

ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

November 8, 1948

Description: In the inaugural episode Anna Roosevelt, from Hollywood, introduces the show and discusses the 1948 presidential election. From Paris, ER talks about Truman's reelection and ejecting the Dixiecrats from power. Anna then returns to discuss news of the day, sports for women, and fashion.

Participants: ER, Anna Roosevelt, John Nelson

[John Nelson:] From Paris and Hollywood by transcription the American Broadcasting Company brings you Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt.

[Anna Roosevelt:] Thank you, John Nelson. Good morning. Some of you who are listening today may be wondering what this program is all about, so I thought I'd start by giving you at least an inkling of what Mother and I plan to do. The program will be a combination of forum and commentary, mixed with recollections and everyday personal happenings. We'll have guests from time to time, some famous, some unknown, chosen just because they're Mr. or Mrs. John Q. Citizen with an interesting story to tell. There will undoubtedly be times when our guests won't agree with us and for that matter, just because we are mother and daughter doesn't mean we will always agree. If we don't, Mother and I will argue out our differences just as though we were at home. On this program, we expect to talk about books and cities and people and probably even cabbages and kings--everything from the latest '-ism' to the latest fashion. Most of all, we want to talk to you about things of greatest interest to you.

[John Nelson:] So, Anna, let me say that we look forward to hearing from any of our listeners whenever they feel like it.

[Anna Roosevelt:] Good, John. Now let's get started. Here's a capsule comment on last week's election as I see it. On the one hand, it's one man's typical American success story, the heart-warming success story of President Harry Truman. On the other hand, it's one of the most exciting examples in our history of the force of the people's voice expressing the people's will. And it's a mighty thrilling sound. Today the election is still a main topic of conversation. I've talked to both Republicans and Democrats and heard them express universal admiration for President Truman and the way he carried his campaign, alone with so little support from quarters where ordinarily he could have expected to find it. At the same time, all those I talked to felt as I do that Governor Thomas Dewey and Governor Earl Warren, fine gentlemen both, deserve heartiest congratulations on their admirable sportsmanship and their battle well fought. It's not every nation nowadays that enjoys the strengthening and wholesome influence of a loyal opposition. But this wasn't a one-man election. What most surprised everybody was the clean democratic sweep in Congress. As someone in London remarked next day, "Why America must be full of people lying flat on their backs in astonishment." [John Nelson laughs] Well the greatest single and immediate reason for this sweep I think was the high cost of living. White collar workers, people on moderate and fixed incomes, like schoolteachers and pensioners, people with children to bring up, these people are feeling the pinch. And President Truman talked to these people and he talked to them about the price of eggs and milk. Then too, labor was better organized politically than ever before, and union members also have families and budgets to worry about. Finally, the people voted to keep the social gains begun sixteen years ago, to keep them and improve them. Now my mother voted by absentee ballot because she's in Paris as a delegate to the United Nations Assembly, but distance doesn't mean she hasn't her own strong views and her own recommendations. So now let's ask my mother, Eleanor Roosevelt, to talk to us from far away Paris, France by shortwave radio telephone. (3:54)

[ER:] Thank you, Anna. There will probably be several interesting results of President Truman's reelection, and the one I'd most like to see is the permanent ousting of the Southern Dixiecrats from the Democratic Party. During the Democratic convention, when it seemed that President Truman had almost no chance of being elected, these reactionary Southerners split with the Democratic Party over the president's civil rights program and formed the Dixiecrats. They won four southern states and thirty-eight electoral votes, which might well have defeated Mr. Truman if the voting had been closer. Now when, to their utter amazement, President Truman has been reelected over their strenuous opposition they are anxious to get back into the Democratic Party. Mr. [Strom] Thurmond, the Dixiecrats' candidate for president, says that he and his fellow governors are still Democrats and that their vote was just a family quarrel. The Southern Dixiecrats are still opposed to the Civil Rights Bill and the rest of President Truman's progressive policies, which the voters just put their stamp of approval on. However, they have a very good reason to come back now, all slicked up as good Democrats and with their explanation that it was all just a family spat. The reason is that since the Democrats have now won a majority in both the House and the Senate, several of these Southerners are entitled to important committee chairmanships under the seniority system--if they are considered as Democrats. Among those who would lose committee chairmanships if they are not considered Democrats are John Rankin of Mississippi, one of the worst Southern reactionaries; and Senator Olin Johnson of South Carolina, who snubbed President Truman, campaigned against him, and then was one of the first on the train at Washington to congratulate the victorious President after his election.

As I understand it, the Democratic members of the new Congress will vote on whether Mr. Rankin, Senator Johnson, and the rest of the southerners who walked out and formed the Dixiecrats are now Democrats or Dixiecrats. It is inconceivable to me how these southerners, who walked out of the Democratic convention, formed their own party, won four states, and did their best to beat the Democratic president, can now walk back into the party explain that boys will be boys and then take up several committee chairmanships won by the uphill fight of loyal and progressive Democrats. I think the people who voted for President Truman did so out of approval for his Civil Rights Bill and other progressive measures, and would not want to see him hampered by having important committee chairmanships in the hands of the very legislators who most bitterly opposed the president.

