

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

July 26th, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question regarding inefficiency in Congress. In the following segment, ER and Elliott discuss the role of Soviet espionage. In the interview segment, ER interviews Florence B. Shaw, President of the National Travelers Aid Association.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Florence B. Shaw, Ben Grauer

[ER:] How do you do? This is Eleanor Roosevelt. Every Monday through Friday, my son Elliott and I have the opportunity to visit with you here in my living room at the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City. Each day it is our desire to bring interesting guests that we are hopeful you will enjoy meeting. Elliott, will you tell our listeners today's plans?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Since the beginning of the Korean hostilities, thousands of men have been sent to military camps and industrial factory centers. Behind them have come their wives and children. Some did not even - did not even have enough money to carry them to the first pay day. Others have never been away from home and didn't know how to adjust themselves. To their aid has come the National Travelers Aid Association. To tell us of the tremendous job being done by this organization and what we as individuals can do to help in this work, Mrs. Roosevelt's guest today is Mrs. George Hamlin Shaw, its president. We'll hear from Mrs. Shaw after Mrs. Roosevelt and I discuss a question sent in by a listener, but first our announcer with a few words.

[Break 1:21-1:34]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] The question up for discussion today comes from Mrs. Mary Wilson of Oceanside, New York. She writes, "I read a recent editorial in a New York paper which accuses the eighty-second Congress of turning out less legislation than any previous Congress within the memory of veteran Washington reporters. Certainly less than any in the last two decades." And concludes with a comment, quote: "All in all it can be reported today that Congress seems to be getting nowhere slowly. Isn't it hard, Mrs. Roosevelt, for people such as I, an ordinary citizen, to have faith in these perilous times when we get reports such as these? Why now of all times should our Congress be bogging down, what is the reason? Perhaps you can give me some glimmer of hope that the affairs of our nation are not as black as they are sometimes painted."

[ER:] Well, just because they're accused of-of passing less legislation doesn't mean that they haven't done a good job. Adding laws uh just for the sake of adding laws would be a very stupid performance. Um it may mean that they are going to have uh more better-considered laws, and that they are taking more time to think through on them. Now, I don't know if it does mean that, uh but I-I personally have always felt that there were too many little personal interests that were injected into Congress and that got through and made a volume of laws. And that uh um perhaps a little more time devoted to the big questions um were-- might reduce the number of little things that were brought up and done but um would be time better spent. And now it happens that perhaps it's taking longer to discuss some of these things; they are very complicated questions that are coming before Congress now, and I would not condemn them until the end of the session and uh until you really know uh what they have done. And very often um there will be a difference of opinion as to what should be done-one and that takes longer. And uh we hope it will be resolved in the wisest possible way. Occasionally it is not; occasionally it takes time and another

Congress will have to change what previous one has done. But um I uh [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] I personally would think that uh the mere fact that there have not been a great many laws passed should not discourage anyone. What I think it does require our attention is the kind of arguments uh and the speeches that are made in Congress on the different subjects that are of vital interest to the people. I think if we would pick out -- in our newspapers and through our congressional directory -- what were the subjects that we felt were important, and follow what was said on those subjects in Congress, and let the congressmen and senators what we felt about their positions, we as citizens would be doing a very valuable piece of work. For instance, just now the controls bill and inflation are of primary domestic importance to every one of us. And the fact that they extended a weakened bill but that they have a month in which to do something better should stimulate every one of us to get in touch with everyone we know and say what we think about that. Um on our on our Point Four Program, on our foreign relief, in other words, on our military bills. Uh all those are things in which uh we should not want to hurry. We should want due consideration, but we should take a part! [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] We should really feel it's what our representatives are arguing that interests us.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Well, do you--don't you also feel that uh that due to the makeup of this particular Congress, uh where there is uh a coalition of Southern Democrats, um more aptly called "Dixiecrats," and uh the Republicans who are anti-administration, and the balance of power is uh is really uh very, very close uh between those two groups and the administration, uh that probably it makes it all the more difficult to come to a-an agreement on all of these policies and uh problems it faces?

