

MRS. ROOSEVELT MEETS THE PUBLIC

February 18th, 1951

Description: In this episode, ER and her selected guests question Senator Wayne Morse, Assistant Secretary of Defense Marx Leva, and Dr. Harold Dodds, about the problems of military manpower and a universal draft.

Participants: ER, Senator Wayne Morse, Assistant Secretary of Defense Marx Leva, President Harold Dodds of Princeton University

[Title Sequence:] NBC Television presents

[Theme music begins 0:15]

[Title Sequence with images of ER:] NBC Presents *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public*.

[Motion picture images of young men signing up for the Armed Services]

[Unknown announcer:] In Washington, today, one of the critical problems confronting our legislators is that of universal military training in relation to manpower. To discuss the issues involved, NBC television presents *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public* from the Colonial Room of the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York. Mrs. Roosevelt's guests today are Senator Wayne Morse, Republican of Oregon, Assistant Secretary of Defense Marx Leva and President Harold Dodds of Princeton University. Also present are representatives of the general public who will ask questions such as:

[Theme music ends 1:05]

[Harold S. Ames:] How many eighteen year olds actually will be drafted if the present bill goes through?

[Helen J. Sussap:] Will enough men receive specialized training in uh essential civilian fields?

[Dr. John Hawley:] Do eighteen year old men, and those in the younger age groups, make the best fighting men?

[ER:] The defense of our nation and its democracy has been uppermost in the minds of all of us since the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. The strength of our armed forces are of basic importance to this defense. But the question of how our armed forces can be built up as quickly as possible without disrupting our economy and undermining cherished institutions of democracy has brought about a stormy debate which is now raging in Washington.

Last week, the Senate Armed Services Committee reported out a universal military service bill permitting the drafting of eighteen year olds. But one member of the committee has voiced serious objections to this bill. He is Senator Wayne Morse, Republican of Oregon, who is our guest today. Another matter of concern is how the draft will affect our entire educational system. President Harold Dodds of Princeton University has been aiding the government on formulating its policy on this question. And finally, we get down to the basic question of just what the armed services themselves think they need in the way of manpower and how they propose to fill these needs. So to start off today, I am going to ask Assistant Secretary of Defense Mr. Marx Leva to state very briefly the general intent of the administration in regard to the Universal Military Training Bill. Mr. Leva. (3:31)

[Marx Leva:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. General [George] Marshall submitted to the Congress just four weeks ago the proposed Universal Military Training and Service Bill. In the four weeks since he did so, the committees of both the House and the Senate have been considering these proposals and have made great strides towards the enactment of the manpower legislation we feel we need in the interest of the security of this country. The Senate Armed Services Committee, on which Senator Morse is one of the outstanding members, and like Mr. Justice [Oliver Wendell] Holmes, one of the truly great dissenters, has acted on the bill, and I will talk about the bill which that committee has voted thirteen to nothing to report to the Senate with the reservations which General Morse--uh [laughs] General Morse is good-- [Laughing] which Senator Morse has. The philosophy behind the bill can be summed up, I think, in six words: weakness invites aggression, strength deters attack. We regard this legislation as an integral part of our program for maintaining peace through strength. The highlights of the bill as reported by the Senate committee can be summed up about as follows. Men of the age of eighteen to twenty six are subject to the act. The men who are nineteen to twenty-six must be called before the eighteen year olds can be called. Under present international conditions, men who are called will serve twenty six months of military training and service. Two months of that will be leave, which gives us a net effective time of twenty four months. The first four months will be military training. That will be followed by twenty months of military service. The act also provides that later on, when international conditions permit, the requirement for military service can be curtailed or eliminated. At that time, we'll go over to a system of universal military training as contemplated by the Commission--the Compton Commission, of which Dr. Dodds was a member. That, in essence, is the legislation.

