

## TALKS BY MRS. ROOSEVELT

May 12, 1937

Description: ER talks with Rose Schneidermann on the problems of the modern working woman

Participants: ER, Virginia Barr, Rose Schneidermann

---

### BARR:

This is Virginia Barr of the Pond's Company, speaking from New York, and bringing you – Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt! Tonight Mrs. Roosevelt is going to discuss some of the problems of women who work. You will hear her in just a moment. But first may I say a word?

This morning you probably listened in on some part of the Coronation broadcast. In English-speaking countries all over the world, millions of other women were listening in too – just as you were.

It may surprise you to know that women in all of the far countries of the British Empire care for their skin with the very same cream that we Americans use so much – Pond's Cold Cream. Pond's is actually the largest selling cold cream in the whole world!

Now don't you feel – “that cream must be good!”

Why not find out for yourself how good it is. Just get a jar of Pond's Cold Cream, and begin to use it regularly. First, use it to clean your skin. Then pat in a second application. You'll invigorate your skin, and make it steadily fresher and lovelier. You'll soon understand why all those lovely looking women in so many different countries, use Pond's Cold Cream.

And now I have the great privilege of presenting – Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt!  
(8 MINUTES FROM MRS. ROOSEVELT ENDING WITH  
INTRODUCTION OF VIRGINIA BARR)

### MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Good evening. Here I am back in New York, after flying all the way across the continent and back, on one of the most delightful trips I have had in several years.

This evening I have the pleasure of introducing to you a friend ... Miss Rose Schneidermann ... who has come to talk over with me some of the problems of the working woman today. Miss Schneidermann is the President of the Women's Trade Union League, and ~~since April First~~, the Secretary of the New York State Department of Labor. She came to this country from Russia as a young girl, and was thrown almost immediately on her own resources. Her father died, and she and her mother were compelled to earn the money to support a large family.

Rose Schneidermann has worked under all sorts of conditions. Yet she has not become bitter or self-centered. She has never lost her innate sense of fairness, and her desire to do what is right for everyone she can help.

### MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. As I've been sitting here, I've been thinking of the first time I met you.

### MRS. ROOSEVELT:

That was in 1919 in Washington, wasn't it?

### MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Yes, it was, and after that you offered to help with those educational courses we were giving at the New York Women's Trade Union League. One of my most vivid impressions of you is pouring cups of cocoa and passing cakes to fifty girls ~~who couldn't read English, but~~ whom you met every Thursday

night, reading aloud to them, and discussing the literature over the refreshments you always brought along.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I still look back on those evenings as some of the most valuable evenings I've ever spent. Because, as we talked together over those cups of cocoa, I learned more about the lives those girls lead, and their problems, than I could have in any other way. Without that experience, I should be lost now in coping with some of the situations I hear about almost every day.

But now, Rose, that was yesterday. What about today?

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Today we know that the time is past when we argue whether a woman should work or not. Because, you see, now women have become absolutely indispensable to our industrial scheme.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Well, that's your opinion, Rose. But you ought to read some of the letters I get. People write me all the time saying the whole unemployment problem could be solved by taking women out of the labor market.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Well, the girl who works today, doesn't work for pleasure. She works, in most cases, because she has to. There may be an invalid mother home, or three small sisters and no father or mother. And then she still wants a husband, a home and children. But to get married, it may be up to her to supply part of the family income.

Before the depression, it was quite customary for a girl to leave her job when she got married, but, now, it's more likely she'll leave the office or factory Saturday noon, get married and be back on the job Monday morning.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

That's true. Marriage for many a girl today means the beginning of a dual life. She has two responsibilities, that of her home, and that of her job.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Working out those two responsibilities successfully is one of the working woman's chief problems. I personally, don't think that either has to suffer because of the other. In fact, sometimes each may benefit.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I know one case in which the wife's working saved the family situation. She was never domestically inclined, and while during the first year of her baby's life, she took extremely good care of her, she chafed at having to accept everything from her husband without making any financial contribution herself. The relationship grew strained. Finally she went back to work. She earned enough money to buy her own necessities, and help run their home. The conversation of an evening in that home is far more pleasant than it used to be. That family is growing together instead of apart.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

You know, our labor statistics show that the majority of married women who work contribute the major part of their earnings to the support of dependents – children, parents, unemployed relatives ...

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

That spikes the statement I'm sure you've heard many times that women take jobs away from men, and spend the money on clothes, beauty parlors, and pleasures.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Oh, yes, I know. Some of their money does go for that. But why shouldn't it? There's no reason why our production methods shouldn't benefit our girls. It would be a waste of our economic resources if we didn't use the clothes we produce. And another angle on that, - I know of the case of one factory foreman who told one worker that if she couldn't make a better appearance on the job, she'd get fired.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Neat, nice looking clothes definitely contribute to the efficiency of a worker. Now, Rose, I've been carrying on a pretty spirited correspondence with a woman from a state where there is some

legislation proposed for the protection of women in industry. She herself is evidently a professional woman.

