

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

March 27, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about young mothers leaving the house to work in factories and the effect that has on children. The letter writer is particularly concerned that middle-aged women with grown children are unable to find steady employment. In the interview segment, ER and Ambassador Ernest A. Gross discuss challenges the United Nations faces in finding a peaceful solution in Korea.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Ambassador Ernest A. Gross.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Today uh Mrs. Roosevelt and I are going to discuss a letter from Mrs. Paralta Galindor of Los Angeles. We've talked about this subject before, but so much mail has been received on this same subject that we're going to go into a little--into it a little more thoroughly. Mrs. Peralta Galinda writes as follows, "re: your broadcast this AM. I would be very interested to hear your view on why the government entertains the idea of taking mothers away from their children for work in the factories, thus risking juvenile delinquency when there are so many older men and women needing jobs. A phobia has been fostered in this country in employing men and women over forty years of age. I happen to be particularly interested in this subject as my husband is in this over forty category. He is keen minded, has an excellent business background, and much valuable experience, but like his associates in the forty plus club his years are an impenetrable wall to a job. It seems to me that something must be done to curb this penalize--this penalizing a man or woman because of an accumulation of years which none of us can avoid to say nothing of easing the financial burden of the younger people who have to shoulder the cost of old age pensions."

[ER:] Well, uh I would agree entirely. I don't think that the government is urging women with children to leave home. Um I think that would be uh a very great mistake except where their children can be thoroughly well supervised and taken care of. I think that um [ER coughs] there may be some need for women with children to go to work to help out the family income. But in every case I think it should be only after the children are well provided for. But in the case that this lady mentions uh I entirely agree with her that young women with children should not be acceptable before the um market for people who are over forty--eh has been used to its limit. Particularly where men who are qualified are concerned the um [ER coughs] there is uh some possibility--y that uh the difficulty about employing people over forty may come partly from the fact that there is a limit um on the number of people over forty that you may have in an organization and pay the same rate of um insurance and [ER coughs] that may be one of the factors against taking on people who are over forty. On the other hand um [ER coughs] there are other things, uh even though a person may have good background and may be in good health um while we know that people who keep on working can be steadier and more valuable over forty we also know that sometimes they lose a little interest in their job. Sometimes they slow down a little bit, they shouldn't and each case uh should be weighed and when they do there should be an effort made to find out if there is some physical deficiency which should be um and could be corrected [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] but um where there is as um as much difficulty as there has been in-in this country I think we are obligated to look into the question more thoroughly than we have. And I think the doctors are among the people, and the psychiatrists are among the people who should be called in to try to make a survey for reemployment of those who are over forty.(4:44)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, of course you make a--you make it sounds as though forty was an old man or woman [ER laughs] and I happen to be over forty [ER coughs] and I feel that I'm very young [ER and Elliott Roosevelt laughs].

[ER:] That's quite true but uh she has put it that forty um is the age after which it's hard to get a job. Now that does not apply where you are holding a job or where you are creating jobs of your own, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] but um we know because we have letters from innumerable people who find it hard to get a new job at or over forty.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well of course—

[ER:] And for women—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] To my—

[ER:] It's even as young as thirty five.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Cause to my way of thinking uh if we pass universal military training and we take that large block of uh youngsters out of the labor market.

[ER:] Out of the labor market.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Who [ER: For two years.] usually go at the end of high school or at the end of college [ER: Mhm.] immediately into the labor pool, uh we're going to find that-that automatically it will step up the employment of those over forty.

[ER:] Oh it will without any question. But there is something that people over forty and fifty um should probably do for their health. And it's not a bad idea to have um uh the general question looked over I think.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, of course in uh, well we'll say in a manufacturing job, uh if you're handling a machine that calls for precision or for uh reflexes that are quick, it is much better to have a younger person who has quicker reflexes and is quicker on the uptake, so to speak, than to take somebody who has slowed down slightly in their mental and physical processes. But uh I think you're right that uh probably the medical profession can go a long ways towards toning up the uh mental and physical conditions of our population after forty.