[ER:] Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Now I'm going to ask Senator Wayne Mose, Republican from Oregon, to tell us his objections to the bill. Senator Morse. (6:14)

[Wayne Morse:] First let me say, Mrs. Roosevelt, it's a great compliment to be your guest on this program. I want to make very clear that I think the security of our country [Coughing off camera] calls for the passage of a new military manpower bill at the earliest possible date. Therefore, I voted, with my other colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, to report this bill to the Senate floor with my reservations. I shall vote on the floor of the Senate for the best bill that we can get through the Senate. I do have some very definite reservations to this bill. I want to say that basically I question some of the statistics of the defense establishment in regard to this bill, both as to their basic sound statistical accuracy and as to the policy behind them. I want to say that I think when the defense establishment came before the Committee the other day and made its proposal for six divisions in Europe, that it to a very great extent weakened its position on this bill. And in fact, I think it's sort of appeased, if it didn't surrender, to the isolationist pressure in this country. I think that was a great mistake. But if we're only going to send a total of six divisions to Europe at the present, then I raise a serious question to, in round numbers, the three and a half billion--uh three and a half million power bill that they presently propose. I want to say that I think the military establishment is very wasteful of manpower, and I think it can make greater use also of women and civilians to do some of the noncombatant jobs than it is at the present time. And I think that some of the objections to this bill will be eliminated by whittling down the three million four hundred and sixty two thousand number contained in this bill to in the neighborhood of three million or a little over. I think there's going to be a saving there.

Second, I want to point out that this is not a military training bill *in praesenti*. It is only *in futuro*. And I happen to be one who is a strong advocate for a universal military training program, and in that program I want eighteen year olds. But this is going to become a universal military training bill only when we have gotten over the present combat needs of this country. You need to remember that you're going to take these eighteen year olds, at the present time under this bill, and not set them off in a separate training program, but they're going to be commingled with the rest of the armed sources, and I think that's a mistake. And further, I want to point out that we're advised by the military and the other members of the committee that there's no danger, really, in taking anybody before he's eighteen and a half. Now I

don't believe in doing things indirectly. If that's the position that the military takes, then why don't we write that restriction in the law? But when I proposed that, that amendment is defeated. And so I would have you keep in mind the importance of separating the universal military training program that I have for many years supported, from the real nature of this bill. That's going to come in some years to come.

And then the last point that I want to make is that the military has not brought to us and adequate reserve program. And our objectives should be to train the largest number of military men in the shortest period of time during the next four year period because the military tells us the next four years happen to be the dangerous years. Now I don't have to go back to school to know that you can train more men in a twenty-one months period than you can in the twenty six months period of this bill. And thus another amendment that I shall fight for on the floor is the twenty-one months period of training, instead of the twenty-six months called for in this bill. (9:55)

[ER:] Thank you very much, Senator. And now, President Dodds, I wish you would tell us briefly how our educational system will adjust itself to our defense needs.

[Harold Dodds:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. Senator Morse said so much about uh the uh amendment in the Senate, which as I understand it, extends the selective service to the age eighteen group, rather than the principle of universal military service. He said so much I agree with that it's hard to get to the question you asked me. Uh but uh colleges and universities are a business as other businesses and of all the industries and businesses in the country, uh they face uh far more serious financial difficulties in the next two or three years by virtue of the defense effort than the others. Uh we are going to have, for a transitional period, certainly uh serious problems to which uh the most extreme program of austerity will be the only answer. However, there are provisions in the-the bill, uh which will be brought out I have no doubt during the discussion, which are going to be helpful for us. The measure is introduced from the Defense Department seems to me to give uh very great consideration to the needs and services that the colleges can perform. As I said before, I'm for that measure beyond anything I've been able to dream up myself.

[ER:] Thank you very much, President Dodds. Now we have some questions which we're going to ask all of you gentlemen to answer. And I hope that if any answer seems to any one of you not to cover completely the question, you'll please break in and continue the answer. First of all, Mr. Harold S. Ames, who's a businessman from New York City, has a question.

