

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

November 30, 1950

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about the Barden Bill and religious education. In the interview segment, ER interviews job placement expert Walter Lowen.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Walter Lowen

[ER:] Well, would you give me that question, Elliott, that you started on?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I will. Uh, the question today is from Mrs. Mary Gorman of Bayshore, Long Island, and she has written in and asked uh, "Recently, uh you agreed with Judge Leibowitz that religion is an important medium for curbing juvenile delinquency. Why, therefore, do you favor the Barden Bill?"

[ER:] I don't quite see what favoring the Barden Bill has to do uh with believing that religion is valuable in the uh life of a child or [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, let me just try to interpret--] his spiritual growth in the first place I think I ought to say that I never have favored the Barden Bill.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh. [ER laughs] Well, of course that-that is something which I think a great many people would be interested in, because I think there's a great deal of misunderstanding on that point. But as I understand it, the Barden Bill bars certain uh should we say uh um advantages to children who go to parochial schools and other religious schools rather than to the public schools--those advantages are not available to those children. And therefore [ER: No, I think that's not-- no.] what Mrs. Gorman is trying to get at is that she believes that you think that the religious training should not be taught in the schools.

[ER:] I don't think it should be taught in the schools. I never have thought so. I think religious training should be taught at home and in the child's church. I don't think it should be taught in the schools. I do think it's quite possible to evolve some kind of, uh perhaps, ceremony, which will bring home to a child, everyday, that there are spiritual values in life. I don't know whether there could be um certain prayers devised or certain um Bible readings that are common to a great many um standards of religions, but um something certainly can be done to bring home to all children that in their lives there is a place for spiritual and moral standards. There's no question in my mind that that can be accomplished without actually teaching religion in the schools, which I think has always been [Elliott Roosevelt: Well--] a mistake. Now let me explain. (2:11)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes.

[ER:] When I said that I was not for the Barden Bill, uh a controversy arose over the Barden Bill because the Barden Bill did say that certain things which were available to children in public schools should not be available to children in private schools because they were paid by uh the state in relation to the school, and therefore should only be available to children going to public schools. Now I was very careful never to state that I was for any one particular bill. I came out backing--as backing the principle that there should be a division between church and state, and I also was very careful to say that I would oppose, always, anything which actually meant um giving anything which had to do with the actual school work to anything but a public school. For instance the provision of books, I would say, was a school function, but I also told a number of people that it seemed to me perfectly silly to tie up with the school the business, for instance, of health examinations. That health examinations should be open to every child,

from the earliest age to the um end of the adolescent period, and I believe even beyond that. I think they should be open to everybody, but, um, that that, from my point of view, is not a school function. Most of the people who have ever watched the examination that a child gets in school realize that even-- that it's a rare thing when a child, in school, gets a decent health examination. It should be a public health service, and it should be done in a center like the county hospital or the city area hospital, where all the equipment is available for examination and where there are specialists of different kinds coming together who can do a full examination of a child. Now, in the question of transportation, I don't think that's a school function. I think that's a community function and should be paid for by the community, not by the school-- should be done because every child should be transported, free of charge, for-- because of the regard we have to the safety of the child, to the regular place where they must go every day to get an education. Now, it's compulsory to go to school, somewhere, and therefore the community has an obligation. Now the school lunches have already been taken out of the school program. They are a welfare activity, and they are usually made possible by surplus uh foods from the Department of Agriculture. They're usually run by the PTA or by some other welfare group and now they're not even considered as a school function. They are a welfare function carried on by welfare groups of some kind for school children. Therefore, wherever there are welfare groups that will run them for a school, that's a public function, not a school function [Elliott Roosevelt: mhm.] but when it comes to the question of providing books, I think that's a school function and I think it should only be for the public schools. (7:07)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, but uh in answering this question that you agreed with Judge Leibowitz that religion is an important medium for curbing juvenile delinquency, and under your statement made uh-- earlier in this program you stated that that is something that should be taught at home. What about the family?

[ER:] At home and in the church.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] At home and in the church. But what about the family that belongs to no church, or has left the church, and uh the family that has no moral sense of obligation with regard to teaching the values of religion to the child? And you say that you can't provide it in the school. Where will they get it, then?