[ER:] I think that's very likely.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh you know I'm very much interested in-in the first part of the-the statement uh about the uh idea of mothers not being able to work in factories because of the--there's a risk of increased juvenile delinquency. Uh don't you think that there's all too little done uh on the part of the government-- I know that industry is taking an interest where they have to reach into the home and use working mothers, uh they-they have kindergarten uh uh playgrounds and so forth for the children of those factory workers and they've even uh installed in some cases uh pre-schools for the very young. Uh don't you think that it's entirely possible that the government might institute a plan if it becomes necessary [ER: Well, I think--] to reach down into the labor—

[ER:] I think probably it should be done that through the state government [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] in the schools. I think that undoubtedly if it does become necessary eh that state governments should undertake a much more--a paid program of leisure time activities for their students, so that a child was really occupied from the time it went to school in the morning till its mother's work was over in the

afternoon. And I do think that married women um it should uh should have hours which permit their being home when uh the children school hours come to an end.(8:36)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I also have a feeling that uh if uh this was instituted at a state level or a federal level or a community level, uh that the uh working mother who has to work uh uh because of the labor shortage and who would ordinarily not work, that the support of this extra program of uh supervision of children after the school hours uh should be in large part at least paid for by the people using those facilities.

[ER:] You mean paid for by the um—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] By the parents.

[ER:] By the parents or paid for [Elliott Roosevelt: By the parents.] by the industries using the people?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Parents and uh with contributions from the industries. [ER: mm, I see.] But I think that the parents should participate, it's just like uh rich people hiring maids so that they release their time for other activities. Uh you are in a sense employing uh people on to do [ER: Well, that's all right if it's--] supervision of your children.

[ER:] Well, that's all right if it's on a voluntary basis that you're being employed. But if you are urged to come in as a patriotic duty when you would rather stay at home then I think it has to be provided by the taxation of all the people, do you see, because it's a patriotic thing, it's not just the um obligation of the parents in that case.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. So in other words it should be borne by the industry and the [ER: And the community.] and all the people in that community. [ER: Yes.] Well, I hope that uh this answers uh uh this lady's question from Los Angeles uh, and I hope it's an adequate answer. I think as there's an awful lot of discussion that could be had on this subject that would be very enlightening.

[Break 10:33 to 10:38]

[ER:] My guest today is not only what uh I might call a business associate, but also a friend with whom I'm looking forward to discussing United Nations affairs. I'm very pleased to introduce to you his Excellency the Honorable Ernest A. Gross, the Deputy Representative for the United States to the United Nations and on the Security Council. Ambassador Gross.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt, uh it's uh a great uh pleasure indeed to be associated with you at a different kind of table than we usually sit at [ER and Earnest A. Gross laugh] usually it's a delegation meeting.

[ER:] It certainly is usually a delegation meeting. Well, to my mind Ambassador Gross one of the most important challenges the United Nations has had is the criticism that it is unable to meet the threat of large scale aggression. Do you agree with this premise?

[Ernest A. Gross:] No, uh I don't. Uh I really think that the United Nations is today dealing with a very large scale aggression indeed. Uh it was quite apparent I think at the time of the North Korean invasion uh on June twenty fifth that uh while the North Korean authorities were the uh primary uh aggressors that uh they were heavily armored by the Soviet Union uh that they had been uh trained uh in the Chinese uh um armies uh and uh Communist China and it was clear from the very beginning that this was a large scale aggression and has since become much clearer with the Chinese Communist uh direct intervention in

Korea. Uh so that I really think the criticism uh that it is unable to meet the threat of large scale aggression is quite inconsistent with what the United Nations is itself doing.

[ER:] What is actually happening today.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Yes uh happening and uh the very-very successfully um uh I think uh although no one I'm sure would dare predict the outcome of the present situation uh it's certainly is uh not at the present time uh hopeless from the United Nations' point of view. Quite the contrary, I think one has the reason to believe that we are facing a turn of-of events there.

[ER:] Well, you really feel that the United Nations is more able to deal with aggression for instance this spring than it was last spring?

[Ernest A. Gross:] Oh I think infinitely more so, Mrs. Roosevelt. And of course uh you who followed the work of the UN even more closely than I and for a longer period um I'm sure will agree that um uh if the United Nations had not taken the action which it did take last June and if it had not made the decision which it made on February first to condemn the Chinese Communist of aggression, I think that uh not only would it not have been in a position not to do anything effective this spring or beyond but it might not have been in existence at all. In other words, I think myself that the United Nations took those decisions which were essential to its survival and uh that um uh by doing so it made itself stronger. (13:57)

