

OVER OUR COFFEE CUPS

January 11, 1942

Description: Eleanor Roosevelt discusses the importance of accepting “aliens” in the United States during a time of war.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt

ANNOUNCER: This is Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s regular Sunday evening broadcast, sponsored by the Pan-American Coffee Bureau, representing seven Good Neighbor coffee-growing nations. This evening, Mrs. Roosevelt has some interesting things to tell you on the subject of morale. Before Mrs. Roosevelt speaks to you, we would like to say a few words about the Americas’ favorite, yes, and the Americas’ most necessary drink ... coffee.

What is the first thing a sailor does when he comes off night-watch? Just ask any officer or enlisted man in the United States Fleet that question and you’ll get the same answer ... he drinks a good relaxing cup of coffee and goes quickly and cheerfully to sleep. You see, coffee helps in many ways to keep up morale in our armed forces ... for coffee gives the extra energy and the extra steady nerves a fighting man must have. Coffee is a grand night-cap after a tough tour of duty ... like night-watch on the bridge of a destroyer scouting the winter seas. Coffee is an aid to the good cheer and good spirits so necessary for good morale. Yes, and what’s true of coffee in the navy, in the army, in the great factories working on the machines of victory, is equally true of coffee in your own home and office life.

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The more coffee you drink in the day, the better able you will be to handle the problems of these difficult times. The more coffee you drink in the evening, the better able you will be to get the most out of every moment of relaxation. Why not try an extra cup of coffee with your evening meal tonight ... try an extra cup with your lunch tomorrow ... and see for yourself how much coffee adds to your morale ... helps you do your part for victory!

And now, we present Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

MRS ROOSEVELT: Good evening. I should like to say something tonight on the general subject of the attitude in this country towards our neighbors, in Latin-America, and for that matter, in Canada.

I told in my column the other day of a letter which I had received from a Latin-American gentleman complaining bitterly about the calm way in which writers and lecturers who spend a few short hours or at most a few days in a country, then tell the rest of the world all about what that country and its people are like, not even prefacing their statements with the remark that theirs are impressions gathered over a period of umpty-umph hours or days.

Just because Canadians and ourselves both speak the English language, which isn’t true of the French-Canadians, incidentally, there is no reason why we should imagine that a casual train trip on the Canadian Pacific or a motor trip from Montreal to Quebec, gives us a complete understanding of our Canadian brethren. I have heard some of my fellow countrymen somewhat irritably complain when visitors from other parts of the world try to write about the United States after a flying trip from the Atlantic coast to Chicago, or even to San Francisco. There are few people in the United States who really understand every part of our own country, and so it is entirely understandable that the Latin-Americans do not think the casual traveler can have a very good understanding either.

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MRS ROOSEVELT HERE:

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All of this is preliminary to saying that I wish we could begin here at home to understand our local situations better, and as we understand our own people, we will be better able to understand our neighbors. It is going to be very important for the future that we should be able to do this. Even now it is important to that little understood and intangible thing called - civilian morale, that we should set ourselves to the difficult task of drawing our people, in whom there are so many different racial strains, closer together instead of letting them drift apart and be divided by their backgrounds because of the war situation. So many different things enter into this question of morale, but one thing above everything else seems to stand out.

If we are going to have a sense of unity and security in our communities, we must give every individual family a sense that they are contributing something to the defense of the community and therefore to the country. It is quite evident that the first people to respond to the call for volunteer service, are going to be people who have a certain amount of leisure time on their hands. It is incumbent upon us all to see that women with household responsibilities and small incomes, who cannot help in Red Cross activities or in any outside services, feel that in doing their home job better, they are contributing to national defense.

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MRS ROOSEVELT:

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Morale, intangible as it is, is a weapon of war. Even sporadic air raids on workers' homes are planned to slow up production, because men cannot work when they think their loved ones are in danger. In the English cities, it is the homes of the dock workers which have been destroyed to a far greater extent than the homes of the well-to-do.

This question of morale is affected by whether people have shelter, adequate food, clothing and medical service and the leadership which gives them a sense that those in authority are really concerned with their welfare. That is why it is so important that in civilian defense, we do a really good community planning job.

It is not our obligation actually to do the work, but we must know what ought to be done and bring the knowledge that we have to the service of those organizations, public and private, that must actually achieve these results.

Sometime soon I hope to have an opportunity to bring some young men from our armed forces to the radio with me, so they can tell you what are the things which they feel affect the morale. There is one phase of this, however, which contributes very much to military as well as civilian morale, namely, the Red Cross work with the families of service men which has to be supplemented by other welfare agencies.

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MRS ROOSEVELT:

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When I was in the country just before Christmas, I stopped to leave a package at a house where there are eleven children. The eldest boy was drafted. He had to have an operation after he went to camp, but he was full of high hopes that he might obtain an opportunity to learn something about electrical work, which he has always wanted to do but never had been able to study while holding down a job at home. This boy's attitude is typical of many other boys in the Services. Just before he left for camp, he came to see me and told me that his mother had been ill and that his chief concern was that his brothers and sisters could go on working in order that his mother would not miss his wages. This boy is no isolated individual, there are hundreds and hundreds of other boys who feel the same way, who want to be sure that while they are doing their duty to the country, the country is doing its duty to their families, by looking after the needs of the families.