[ER:] Oh, of course it does. I mean, that is coalition is a perfectly terrible coalition, because it means the administration has a very narrow margin and um uh they-they have a very hard time uh to get consideration, that is fair consideration, of the things that should go through -- or that they feel should go through. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Now --

[Elliott:] I was very much interested, for instance, in reading in yesterday's paper that on the question of controls, uh price controls for beef, that the administration wasn't even able to get in favor of its bill uh the majority leader of the administration in the S-United States Senate. uh Mr.--

[ER:] No, because he comes from a state where beef is very -- where beef owners are very strong, [Elliott Roosevelt: Right.] the cattle owners, and he doesn't dare. Now uh the people as a whole should understand that um these-these interests uh have organized lobbies and they work all the time. And the people that work all the time or organized lobbies will be what will control us. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] And there's a very strong farm block always. And uh there is um a-a large group of special interests. And um when-when an effort is being made to protect the people as a whole um then they ought to be awake to the special interests that go to work, [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.]and they ought let the-their representatives that they're not-they haven't gone to sleep!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Didn't there used to be a taxpayers' association? Organizations of plain ordinary taxpayers that used to uh appear in Congress before congressional committees to fight for good legislation? (9:02)

[ER:] Well, I don't know about that. I've known a great many groups that in special areas appeared. Uh I've known a great many women's groups, for instance, in the old days that fought for certain labor um laws for women. I've known of-of um the League of Women Voters, for instance, will give you impartial information and will back their measure. And um where foreign affairs are concerned, the United Nations Association will give you impartial information and back measures. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] But uh I don't um I-I don't remember those taxpayer associations, though I have a faint sort of feeling that they sound familiar to me, but I don't--don't remember them actually working there.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But uh it would be through uh people organizing and starting that type of activity that we can work to prevent special interests from uh railroading through legislation that is purely in their interest and uh not necessarily for the public good.

[ER:] Yes, but probably they can work through their existing organizations if they um are awake to the need.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Well, this uh-this whole question of uh the amount of work that is done by a-a particular session of Congress, like the eighty-second Congress as in this letter -- I remember when the eighty-first Congress uh was in session, they said the same thing about it, [ER: I don't think they said --] and they said the same thing about the eightieth Congress.

[ER:] I don't know that they said they hadn't passed enough legislation, that's a-a new one. Um they usually say that what they've done um is so bad uh that they will go down into history as the worst Congress. I've heard [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] so many Congresses called the worst that I'm beginning to think that that is probably a slight exaggeration. I imagine there are always good and bad things in every Congresses, and there are always men who stand out who've lived and voted according to their principles. But um there are others who have not, that's all.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well today -- as of today, would you say that the present has Congress uh met with most of the major issues and ha-has dealt with those issues uh up to date, or are they still way behind in solving them?

[ER:] There are a good many others, they're still -- but usually the talk all goes on at the beginning, and you never work this hard in any legislative body at the beginning, you always wait until the end, and then the last part of the time you rush everything through. And that's how a lot of the bad things get through. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] But um uh you can't expect that the beginning will show uh the record of accomplished legislation that the end will. (12:11)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, do you feel that uh that what has been said of so many congresses, that we have too many old uh people in the seats of importance because of our uh system whereby uh length of service uh determines uh how important you are in Congress. Do you think that has-uh that the Congress today is-is made up of more older people than before, or do you think that uh-uh that that was --

[ER:] Well, I don't know the proportion, it would be natural to have more older people, though I think now there are a fair sprinkling of younger ones. Personally I think that sprinkling should be increased. Um it ill befits me at my age to say at what age [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] exactly we should retire, but I think that um-um when we begin to feel that our opinions are solidifying we have better retire.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] All right, well I think that that answers uh this question from Mrs. Wilson, and I see now it's time for us to go on to another part of the program.

[Break 13:27-13:58]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Today we have a letter from Fred and Jacob Sudak of Chicago which deals with a subject that is growing daily in importance. They write, "Dear Mrs. Roosevelt, my father and I are constant listeners to your very worthwhile and enlightening program and we find it enjoyable as well as instructive. Some time ago, you may recall, Senator [Alexander] Wiley of Wisconsin made a proposal wherein the United States should establish on and train a fifth column movement designed to operate behind the Iron Curtain. We have long been in favor of such a proposal, and we are unable to perceive why such a proposal has not been given more consideration. For proof that such an organization is

extremely helpful to a nation who employs such tactics and harmful to the nation who is forced to combat the same, we need only cast our eyes to the present world situation. Everywhere throughout the world we can see the degenerating effect on the rule of the conqueror and the distinct boost in morale to the oppressed." Messrs. Sudak then suggests that this be the subject of a debate on Mrs. Roosevelt's television program, which is now under consideration. But in the meantime we thought uh we'd like to discuss this subject here. The letter concludes, "Again, let me say we enjoy your program and fervently hope that you continue to keep up the good work on behalf of the American way of life, which is the only hope this world has for survival."

