

THE ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

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Description: In this segment, ER discusses the difficulties of parenthood.

Participants: ER

[ER:] Thank you, Anna. Today I should like to talk a little about one of the things which I consider is an increasingly important problem. Namely, the difficulties, and sometimes even the obstacles, which are placed in the way of parenthood. It's natural that uh young people when they marry should found a family, should have children. And children are entitled to a secure and happy home life. It's important not only to them and to their parents, but it's important to the nation as a whole. Yet it almost seems that in general, things are being made more and more difficult in life for young married people. The difficulties are first of all financial. Now we know that in some countries where they want to encourage uh larger families, financial bonuses are given. For instance in our neighbor Canada gives some financial assistance. We remember of course that Hitler in Germany did this too, but unfortunately with a most ignoble purpose--that of raising young boys to be soldiers and warriors for a Nazi war machine. They told girls that they should be happy to be mothers of potential warriors, and I think there are very few mothers who are really happy at the thought of raising what used to be called "kanonenfutter", or cannon fodder.

Naturally, this is not the kind of parental encouragement that I would like to see here, but I think there are many things which we could do to encourage home life when parents are young, which we do not do. And many things that I see happen really discourage home life and normal families and a normal increase in population. Of course, nobody is in favor of a huge overpopulation such as has come to some countries in the Orient. That is not desirable. But statistics do show that our birthrate is declining and some experts predict that with the way in which we are learning to increase people's age limits, we are going to shortly have a population very out of balance- with more middle aged and older people than we have young people, which is not too healthy for any society or any nation.

Most obvious, as I said, difficulty in the way of young families is financial insecurity. I know of a young couple now who write me very often of their anxiety for the future of their children. Cynics of course say that in this country it isn't really insecurity, it's selfishness-- that for instance when a young family has to choose between having an automobile or a baby they choose the automobile. But I'm not sure that's just selfishness. I think sometimes it's because they really are afraid of what may happen to their futures. I've heard a young mother of four children complain bitterly that she and her husband are discriminated against in housing. They have difficulty in many ways because they have what is considered too large a family. And it seems to me that if we just changed our attitude, perhaps if we really felt that the young couple should have every help, that it should be made easier to find housing, easier to get assistance. Uh I'm not sure there aren't some things about teaching people to live in a community in the way we used to in our early pioneer days and help each other which couldn't make life today much easier for the young married people. And now, back to my daughter Anna in Hollywood.

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