

PAN-AMERICAN COFFEE BUREAU SERIES

March 15th, 1942

Description: ER recounts her travels to the West Coast and her observations on the war preparation. ER also defends food stamps and school lunch programs from budget cuts.

Radio show, Topics: discussion of wartime America, rules for Mother's in wartime. ER responds to a letter about work for people between the ages 40-65. ER urges the continuation of the food stamp program and the school lunch program.

Participants: ER, Dan Seymour

[Dan Seymour:] This is Mrs. Roosevelt's regular Sunday evening broadcast, sponsored by the *Pan-American Coffee Bureau*, representing eight good neighbor coffee-growing nations. This evening, Mrs. Roosevelt speaks to you from New York, and gives you her impressions of the America of today: alert, hardworking, striving toward victory. But first, a few words from our sponsor.

Stores throughout the country are featuring and talking about coffee fashions and coffee colors. Now this doesn't mean that all of these fashions are to be the brown shades of coffee itself. For many of them take their inspiration from the beautiful green of the coffee leaf, the beautiful red of the coffee berry before it is processed. Coffee, you see, is a very colorful subject, as anyone who has seen coffee growing on the beautiful hillsides of Latin America well knows. Yes, and all the color and the excitement, the very sunshine itself of Latin America, comes to you in every cup of coffee you drink. That's why coffee is always so delicious, so refreshing, so delightful a beverage. And when you add all this to the fact that coffee actually helps give extra energy, and extra steady nerves, no wonder coffee is not only America's favorite drink, but America's necessary drink in these busy days. No wonder more and more people say, "Get more out of life with coffee." And now we present Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm sure that many of you who are listening to me tonight have had an opportunity to travel back and forth across our continent since December 7th. But for those who haven't had that opportunity, I should like to record my own impressions. I made a trip out to Los Angeles, up the West Coast, and back via Salt Lake City and the central part of the country, leaving Washington, D.C. on December 8th, and returning about a week later. At that time, there was a certain amount of activity on the part of the Army, in enlarging airfields and in practice with airplanes, and our production plant showed a certain amount of expansion and activity. On my last trip, which was only out to the Northwest and through the central part of the country, I was much impressed by the increased facilities created for the Army Air Force, the increased personnel and material of every kind. Our production counts also seemed to be expanding in size and in activity very rapidly. What was even more apparent was the willingness of the people to meet the need for speed in the preparation for defense. No one grumbled that after dark, you had to leave by air and arrive by air at a field which was three-quarters of an hour's drive away from the city, instead of using the regular airport. The army rules and regulations were being accepted and lived up to.

People have taken first aid courses in great numbers, station wagons are in readiness for conversion into ambulances, and people know what their job is in case of need. There was an increased realization of the need for guarding production plants, of being wary of what you said and to whom you said it, and acceptance of the possibility of a surprise attack with the determination to be unsurprised and ready at all times. This is to me a great stride in advance. I do not mean to say that everything which

needs to be done has been done, but it does mean that in place after place where I just walked about for a few minutes, I found there was activity and preparation to a very marked degree. This is brought about by a state of mind, I think, and it is good to cultivate it, not only among military forces, but in the population as a whole. So I'm going to read ten rules which Mrs. Mabel Stillman of New York City has written for mothers in wartime, because they're sane and helpful, and everyone can follow them. Here they are: (3:53)

Rule 1: Before you turn on the news or open the mail, turn your hearts to God, even if only in Father Huntington's brief prayer: "I will give thanks to God today. I will give myself to God today. I will ask God to help me today."

Rule 2: Keep breakfast cheerful and allow no controversy or personal criticism at any meal. May I interject that if your family is large and you can carry out Rule 2, you will start your day with a sense of accomplishment. I know of no meal where some members of the family are more apt to be slightly out of sorts.

Rule 3: Buy wisely: practical clothing, healthy and simple food.

Rule 4: Remember that working for your home and family is working for your nation, but give your free time to the community.

Rule 5: Stop parties but increase simple hospitality, especially to servicemen and their families.

Rule 6: Walk in the fresh air a few minutes every day.

Rule 7: Look at beauty every day, if only the bare branches of a tree beside the park.

Rule 8: Hear good music every day, if only a lullaby on the radio.

Rule 9: Relax before the family comes home, and be ready to meet their problems. As a mother, a few years back of an active family, this ninth rule I believe is one of the very best if you can possibly follow it. However, if you're going to do all the other things suggested, you will have to combine some of them in order to get any time to relax before the family comes home. You'll have to meet their problems anyway, and if you cannot relax, I suggest that you forget your own troubles as you take on those of others.

Rule 10: Before turning out your light, lift your loved ones near and far, your country and the whole world to the divine mercy, and end your day saying, "Into thine hands I commit my spirit." Perhaps if we can remember Rule 10, we will ward off sleepless nights, for willy-nilly anxieties will lie heavily on many hearts, and there is nothing we can do about it. (6:17)

And now, here is a letter which brings up another subject which is with us in peace as well as war. A woman writes me, "You see my husband and I are among the people whose ages are from forty to sixty-five. I happen to be fifty-six and my husband is sixty. We call ourselves the forgotten Americans, for wherever we turn to find work our ages are against us. We see-- you see, we have no professions, and neither graduated from high school. No matter where we try to find employment, we strike a stone wall. Never mind us personally, but can you, over the radio or somehow, plead for the cause of the men and women between at least fifty and sixty-five? Would you keep repeating it once in a while? Perhaps someone will hear and give us a chance to make our own life."