[ER:] Well, I-I think the answer really is that of course we do have an intelligence uh program, but I doubt very much whether we are in a position to uh do the kind of spy work which -- we-we just aren't made uh that way; we're not very good spies. Um and we-we are not, you see, organizing in the way the Russians are organizing to try and overthrow governments all over the world and bring them by force to -- or if not by force, by um underhand methods -- uh to our particular ideology. All we would be doing would be to organize in order to work behind the Iron Curtain lines to persuade people that what they have was not as good as what the outside world, the free world, might have. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Now it's much more difficult to inspire the kind of fanaticism. Um you know very well that if you've discovered you're going to jail, uh you may be-you may be killed um. You've got to feel that there is a great crusade going on and that you are serving something that is much more important than your own life. Now, we can't do that with uh with our people. We can-we can find a few people who love to risk their lives just for the fun of uh doing something, outwitting other people and getting information. Yes, there are people who are willing to do that. But it's not the same kind of a crusade in which you give your life because you feel that in the end the peoples of the world are going to profit by what you do. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] So I don't think it's possible to organize. In time of war, yes, because there the existence of your [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] country is at stake [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] and that's a different thing. But I just don't think we're made so that we, for the most part, would feel that it was worthwhile risking our lives to do that. (18:14)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, on the other hand, uh probably the finest intelligence service in the world is that of Great Britain. They have uh spies, or as they call them agents, working constantly. I read a very interesting story not so long ago of uh a British agent who lived in Germany and worked uh-uh so closely into the inner councils of the Nazi regime that he was very a important general on the supply core of the-- on the general staff of the German army. Uh and nobody in Germany suspected him of being an agent, but uh in actuality he worked for the British all the way through.

[ER:] Well, um it's an old tradition of course with the British that they do have people trained to that service and uh who do it. Uh I don't see how um they would have bought a German, I should think, to do that. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And um I should think it would be an awfully tricky business, and they must sometimes be double crossed. I should live in terror for fear the man who was selling [Elliott Roosevelt: Yeah!] to me might also be selling me out. [Elliott Roosevelt: Well --] But um I -- it is true that the British have had people and they've done very daring things, but usually short-term things, usually being dropped for a short time and getting out. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] And I uh-I think it's usually during a war, or when war was approaching and seemed imminent. Um [ER clears throat] then --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well in the days of the Kaiser, the Germans had a very remarkable system. They ordered their own nationals to go uh other countries and settle down and -- [ER: Oh yes, and settle down and live in South America.] Yeah, and become uh citizens of that country.

[ER:] Yes, but that was partly uh to conquer the world, you see. That again was almost like the Communist ideology. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] They were going to conquer the world for the German

race; the German race was going to be the supreme race of the world and they were going to control the whole world. Now if you-you have that sort of idea and an ideal, you'll do a good deal. But --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Of course, that isn't uh -- the British system is not exactly what they meant in this letter. [ER: No.] What they talk about in this letter is to establish on and train a fifth column movement, and a fifth column movement actually means the establishing and training of -- for instance, if we're operating against the Soviet Union, training Russians uh and then getting them into the country and having them work from within the country.

[ER:] That's it, that's it, just exactly. I'd--I don't know how well we are fitted to do that, now um I don't think it goes with our character very well. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] I don't think we are good at that.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well , certainly it would be uh very difficult to find many Russians who have left Russia because they wanted to get away from the system to go back who would want to go back and risk their necks by getting under the system again.

[ER:] I think it would be quite difficult.

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER laugh] (21:29)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well uh, on the other hand, I do understand that there are uh quite successful movements of refugees from uh from Poland and Czechoslovakia and Hungary and Romania and those countries who are constantly going back and forth. I understand that they have underground radios uh that they broadcast right from within their countries uh giving free information, correcting the falsehoods that are handed out by the communists. Do you know anything about that activity?

[ER:] I've heard about that, but I-I don't know much about it. I've heard it was being carried on and that it was being carried on by those who hoped eventually to free their countries. That's another thing; that you can get people to do things of that sort and risk their lives when they hope to free their country from something that they don't like. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] But to get Americans to do that would be quite another thing.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh on the other hand, I would think any uh good fifth column movement would be with the nationals who are working [ER: Who are working--] to free their country.

[ER:] That's-that's practically the only way it could be done.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And uh I'm not at all sure that this country isn't doing that. We don't announce to the world uh the work that we carry on in that uh respect any more than the Russians announced that they have forty-two operatives over here training fifth column operators in this country.