[ER:] Uh, they won't get it anyway even if it is provided in the school, if they come--if they're constantly living in that environment at home. So that um--I-I don't think uh they'll get something out of the school, because the school can teach moral standards and ethical values. And, the school can also teach a child that there is a spiritual side to life, and they can even teach them that there are different kinds of religions and that they should go to their churches and find out about it. But if the child is-is in a family where the family doesn't help him, that child's going to have a hard time.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I think that's true. Uh, but I wonder if it is absolutely right that we say there is--there sh--shall not be any religious teaching of any kind in our schools. Uh, because after all we do grant to various religions the rights to have schools for children, uh such as the Catholic Church has parochial schools. Uh, the Protestant Church has uh schools for uh Protestant boys. There are also the Qu--

[ER:] Protestant children!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes. Children. I'm sorry. There are the Friends schools, who teach the Quaker religion.

[ER:] Those are all private schools.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] They are private. All of them are private. But, is there anything wrong with that system? Is there some reason why that system should not exist?

[ER:] No, I don't think there is. But you--then if you choose to send your child to a school um where he will get religious teaching, then you choose to pay for it. Now you haven't asked me some of the most important questions on this uh idea, namely eh what about release time in school program? What about uh the saving to the taxpayer where you send your child to a private school? Those are questions which are constantly being brought up.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, give the answer to them!

[ER:] Well, I think release time has turned out rather badly because it upsets the child's school day, and uh takes them out at different times, and I think most teachers would tell you that release time has not been a good um--a good thing. Uh, therefore I think it again comes back to the fact that the family and the church must arrange for teaching. Um now, in the case of um the saving to the taxpayer, which is one of the things that is most often brought up, um I don't know that there is really eh much logic in that argument, for the reason-- that while it's entirely true that if you pay for a private school, you do take that burden off the public school. If your child was in public school um it might add to the whole community burden a certain amount, but um the addition would not be in proportion to what you pay outside for a private school. Therefore, the argument is not really a very valu-valid argument. (11:43)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well are there any other arguments that you feel have not been answered by my questions?

[ER:] Well I imagine there are plenty of others, but I can't think of them at the moment!

Break (Break 11:52-12:08)

[ER:] The question of employment today is certainly one of vital importance to everyone. My guest this afternoon is one of the leading experts in the field of job placement, and an authority on the proper approach to job hunting. I would like to introduce Mr. Walter Lowen.

[Walter Lowen:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Mr. Lowen, your placement agency has become--has come to be recognized as one of the best in the country for placing the right man in the right job. To have been able to build this business you must have had a thorough knowledge of what makes people tick. How did you acquire this?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, I would say simply by trial and error. Uh, it takes a lot of experience in order to learn to know people. And uh it's just like playing the piano; one has to practice. And I would say simply by experience--trial and error over the years.

[ER:] Now do you feel that when you look at someone when they come in that you know something about them right away?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, a person who comes to my desk has usually prepared a resume for me in advance of their arrival, so that I do know quite a bit about every person with whom I talk.

[ER:] That's a very personal uh job that you do, but even though a person prepares a resume, um until you actually meet them and talk with them, you haven't got the-the sense of personality, have you?

[Walter Lowen:] No, uh very often a person is able to put over something of their personality in a resume. But, uh on the other hand, uh one really gets to know a person as they sit in front of you, and uh you look at them [ER: You ask them questions!] Yes! Uh, and I don't hesitate to ask them leading questions to bring out anything I want to know.

[ER:] How long have you been in the placement agency business?

[Walter Lowen:] This is my 30th year! I will complete my 30th year on December 15th, approximately.

[ER:] Why, that's a long time! And how many people have you found jobs for in that time?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, I should say my office must've placed at least 100,000 people during those--the past 30 years.

[ER:] Goodness. Do you handle only uh the type of people who are interested in the advertising and sales promotion fields, or do you try other people--other kinds?

[Walter Lowen:] No, we really cover the commercial field, although uh we have--the majority of our placements are in advertising and merchandising and sales promotion. But we place high-price sales executives, presidents, vice presidents, and so forth.