Now, here's one of the things she says:

"We are worried to death about a bill to limit women but not men to forty hours a week."

You see, Rose, her contention is that it is unfair to limit women and not men. She forgets that men, being better organized than women, have already made many of these arrangements rather successfully for themselves.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Few people realize how difficult it is for unskilled women to organize. They frequently look on their employment as temporary. They're looking for some man to come along to take care of them. Also they're afraid if they organize they may lose the jobs they need so desperately.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

That's true -- Now this lady I've been corresponding with adds this: Somehow I cannot shut out of my heart a little resentment against those men who are so blithely attempting to take from me the right to compete with any competitor for the best living I am capable of making."

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

I'd like to answer that.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I'd like to have you.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

In all seriousness, I am not interested in maximum hours and minimum pay for professional women. They are trained and educated and can jolly well take care of themselves. Let's face facts, as they are. Of course I want the best possible working conditions for all people, men and women, and it's obvious to me, as it must be to you, Mrs. Roosevelt, that when the working conditions of women are bettered, those of men automatically rise too. You see, when women work long hours and for next to nothing, they are not only competing against each other, but are pulling down the wages of their men folks. The women who are working in factories .... who have home responsibilities too -- need improved conditions most. There are very few men who go home at the end of the day to do the housework.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Oh, I've known some who have.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

Oh, yes, of course, some do. But they only do it in an emergency. They drop it as soon as they can.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

That's so -- and I don't think there's any question that a woman who works to give her children the necessities and some of the advantages of life, should have her work day limited to eight hours. She has to provide her child with companionship. She has to oversee her home, for no home can run without supervision.

MRS. ROOSEVELT: (Continues)

I know one woman - with six children to bring up. Her husband's wages were not sufficient to give the children the clothes and educational advantages she was determined they should have, so she worked on the night shift in a mill. She was strong and sturdy, and for a time, things went well, although I think the sum total of the sleep she got was only four hours a day.

After a while she found that her children were getting out of hand. The eldest boy was in trouble with the police.

If that woman could have worked an eight-hour day, she could not only have provided the necessities, but could have given her boys and girls the companionship and guidance they needed.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

I know any number of cases just like that.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Of course you do. But now, Rose, before I go on to the other questions I want to ask you, Virginia Barr has a word to say.

(INSERT MIDDLE COMMERCIAL)

MIDDLE COMMERCIAL

BARR:

Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

In our book of lovely and important women who use Pond's, there's one dazzlingly beautiful woman who has two homes that are 6000 miles apart. You see, she is a Californian. And she married a grandson of the poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson. Now, as the Lady Tennyson, she spends half the year in California, the other half in England or on the Continent. Just now, of course, she's in London to attend the Coronation.

Lady Tennyson, in spite of all this travel by sea and land, this changing from sunny to cold climate, never has any trouble with her complexion ... either with roughness caused by changing weather or lines caused by fatigue. She finds Pond's Cold Cream is the best way to ward off these skin faults – and just as easy to use when traveling as at home.

Whether you're going to be traveling or staying near home, I wish you'd try Lady Tennyson's method of caring for her skin. Just use Pond's Cold Cream time and time again during the day, as well at night. Do as she says – if your skin feels the least bit rough, or you're out in the dust – get out your Pond's Cold Cream and put on some more for another cleansing! You'll find this does more than clean your skin. It invigorates it. It keeps it soft and fresh looking, and free from skin faults. Get some Pond's Cold Cream tomorrow so you can begin right away.

And now once again we have the privilege of hearing – Mrs. Roosevelt!

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Rose what do you think<sup>3</sup> is the most vital question facing working women today?

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

I would say – getting over their economic inferiority complex. I think girls should realize that they are just as important to the nation industrially as men are. I've known many women who have felt they could never hold down a job, and even when they find they can, they carry this feeling of inferiority into business and industry, and are willing to work for much less pay. You know, in unskilled work, women get one-third less for the same work men do.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Like everything else, working conditions change. What would you say is the most significant change going on before our eyes today?

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

That's a large question. But there is one stage of evolution we're going through right this minute. When immigration was unrestricted, the American girl went into "business" – that is, she worked in an office. We depended on the immigrants for the factory work and domestic employment. Now an increasing number of American-born girls are needed and are going into these fields.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Many women consider housework demeaning, which it is not, of course. But I don't believe that American girls are going to be willing to go into domestic service unless better working conditions prevail.

