February 15th, 1941

Description: In this episode, ER discusses several topics, including: the treatment of "enemy aliens," preparation for the relocation of Japanese Americans to internment camps, the need for women in war work, American society's penchant for careless behavior, and the need to for Americans to act as global citizens during wartime.

Participants: ER, Dan Seymour

[Dan Seymour:] This is Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s regular Sunday evening broadcast sponsored by the Pan-American Coffee Bureau, representing seven good neighbor nations. This evening Mrs. Roosevelt speaks to you from New York, and our broadcast started at six forty-five eastern wartime. We’d like to emphasize those words ‘war time’ for a moment. For they reflect another whole-hearted decision on the part of the men and women of this great nation of ours to get more out of every day; more effort, more work, more production for our great victory offensive, just as millions and millions of men and women are drinking coffee and for the same reason. Coffee, they know, helps them get more out of life. Coffee gives extra energy, extra steady nerves. Have you tried drinking an extra cup of coffee with your lunch? An extra cup during that midafternoon let down period? An extra cup with your evening meal? You have? Then you’ve discovered just how much coffee helps you to get more out of every hour of work, more out of every hour of relaxation. We don’t have to do much urging to get you to join Pan-American Coffee Bureau and millions of your fellow Americans in cheering the slogan "Get more out of life with coffee." And now, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. (1:16)

[ER:] Good evening ladies and gentlemen. There are several subjects in particular which I would like very much to discuss with you this evening: the problem of what we call “enemy aliens,” the question of women in war work, and the problem of national carelessness. Concerning the first subject, I think it is unfortunate indeed that we have to use a phrase because it is traditional, namely “enemy alien,” when we talk about the people in our midst who are not citizens and who came to us from other lands. We know that we have enemy aliens and we want them apprehended and put where they can do no harm, but we also know that we have enumerable friends who are aliens, who have taken refuge in the United States and whose whole hope for the future lies in the justice and the freedom which this country offers. It is obvious that many people who are friendly aliens may have to suffer temporarily in order to ensure the safety of the vital interests of this country while at war. It is well I think to tell the Japanese and our own people some facts, namely that the government agencies are in control of the situation. That the army and justice department are fully cooperating, and that it is most important to stabilize employment conditions in west coast industries.

I want to point out here that private vigilante activities, while they may be inspired by the highest sense of patriotism, may jeopardize the national security and bring retribution against thousands of American nationalis-nationals in the Far East. It is much wiser and safer to leave this whole situation in the hands of legally constituted agencies, reporting to them anything...
which seems suspicious. We are going to move the Japanese population out of strategic areas on the West Coast as soon as possible, but it is going to be done so that they will not waste their skills. They must not be allowed to plant their gardens and then have to leave them because those gardens are not only a source of subsistence to them, but they supply many people in the United States with vegetables. They should plant gardens where they are to be moved in order that we do not have an unnecessary economic strain upon the country. This is just one incident but there may be many others, and all of them must be dealt with on the community level. So it is important that you and I in our communities study the problem of the alien -- the citizen born in another country or the citizen born here but of foreign parents -- and try to deal with this problem with all due regard to the safety of the nation. Never forgetting however, that the things for which we fight, such as freedom and justice, must be guaranteed to all people and not to just a select few. (4:13)

Now for the question of women in war work. Today saw the starting of the registration of older men up to forty-five under the Selective Service Act. I am sure there are many men for whom useful and necessary occupations will develop in the course of our war effort, which will take them out of the work which they are doing at present. I do regret however that women are not being registered at the same time as men. I feel quite certain that if the war lasts long enough we will register women, and we will use them in many ways as England has done. I think it would save time if we registered women now and analyzed their capabilities and decided in advance where they could be used, if they are needed, and as the need develops. We are trusting, of course, that women will volunteer wherever they can find useful occupations, but this seems to me to be a rather wasteful method. If selective service is a value where men are concerned, it should certainly be equally valuable where women are concerned. I’ve already received many letters from high school girls on up to great-grandmothers who recognize the fact that they can find or make jobs for themselves in various fields of service, and that they can go on performing the service which is most important at all times: running a home to the best of their ability when they have one. But many people have none. They are the ones who most vociferously are demanding that the government list them and evaluate their capacities and put them where they can be of most value. People who’ve trained themselves or who have a gift along certain lines can always be used to advantage in their specific field. Some are likely to neglect this consideration in their desire to be of service and volunteer to do some work where their previous training will be of little value. This is wasteful, and we should eliminate the waste if we possibly can. It may be possible of course to get a very good picture of the woman power of the nation if this is available in the volunteer offices established under the local defense councils. However, this will never be as complete as a government tabulation of the type undertaken in the mobilization of man power.

