

MRS. ROOSEVELT MEETS THE PUBLIC

November 5th, 1950

Description: In this episode, ER and her selected guests question the New York City mayoral candidates: Paul Ross, Edward Corsi, Ferdinand Pecora, and Vincent Impellitteri.

Participants: Elliott Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Paul Ross, Edward Corsi, Vincent Impellitteri, Judge Ferdinand Pecora, Mrs. Ralph Morris, Muriel Hutchinson, Phyllis Pollack, Richard Craven, NBC Announcer

(31:22)

[NBC Announcer:] [speaking over advertisement music] -- meet Mrs. Roosevelt, here's news about *The Aldrich Family*! Tonight at seven-thirty when we meet them, we find Henry in the midst of fireworks, even though it isn't the Fourth of July. The fireworks are due to Henry's being involved in a triangle love affair. For fun tonight at seven-thirty, enjoy *The Aldrich Family* on Channel Four. Now, *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public*, followed at four by *Meet the Press*. This is WNBT New York, Channel Four.

[Theme music 31:49-32:40]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] [speaking over music] It is commonly said that the office of mayor of New York is second in importance only to that of president of the United States. From the Colonial Room of the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York, NBC Television takes pleasure in presenting *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public*. Mrs. Roosevelt will introduce as her guests the four candidates running for mayor of New York to discuss today questions pertaining to those candidates, which have left the public in the following frame of mind. [Music ends]

[Unknown speaker 1:] I'm so confused about the election; I don't know whom to vote for.

[Unknown speaker 2:] Well I'm so confused about the election; I don't know whom to vote for!

[Unknown speaker 3:] I'm so confused about the election; I don't know who to vote for.

[ER:] That is a sample of what good many people seem to be saying at the present time. I asked a man in the country, who was coming all the way into New York to vote because he lives in New York City, who he was going to vote for. And he said, "I don't know, I'm waiting for your program tomorrow afternoon to make up my mind!" So [ER laughs] it's evident that in a way, the vote for mayor this year is pretty confusing to a good many people. I don't happen to vote in New York City, so I can look at it very objectively. I vote in upstate New York, in Dutchess County. But evidently those who vote in the city have found this a rather confusing campaign. And therefore, since this is very important, I'm glad that I've been able to put on this program today. It seems to me that the mayor of New York City has a very important job to do. It's a very big city; he is entrusted with very large expenditures of funds, which are a public trust. He also has the usual uh duties of a mayor in any city, but added to them because of the city's size and the fact that many things come to New York City for exit, and many things come in to New York City, the mayor has an enormous number of interests. And added to that now, it has become an international center. And therefore, it seems to me that this is a very important election. The campaign has been perhaps one of the most heated that we have ever had. Um and I would like to say that I will try-y and keep the gentlemen who have been kind enough to come on a very moderate tone this afternoon. [ER

laughs] And I'm very happy that they have been willing to come, and I'm now going to introduce them to you. On my right is Mr. Paul Ross, the American Labor Party candidate. And on my far left is Mr. Edward Corsi, the Republican candidate. Then this empty seat we hope will be occupied by Judge Ferdinand Pecora, who represents the Democratic Party. He's on his way but hasn't yet arrived. And then on my left is acting mayor [Vincent] Impellitteri, who represents the Experience Party. Now I will begin immediately, I think, because you would all like to have each one of these gentlemen state briefly, I think, what they consider their qualifications uh for the job and what they think of as being the job. So we will begin, I think, on my right by asking Mr. Ross -- Mr. Ross -- Mr. Paul Ross of the American Labor Party. (36:37)