[ER:] No, I think that -- I don't know whether we are doing it or not doing it, but it would be highly unwise to announce it to the world! [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And uh in pro-- all probability any uh good uh government -- [ER: Must be done by the people themselves.] And any good government is uh encouraging uh those people who wish to free -- [ER: Their own nations. Without a question] Mhm. Now, I feel that uh-that this uh letter has one sentence that bothers me a little bit, uh it says that "all we have to do is cast our eyes to the present world situation." And then they go on and say, "Everywhere throughout the world, we can see the degenerating effect on the conquering and the distinct boost of the moral to the oppressed." I'm uh rather interested in

where they see uh the conquerors, uh the uh Soviet uh people who have taken over the governments in these Iron Curtain countries, uh where they see them being undermined very effectively as yet. (24:16)

[ER:] Well, I-I think that's perhaps more hopeful uh wishful thinking. Um I've read lately quite a good deal uh from people who felt um that there was a wave, even within Russia, of discontent. I think it's quite possible, but I think that um uh it's one thing to be discontented with your government, it's another thing to be uh prepared to let a foreign government come in and take over. Um I think it's always possible that when people are not getting all that they want to get um there will be discontent within a country. But that doesn't mean there is an actual overthrow imminent of the government.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] No, for instance, we have the case in point of uh-uh General Franco in Spain. He's uh been in power a long time, and there's been uh-uh certainly a lot of other governments that haven't felt that Franco was allowing his people to have a democratic form of government. [ER: Mhm.] And there are lots of uh Spaniards who uh are outside who would dearly love to overthrow Mr. Franco's regime, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we're making much progress in that direction.

[ER:] It doesn't mean they're making any progress in that direction, because um [ER clears throat] Mr. uh Franco has the um backing of the church, and the church is practically all powerful in Spain, so that um there is I think very little progress being made in that direction.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. All right, well, I hope that that answers the letter from the Sudak's father and son, and uh I see now that we have to pause and go on to another part of our program.

[Break 26:10-26:38]

[ER:] Thank you, Elliott. Mrs. [Florence B.] George Hamlin Shaw, president of the Nation Travelers Aid Association, is the first winner of a newly established award of the National Council of Women of the United States, as the woman volunteer of the year for her work in connection with Travelers Aid and other organizations. It gives me great pleasure to present to you to Mrs. Shaw.

[Florence B. Shaw:] Good afternoon, Mrs. Roosevelt, it is a very great pleasure for me to be on this program.

[ER:] Well, Mrs. Shaw, uh you know of course of my personal interest in career volunteers, of volunteers in general, and my admiration for public-spirited women who give their free time to worthy causes. Now it gives me great pleasure to act on behalf of the National Council of Women in the United States which also recognizes the great contribution which women can make. They have asked me to present you with this scroll as their reward to you for outstanding volunteer work in the year 1950, and I am delighted to have the opportunity of doing it on this program. Now we have to get back to the questions which I want to ask you. How did you first become interested, Mrs. Shaw, in the Travelers Aid Association?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well years ago, 1927 to be exact, when I came back from Europe, I wanted to volunteer. I of course, I spoke several languages, I had been interested in people, and so it was suggested to me that I could put my services to best use in the port department of the New York Travelers Aid Society as a language volunteer. And, of course, those were the days of the picture bride when many of the Slavic women were coming with lots of petticoats and cheeses and most of their belongings wrapped in great big bandanas.

[ER:] [Laughs] That must have been very interesting. That leads me to ask you, how many languages do you speak?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Two: German and French. Which were very useful.

[ER:] Very useful. Uh at this time, what do you consider the Travelers Aid Association's most important activity? I gather that you have um many others besides the ports? [ER laughs]

[Florence B. Shaw:] Yes, indeed. I think our most-- uh the great pressure that we now -- of course, is for the moving people, and people are on the move. Not only industrial workers, defense workers, but the military and their families. They're all being uprooted; many of them are going into distorted communities uh with very little housing, and therefore our housing and information service, which is a regular part of the Travelers Aid, is being stretched to its very limits of the service we can give. (29:33)

[ER:] Are there any other activities besides these?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Oh yes. Uh of course, we do a tremendous program: We are a part of the USO, we are a part of the newly-created United Community Defense services, as well as the lamps which I'm sure you've seen in ports and airports and bus terminals and also in the stations all over the United States. We have a hundred and ten local societies in addition to the national Travelers Aid Association, of which I have the honor to be the president. And we also have six hundred cooperating representatives in many small hamlets. Ours, you see, is a chain of service, so that if you should fall ill or be sick in San Francisco and going-be going to Kankakee in Illinois, we can quickly communicate with Kankakee and help you home.