Incidently, I was reminded very forcibly the other day of the need of more women in the nursing profession. My third son was on leave from his ship in order to have his appendix removed. He came through his operation successfully, so there was no cause for anxiety. But when I visited this child of mine in the hospital I went through some of the wards with the doctors and realized how urgent a problem is the recruiting of more women to the nursing profession. For we are using so many more nurses now in the army and navy, that the Red Cross has made an appeal for girls to take up this profession. Even during their period of training, they will be making a contribution to the winning of the war. Whether they continue in the profession after the war or not, this training will be of value in their homes and in their community life.
Again I would like to make the suggestion that people who cannot see their way clear to giving full time to training in the nursing profession can still give time enough perhaps to become a nurse’s aide. The Red Cross course for nurse’s aide requires a given number of hours on academic and practical work. And with the completion of the course, a number of hours of volunteer services in a hospital, and this will give women and girls who can give three or four hours a day every day a chance to become a nurse’s aide. These nurse’s aides will relieve the trained nurses of many minor duties, and make it possible for them to give the skilled care which makes so much difference in the recovery of the patient. Nurse’s aides also can do much of the watching of patients, which is very valuable in critical cases. And yet they will allow regular nurses to go about their duties with a much freer mind, for they will know that someone with a certain amount of training is watching at the bedside of a patient who might need emergency care. There is also, of course, the field covered with the regular Red Cross workers, who have long provided a much needed hospital service by writing letters for the men and by intelligently contributing to their entertainment, and thus making their convalescent period more cheerful. These ladies are a link with the families who cannot be at the hospital because of distance or their financial situation. (8:40)

Now as to the great problem of our national carelessness; the burning of the Normandie this week and its final capsizing, in spite of all the efforts made to minimize the fire damage, probably will be celebrated as a victory in the Axis countries. Whether this fire was caused by sabotage or not is perhaps unprofitable to discuss, but I think there is a serious lesson for all of us in this fire, and the fire which will delay the finishing of the Hotel Stature in Washington. That lesson is one of taking great care about little things. We as a nation are apt to be careless. We throw our matches down without making sure they are out. We drop cigarette ashes without paying attention to whether a living spark still burns. We do not always grind out our cigarette stubs. Every one of these little careless habits may bring us a fire, and once a fire starts it’s hard to say how much damage will occur. We are all familiar with the fact that we lose thousands of dollars’ worth of trees every year because of the carelessness of hunters and campers and passing motorists. Let us resolve as a measure which will help us to win the war, to be careful of little things as this has a bearing on our national habit of waste. We’re going to need things not only for ourselves but for the benefit of our allies all over the world: food and clothing and vital war materials of every kind. It will astound any family if they start to save in little ways how much it will amount to in a week or a month. The delay in the use of the Normandie is important for all of us because our production can be speeded up to the nth degree in this country, but it achieves its maximum value only if we distribute what we produce throughout the world. So the protection of convoys and the sliding down the ways of merchant ships are as important as the production of the things which we use for the protection of the United States. I’ve been surprised to have people write to me that they were not either able or willing to by defense bonds or stamps for one reason or another, and their arguments have been based on the premise that they were giving something to the government. Every stamp and bond will be redeemed at the stated time, and every investor in these bonds and stamps will receive his or her money back plus interest. (11:17)

Now in closing I would like to leave you with this thought: when any public man says that we should consider only our own needs, that we should've done this in the past as well as in the present, it shows how little he understands the magnitude of the world's situation. He shows above everything else that he's learned nothing from world events in the past few years. We can
no more live in a world that is alien to our form of government and our way of life then we could stay out of war, remain un-attacked in a world which was at war. Only men with vision to embrace the whole world picture are of any value at the present time. One of the things which we must keep before us is the fact also that we must not only fight this war side by side, but we must learn in doing so to get on with other people, to recognize the fundamental qualities in other people which put them on our side. We may be irritated with an individual who remarks that because we tried to stay at peace and have only just come into fighting beside him we're playing a less important role, but our own irritation at this criticism is not of great importance. The thing we must be sure of is that this individual is fighting for the same democratic rights in which we believe; otherwise the Atlantic Charter will not mean anything. The war will have been fought for nothing. As we fight side by side with the men of China of India of Africa of Great Britain and its dominions of South America of Russia of the Netherlands and of Norway and of the other countries who are our allies, we must make it our job to know what are the fundamental things which will preserve a free and democratic world. Yes, and we must make sure that those who are with us are our true allies in the important sense that they believe in the fundamentals of democracy and of freedom. (13:26)

[Dan Seymour:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. You've certainly made several very important problems much clearer to all of us. And now I would like to make something clear about America's most necessary drink, coffee. Most of us enjoy the aroma of coffee, the taste of coffee. We like coffee, but very often we think of coffee only as a delicious beverage. We fail to realize that coffee is more than just a pleasure of the American way of life, that coffee actually helps us in our work, helps us get more out of moments of relaxation. How? By giving us extra energy, by giving us extra steady nerves. Drink a cup of coffee now. Enjoy it. Delight in it. But more than that see for yourself how much it cheers you up, releases new energy for you. In other words, test for yourself the Pan-American Coffee Bureau slogan "Get more out of life with coffee."

Next week Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt will speak to you again at this same time. Until then this is Dan Seymour saying good evening for the Pan-American Coffee Bureau. Remember "Get more out of life with coffee." (14:33).

[Unknown:] This program came from New York. This is the Blue Network. (14:37)

[NBC chime]

(14:42)