[Mr. Harold S. Ames:] How many eighteen year olds actually will be drafted if the present bill goes through?

[ER:] I think that, perhaps, you, Mr. Leva, would like to answer. [Coughing]

[Marx Leva:] Well, it's hard to say exact numbers. The bill which the Senate Committee has reported provides that the nineteen to twenty six age group, those in that pool must be exhausted before any eighteen year olds can be called up. And then those who are eighteen nine months are called before those who are eighteen six and so on, the feature which Senator Morse mentioned. Assistant Secretary [Anna] Rosenberg in testifying on the bill had said if the bill originally submitted were passed without restrictions, we would propose to phase approximately four hundred to four hundred and fifty thousand eighteen year olds into the program in the first year. Under the bill, as presently drafted, that would not be possible, and eighteen year olds would not be reached, in my opinion for eighteen months to two years. (13:08)

[ER:] Uh, [looks at Harold Dodds and Wayne Morse] do either of your wish to say anything on that?

[Wayne Morse:] I agree with the analysis he's given.

[ER:] You agree with the analysis. Very well, we'll go on to the next questions. Miss Helen J. Sussap, director of the Department of Talks at a major network.

[Helen J. Sussap:] How does the government plan to insure that enough qualified men will be trained in in sp-specified-- rather, in specialized fields, such as medicine and engineering, which are as essential to our defense as military training?

[ER:] I think, perhaps, that's your question, Dr. Dodds.

[Harold Dodds:] I was expecting it, yes. [ER and Wayne Morse laugh] Well, the bill provides that the president can defer men by categories, college students by categories, and that it is the assumption that of the boys now in college uh a certain proportion, a necessary proportion, would be deferred to continue their education in medicine, science, technology, or other necessary lines. Their service would be only postponed; they would owe national service on the completion of their education like others. In respect to the eighteen year olds, the provision is clear in the bill, up to seventy-five thousand can be selected out and furloughed, if that's the word, to the colleges to continue their education in these lines. The justification for it, as against the deferment of college uh students *en bloc*, is that it is in continuing their education that they render their best national service their country can offer.

[ER:] Well now, how are they to be chosen? I mean the colleges are they going to decide or who is going to decide?

[Harold Dodds:] Uh well, Mr. Leva will have to answer part of this because the li-the-the uh bill's a little vague in respect to the boys in college. But uh it's clear in respect to the eighteen year olds coming along, the selection will be in the hands of the civilian commission and not in the hands of the armed forces, and that the educators like very much.

[ER:] [Addressing Max Leva] Uh, do you want to say anything on this?

[Marx Leva:] Well, with respect to those now in college, the bill which Senator Morse's committee is working on provides that any young man in college can finish his current year, and under the general deferment policies of the president can be deferred to complete his education if he's in a field where that's essential. (15:41)

[Harold Dodds:] Yes, well that's uh-that uh -- I didn't refer to that in my opening remark. That's a further consideration to the colleges, the deferment of a boy until the end of his academic year -- of-of the academic year in which he's called. And, uh, the other deferment.

[ER:] Yes, Senator?

[Wayne Morse:] If I may make a brief comment on this, Mrs. Roosevelt, because it represents another very important reservation I have with this bill. When President Dodds says that in respect to this problem the bill is vague, he says a mouthful. [Harold Dodds laughs: Thank you.] I think it is most unfortunate that the defense establishment did not bring to us a bill with its educational provisions reduced to blueprint form. Because the only hope we have, as I see it, for the decades ahead to retain a superiority over communist Russia is in the field of American science and technology and trained skills. That's our only hope. We've got to rely upon our educational systems and our vocational and our technical schools, which I think are very much slighted in this bill, to give us that superiority. And I-I don't like this word deferment in connection with the training of our future scientists. I say the military should have brought to us an educational program in the form of a marriage between the military program of this country and the

educational system of this country. Where these boys will be getting their military training coexistent with their scientific training. You're going to get some of your best young men that aren't going to like this idea of being deferred. I've had-I had a young chemist just last week sit in my office, and say whatever you do don't get these young scientists off by themselves in a deferred class. And I think we've got to work out a much better educational program than this bill has worked out. And I also feel that the seventy-five thousand that's been selected is entirely too small a number, and I do not think that they've given us a blueprint that ensures that the program is going to be democratic.

