circulation and tone up your skin. Do this every night for a few weeks, and see if your skin doesn't improve! It's brighter, clearer, and the little blackheads and blemishes are fewer and farther[,] between! Just get a jar of Pond's Cold Cream and start in tomorrow!

And now, once again, we have the privilege of hearing – Mrs. Roosevelt!

(MRS. ROOSEVELT RESUMES)

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Now, Mr. Van Loon, ~~I have one leading question I want to ask you.~~ What question do you want to ask me?

MR. VAN LOON:

An awful lot of questions – ~~but the nimble little seconds have eaten up most of them. But you have seen more of our country than anybody else I can think of, and at this moment I can only think of one hundred and twenty-five million people.~~ But you know the whole battlefield of our present economic and social conflicts. Is there some definite incident or personality that stands out among all the rest – that you remember more clearly than others?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

There's one – yes – that I have thought of often. I would say I think this person is the one most deserving of sympathy. She is a woman who came to me last winter. We talked together and she asked me very wistfully how I could go on liking human beings, when I knew so many of them were selfish, envious creatures, and when, she said, after all is said and done, life itself is so utterly boring.

MR. VAN LOON:

Yes Life being haring – is like there's no water it's the pea¹⁷ – there's no excuse for that. For whatever life is, it never is boring even in its dullest moments. By way of contrast, what do you remember as an agreeable experience?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

The woman I remember with the greatest pleasure was a young woman whom I know very slightly. She wanted me to come and see her house. She never would have had it, she said, had it not been for the Federal Housing Administration which made it possible for her to borrow the money to build. And the look in her eyes I will always remember, when she told me how she and her husband were working day by day so that that little home which they felt was perfect could be free and clear of debt.

(OVER)

MRS. ROOSEVELT: (Continued)

When I came away, I had with me the best possible assurance, that with such people living, we have a very stable future.

MR. VAN LOON:

Mrs. Roosevelt, if I am not mistaken, you ~~belong to that fortunate group of people, I think they call themselves intellectual optimists, who~~ believe that in spite of much evidence to the contrary, the world makes progress all the time – slowly but nevertheless certainly. What do you think is the clearest manifestation of that spirit of almost automatic progress?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

~~The best indication I know of progress, is the fact that more people are thinking not of themselves only, but of themselves as a part of the big group of human beings. I think we have made great strides in our thinking and feeling for others.~~

~~In specific things,~~ I should say the fact that the people of this country are more firmly rooted in democracy than ever before, because they are taking a greater interest in their government. This is perhaps one of the most hopeful signs for the future good of mankind.

MR. VAN LOON:

Now, may I ask a rather indiscreet question? I've known you for some time ~~now, which at least shows I sometimes can be discreet too, but~~ and¹⁸ I have always admired your cosmic interest in your fellowmen. Yet For¹⁹ the good Lord endowed you with a sharp sense of awareness, a definite power of observation²⁰ and a power so strong can only be the privilege of one with a very direct sense of humor. What episode stands out on account of its humor? Voluntary or involuntary humor...?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I am afraid, Mr. Van Loon, that one of the things one must remember, if one has a sense of humor, is to keep it to oneself. There are few people indeed who like to furnish the cause for mirth, though they may enjoy it at other people's expense. ~~So what may afford me great amusement in the course of the varied activities of my life must remain buried in my own memory.~~ I'll tell you this one: a lady came to see me one day + I asked her what I could do for her + her answer was: -- That she did not want very much – simply would I help her get a million dollars.²¹

VAN LOON:

Why Mrs. Roosevelt. I was just going to ask you that myself.²²

MRS. R:

I guess the same answer applies to you.²³

(PAUSE)

Mr. Van Loon and I must leave you now, and in going I want to thank him for joining me here tonight.

I would also like to thank all of you who have listened to me in the past weeks for your attention. I have enjoyed these Wednesday evenings so much, and as this particular series of broadcasts is concluded now, I know how much I am going to miss being with you on Wednesday evenings.

May the summer be happy for all of you, and may it be a joyous vacation time.

Good night – and for now - good bye.

(CLOSING)

CLOSING COMMERCIAL

BARR:

_____ With this broadcast, Mrs. Roosevelt concludes her series this season for the Pond's Company. In behalf of Pond's may I thank Mrs. Roosevelt for her time and thought which has made this series possible, and wish her a happy summer, and say that we hope she will be back with us at a later date.

And may I remind you also that all over America -- in fact, all over the world, lovely women care for their skin regularly with Pond's Cold Cream. Do²⁴ Get your jar of Pond's Cold Cream tomorrow -- keep your skin nice and smooth all through the summer.

This is Virginia Barr, saying goodnight, and for the present, goodbye.

ANNOUNCER:

This is the National Broadcasting Company.

Transcribed by: Lee Febos.

Proofread by: AB, Lee Febos, Matt Girardi, IK David, Crystal Brandenburg.

Transcribed from a script held in the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

¹ The words "I" through "here" are a handwritten interlineation.

² The words "change" through "being" are a handwritten interlineation.

³ The words "and" through "done?" are a handwritten interlineation.

⁴ The words "After" through "group." are a handwritten interlineation.

⁵ The words "That" through "surely" are a handwritten interlineation.

⁶ The words "She" through "obeyed" are a handwritten interlineation.

⁷ The words "You" through "Truth." are a handwritten interlineation.

⁸ This is a handwritten interlineation.

⁹ This is a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁰ This is a handwritten interlineation.

¹¹ The words "and" through "needs" are a handwritten interlineation.

¹² The words "or" through "generation" are a handwritten interlineation.

¹³ This is a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁴ The words "each other" are a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁵ This is a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁶ The letters "ed" are a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁷ The words "Life" through "pea" are a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁸ This is a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁹ This is a handwritten interlineation.

²⁰ The words "a" through "observation" are a handwritten interlineation.

²¹ The words "I'll" through "dollars" are a handwritten interlineation.

²² The words "Why" through "myself" are a handwritten interlineation.

²³ The words "I" through "you" are a handwritten interlineation.

²⁴ This is a handwritten interlineation.