[ER:] I see! [ER laughs] Well, that's-that's very interesting. Now you spoke about being a part of the USO. Uh how do your services and their services um mesh together and complement each other?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, we are the casework agency in Tra-in the -- the Travelers Aid is the casework agency in the USO picture There are other national agencies -- six other national agencies -- each who play their part. They do the uh recreation, the club activities; we do the casework, housing, and information I have just mentioned, and we also operate the lounges for troops in transit as it was called, and you remember World War II -- we have ten of them beginning now in all of the railroad terminals.

[ER:] I see, well that, I think, just in itself would bring you um a tremendous piece of work. Because I remember the one in Washington during World War II, and uh the variety of things that came up in that um lounge was something to shape your uh ability to meet [unclear term] [Florence B Shaw: Night and day, you might add.] Night and day.

[Florence B. Shaw:] And it seems to me that in all the Travelers Aid movement, the real problems come at night. The problem -- [ER: Well they always do.] Yes. The problem -- and with it, the other agencies are not available, so the Travelers Aid gets these problems in the station, and we try to take care of them and very often in the morning refer them to other people. You see?

[ER:] I see. Well now, I think our listeners would like to hear the history of the Travelers Aid. By whom was it founded, and when?

[Florence B. Shaw:] It was founded just a hundred years ago. We are celebrating our centennial. It was founded by a mayor of St. Louis Bryan Mullanphy, who uh had had a struggle himself, and who had watched the immigrants come down the river in St. Louis, and who left a third of his fortune, about five hundred thousand dollars, to help travelers going to the West. And that money is in a trust, and it still is used by the Travelers Aid Society of St. Louis. Then on as time passes and in Boston, uh as a part of the YWCA movement in 1866, Travelers Aid began to give this service or--under the YWCA to young women in distress. And then finally, after giving you the chronology of it, in 1890 the Council--National

Council of Jewish Women began to work in the port department. And then in the South in 1901, women in Atlanta began to be interested in this, and they formed the Women's Missionary Association and set up similar services. And then finally in New York, Grace Dodge called a meeting here, and it formed the first nonsectarian Travelers Aid Society. And I remember uh hearing you speak at one of New York Travelers Aid Society annual meetings many years ago.

[ER:] Yes, I remember very well speaking at it. I didn't know the history [Florence B. Shaw: Yes.] as well as you've given it to us!

[Florence B. Shaw:] And now you see the National was only formed in 1917, because the National is just the-the-center point of all of the activities. Of all --

[ER:] Of all of the activities. Instead of all over the country. [Florence B. Shaw: That's right, that's right.] Um will you tell us of some of the actual happenings in a typical busy day of a Travelers Aid volunteer? Are they all volunteers, by the way?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, not at all. The preponderant amount are volunteers, but all of the staff, the professional staff, are professional caseworkers, and they of course have uh the responsibility for all of the referrals. The volunteers recognize a problem and then turn it over -- if it's a serious problem involving relief, particularly -- turn it over to a staff person to carry on. They've used the volunteers in the stations, and the number of volunteers varies with the pressure of the job. During the war, of course, there are thousands of women volunteering, and men too during the nights. But that's an expandable thing depending upon the amount of work we need to do.

[ER:] Well now, they must have some kind of training before they are fitted to um go into this service? Don't they have to have something?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Oh, very definitely, and the degree of which we consider a volunteer eligible and efficient is the degree to which she not only brings her own resources to the job, but which she accepts -- uh with the spirit with which she accept the-accepts the orientation uh which she must have, and also the uh the cooperation that she can give to the professional staff, and her ability to accept uh the guidance uh which she must continuously have by the professional caseworker.

[ER:] Yes, that's very interesting. And um, uh, how do men fit into this? Do they accept the guidance as well as women?

[Florence B. Shaw:] I find men are very docile and not at all uh self-reliant. I think they're even more quick to ask a question than a lady, perhaps particularly when it relates to a runaway child. I think they're appalled by any responsibility for runaway people. Uh you see because back of the simple question the person asks at the desk is generally a very, very deep one. They come to the desk and ask a simple question, but that is only an introduction to the thing which is really on their mind and which is probably re-the real problem that caused them to run away. And so it's the skill of the professional work in bringing out that problem that makes our work so helpful in the whole business and community organization.

[ER:] Well, it certainly is a very stimulating kind of work. Um how does one go about offering one's services if one wanted to help?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, as I said we have a hundred and uh ten locals all over the United States, we are part of a of a Community Chest in each of the cities. So all anyone has to do is just call up the Travelers

Aid, you'll find us -- a-anyone-anyone can find us in the directory, and make an appointment to come to one of our offices and be interviewed.

[ER:] And then if you find the person has the proper qualifications, you'll give them a chance to go to work?