[Paul Ross:] I think the important thing to discuss here, with respect to the job of mayor, is the question of how this campaign has been conducted by the candidates and what are the fundamental issues. The American Labor Party candidate for mayor has uh-uh carried on this campaign only on the r-real issues. The uh -- Tammany Hall has had two candidates in the field, Judge Pecora and Mr. Impellitteri, and uh they've been arguing with each other as who's closer to uh the uh-uh racketeers and the gamblers. Republican Party's had its own troubles. [coughing in background] Only the American Labor Party has raised the issues of a campaign which Mr. [James] Reston of the *Times* has indicated are uh peace, jobs, houses, and new schools. The American Labor Party has presented a program to meet these real needs: a program for peace by negotiation; new housing and an end to Jim Crow; against rent increases and for price controls, with a rollback in prices to pre-June levels; a program to halt receptions to known anti-Semites, like the Polish General [Władysław] Anders; to halt the re-Nazification of Germany and the building of a new German army; a program for the repeal of Taft-Hartley and the McCarran law; a program for using our resources for schools, houses, health, and social security, which can be achieved only in a world of peace, not when we spend annually fifty billion dollars of our resources for war. Thousands of independent voters, including many who may not support all of the American Labor Party program, will not waste their votes on the other parties. They recognize that only a vote for the American Labor Party on row C can count for honest, progressive, efficient government in LaGuardia tradition. A vote for the American Labor Party is a vote for a six hundred dollar increase for teachers and other city workers. It's also a vote against the fifteenth rent increase in December, and a vote for the American Labor Party in row C is a vote against a fifteen subway fare next July. And if I were elected mayor of New York City, I would see that all of these issues, which are so vital to the uh welfare of the people of the city of New York, are properly fought for and achieved. I think these things can be done; the people of New York City can get decent housing, can get decent schools, provided they have a mayor who's not tied to any machines and uh isn't under the influence of big business. And I think if uh I had all of these things, I could be a very good and effective mayor.

[ER:] Thank you, [ER laughs] Mr. Ross. Now we'll ask Mr. Corsi.

[Edward Corsi:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt, uh thank you very much for the opportunity to appear on this program, and thanks also for the paused refreshments. But uh I have been waging this campaign on a very, very simple proposition. And that's the proposition of good government as we had it under LaGuardia or traditional Tammany government. I have not uh -- I have been careful to-to say all during the campaign that I have the greatest respect for both of my opponents -- in fact, three of my opponents -- but uh we're fighting a system. A system which, every time it has been in power, has produced nothing but scandals. And may I say, Mrs. Roosevelt, the same system that your great husband fought in this city. Uh I don't think there is any hope for the greatest city in the world and the capital of Western civilization and a type of antiquated government of the machine type that goes by the name of Tammany Hall. The city is almost -- or fast-nearing -- the verge of bankruptcy, as the report of the controller of the city shows. We're working on a budget of a billion, two hundred million dollars, which is exactly five hundred million dollars more than LaGuardia spent when he was mayor of this city. There is waste and extravagance in that budget. The city of New York just cannot afford Tammany Hall. And the only

candidate who offers an opportunity here to rid the city of the Tammany system is Ed Corsi, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Thank you very much, Mr. Corsi. Now I would've asked Judge Pecora, but instead I will ask the acting mayor, Impellitteri, if he will make his statement. (40:43)

[Vincent Impellitteri:] Mrs. Roosevelt, I'm very happy to be presented to your audience today to express my views as to why I think I'm the best-qualified candidate for mayor of the great city of New York. I was first elected president of the council in 1945. In 1949, after four years of service at City Hall, I was re-elected. I think that the very important job of being mayor of this city requires a man of experience. I've been at City Hall for five years. During those five years, I've been the presiding officer of the council, which is the legislative arm of the city government. Far more important than that, I have been a member of the Board of Estimate, with three votes -- exactly the same voting power as the mayor. The Board of Estimate is like the board of directors of a very large corporation. Nothing goes on in the city of New York without the approval of the Board of Estimate. I've been a member of that body for four--for five years. That is really the governing body of the city. Then in addition to that, for five years, during the frequent absences of Mayor [William] O'Dwyer from the city of New York, and when the mayor was ill and unable to attend to his duties, by provision of the charter, I became the chief executive of the city of New York, with all the powers and responsibilities of the office of the mayor, with two minor exceptions: that was the power of appointment and dismissal, which did not come to me unless the mayor was out of town over thirty days, and the power to sign a local law, which did not come into being unless the mayor was away over nine days. I frequently sign local laws. Outside of those two minor exceptions, I have actually been the acting mayor of the city New York very, very frequently. So that I have had experience for five years with the legislative arm of the city government, with the governing arm of the city government, and in the actual seat of the mayor's office itself. For those reasons -- and at my age, which is the age of fifty -- I think I've had the experience and I think I've had sufficient youth to carry out the back-back-breaking type of work that's involved in conducting the office of mayor. And I might point out to you that the former mayor resigned because he said at his age, the job was too strenuous, and that unless he resigned to take an easier assignment, his health would be permanently imperiled. Those are my reasons, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Thank you very much. Now we will turn to our guests who are here to ask the kind of questions, I hope, which are in the minds of the general public. I would like to introduce first of all Mrs. Ralph Morris of 414 East Fifty-Second Street, who is president of the League of Women Voters of New York City. Will you ask your first question, Mrs. Morris? (44:00)

[Mrs. Ralph Morris:] Yes. Mr. Ross, [clears throat] you say you are going to restore the five-cent subway fare, eliminate the city sales tax, and give salary increases to all city employees. Where will you get the money?