MISS SCHNEIDERMANN:

I think household workers have a right to expect a room of their own, some chance for that privacy which we all must have. Hours are excessive, especially when a girl is on call from six in the morning until the last member of the family goes to bed at night.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

And there's another point in that connection. All women who are going to employ labor in the home or in any other way, should know what it means to work themselves. If not, they can never be good employers. (Anecdote)

How do you feel about the woman who doesn't need to work to earn money? Has she the right to do so?

MISS SCHNEIDERMAN:

— Most of the girls I know and work with have no choice. They have to earn money. But for those who don't, I certainly think they have the right to. No one ever stops to ask a man if it's financially necessary for him to work. Why should they ask a woman.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

— Oh, men and women are writing me all the time complaining that jobs are being taken by women who don't need money.

MISS SCHNEIDERMAN:

— Do you think they are right?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

— I would like to say this in that connection. During the depression when a woman did not need a job, perhaps for the time being she should have given it up. The idea that we are going to waste the potential ability of men and women and decide that they should become parasites rather than producers seems to me a perfectly fantastic idea for this country to subscribe to permanently.<sup>4</sup> There is something intrinsically valuable in the feeling that you are doing a constructive piece of work. It may be in the home or it may be outside. The need to earn money is totally unimportant, because every piece of constructive work creates employment.

MISS SCHNEIDERMAN:

Personally I look forward to the time when every citizen, man or woman, will contribute to the life of this nation by having some useful work to do ... contribute to the economic life and to the social well being of the country.

Here's something I'd like to ask you. What about the girl who stays at home? ... who doesn't go to work?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I sometimes think that the wife who stays at home, and carries on all the work in the household, should be paid a definite salary for she earns it without any question. Any girl who is needed at home, has a job just as surely as the girl who operates a machine in a factory. If she ~~can work and doesn't~~ [is not needed at home]<sup>9</sup>, I think she loses out [by not working]<sup>10</sup>. I think she limits her contacts with other human beings and her whole personality suffers.

Now, Rose, how would you answer this question? Do you think men really resent women in industry?

MISS SCHNEIDERMAN:

Emotionally – I think they do – sometimes. But they need them just the same. But, Mrs. Roosevelt, can you imagine what would happen if ~~every working woman~~ close to 11,000,000 working women<sup>11</sup> in the United States suddenly quit ~~her~~ their<sup>12</sup> jobs<sup>13</sup> ~~today~~ and just waited for ~~some man~~ the men<sup>14</sup> to support ~~her~~ them.<sup>15</sup>

MRS. ROOSEVELT: (LAUGHS)

Well – then the men would resent them!

In solving all the problems of the world, men and women must work together. When they have worked side by side in the factory for example, they understand each other better. I am convinced that often the girl who has worked is a more capable wife – she is more valuable to herself than the girl who has never known the “give and take” of the working world.

(PAUSE)

Now, Miss Schneidermann and I must leave – she to go to a meeting of the North American Housing Exposition, and I am going to the theater again .... two plays in one week – an orgy which I haven't indulged in for a long time.

Next Wednesday I am going to talk to you from Washington, and I'm going to tell you a little about the White House, some of the interesting and amazing things connected with it that I have learned only through living there.

If you have any particular questions or suggestions you want to send me, I shall be delighted to get them. And we'll do our best to work the most generally interesting of them into these broadcasts. If you do write, please address your letters care of the station to which you are now listening.

Good night.

CLOSING COMMERCIAL

BARR:

Mrs. Roosevelt will be with us again next Wednesday night at this same time. She is going to take us on a personal tour through the White House and will tell us interesting bits of White House history she has gathered in the past four years. She is also going to answer some of the questions that you have sent in.

In closing now may I say – for the sake of your complexion, I hope you'll cleanse and invigorate your skin with Pond's Cold Cream. Bear in mind to get a jar in the morning.

This is Virginia Barr of the Pond's Company saying "Goodnight".

ANNOUNCER:

This is the National Broadcasting Company.

---

Transcribed by: Lee Febos

Proofread by: Angela Baker, Matthew Girardi, Margaret Swenson, Olivia Kinhan, Sara McCracken, Ikerighi David

Transcribed from a script held in the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

---

<sup>3</sup> There is an arrow repositioning "(what do you think)" as before Rose.

<sup>4</sup> This is a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>9</sup> The words "is not needed at home" are a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>10</sup> The words "by not working" are a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>11</sup> The words "close" through "women" are a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>12</sup> This is a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>13</sup> The letter "s" is a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>14</sup> The words "the men" are a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>15</sup> This is a handwritten interlineation.