[ER:] Good gracious! [Walter Lowen laughs] I didn't know one had to place presidents and vice presidents! I thought they were just uh invited! I didn't realize one placed them. [someone coughs in the background] What do you think then are the most essential qualifications for success in the business world?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, uh I feel that reliability is perhaps the uh most important. And with that, of course, would go loyalty and punctual-punctuality, accuracy, and then I feel that good humor is very important. A person should be cooperative and willing to take correction, and uh appreciate his fellow workers. And then of course, there's education or training, and with that, initiative, and alertness, and good judgement--and then there's enthusiasm, without being aggressive, however. And persistence without uh stubbornness. Uh, then I think it's very important to uh achieve the right mixture of self-confidence and humility. And then, of course, one must really be in love with his job in order to be a success. He must be willing to work at it uh without hesitation and uh with enthusiasm and love for his job--uh-uh hours irrespective. And then, of course, the most important, too, is that he should be profit-minded for his employer, and give more than his money's worth. Give more--give the employer more than his money's worth; I think that makes for success.

[ER:] My goodness, you have named the perfect-- [Walter Lowen laughs] the perfect individual as far as qualities go! Is there any one, particular one of those qualities that you consider uh the priceless ingredient of success, or the essential one?

[Walter Lowen:] I would say that a person who uh manifested reliability. A-a person who really brought reliability uh into his job uh would have the priceless ingredient for success. Because if you look around you, you see how really few thoroughly reliable people there are in the world. It seems to me that uh reliability, therefore, is the priceless ingredient.

[ER:] Yes, well, of course to be reliable um-- it's one thing to be reliable in a job which is a routine job. It's another thing to be reliable because you are able to take responsibility and think for yourself. Now those are [Walter Lowen: That's right.] two very different qualities [Walter Lowen: Yes.] aren't they?

[Walter Lowen:] Uh, I think someone once said that you could test an executive by the amount of supervision he needed. That a real executive did not need supervision.

[ER:] Mhm. That's a very good test [Walter Lowen: Yes.] I think. What, uh--to turn to something not quite so agreeable uh, what have you found are the most frequent reasons that contribute to a person losing his job?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, uh there are a number of reasons. Uh, there of course is laziness, and disloyalty, and intemperance. Um, that is uh the opposite of uh reliability, and uh unprogressiveness, and poor personality, emotional stability, dishonesty, immorality, talkativeness--sometimes a person talks themselves out of a job. All their-their coworkers gang up on them uh if a person is too talkative and tries to dominate every conference, he may find himself out. And a bad disposition would contribute to losing a job, if a person was surly, or arrogant, or ungracious. And poor health frequently uh causes too much absenteeism, and uh-- so that it becomes intolerable and a person finds himself unemployed. And then uh income mismanagement is another frequent uh cause for uh losing a-a job. A person is unable to manage his income, and gets into debt and uh repeatedly borrows from his fellow employees, and the--even the office boy. And uh while he may be tolerated for a while for his brilliance, or his charm, but at some point, this weakness of character will become glaringly apparent, and someone else will occupy his desk.

[ER:] Well, now you uh-um--you said thirty years, so you were actually running uh a placement bureau in the early years of the Depression.

[Walter Lowen:] Yes.

[ER:] Now, how--did you find jobs even then?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, we started, really, in the Depression, we started, uh-- we didn't know that it--there was a depression. Mrs. Lowen and I started the Vocational Bureau, and uh we--I--in our youth and foolishness just didn't know that there was such thing as a depression. We had uh quite a struggle. But, uh of course during the actual Depression, the depression of the 30s, uh, it was terrific. There were times when uh-uh we wondered uh just how we were going to manage, and we would uh-uh portion for ourselves and our daughter uh a dollar a day for food. Uh but we really had fun at trying to manage. And uh we did manage. And I think uh we were the better for it. I-I don't think that hardship uh is ever anything that one uh need look back upon, certainly, with regret. I think it really makes for character.

[ER:] But, did you find any jobs for anybody in those days? [Walter Lowen: Yes we did.] You did?