[ER:] Well, those were of course essentially moral decisions, weren't they? They were the decision of whether you would continece something which you though was wrong. And the nations um--the great majority of nations decided that they agreed on what was wrong and that they would stand together to prevent it. Now that having been uh taken I-I look upon that decision as a moral decision and I've always felt that the League failed very largely um in its moral decisions when it abdicated doing anything because it had no power. [Ernest A. Gross: Yes, it uh--] And I feel that was one of its major weaknesses. And I've always been um very much interested that through voluntary um action we have been able to do in the United Nations what I think most people who watched the League felt could only be done by the United Nations if they had a-an actual set-up for the use of force. And that it already was a trained body within the United Nations and the nations themselves had begun to decrease their individual force. Um so that I-I think this has been a very significant thing that the power of moral decisions has strengthened an organization which is the machinery through which peoples will work to maintain peace. (15:43)

[Ernest A. Gross:] I uh I agree uh I think that it's true that uh all institutions--all human institutions uh grow stronger uh if they are in a position to uh make the decisions which are essential to their own survival and which are true to their own basic uh reasons for existence. I mean isn't the same thing true of the Constitution of the United States? Uh it's an idea, it's an agreement, it's a solemn compact and uh-uh but this idea—

[ER:] Well, certainly when it was entered into it was highly doubtful whether uh the states were going to be able to live up to the things they agreed to live up to.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Yes, uh [ER: oh.] and I'm reminded of what the great Chief Justice Marshall said uh after he had been chief justice uh one of our very greatest uh for over thirty years he said--he wrote uh to another equally great judge, uh "I doubt very much" said uh Chief Justice Marshall, "that the Constitution can survive" [ER laughs] uh it survived uh because it--because it was able uh to uh provide the basis for decisions and uh its principles, obviously, are sound [ER: Well.] and I think that this, that the United Nation's Charter is an idea too. It's an idea that marches, it's an idea that has a flag and above all it's an idea and a principle for which people are now fighting and dying and that uh is a dedication of the charter

I think that-that the United Nations is immeasurably stronger uh than it would have been if it had not been capable of making these decisions.

[ER:] Well, I um I would of course agree with you and um I think there are uh other uh things happening in the United Nations that um add to this strength. So I'd like to ask you whether the United Nations is doing anything at the moment to reduce political tension throughout the world.

[Ernest A. Gross:] [coughs] Yes, I think it uh I think it is in the first place I think that uh the work of the organs of the United Nations uh uh such as the first one that comes to my mind uh for obvious reasons um uh is the uh is the Human Rights commission, uh of which you of course are such a distinguished representative of the United States. And uh it seems to me uh that one of the major causes of tension in the world is the lack of respect the utter deprivation of human rights in um in the Soviet system.

[ER:] But like many other things, Ambassador Gross, um it's not only in the Soviet system. There is that deprivation of human rights under some other systems even under uh good systems. Some people suffer, and I personally feel that um it will take us some time to achieve the work that we've set ourselves in uh the Human Rights commission because you not only must write a charter, but you must gain the understanding and acceptance of people throughout the world of what you've written.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Yes, that's the uh [Ernest A. Gross coughs] the history of the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments. Uh and uh certainly the Declaration of Human rights in which you played such a very large part uh in uh forming, and I know the difficulties you had and the obstruction [ER and Ernest A. Gross overlap] that you faced.

[ER:] Had had difficulty but [overlapping ends] we're going to have even-even more difficulties when we come to writing the covenants which um are entirely new, this is a new kind of treaty a um, people haven't made treaties on these subjects before [Ernest A. Gross: Quite so.] and um there-there are a great many difficulties involved, but I nevertheless believe that to translate little by little into law so that it may become uh gradually understood in the same way throughout the world uh what you mean when you talk about fundamental human rights and freedoms um is a very important objective no matter whether it happens uh tomorrow or ten years from now, we are marching towards one, the achievement of one of the basic things that will create an atmosphere in which peace can grow.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Yes, I-I think one of the uh I thoroughly agree and one of the uh central values of uh going through all the trouble and uh almost agony [Ernest A. Gross laughs] uh to uh uh formulate these agreements that you refer to. It seems to me is the educational process that-that is-that accompanies the very attempt to reach the result. That is of great value in itself.

[ER:] I think the uh um cynicism of the Soviet Union on this is one of the um real um sa--really sad things that uh when one-one comes up against don't you?