[Florence B. Shaw:] That's right. After they have taken this indoctrination course.

[ER:] How long does that take?

[Florence B. Shaw:] It varies upon the size of the community. For example, the problem of giving volunteer uh service in New York is a very serious one, because you can imagine how much information you must know about the city of New York and its transportation problems, subways and so forth, streets and so forth, before you would be qualified to sit at a desk and give that knowledge.

[ER:] Well, not only that-not only that, but I should think you'd have to have a tremendous information on um uh the organizations available.

[Florence B. Shaw:] Exactly. Exactly. [ER: I should think that is --] We're a referral service, [ER: Yes.] and all of that is very involved, so that here and the larger cities, it may be uh several weeks, it maybe several months. And then the volunteer is never left alone at the station without a professional at her side to take over if the problem becomes too involved. Then there are all res-kinds of resource books which you have to help you, as well.

[ER:] Well, thank you very much, we just have to pause for a minute and let our announcer have a word, and then we'll come right back for further questions.

[Break 37:51-38:15]

[ER:] Now we come back to our interview with Mrs. George Hamlin Shaw of-of the Travelers Aid Association. And since I think we got away a little from our -- the typical day of a volunteer, I'm going to ask you, Mrs. Shaw, if you could really give us a glimpse of what a typical day would be for a volunteer.

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, first of all, you're at the station or you're at the port, but more particularly at the station where everything happens, and everything happens at once.

[ER:] What time do you get there?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, it depends on the shift you signed up for. It may be in--at night, it may be in the early morning. Or it may be that you're having some holiday coverage at noon. But anyway, people are waiting at the desk for this information, and there is a group who come from ships' DP and they have piles of luggage, and they're waiting to be routed or rerouted or something of that sort or waiting to meet relatives who have come for them. And at the same time, a station official comes up with a telegram he's received from the conductor saying someone's fallen desperately ill on the train, and he wants you to be sure to call the ambulance and take care of the person who will need hospitalization, and simultaneously notify relatives not only from the city which the client has come, but the place they're going. And still, the telephone rings. And then a little child comes up -- maybe she isn't so little, maybe let's say it's a girl of fifteen, and she tells you she's nineteen, and she's coming to New York for work. And you're very concerned about the work that she is going to come to, and you're equally concerned about the home she has left and the compelling reasons for her having gone. And so you have to notify that Travelers Aid Society back where she's come from so that they can confer with the mother and see what plan should be

made for her and if perhaps the family weren't a little bit responsible for the child's running away. So you see, as I say, it's very colorful and very stimulating, and I have been at it for twenty years. So anything that can hold your attention twenty years really must have movement.

[ER:] Yes, it really must have. But now, how many hours do you volunteer for as a rule?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Uh four is a minimum. [ER: Four is the minimum?] Yes, and you must give the equivalent of two days a week.

[ER:] Two days a week? [Florence B Shaw: That's right.] And uh so um how many can -- how many do you like to have people to volunteer for, eight hour days?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Yes, an eight hour day, a minimum of twice a week. Of course, in the war program it was slightly different because many people--women were working and couldn't give so much. So there we permitted them to have only one shift, that is perhaps uh-uh two four hour periods broken up to fit in with their programs, because we had so many girls who gave time at night who were--who were working during the day.

[ER:] Who were working during the day. I see. Well now, I want to come to a practical question: From where do the funds come to maintain your organization? [Florence B Shaw: They come --] Besides the [unclear terms] you spoke of.

[Florence B. Shaw:] [Laughs] That would be very inadequate believe me, only 500,000 dollars; our budgets are tremendous. Uh we are a part of all the Community Chests, as I have told you. We also have funds from transportation companies, from steamship companies of various kinds, from personal gifts, from foundations, and now through the United Defense Fund we will have moneys which will be siphoned to USO and the United Community Defense Services, which is the organization which is going to take care of the defense workers whereas the USO takes care of the moun-military.

[ER:] Well now, um do you always have as much of a budget, I mean, do you always cover your budget or do you sometimes fall short?

[Florence B. Shaw:] We always cover it, but that uh requires uh sometimes curtailment of services, and I'm sure you know social work so well, always know that there's always too much work and always too little money.

[ER:] Well, that's--that's a rather familiar tale. [Florence B. Shaw laughs] But does--does the Travelers Aid have any plans for new or supplementary services, will-- in the talking stage to which our listeners can lend a helping hand? (42:29)

[Florence b Shaw:] Oh, we are going soon to have a Travelers Aid Association of the World. There was just a meeting in Canberra, Australia, in which this Travelers Aid movement of the World was inaugurated. I shall be meeting with the representatives of Great Britain in London this summer, and we will make plans. A good many countries in Europe do have a service similar to Travelers Aid and this is the first time that we would try to coordinate [ER: Coordinate.] Yes.