[Walter Lowen:] Yes we did. And I remember one man, for instance, who had been a vice president of a very large corporation, one of the largest--came in to me, and uh said uh, "I'll just take anything, Mr. Lowen." And I placed that man at five thousand dollars, uh which was uh-uh m-merely a small percent of what he had earned in the past, and he came in to me afterwards and he said "Do you know Mr. Lowen, the placement of that five thous--uh uh this placement really means that--the difference between my eating three meals a day and holding on to my house in White Plains, or losing it." And I feel that, uh-uh in that period of depression, when I was able to help people an-and uh inspire them, keep their spirits up--because I've always felt that it was important that whoever came to see me uh went out feeling better for having come in. I'm sure that that contributed greatly uh to the future success.

[ER:] Well, I-I should think it would have given you an insight into human beings which nothing else could have possibly done.

[Walter Lowen:] I'm sure it did, Mrs. Roosevelt.

(Break 21:54-22:03)

[ER:] Undoubtedly, Mr. Lowen, there are times when a person should change their job. Now, um, how do they--how do they decide that?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, uh I always feel that uh it's good business for a man to test his market value from time to time, and uh see whether he is doing the best he possibly can uh for his uh family and himself. Uh but I frequently advise people who come to me not to change their jobs. I set up four standards of when to change your job. I feel that if a man is making good progress where he is, he's very foolish to change. But if he does determine that it is time for him to change, then I say to him, "The next job you take must have as much security as you now enjoy in your present position." And second eh, "You must have as happy an environment. You must enjoy your associates as much uh in your next position." And third uh, "You should look for greater responsibility and opportunity for growth." And fourth, and last uh, "I think you should have more money if you make a change." I put money last because if any of the three uh previous uh points are missing uh then money will not compensate.

[ER:] Money won't compensate [Walter Lowen: That's right.] for th-the others not being there. [Walter Lowen: Yes.] Well, what do you find are the most frequent reasons for employers losing their personnel and having a large turnover? (28:43)

[Walter Lowen:] Well, uh I feel that uh-uh men change because they want greater security, and for a man to be happy in his job, he must have a sense of security, and they change for a better opportunity, and uh improved location or environment, a man wants to be proud of the environment or location of the place in which he works, doesn't have to --want to apologize to anyone for it. And then, uh personality trouble is a frequent cause for change. If a man finds his superiors or close associates are antagonic--antagonistic or obnoxious uh his job might become unbearable. And, uh then employer's reliability is another reason, because some bosses give uh promises very lightly. And unprogressiveness, because many an employer lacks uh vision. And uh as we read in proverbs, uh where there is no vision the people perish. So ambitious men pull out if they feel that management is just coasting. Then--bad disposition. Uh, an employer who is autocratic, or profane, or temperamental uh can succeed in brow-beating his employees for a while but the good ones know they don't have to take it. And they won't. And then lack of appreciation. I'd say many a man suffers from the "I knew him when" complex. Uh, valuable employees are often lost because a boss just can't realize that their men are growing up and deserve more recognition. And then lack of proper compensation. Uh, some employers milk their business dry for their own selfish uh interests, and uh fail to be good dividers and if they do that I feel they're asking for trouble. Then, internal politics, uh--I-I feel a great curse in any business is the backstabber, the credit-grabber, the stiletto-thrower, and many good men change jobs every year just because of internal politics. Then too much overtime is another cause--this usually points to poor management, and the smart employee recognizes-uh- recognizes it as such. Uh, overtime should be the exception, I feel, rather than the rule. And then another--I'd say the final cause might be nepotism. Uh, when family members, or fraternity brothers, or any other group are noticeably favored, the ambitious young man who does not belong uh usually steps out to find a better opportunity elsewhere. (26:33)

[ER:] Mhm. Mhm. Well, those are all good reasons why you'd lose-- er why an employer would lose uh [Walter Lowen: People. Yes.] his people, his--every-every one of them I can recognize. But when a person is looking for work, um would you feel that they ought to leave their name and history with a great many agencies, or is it better to concentrate on one agency, or one or two agencies?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, uh we have from the start, uh had underscored uh on our application forms that we do not expect anyone to depend entirely upon us to uh find employment, but to uti--use their best efforts

to place themselves. And therefore, I think it's a very good idea to uh-uh list their names and their--and uh leave their resumes with uh as many agencies who uh they feel can actually be helpful to them.