[Harold Dodds:] Now--

[Wayne Morse:] And I want to see that any boy-I want to see that any boy, no matter if he comes from a wealthy family or a poor family, that is superior in intellect, is going to be given assurance he's going to be selected in this program. Oh, I know there's some language in there that they're going to say, "We'll make that possible to work out." Well, I happen to believe that it's our duty as legislators to see that it's in the bill before we vote on it. And I think that the defense establishment has been very derelict in respect to the educational provisions of this bill.

[Harold Dodds:] Now wait a moment, Mrs. Roosevelt--

[Marx Leva:] Well--

[Wayne Morse claps his hands together audibly and smiles)

[ER:] First you, Dr. Dodds.

[Marx Leva:] You go ahead. (18:09)

[Harold Dodds:] Uh, no--

[Marx Leva:] You go ahead.

[Harold Dodds:] No, I'm only a college [ER: All right.] president. [Laughter from guests]

[Marx Leva:] Well all I wanted to say, a college President should take priority in this that was what I wanted to say.

[Harold Dodds:] Well then I will, if we uh-- gladly--

[Marx Leva:] I wanted to say if we--you go right ahead.

[Harold Dodds:] Yes, in that case. Uh Senator Morse had a lot of sense uh mixed up with uh some uh fallacy it seemed to me. Uh I realize that from the standpoint of the morale of these boys who will be deferred from military service or whose national service as distinct from their education is to be postponed, there's a difference there, Senator. We'll have a problem um-- we'll have a problem of building their morale. It is a new idea that by staying in college you serve the state best. But that they should be in a uniformed reserve, integrated organizationally with the army, I should object to very much. It seems to me the moment you do that, uh you lose uh the full advantages of the traditional American educational method. For science - scientists, engineers and others, where creative capacity, freedom to develop is very, very important. And I hope that those who are -- who have postponements or deferments or who-- even if they're put nominally into a specialist reserve, will not be put there integrated with the armed forces organizationally.

[ER:] Well, I can see that argument and I think the Senator will see that. That it is, if they are under military uh orders um it does make a difference uh uh as far as education goes. But I should think that was a possibility to resolve. [Harold Dodds: Well--] I should think that you could find a way to resolve that question and--

[Wayne Morse:] Of course, Mrs. Roosevelt, that all depends on what kind of orders they're under.

[ER:] Yes, what kind of-- (20:03)

[Wayne Morse:] And uh certainly it's going to be very wasteful of manpower to give them this training and then bring them back into a form of military training [Harold Dodds: Oh--] that isn't related to the scientific training that they have. And there's going to be a danger of that, the way this bill is currently worded. My point is, they do not have this program worked out in detail in this bill and I think we ought to see it first. [ER nods]

[Marx Leva:] May I speak to that?

[ER:] Yes.

[Marx Leva:] I was-- it was for that reason that I thought the university president deserved priority, because if we had come up with this marriage between the military and our educational systems which Senator Morse advocated, we would have been accused of an attempt to have military domination of the university, which is the last thing we should have or should want. The program envisions seventy-five thousand young men being taken out after their basic military training and sent to college. There is a scholarship program, there is a five man commission to administer the program, appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. The various objectives which Senator Morse has expressed I think are met in the bill. They're met in a way the university presidents have advised us they should be met. I don't think the military should try to draw up a blueprint for the educational system.