[ER:] I see. Yes, I have seen people in-in um stations and so forth abroad. But now I wonder if you'd tell me if you've served as a volunteer in any group which we have not discussed?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, one, uh my family. I think to have uh--think that that is a part of a woman's voluntary service. [Florence B. Shaw laughs] Uh but I must say that these assignments: the USO,

Travelers Aid, and the New York Travelers Aid, and my interest in one or two other things, the Philharmonic, for example, keep me much more busy than I had ever expected to be.

[ER:] [Laughs] I should think they might! [Florence B. Shaw laughs] How much time do you give to the Travelers Aid?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, it's really a full time job. [ER: Full time job every day.] Oh yes, oh yes. Because of all these problems of policy, of expansion, for instance, just now you mentioned the Washington lounge, we're soon reopen it. And I am very interested in the plans for uh the physical outlay of that lounge, and the plan for inaugurating uh it-the opening, and so forth and so on. There's always something to do.

[ER:] Well, you seem to have found volunteer work very satisfying. Do you recommend it to all the other women?

[Florence B. Shaw:] I do indeed. I think any girl who has time, who's got a college education should start very young to be a volunteer. And then when you reach middle age, it's a wonderful antidote. Because you have had experience, and you can accept the responsibility which makes the day fly one day after the other.

[ER:] In other words, when your family begins to not be as demanding upon you, why uh you can use what has thus far been in the sideline and let it become um a main part of your day. [Florence B Shaw: Yes indeed, Mrs. Roosevelt.] Then you are never dependent uh on-on your children for interest.

[Florence B. Shaw:] I'm sure that's true, and I'm sure that women find um great satisfaction in being useful and seeing the tangible results of their work expressed uh in relation to other human beings.

[ER:] Well evidently, the National Council of Women felt that you had done, and were doing a magnificent job, or I'm quite sure this distinguished group would not have named you the outstanding woman volunteer of 1950. Um will you tell us by whom the council was founded and when? (45:17)

[Florence B. Shaw:] It was founded in 1888 by a group of very distinguished women, almost all of them workers in the suffrage cause: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Frances E. Willard. And of course, it is composed of many large national organizations.

[ER:] Well um, I know that it's a-a national organization, and I think that it's associated with an international group, isn't it?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Yes, the United States group is the founder member of the International Council of Women formed a few years later. And it now has councils in thirty countries on all of the continents. Uh actually, uh the Council of Women have been responsible for many advancements made by women. In fact, the Greek women won the right to vote as a result of the impact made by the recent triennial council of the International Council in that country. Actually, the work-they work in all fields that pertain to the advancement of women: health, education, improvement of industrial conditions, and it has worked forcefully for a vote for women in many countries, and I'm sure its pressure has been felt in many places so that women could be free.

[ER:] Well, I'm interested because I remember um that this meeting which you speak of now was being held in Greece when I first reached Geneva this spring, and I did see one or two of the people who attended that meeting afterwards at the Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva. But I had just forgotten for a minute uh about it. Um and I do um remember their saying that they felt that the reason the

suffrage law passed in Greece was because the women were there on the spot, and they -- the gentlemen - - couldn't get away from the fact that they were there! [Florence B. Shaw laughs] [Florence B. Shaw: Of course, the --] Um now, I wonder if any woman can become a member of the National Council, how would she go about it if she wanted to be a member?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, I think she would simply call the National uh Council offices here in New York, and would arrange to go this office of theirs in Madison Avenue and uh have an interview, and uh they would give her the necessary information. But --

[ER:] I had an idea, though, that the National Council was sort of coordination of organizations, or isn't it?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Yes, it is. It uh is a coordination of the National Council of Negro Women, the National Association of Colored Women, The National Federation of Business and Professional Women. Other groups are the Women's Christian Temperance Union, uh National Association of the Salvation Army, National Panhellenic Conference, and so forth. And of course, after the conference, they would find out what her particular interest was and suggest that she then go to the association which would answer her interest. [ER: I see.] So it would just be an intro into the program.

[ER:] They would-they would get her in through an organization and that --

[Florence B. Shaw:] And find out what her interests were.

[ER:] Well, that is what I thought. Well, in your opinion, do you think women as individuals and in groups could do more than they are doing to bring understanding and eventual peace to our present troubled world?

[Florence B. Shaw:] I think women are very alert and certainly very effective and a very defor-def-uh determined force, and I think they will always meet their challenge.