[Paul Ross:] In my speech before the Citizens Budget Commission Carnegie Hall, at which all of us spoke, I gave my program which will meet those uh-uh needs of the city. First of all, uh I said that we could save at least 10 percent of the city budget, and Mr. Corsi agreed with me. We could save from a hundred to one hundred and twenty five million dollars every year. Secondly, I would reassess real estate so that profit-making real estate would carry its fair share of the burden of running the city government, which was approximately 80 percent before the O'Dwyer administration and is about 46 percent now. As a result of that, I would get a hundred and fifty million dollars. Now if you add one hundred and fifty to one hundred and twenty five, you get approximately two hundred and seventy five million dollars. In order to restore the uh five-cent fare, you would need approximately -- seventy, twenty-five, and ten -- eighty f-eighty-five million uh -- ninety-five -- one hundred and five million dollars, which will provide a six hundred dollar increase for the transit workers, and ten million dollars for improving the condition of

subways and uh the deficit. The uh sales tax is a hundred and thirty two million dollars. Uh if you add those two together, you'll find it's less than what I would get from increasing the real estate uh tax on profit-making property and taking the water out of the budget by pr-using the hundred to one hundred and twenty five million dollars that is unnecessarily spent on that budget.

[ER:] Now we will come to your first question. This is Miss Muriel Hutchinson of 444 Central Park West.

[Muriel Hutchinson:] I'm also a native New Yorker, that rare thing. I would like to ask Mr. Impellitteri something: that your Democratic opponents claim that you're merely a disgruntled politician who belonged to Tammany Hall for eh a good many years, and that when they failed to pick you as a Tammany candidate, you made a deal with Governor [Thomas] Dewey for his support.

[Vincent Impellitteri:] [unclear mumbling] That's a --

[Numerous voices overlap ER with unclear mumbling]

[ER:] Before that question is answered, I'd like to welcome Judge Pecora, and ask him to come and sit down. After the answer to this question, uh I will then give Judge Pecora a chance to make his statement. Uh go right on, Mr. Impellitteri.

[Vincent Impellitteri:] That's a perfectly silly observation; it's as silly and as distorted as a great number of other that have been hurled around in this campaign. I asserted my independence when I found out that the Tammany bosses had made a deal -- had made a deal with the leader of the Liberal Party and the former mayor of the city of New York. When I found out that that deal was consummated without giving the Democratic rank and file a chance to participate in the selection of their candidate for mayor, I became the candidate of the Experience Party.

[ER:] Now before we go on [ER clears throat] with the other questions, I think, Judge Pecora, you should have the opportunity that the others have had of stating uh in two minutes what um you consider this job to mean, and your qualifications. (47:15)

[Judge Ferdinand Pecora:] I hesitate to undertake to do that in two minutes, Mrs. Roosevelt, because the issues of the campaign, in my opinion, could scarcely be enumerated without discussion in two minutes. My qualifications uh are based upon thirty years of public service, twelve of them in the district attorney's office, the last eight of those twelve I was the chief assistant and acting district attorney. Then I devoted two years of service in Washington, seventeen months of them as counsel to the United States Senate Committee on Banking and Currency in the-in the very early stages of your revered uh late husband's administration, Mrs. Roosevelt -- [audio skips ahead] -- investigating the practices in Wall Street. I uh helped to draft legislation designed to cure the evils that we found to exist. One of the uh pieces of legislation that was enacted uh was the one setting up--creating the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the late President Roosevelt honored me with an appointment as one of the original members of that. While serving on that commission, in January 1935, the then governor of the state of New York, Governor [Herbert] Lehman, appointed me to the Supreme Court bench. I was elected that year for a full term with the endorsement of both the Republican and Democratic parties. I was reelected last year for a second term as the candidate not only of the Democratic and Republican parties, but also of the Liberal and the City Fusion parties. That gives me an experience of very nearly sixteen years on the bench. And during that sixteen-year period, many cases came before me involving various phases of the city government. Many applications came before me, as they do before every other Supreme Court justice, to review determinations made by the heads of various uh city departments or city agencies. All of those things have combined, I think, to give me uh more than a-a mere passing interest and knowledge of the--

our city government and uh its many, many problems. Uh the twelve years I spent in the district attorney's office brought me in the very closest of contact with our police department, for instance, so I was able to study at very close range its functioning. And uh also the various processes by which uh district attorneys, as [audio skips ahead]-- of our communities, uh seek to uh clear the moral climate of our city and keep it clean and pure.