[ER:] I-I-I think that most of us would agree with you there, but I think probably where the real difference lies is in the fact that perhaps the bill doesn't-- is not as clearly worded, and I have had enough experience now, I never used to have [ER laughs] with wording things properly, so I know that is very essential, and I can see the Senator's point [ER laughs] and I hope that it will be very carefully worded. And now we want another--

[Wayne Morse:] Now just one second--

[ER:] Yes?

[Wayne Morse:] Further on that, we had a little difficulty in the committee on the proposal that the selection of these boys we adopt a geographical formula, uh which I think is rather basic to a democratic running of an educational program in which the federal taxpayers have a part. We couldn't get any support from that-- for that either from within the committee or from within the defense establishment. As a result, some of us are raising a query as to the basis on which these boys are going to be selected.

[ER:] I think--

[Harold Dodds:] Mrs. Roosevelt, if-if we had all afternoon till midnight to discuss this, I'd like to raise a question with Senator Morse, as an old teacher of Political Science, on what should be left to the uh

administrative uh uh working out and what should be defined in legislation, but I restrain. [All laugh]
(22:35)

[ER:] Well, I'm glad you do restrain yourself, because time is running out. I want to ask Dr. John Hawley of the Presbyterian Hospital in New York City to ask his question.

[Dr. John Hawley:] I'd like to ask is it definitely true that the eighteen year old boys and the younger age groups make the best fighting men?

[ER:] Well, we have to ask uh, uh, Mr. Leva, I think, that question.

[Marx Leva:] Well, I served during World War II in the navy, and uh I had twenty six months of seas duty, we had younger boys and older boys. I'd say the younger boys were just as good as the older ones. For the army, I think the question of stamina in the younger groups comes in very prominently. And on that one I would only be able to quote you the words of General [Dwight] Eisenhower, General [George] Marshall, General [Omar] Bradley, General [Joseph Lawton] Collins, all of whom feel that the eighteen, nineteen, twenty year group are among our best fighting men.

[ER:] Uh anyone else want to say anything on that?

[Wayne Morse:] A testimony before our committee universally supported the conclusions that the Secretary has just announced.

[ER:] All right, then we move to the next question, Ms. Miriam Robinson, research technician at the Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

[Miriam Robinson:] Uh won't the drafting of eighteen year old boys have a serious effect on their moral fiber and the moral fiber of the country as a whole?

[ER:] I think I'll ask you, Dr. Dodds.

[Harold Dodds:] Well the Senator -- the day I was on the stand with Senator Morse's subcommittee, he gave the best answer to that, and the papers misquoted me. Some of them had said that I had said that boys of eighteen were more able to resist temptation [Wayne Morse and ER laugh] than boys at nineteen. And all I said was that they were equally able to resist temptation at nineteen. If we had more time, Mrs. Roosevelt, I'd go along-- go on and say what I think the army ought to do in its training methods to reduce the moral risk of this service. But I don't think uh most educators of uh-uh, at least those of us who deal with men's colleges and don't have problems of coeducation, would uh would hold that there's any measurable difference between eighteen and nineteen so far as resisting the world is concerned.
(24:47)

[ER:] All right Senator, what do you want to say?

[Wayne Morse:] I simply want to say that if we parents [ER coughs] haven't trained in our children by the time they're eighteen those moral principles that will protect them as they go into Army life, they're going to be stronger boys having had the army experience. They need to get away from us by that time and get some of the experiences of the army life.

[Harold Dodds:] Oh, I want to endorse that, Mrs. Roosevelt. [Harold Dodds and ER laugh]

[ER:] I think that seems to be general agreement. As far as -- I'm-I'm a little amused because I get a great many letters from mothers who say, "My darling baby is being taken from me." [ER and Wayne Morse laugh] And I write back and say that um eighteen, you are no longer a baby [ER laughs] and if you are, you shouldn't be. But I still am amused that here we have a college President and a Senator and I gather also the [All laugh] defense [Marx Leva: I-I fully agree the banner is being so well carried elsewhere, enough to care--] all in agreement upon this question. And now we will come to one more question, from Mr. Harold Ames.

