

THE ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

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Description: In this segment, ER discusses how little the press understands about public officials.

Participants: ER

[ER:] Thank you Anna. I couldn't help being rather amused at something President Truman said the other day; I knew so well what he meant. When the President announced the resignation of Army Secretary Kenneth Royall, Mr. Truman explained that frequent changes in top government posts are inevitable because to be in government service or in public life, it takes an iron man with an elephant hide. Well, that of course is what I've been saying all along. When I was on my lecture trip, a correspondent somewhere --I've forgotten just where--came up to me and said did I realize that my son Franklin Delano Roosevelt was going to run for the Senate. I was a little flippant because I knew that he really wasn't going to run for the Senate and I said I was appalled at the idea. Of course I was really only appalled that anybody could think that a young man of his age would be running for the Senate, when of course he was going to run for Congress as a member of the House. However, those little things show that sometimes newspaper correspondents don't really understand government positions quite as well as they might, and don't realize that it would be a little unwise to run for the United States Senate when you are as young as Franklin Junior is. Nevertheless, when I said I was appalled, I was perhaps saying something flippant and yet I'm always amazed whenever I find someone who's not only willing but anxious to enter public service, for the very reason President Truman mentioned, plus one or two other less important ones. Of- on the other hand, it's perfectly true that it's absolutely necessary that young people and older people be willing to go into government service and in to public life, and certainly it's most commendable when they do. And it often is, from the point of view of their financial situation, a very great sacrifice because rarely do they make as much in any government job as they would make if they stayed in their particular line of work in private industry or in a profession. Of course there are compensations. There is a great interest in feeling uh that you are shaping history, and that I suppose is what makes men and some women willing to undergo the disadvantages. I think perhaps a more restrained press that was a little more careful in checking the things that it wrote about people, Um perhaps a little less interest on the part of individuals in personal items about their public servants rather than the more important items uh that really affected the work that they were doing would be a great advantage because, after all, being a public servant does not mean that the whole public has a right to your entire life, it has a right to know what-- how you do the work which affects them, but that of course is one of the things that we have never really mastered in this country. They do it better in some of the older countries. And I hope as we grow older we will treat our public servants better, allow them more privacy, hold them to higher accountability for the work they do, expect the best that they can give us and then perhaps it will be possible to get more people of real high standards into our public service and into public life as a whole. And now back to my daughter Anna in Hollywood.

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Transcription: Melissa Melvin

First edit: Anna Karditzas

Final edit: Christy Regenhardt