

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

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Description: In this segment, Elliott Roosevelt and ER respond to a listener's question about whether or not doctors should be drafted into the military.

Participants: ER and Elliott Roosevelt

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[ER:] All right, Elliott.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, Mother. I've got a short question same way that you put it to me. Should doctors be drafted?

[ER:] Why of course under certain circumstances they must be drafted. But drafting doctors requires a great deal more discrimination than drafting um people just uh ordinary uh boys into the army or the navy or the marine corps or the air force because doctors have had special training, and the whole health of the nation depends on having proper medical care at home as well as in the armed forces. Now, um do you remember rightly, I may be wrong in this, but um we were told that in the last war, the women doctors in the USSR were put in the front line trenches because they were expendable. If they were killed there were always more women doctors that could be found, and the men were kept in the hospitals where the real uh important things were done for men and women. And of course, not much attention I imagine was paid to the civilian population in the USSR during the war. Um we are a little bit uh differently organized in this country, where we're more highly organized and we're accustomed to different things, and therefore um I think uh the drafting of doctors and dentists and all the other things must be done with greater discrimination to leave a balance at home. In the first place, we have highly trained specialist of all kinds; if we take all the specialists of a certain kind into the army, it doesn't serve the army very well and it leaves the home front completely badly balanced. So uh it's quite a different thing drafting doctors, I almost think it should be done by a uh body of doctors who would have some public health um people on their group, some specialists of each kind. Each of them watching to see that in whatever area there would remain a balanced group, and that the army um, or rather the services in general, would also get a balanced group of people capable of doing the whole range of doctor's services. For instance, you remember well, at least I hope you do though I don't know why you should, [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] that one of our main troubles in the last war was that we didn't have enough psychiatrists. [Elliott Roosevelt: That's true.] They couldn't be found; they just didn't exist because we never trained enough. Now, that's another question that enters into this because it is essential to hold enough young people being trained to keep training in the new ways and the new anything new that's discovered enters into the training of a new doctor, and uh of a youngster that's to say, and uh that must not be stopped because if that flow stops then at a certain given point you have nothing to draw from.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, now let me get a little specific. I have friends of mine uh who at -- in 1940 had just finished their internship. They uh were ranged in age from uh twenty-eight to thirty-two, uh they gladly volunteered to go into the armed forces, they served through the war, most of the them at the end of the war uh were released. Uh they were uh released as I was uh with the specific understanding that of course uh were still on call. The emergency never was-- did come to an end, so nobody was ever released from the armed services. Many of them accepted uh reserve commissions. Now those young men at the end of the war used their G.I. benefits to make down payments on equipment so they could open offices and become practitioners. Uh they invested in-in the tools of their trade, their instruments and all the rest of the very expensive things that a doctor must have. Now, I find that many of those doctors are receiving,

not only the ones who have accepted reserve commissions but some of those who just were ordered back home and told uh-uh they were still on call as long as the emergency lasted, they are being called back into service. Do you think that's fair? (5:45)

[ER:] Well, of course, I don't think that if it is humanly possible we should take boys back into service who are just starting to be established in a career which is extremely difficult to get started in, because you can't start from the beginning in four or five years and be as far ahead as the man who hasn't had to break off. (6:12)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] No, they'll be through if they spend another four or five years in the service and then come out. Uh they are all going to be at the age of forty-five and they'll be starting in business.

[ER:] Well, that-and that is why it seems to me that particularly in the case of doctors um it should be done by a group of very well-known doctors, and there should be an arrangement by which uh most of these doctors you see should serve on hospitals. I mean that is their affiliation and their permanent affiliation. Now, it should be done on the basis that the men that come back have a place for them waiting [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] and that they have not lost that place at least so that they will uh have something as a background; won't be wiped out. But besides from that, I think unless it is a total war in which everyone has to give up everything, um I do not think that men who have been through one war should be made uh to made a part of another one of them in except in such cases as a percentage is needed for teaching purposes, and that percentage should be very carefully chosen of men taking everything into consideration who can um best be used and also best be spared.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. All right, now what about the doctor who during World War II uh entered under one of the training programs into a medical school government paid for his education and he came out of medical school and he has been through his internship since the war and now the armed services want him.

[ER:] Well, I think there is-- I think it's hard on him, but I think he does owe more than--than the doctor uh who paid for his own um education, and he does owe more to the government for that reason, and if it can be done so that he gives only a limited period of service, um I would feel he had an obligation to do it. But again I would feel that it had to be done through a group of people who would preserve a background in his profession. (8:57)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, I got one quick question. What about the boy uh who wants to go to medical college, has graduated from his regular college has been accepted to medical school, and he receives a draft call under the regular uh branches of the service. Should he be permitted to have a waiver and to be able to go ahead with his medical training?

[ER:] That must be based entirely on the need. If the need is essential to have boys trained for that then he should do that, but that's uh that's a question that only the board could decide.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And you recommend that we should have a board under our selective service system, which would be composed of eminent doctors beyond reproach who would have charge of the selection of the doctors who would be drafted in the service.

[ER:] And of planning their-their future at the same time.

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