[Harold Ames:] Well, couldn't we eliminate the need for eighteen year olds by drafting men now deferred for physical reasons and uh placing them in non-combat service jobs?

[ER:] And that I'll ask you, Mr. Leva.

[Marx Leva:] Well, we are going to do that to the maximum possible extent. But that will not eliminate the need at some stage for taking the eighteen year olds. General [Lewis Blaine] Hershey pointed out that as to the eighteen year olds; it isn't a case of whether he goes but when. He'll either go when he's eighteen or when he's nineteen. And he will be called up; we will go through that pool you speak of as effectively as it's possible to do so.

[ER:] Yes.

[Harold Dodds:] Actually, Mrs. Roosevelt, just one second.

[Harold Dodds:] Uh, that I'm-- again raises the question right away of the difference between selective service and universal service. An affirmative answer to that question would imply uh dependence further on selective service. Wouldn't it, Senator?

[Wayne Morse:] I think so.

[Harold Dodds:] Uh and some of us don't like that.

[ER:] You don't like that. [ER laughs]

(26:48)

[Wayne Morse:] May I say this, Mrs. Roosevelt?

[ER:] Yes.

[Wayne Morse:] That I think it's very important, and I know that uh the Secretary and the rest of the military establishment are at work on it. That it is necessary that we cut down deferments on the basis of slight physical disability. I think that there are thousands of people in this country that are deferred for minor physical disabilities that can perform a certain type of non-combat work in the military establishment, and they ought to be required to do it. Because I-I-I think there's very much of where the waste of manpower within the military comes. And I think the military's got to make a saving on manpower so that we can build up the largest number of trained combat troops possible in the years immediately ahead.

And this is the last comment I'm going to make on the program because I think I've talked more than my share. But I want to say this: that I think the American people ought to be told, by everyone in government these days, that the next four years are exceedingly critical, and that's why I want us to see--

want to see us build up the broadest base for trained manpower in this country possible during the next four years. To do that, I think then Stalin will understand that we do mean to carry out our obligations under the North Atlantic Pact, and the basic one is that if any country member of that Pact is attacked, we go to the defense of that country. And that's why I have serious question as to whether or not at this time; we ought to announce to the world we're only going to go for the present with six divisions in Europe. I don't think that's very good for the boys that are going to be in the six divisions. [ER smiles and grabs Wayne Morse's hand] Because I think they're going to need a stronger backing than six divisions.

[Marx Leva:] Yeah, ten seconds. (Laughs)

[ER:] Jo-- you, just once-one second.

[Marx Leva:] One second. That's the very reason we need an army, an air force and a navy of three million four instead of the lesser figure you mentioned because we must build up for the present crisis as well as lay an enduring foundation for the years to come.

[ER:] Now I have to say thank you to all you gentlemen, Senator Morse, and President Dodds, and Secretary Leva, and our guests. And this is goodbye for today. (28:53)

[Fades to black]

[Theme music begins 28:54]

[Credit Sequence:] Next week *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public*

[Credit Sequence:] [Text overlays motion picture images of ER] This has been a Roosevelt and Jones production / Directed by Charles Christensen

[Theme music ends 29:09]

[Unknown announcer:] Next week at this same time, NBC television will again present *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public* to discuss the problem of civil defense.

[Theme music returns at 29:18]

[Credit Sequence:] Presented by NBC Television

Mrs. Roosevelt's guests will be Governor Millard F. Caldwell, Civil Defense Administrator, and [screen goes black and theme music ends 29:25] George Wallender, the Writer of Civil Defense for New York City. We invite you to join us. Portions of today's program, which originated in the Colonial Room of the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York, were on motion picture film.

[Credit Sequence:] *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public* [Letters fade]

[Credit Sequence and Announcer:] NBC Television

[NBC chimes]

[Fade to black]

(29:47)

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