[ER:] Thank you, sir. Now, we are having the questions which we hope are the type of questions that the general public is wanting to ask at the present time. And the next question will come from Mrs. Phyllis Pollack of 66 Park Avenue.

[Phyllis Pollack:] Well I'm from Scotland, and I became an American citizen in 1946, and I want to ask Mr. Impellitteri a question. What have you to say to the charge that you neglected to attend almost 50 percent of the meetings of the city council while you were president of the city council? That charge has been emphasized frequently.

[Vincent Impellitteri:] I'm very happy that you've put that question. That is one of the most ridiculous charges in this entire campaign. I will merely refer you to the Citizens Union report, when I was a candidate for reelection in 1949. The Citizens Union, at that time, said that I had made a very fair and impartial president of the council. They went on to say that my attendance at council meetings was very regular. Now what they failed to say is this: under the law, when I was acting mayor, the law forbids me from acting as the presiding officer of the council. And these times that they enumerate when I was not present was due to the fact that the charter prevented me, as the acting mayor, from actually presiding in the council meeting. So although I was right there at City Hall, I was prevented, under the law, from presiding at a council meeting. [ER: Now --] And-and they know that.

[ER:] [laughs] Now we come to our last guest on the program, um Mr. Richard Craven of 535 East Seventy-Second Street, and he is here as a first voter having come down from Harvard this weekend to cast his first vote. Mr. Craven.

[Richard Craven:] Thank you Mrs. Roosevelt. I have a question for Mr. Corsi. You claimed credit, sir, as New York state labor commissioner under Governor Dewey, the highest employment in the history of New York State. How did you bring this about? Because this happens to be true of the whole United States, and the United States happens to be under a Democratic administration. (52:16)

[Edward Corsi:] The state of New York not only has the highest employment in all its history, it has the best [ER coughs] labor management relations of any state in the union, and better than the nation as a whole. We've promoted employment and a protection of workers in this state by furthering collective bargaining without compulsory labor legislation of any kind. And it's significant to know that this New York State record begins only in 1944. That previous to that, the state of New York ranked sixth among the industrial states of the union for peaceful labor relations, employment, and conditions of employment.

[ER:] And now we'll come back to Mrs. Morris for her second question. Will you ask that?

[Mrs. Ralph Morris:] Yes, I have a question I'd like to ask of Judge Pecora. In order to increase efficiency in New York City's government, will you ignore political obligations in making appointments to such key jobs as commissioners of police, hospitals, welfare?

[Judge Ferdinand Pecora:] I - [clears throat] I have no political commitments to serve. I have made absolutely none to either a political organization or to a political leader in connection with my nomination for mayor. I would seek in every way to invite into the service of the city such men and women as I may

deem to be not only qualified by experience, education, and training, but also integrity of character. Political considerations will play no part.

[ER:] Miss Hutchinson?

[Muriel Hutchinson:] Uh I have a question I should like to ask Judge Pecora too. You claim to be n-against crime and all its works as a judge on the bench. Well why, then, knowing his underworld connections, did you accept Frank Costello's personal dinner invitation, even though it was cloaked in the guise of a charitable affair? (54:17)

[Judge Ferdinand Pecora:] I got no personal invitation from him at all. My invitation came on the afternoon of the-the evening on which that dinner was held. I had an engagement for at least a month standing to have dinner that night with the rabbi of the Temple Israel and officers of his congregation. I was scheduled after dinner to address the congregation -- or the men's club -- on the subject of civil rights. I had dinner with Rabbi [William F.] Rosenblum, I had dinner with several of the officers of his congregation, and from dinner we went directly to the auditorium where I spoke on the subject of civil rights to an audience of several hundred persons. I told the rabbi that I had received this invitation during the day, and that if I got through in time, I would uh go down to the dinner. I merely knew it was to be a dinner of some kind in connection with the charity drive of the Salvation Army. And so I went there, I got there about twenty minutes to eleven. Practically everything was over when I got there.

[Muriel Hutchinson:] May I ask a further thing on this subject -- did you not receive a-an invitation by mail?

[Judge Ferdinand Pecora:] I did not. [Muriel Hutchinson: Because I know Mr. Costello's name was on the invitation.] I did not. I said expressly: I got the invitation that afternoon.

[ER:] Mrs. Pollack.

[Phyllis Pollack:] I have a question for Mr. Corsi. You claim that Mr. Impellitteri is a candidate of Tammany Hall and will be controlled by Tammany if elected. How do you explain Governor Dewey's high praise of him in a recent speech in Brooklyn?