[ER:] Well, that's a nice thing to say about. Well, going back for a second to the Travelers Aid, how can one make a contribution to the organization?

[Florence B. Shaw:] Well, if you live in New York City, you simply contribute to the New York City Travelers Aid Association: the Travelers Aid Society, 144 uh-uh East Forty-fourth Street. The other parts of the country we are part of a Chest. Of course, there is no Chest in New York, so we conduct our own campaigns to raise our own funds in New York. And we would be very grateful for any assistance, whether in the form of money, or in the form of voluntary services. And, Mrs. Roosevelt, how nice of you to give me this opportunity to say it. [Florence B. Shaw laughs]

[ER:] Well, I'm-I'm very-I'm very glad that you say it that way, that you want both money and the voluntary services. Well now, I see our time has drawn to an end, and I want to thank you so much for being with me today, Mrs. Shaw.

[Florence B. Shaw:] It was a great honor.

[Break 49:35-49:58]

[ER:] Today science seeks knowledge to combat disease and alleviate human suffering. This is a year-round campaign for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, an organization in which sponsors research in order to determine the cause and effective treatment for the dreaded nerve disorder multiple sclerosis.

Medical research has made great advances in the prevention and treatment of the diseases of childhood, such as typhoid fever and diphtheria. A tremendous job, however, remains to be done with the chronic diseases of the nervous system which disable and cripple thousands of young people yearly. Multiple sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system in which the myelin sheath is partially destroyed, causing widespread disabilities. Visualize what happens when there is a short circuit in an electric wire, and you have a good idea of what happens in multiple sclerosis when nerve impulses cannot properly be carried through the body. Some of its symptoms are impaired vision, staggering gait, numbness, bladder trouble and lack of muscle control. Young adults in their prime of life and usually between the ages of twenty and forty are the victims of this disease. Today, multiple sclerosis and victims of other related nerve disorders have found hope through the efforts of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. This young organization, only four years old, has made great strides in its program of medical research, public education, and aid to the multiple sclerotic. Already, the society, which represents over sixteen thousand members in this country and abroad, is sponsoring vitally important research projects including five clinics. According to a survey conducted with the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation covering all leading voluntary health agencies last year, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society spent the largest percentage of its funds for research. This is good, but so much remains to be done. The Society hopes to support other important research projects and establish much-needed clinics in many other areas of the country. But money is badly needed to implement its program; multiple sclerosis has been a neglected disease. It needs to be brought to the forefront as a worthy cause that deserves public support. Also of prime importance in this Society's drive is to locate all victims of multiple sclerosis. This will help determine the number people in the United States who are victims of the disease.

[Break 53:01-53:34]

[Ben Grauer:] This has been the *Eleanor Roosevelt Program*, recorded in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room at the Park Sheraton Hotel on the corner of Fifty-fifth Street and Seventh Avenue in New York City. Today Mrs. Roosevelt's guest was the president of the National Travelers Aid Association, Mrs. George Hamlin Shaw. Tomorrow, we complete our week with a guest interview with the Sunday editor of the *New York Times*, Mr. Lester Markel. Mr. Markel is obviously one of the most distinguished and best known editors in America with an assignment of editorship of the Sunday *Times*. And he is going to speak not only of his work with the *Times*, but the story of the founding of the International Press Institute. He'll tell us why it was formed and what the Institute hopes to accomplish. I thought I might take a peek into next week's guest list, and we'll find heading it on Monday, July 30th, Rex Stout visits with Mrs. Roosevelt. Mr. Stout, of course, is the well-known author of mystery stories and uh creator of the character Nero Wolfe, with addiction to a foaming beverage and raising orchids. Uh I'm hoping Mr. Stout will tell us something of how he raises the unusual plots and situations which occur in the Nero Wolfe mysteries. On Tuesday, Mr. Oscar Pogge, director of Bureau of Old Age and Survivors Insurance Division of the Federal Security Agency Social Security Administration, will speak to us. And behind those formidable titles, I know, there will be some interesting facts as to Social Security Administration and how it operates to benefit all of us. On Wednesday, Phil Regan, a motion picture and radio star. Those are some of the guests scheduled for next week, and tomorrow, of course, our guest Lester Markel, Sunday editor of the *New York Times*. Mrs. Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt will be with you again tomorrow and every day, Monday through Friday, from 12:30 to 1:15. Until tomorrow then at the usual time, this is Ben Grauer bidding you all good afternoon.

Transcribed from holdings at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)
File(s): 72-30(207)

Transcription: Ruth Tornell
First edit: Jay Fondin

Final edit: Seth LaShier

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