[Ernest A. Gross:] I find that uh to be painfully true the uh um of course again in this field we're discussing at the moment, the human rights uh field, I was very much impressed, I suppo-- I imagine you must be too, uh more than once to see how the Soviet Union felt impelled some way to pay lip service to the principles of the--that you are fighting for in the human rights field, in other words uh uh it proves I think all over again that uh there are two classes of people in the world those who are free and those who want to be free [ER and Ernest A. Gross laugh] uh that every individual um either has freedom or wants it and that applies to people on both sides--all sides of all iron curtains don't you think that's right [Ernest A. Gross laughs]

[ER:] I think that's right. For a minute we have to let our announcer have a word, but we'll come right back because I want to ask a question.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Yes.
[Break 22:05 to 22:25]

[ER:] Well now we can come back to our discussion with Ambassador Gross, and I'm particularly anxious having talked about um the human rights um to say-- to ask um you something, Mr. Ambassador, uh we all know that throughout the world there are many human rights uh that um are not just the civil liberties and the freedoms that you and I can talk about. We know that there is uh really no freedom from want in a great part of the world and that that is almost a basic right. Uh you must be able to eat or you don't care whether you vote. [ER and Ernest A. Gross laugh]

[Ernest A. Gross:] That's right. That's right. Just as certainly the depravation of human rights is one of the basic causes of tension in the world, I think you're right in saying that the uh that another cause of tension which has political effect uh is the uh is the uh depravation of uh personal necessities, and um uh I think that uh there again the United Nations uh is uh at least uh in a position uh to uh do very important work. I say in a position to because I don't think at the moment it is doing all it can do uh and I think that most members of the United Nations realize the uh the importance of this work and uh uh we certainly, I think in the United States, uh can be proud uh because we have exercised a certain leadership the so called Point Four Program, the technical assistance program, the idea of uh making it possible for areas in the world where they don't have uh steel plows, uh where where their agricultural methods are what we would think to be hundreds of years antiquated uh to make it possible to lend skills to those countries, to share our knowledge, to let them improve themselves. It's self-help.

[ER:] I-I feel that we should integrate that with the uh United Nations work and get all the--use it as a stimulus to other nations to come in and help doing it. And I-I think I can see endless possibilities for helping as a nation. For instance, why should we go on having in the Punjab um these floods every single year which destroy um food that is needed by their people?

[Ernest A. Gross:] Oh, by millions of people, yes.

[ER:] Now we do it here. We let floods go on but we don't have people starving immediately as a result, which they do in Pakistan [Ernest A. Gross: That's true I think.] and we have the knowhow to help them, to do some of that work which is needed. Um it's a type of TVA work and um I-I can see endless things in irrigation, in forestry, in-in uh um agriculture that we can do [Ernest A. Gross: Oh yes.] that [Ernest A. Gross: And uh--] will change this picture. (25:44)

[Ernest A. Gross:] Yes that-that the uh horizons there are—

[ER:] But when I say we, I mean the nations—

[Ernest A. Gross:] The nations of the world—

[ER:] In the United Nations.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Yes, uh that's right it's uh it's important to stress the cooperative nature of this, that again is one of the essential uh uh principles in the United Nations charter of course it's uh it's an agency in which nations can cooperate to common objectives. But I-I think that the economic uh the economic aspects of the work of the United Nations uh are of not only a growing importance but I think that they're getting more and more attention. Now uh I would like to refer for example to the um uh to the Economic and Social Council meeting, which is now going on in Santiago in Chile, uh and uh it is true, unfortunately true, that the Soviet um uh Block representatives to the council are using all sorts of

obstructive devices, uh procedural tricks uh to-to prevent the uh orderly carrying on of the-of the Economic and Social Council. I think that uh that uh it is very unfortunate that the um that they are engaging in that sort of practice there uh because up to this point uh it has been one of the chief sources of uh of uh I would say uh dissatisfaction with many people, and of many people in the world with the Soviet attitude toward the United Nations that they have not participated in the work of the specialized agencies. They have not uh been members of the World Health Organization, of the Food and Agriculture Organization. Now, however, they not only are refraining from participating but they are actually obstructing uh the work of the uh Economic and Social Council. And um I—

[ER:] Of course, that's natural because they know that the more work is done under the Economic and Social Council, the less chance there is of communism coming about throughout the world.

[Ernest A. Gross:] I think that's exactly true and doesn't that bring us right back to the question--to the proof of the pudding that the economic uh difficulty is a cause of political tension.

[ER:] I think it is.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Uh you can relate the two things.