[Edward Corsi:] Uh I have the same uh personal regard for Vincent Impellitteri as Governor Dewey and everybody around this room has. And I have never questioned it in the whole course of the campaign. I simply say, and I repeat again: no candidate of Tammany Hall, be he of the Pecora faction or the Impellitteri faction, can run this city as Judge Pecora has just stated. It has never been done, and it'll not be done now. [ER: Now --] The system wins, not the man.

[ER:] Now we'll ask Mr. Craven.

[Richard Craven:] I have question for Mr. Ross. You claim that the American Labor Party is the voice of the American working man and of labor. Why is it that no labor organization -- except that small element in labor that has clearly been branded as communistic -- support you and your party?

[Paul Ross:] Our party, the American Labor Party, not only represents labor-working people, but it also represents middle class, professional white-collar workers. And our program is entirely an American program based upon the American political scene. We fight for rent control, we fight for price control, we fight for housing, we fight for schools, we fight for all the indigenous American issues with -- j-just as American as baseball and ice cream. There is nothing communist about our party or its program, we don't advocate socialism, we don't advocate pie-in-the-sky. What we want is to help the people in New York

and in America to get a decent life now. And our program and our fight is for those things, and we'll continue it.

[ER:] Now I think there's time still for perhaps a whole round, Mrs. uh Morris.

[Mrs. Ralph Morris:] Yes. Commissioner Corsi, under the New York state constitution, the city has reached for all practical purposes the limit-its limit to borrow money and to increase real estate taxes. How do you propose to meet the city's ever-increasing financial responsibilities?

[Edward Corsi:] I think, as Mr. Ross has said, and has -- it has been fully demonstrated by the Citizens Budget Commission. There is considerable political water in the city budget. The Citi-Bud-uh the Citizens Budget Commission made a study of five departments in this city and showed clearly that by efficient management we could have a saving of thirty million dollars in only those five departments. If that's true of the twenty-two city departments, we could have a saving there easily of over one hundred million dollars that could be used for many purposes, and particularly for increases in salaries to underpaid city employees.

[ER:] I'd like Miss Hutchinson.

[Muriel Hutchinson:] It's a question to Mr. Ross. Mr. Ross, if you were elected mayor, would you appoint to city positions any man who is regarded by the State Department as a poor security risk, as possibly having belonged to the Communist Party of any-or any of it-oh any of its frontal organizations?

[Paul Ross:] I would appoint to office the best-qualified people I could find anywheres in the country. And I would be guided by the fact that they were American citizens, that they weren't convicts, and I wouldn't be concerned for their beliefs except the fact that they were qualified for their positions and they were citizens of the United States.

[ER:] Mrs. Pollack?

[Phyllis Pollack:] I have a question for Judge Pecora. You stated in your campaign that the Liberal Party picked you first. The record shows that the Liberal Party chose you after [Carmine] DeSapio, [Edward] Flynn, and the other city leaders had agreed that you would be their candidate.

[ER:] You-you have to be quick.

[Judge Ferdinand Pecora:] The fact of the matter is that the leaders of the Liberal Party wanted me to be the candidate for mayor and not only in 1945 but also last year in 1949. And the only reason that the Liberal Party didn't nominate me in either of those years was because the Democratic Party didn't nominate me in either of those years. As a matter of fact, the Liberal Party's convention was held on a Monday following the Saturday on which I was nominated by the Democratic Party. [ER: I'm sorry --] Eh but the event -- the uh-the uh agitation for my nomination commenced at the hands of the Liberal Party weeks and weeks before nomination time.

[ER:] I'm sorry to have to bring this to a close, I hope we've enlightened some people on the questions they had in their minds. I want to thank all of the candidates for mayor: Mr. Ross, Mr. Corsi, Judge Pecora, and Acting Mayor Impellitteri, who were with us this afternoon, as well as our other guests. And now I shall be looking forward to being with the audience again next week. Thank you and goodbye.

[Theme music begins 1:00:34]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] [speaking over music] Next week, Mrs. Roosevelt is going to have as her guests on this program the crew of a B-29 aircraft that has been flying heavy combat missions in Korea. There is a particularly interesting story connected with this crew and its ship, The Spirit of Freeport. Be with us then next week at this same time to hear firsthand the report of these men just home from the Korean war front. Portions of today's program, which originated from the Park Sheraton Hotel, were on motion picture film.

[Theme music ends 1:01:09]

[NBC Announcer:] NBC Television.

[NBC chimes]

(1:01:18)

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