The sad part of this letter is that neither the man nor the woman has had an adequate education or an opportunity to learn any skill in any occupation. They are the people who are the first always to be eliminated from jobs, the first ones to be put on relief because they have so little to offer the community.

It is not just a question of age, because their situation probably began to be serious before they reached their present age, or by this time they would have an opportunity to lay up something for their old age. Age does enter into the question, of course, and it is wrong, for people can be at their maximum of strength and usefulness between fifty and sixty, if they are well and strong. The people who break down sooner usually do so because the conditions of their childhood and early years were uncertain as to economic status, and prevented them from obtaining proper medical care. This inability to obtain work in the middle years is a community problem, and it is all very well for me to try to find some kind of unskilled work that this particular couple can do, but that does not solve the problem of hundreds of thousands of people like them, which is with us on a nation-wide scale. It points to failure in our educational system, to fundamental failures in our economic system, which do not give every child a good start, to the failure of the community, which does not plan to see that everyone in the community, up to the time when old age pensions have been earned, has work to perform commensurate with their ability. That means planning on a greater scale than we've ever planned before. But when a letter such as this comes in, at a time when most people insist that there is work for the asking almost everywhere in the country, we know that even during a war period, we must not only meet these problems but plan for them in the future. I wish that everyone living in a community where these problems have been worked out and solutions found would see that they are given publicity. For I cannot help feeling that we are not yet aware of things now being done by communities all over the country to meet similar problems. There is to be a meeting in Washington this coming week to discuss the needs of children in wartime and how they are to be met. Miss Katherine Lenroot of the Children's Bureau in the Department of Labor has called together professional and outstanding citizens from all over the country, and I hope you will follow the reports of this gathering with interest. Wartimes affect the children as much as the grownups, and since our future lies in the hands of the children, we must guard them from harm. (9:53)

And now, I want to tell you about two programs which seem to me very essential to continue during the war period. No matter how high wages go or how successful we are in obtaining full employment for those who are able to work, there are always going to be some people in every community who cannot, either because of physical disability or because of their mental capacity, earn enough money to obtain an adequate standard of living. This is particularly hard on the children. I'm thinking of one very old man whom I know. He's a fine old man of independent character who has worked hard all his life. He's a caretaker now, and he does his job well, but it pays him a very small sum of money. He has an invalid wife and a small grandson living with him. He does not wish to be beholden to any relative and lives on what he earns, but because he is old, it is not enough. For people like this man, the food stamp plan is vitally important, and I'm not sure we can afford to give it up, even in times of maximum consumption and nearly total employment. Because during the period of change over in industry, we're going to have a great many people unemployed, partly because some peacetime industries are going out of business, and partly because industries must have time before taking up the full capacity of labor in war production. If we do not want a slump in the physical condition of the people as a whole, in addition to that of the children, I do not believe we can afford to do away with the stamps which provide extra food. At present, the food stamp program is in operation in approximately 45 percent of the geographical area of the United States, but the communities in which it operates represent a total of 60 percent of the population of the United States. This program has made such a great difference in the nutrition of the country that it seems extremely important to keep it in operation as far as possible.

The second program that I feel we will need as much for education as for any other reason, is the school lunch program. More and more schools are making application for a school lunch program, and this program is now operating in eighty-one thousand schools. The proposed cut which will be made on July 1st will force all communities to make up for what the government has ceased to contribute in surplus commodities, and to meet the needs which have never yet been met. The communities can plant community gardens and tax themselves to buy what they cannot grow, but it will not be easy and in poor communities, it will be impossible. This has been faced by one organization at least, the Parent Teachers,

but it should be faced by every community throughout the nation. It means that some method has to be devised by which we create interest in the states as a whole so that the individual communities may receive some help from their states, even if we do not spread it over the nation as we have through the distribution of surplus commodities in the past. Educational value, of course, lies in the fact that children are willing to eat a great many things as a group that they would not eat perhaps at home, and once having learned what a good diet is at school, they will carry the idea home and stimulate the family to get more information on the subject.

[Dan Seymour:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. As you have so well said, there is a new state of mind in this country, a true realization that each one of us must get the very most out of every minute of his or her working day. Store up the greatest possible amount of energy during each moment of rest and relaxation. That's why more and more people, we are sure, turn to coffee, because they know that coffee does help give them extra energy and extra steady nerves. They know that coffee helps them get more out of their work, get more out of their relaxation. They know from their own experience the true meaning of the words "Get more out of life with coffee." Next week, Mrs. Roosevelt will be with us again at this same time. Until then, this is Dan Seymour saying good evening to you from the *Pan-American Coffee Bureau* and telling you to get more out of life with coffee.

[Unknown announcer:] This program came to you from New York. This is the Blue Network.

[NBC chimes]

(14:29)

Transcribed from holdings at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)

File(s): 46-5:42

Transcription: Anna Karditzas

First Edit: Julia Goldman

Final Edit: Seth LaShier