[ER:] Now I'd like to ask you, as a result of the Uniting for Peace resolution what steps have been taken to strengthen the United Nations? (28:09)

[Ernest A. Gross:] Well, of course uh I think that the-that program is uh of extreme importance to the peace of the world uh the uh-uh reason I think that it is so important is that the General Assembly uh is of course a body in which sixty members participate, all the members of the UN, and there is no veto. Uh the uh majority of the membership therefore can take decisions and make recommendations which may prove essential to meet threats to the peace or to uh meet and repel acts of aggression. So that it is on that basis that the General Assembly decided to um uh establish, a few months ago, decided to establish uh two new committees. One to uh consider and to make recommendations about collective measures, which the United Nations might uh develop uh which involve for example the setting aside of uh of armed uh forces of national units uh in various member states which could be available upon recommendation of the General Assembly if they were needed to uh preserve peace or to restore peace. And also uh a Peace Observation Commission, uh I have the honor to be our representative on that and therefore am particularly interested in it perhaps. But uh uh it seems to me that that has considerable potential importance. The Peace Observation Commission will be in a position to be on the spot in areas of danger or-or of tension and report uh to the United Nations promptly uh if there are imminent threats uh which uh the United Nations can be forewarned about before the danger uh happens, before the-the blow strikes. So—

[ER:] Well now um that is um that really gives a great deal of power doesn't it, to the General Assembly?

[Ernest A. Gross:] It gives the power to the General Assembly without taking power away from the Security Council.

[ER:] Oh the Security Council does still have a leading role to play in cases of—

[Ernest A. Gross:] Oh yes. Oh yes. You will hear some criticism occasionally from some of the um Soviet uh spokesman uh against this uh Uniting for Peace resolution. uh Their argument is that it uh that it uh is uh improper I think uh sometimes they say it is illegal [Ernest A. Gross laughs] they use that argument quite often. Uh to--because they say it does take away the powers of the Security Council. Actually, Miss Roosevelt, it does not do any such thing, it in fact it provides, uh expressly provides that the General

Assembly may take the action only if the Security Council by reason of uh the veto uh is uh failing to perform its proper functions under the charter. And of course in that respect uh it does not deprive the Security Council of its full opportunity to do its duty. It merely says in effect, if the Security Council is prev-is prevented by the abuse of the veto from doing what the charter of the United Nations contemplated the Security Council would do that under those circumstances the General Assembly will take the necessary actions to preserve the peace of the world.

[ER:] Mhm. Well, that's-that's very clear. Now as to what happens. Well, now I'd like to ask you something that I think confuses a great many people. Supposing there should be aggression in Europe which all of us hope that we are preventing at present, what is the relation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the United Nations in dealing with such aggression? (31:55)

[Ernest A. Gross:] Well, of course the North Atlantic Treaty Organization uh is uh a regional organization within the general framework of the uh United Nations. But it is a defense organization and uh it is set up in order to move quickly uh in the event there is an armed attack against any member of the organization. Now the United Nations um uh of course uh presumably would be called upon in the event of an aggression, as it was in Korea, would be called upon to determine whether there was an aggression in fact, or not. That's where this Uniting for Peace Resolution comes in and then of course it would decide uh what steps should be taken and uh the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its members as well as the other member so of the United Nations would then act in accordance with the recommendations of the General Assembly. The main point is of course that the United Nations Charter and the United Nations Organization is supreme and uh there is nothing in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which is in any way inconsistent with the overriding power and authority of the United Nations under the charter.

[ER:] I see. Well, just uh quickly then um nothing that was done in Korea either um was against the United Nations Charter.

[Ernest A. Gross:] No, of course the-the uh United Nations uh Security Council uh decided at once that uh uh action should be taken and a recommendation was made to the members. It was entirely within the charter, and as a matter of fact everything that is happening in Korea today uh is uh truly a United Nations effort. Including, and this is awfully important I think, including the efforts which are now being made uh to find a peaceful solution of the Korean question in accordance with the principles of the United Nations of course.

[ER:] Well those efforts um are very important I think, and I hope that something uh will come of them and—

[Ernest A. Gross:] I strongly uh hope uh that uh you're right and uh I'm sure that uh the United States government is completely sincere in hoping that uh there will be a peaceful solution of the conflict in Korea, a peaceful end to it. We ourselves in the resolution, which we uh introduced and which the General Assembly adopted a few weeks ago proposed that a good offices committee be set up and that committee is available uh to use any opportunity uh that presents itself to bring about a peaceful solution. The United States government is strongly supporting the work of that good offices committee.

[ER:] Well, I think that is very good. I'm sorry that our time has run out and we have to stop this very interesting talk, but I'm very grateful to you for coming and being with me today Ambassador Gross.

[Ernest A. Gross:] Thank you. It was a great honor, Mrs. Roosevelt. (35:06)

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