[ER:] Some of the people that I'm getting more letters from um than the normal--from any other group are the people who are over forty five, and who seem to have a very difficult time getting work. Now, um it looks to me as though you ought to have acquired experience; you ought to be more reliable--which is one of your main things [Walter Lowen: Yes.] at forty five, and I cannot quite understand why it's so difficult. And I know that you might pay a little more insurance, but even then, I should think, it would be important to have a stable middle-aged person of experience.

[Walter Lowen:] Well, you have touched on one thing: uh employers, uh who are paying group insurance, uh find that they do uh-uh have a premium to pay on the older man. Many men have come to me and said uh, "I provided for my insurance uh at my old age. Uh I have uh an annuity coming up, and I don't really need to come under the group insurance." But employers, nevertheless, seem to be reluctant to take anyone on uh who is not uh insured under their group insurance plan. Now, it seems to me that uh too many of the older people uh think too much about their age. Ah, I often say to uh men who come into me, who look forty, but whose calendar age is fifty, "Why should you tell your age? Women don't." I say to the men, "Why don't you take a leaf out of a woman's book, and if an employer asks you how old you are, duck the question and say 'How old do you think I am?' And if he says, 'Well, you look forty two to me,' then say, 'Well, let's let it go at that.'" And uh, I-I feel that that's sound advice. I think that too many people feel uh that uh they must uh shout their age from the housetops, and I'm not in favor of that. I think people should forget about their age and keep young in spirit. And turn uh maturity and seasoned experience into an asset. Now today, for instance, I placed two men, both of them were over fifty, and they were sec--uh-uh selected because of their age. So that there are-are times when uh employers insist on [ER: Really want--] having an older man. Yes.

[ER:] Well now, that's very encouraging to ol--the older people who complained. I get more complaints from women, of course, because being a woman-- [Walter Lowen: Yes.] the women would write to me. But um do you handle uh positions for both men and women?

[Walter Lowen:] Oh, yes. [ER: Mm.] Uh, positions for both men and women and all over the country.

[ER:] Oh, not just in New York City?

[Walter Lowen:] Oh no, it's a national operation. In fact, I've had calls from all over the world. I've placed people in India, and Shangai, [ER: Have you really?] and Alaska, huh.

[ER:] Well, that's interesting, [Walter Lowen: Yes.] because you must have to have very wide experience to know the type of thing that will suit um uh in a-in a place so far away, for instance.

[Walter Lowen:] Well, uh, I-I like to work from a uh clear requisition. I like the employer to let me know exactly what he wants, to give me a clear picture of what he wants, and that uh simplifies my work, then I try to match up the person.

[ER:] Yes, but that again must be difficult, because when you're sending someone so far away, unless you know the employer uh you've got to gauge from his letter what his personality is.

[Walter Lowen:] Yes, that's true. But, uh many times, an employer uh will describe exactly the personality of the person that he wants. Uh he will say, "he must fit in to such-and-such an environment."

[ER:] I see. Well now, there's one thing that I've always wondered, and I'd like to ask you: when a job seeker is someone just out of school, or someone who is suddenly forced to work with no previous experience, what is the best way for them to decide what they want to do, and how should they go about it?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, uh I think there are various places for aptitude tests. And I should think uh a good aptitude test uh would be most helpful. Um, then many times a person may have a hobby, and they could turn that hobby into uh a uh business asset.

[ER:] That's so of a --of a youngster, very--it might easily be true, wouldn't it?

[Walter Lowen:] Well, I knew of a man who uh made a-a-a hobby of collecting rugs. Oriental rugs. And uh when he lost his position uh he found that his knowledge of oriental rugs was sufficient uh to get him uh an excellent position [ER: Now--] in the business world.

[ER:] That's a good idea! Now I thank you so much for being with me.

[Walter Lowen:] Thank you for asking me.

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