I felt for a long time that there are really only two major political factions in the United States, liberals and conservatives, and that this would be much more logical if our political parties were divided along those lines. The Democratic Party has seemed to me to be predominantly the party of liberalism. Although, through the sometimes curious evolution of politics, it embraced southerners who number among their ranks several of the most reactionary men in public life. Similarly the Republican Party is traditionally the party of conservatism although it embraces some very fine liberals. Now for the first time in history, the Democrats have won an election [ER coughs] without the solid South. Some of the more reactionary southerners have chosen to break with the Democratic Party and I think it would be a good idea to make the break final. Possibly the southern conservatives would be welcomed into the Republican Party with whom they voted so often in recent years. My husband tried to rid the Democratic Party of some of the most reactionary southerners some years ago when he undertook to defeat several legislators who we felt were sabotaging the liberal measures he felt he'd been given a mandate to put into effect. He failed in this, but now that the Dixiecrats have chosen of their own accord to walk out on their party during an election, I think the Democrats should insist that they stay out. And now back to Anna, in Hollywood.

[Break: 8:55-9:03]

[Anna Roosevelt:] Thanks, Mother. You know that's the first time I've heard Mother's voice in two months, and hearing it makes me think of the many other mothers and daughters, husbands and sons who are parted by an ocean or a continent. A close friend of mine has a daughter in Germany who's been there

for two years. Her daughter's husband is in the army of occupation and they can't come home until next year. My friend and many others like her just long for the sound of the voices of their loved ones, so I am lucky. And not only is this a big day for Mother and me because it's the kickoff of our new radio program, but also it's an important family anniversary--a day which brings back close family memories, particularly as we've been talking about elections. It was just four years ago today Governor Dewey conceded the election to my father. I was with the family at Hyde Park at that time. The night before my father was sure he had been reelected, but by 11:40 he was feeling he needed some well-deserved sleep. So he went out on the porch of our home and told the hundreds of neighbors and friends gathered there that while the final results were not in, he felt he could safely predict he would be coming up to Hyde Park from Washington for another four years. As we know, it didn't work out quite that way. And it was four years ago today, right after Governor Dewey conceded the election, that father made a statement just as true today as it was then. "What is really important," he said, "is that after all of the changes and vicissitudes of four score years since the Civil War, we again have demonstrated to the world that democracy is a living, vital force. That our faith in American institutions is unshaken. That conscience and not force is the source of power in the government of man. In that faith let us unite to win the war and to achieve a lasting peace."

[John Nelson:] You're right Anna. Those words are as important today as they were then.

[Anna Roosevelt:] John, I think we've been serious long enough. Last night some of my friends were hashing over the weekend's football games. They were discussing the need for rule changes and the fact that Army used about one hundred and eighty substitutions in its Saturday game with Stanford. Now I used to be quite a fan, and I can well remember watching many a game in the East with rain pouring down the back of my neck and my feet feeling like icebergs. However, once you become a mother and take on the many responsibilities of a family, somehow you don't seem to have time to keep up with sports. But I see something is being done about backsliders like me. Here's a news item I saw in the *New York Times*: "White Plains to Educate Women in Sports Terms." That's the headline and the story tells about a new course of study in the White Plains schools--a course designed to help us women understand athletic contests without pestering our husbands with silly questions. I'm all for a course like that. Why, it may even make for better domestic harmony.

Now I wonder if you felt as I did when the long skirt fashions came in. I was mad as could be. In the first place, I'm five feet ten inches tall in my stocking feet and I was convinced the long skirts would make me look even more like a beanpole. And this height means there's never enough material for letting down purposes. Secondly, I hate shopping. And thirdly, I've got just enough thrifty Dutch and Scotch blood in me to make it impossible for me to desert clothes just for fashion decrees. And now, I'm getting mad all over again because a West coast designer, Rene Hubert, who clothes many a movie star, is decreeing short skirts again. This time his advice is that they will be skin-tight and slit all the way up, whatever that means. And maybe you like drastic and frequent dress style changes, of course the dress manufacturers and designers must, but I just don't.

[John Nelson:] Anna, I know husbands will certainly agree with you.

[Anna Roosevelt:] That I can understand. Now in closing, John, I'm reminded of a statement made by the dowdy Civil War General, William Tecumseh Sherman, a man of salty and Shavian wit, why he'd go to jail swore Sherman before he'd be president. Because he said if he were to become president he knew the newspapers immediately would accuse him of murdering his grandmother. And even though he'd never so much as seen the amiable lady, Sherman added, they'd go ahead and prove it too.

[John Nelson:] Listen again Wednesday this same time when ABC will bring you by transcription Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt. This is ABC, the American Broadcasting Company.

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