This cannot be done unless in every community we have defense councils which have a real interest, not just in the protective side of defense, important as that is, but in the use of community agencies to meet the needs of all the people whatever they may be.

Morale comes from a sense of contentment, from a removal of anxiety as far as that is possible, from a knowledge of what we do under various circumstances. Air raids will be far less worry if we know what we do if and when they occur. (MORE)

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

(CONTD)

If we have orders, and know how to execute those orders because we have carried them out before in drills over and over again, they will become automatic procedure. Morale is that self-discipline which makes us continue our daily rounds no matter how heavy our load of anxiety and sorrow may be. I was struck by that the other day when a very charming, sweet-faced woman said: "I have plenty to keep me awake at night worrying, but I know that I am only one among thousands who have people they love in our war areas. I try to keep busy and manage to keep myself in hand."

That is one thing to remember. Keep busy and use your commonsense on rumors. Rumors are a subtle way of lowering morale. They are often started by the enemy. They may only be exaggerations at first, but they gradually grow into extraordinary tales. For instance, a friend of mine told me that she had dreamed that she went down in a submarine to the bottom of Pearl Harbor, and found every ship in our Pacific Fleet down there too. Strange to say when she woke up, she wasn't on the bottom of the ocean, nor was she surrounded by all our other ships.

That dream, if repeated, might easily become accepted as fact and before we knew it, these inventions would be repeated as realities.

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MRS ROOSEVELT:

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There is one large group in our country which can help us greatly on morale - namely, those people who have lived through some years of war in other countries, or years preliminary to the actual war. Their experiences will be of great value to us. We must not fail to make use of them.

Many of these people, of course; must come in the category of "aliens" under the law, and that brings up a subject which is very serious in time of war. These aliens are in our country and their morale is, therefore, just as important as citizens' morale. I know it does not help their morale for us to be thinking of them as aliens and treating them as such.

We as citizens, must keep reminding ourselves that at one time our ancestors were newcomers to this country, and also that most of the people to whom the term "alien" refers, came to the United States a great many years ago to make their homes here, or more recently because they were considered "enemies" of undemocratic governments and were, therefore, persecuted.

Yet in spite of their eagerness to help and to be a part of us, as a united nation defending ourselves against aggression and oppression, we read in newspapers in the "Help Wanted" advertisements that "Aliens Need Not Apply." We hear of employers who are discharging admittedly loyal and efficient workers merely because they are not citizens, or in some cases because they have foreign-sounding names and the employers cannot be sure that they are citizens. We hear of some

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MRS ROOSEVELT:

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communities where those who are not citizens under the law are not permitted to take part in local civilian defense activities.

In addition to this, now come the rigid war-time regulations and restrictions upon the conduct and freedoms of those who come here from nations with which we are not at war. I realize, and so do they, with wonderful patience, that the greatest care must be taken in these perilous days.

I am concerned with the possible consequences if we do not make every effort to differentiate between the many loyal American non-citizens and the comparatively few who may be truly alien to our way of life.

The government has agencies which can be trusted to guard against the people who are disloyal. We must not forget this and we must realize that one cannot tell the difference between a citizen and a non-citizen by just looking at him, by seeing the color of his skin, or by hearing him talk.

I think it is pertinent to quote what Walt Whitman wrote years ago, America is a “nation of nations”, and therein lies our strength. If we do not want to create “nations within a nation” if we wish a united spirit and united defense so essential to ultimate victory, we must stop thinking in terms of “alien” or “alien enemy” and judge and act only on the true tests of loyalty, usefulness, and the love of America.

ANNOUNCER:

Mrs. Roosevelt, the Pan-American Coffee Bureau, of course, cannot speak for all of the Good Neighbor nations, but as representatives of a large group of Latin-American countries, the Bureau can thank you for your excellent suggestions on Good Neighbor relations. We all must make a real effort to know and understand each other better. Fortunately, the Pan-American Coffee Bureau, as its name implies, has no trouble explaining the virtues of one famous Latin-American product to the people of the United States .. coffee. In this country people drink more coffee than any other beverage ... and the sale of coffee increases daily. There are plenty of good reasons for this, too. For coffee is not only the most delicious and delightful of drinks ... coffee actually helps the person who drinks it by giving extra energy and steady nerves. Right now, more than ever before, coffee is Americas' necessary drink. For we all need extra energy these days. We all need extra steady nerves. We all need the good cheer and the comfort which coffee gives[.]¹

What good fortune it is that there is a limitless supply of coffee, and at prices we can all afford. H[ow]² lucky we are that we can sing as we swing into anothe[r]³ grand evening of relaxation, into another tough week [of]⁴ hard work ... let's have Another Cupt of Coffee ... [the]⁵ theme song of victory. Next week, Mrs. Roosevelt wi[ll be]⁶ with us again at this same time. Until then, this [is]⁷ _____ saying good evening for the Pan-American Coffee Bureau. And don't forget that good cup of coffee.

Transcribed by: Nicole Mortland

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