

## OVER OUR COFFEE CUPS

March 1, 1942

Description: Discusses two letters: budget during the war and the community and draft board.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt

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ANNOUNCER: This is Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt's regular Sunday evening broadcast, sponsored by the Pan-American Coffee Bureau, representing seven Good Neighbor nations.

This evening, Mrs. Roosevelt speaks to you from Seattle, Washington. She has two very interesting letters she wishes to ~~answer on~~ tell you about<sup>1</sup> on subjects of ~~vital interest~~ importance<sup>2</sup> to the nation.

But first, we would like to answer a letter we received the other day from a suburban housewife on this very vital subject of coffee. "I agree with you," this lady writes, "that coffee does help give extra energy, extra steady nerves. I never fail to drink a cup in the late afternoon to cheer me up, help me get on with my work. But, goodness gracious, why don't you shout a few words about how delicious coffee is! Energy or no energy, I'd drink it just for the taste, wouldn't you?"

Of course we would. And right here and now we want to say that we've worn out a couple of dictionaries to tell you just how delicious a fresh, steaming cup of coffee really is. But words can't describe coffee and do it justice. If you know some new ones, please send them in. But isn't it wonderful to know that every cup of coffee you drink not only gives you this glorious taste thrill, but actually helps give you the extra energy, and extra steady nerves? Sure it is. That's why we continuously shout "GET MORE OUT OF LIFE WITH COFFEE."

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

MRS. ROOSEVELT: ~~Good evening!~~ At this time, I would like to answer two very important letters I received recently. The first letter asks for help in adjusting a restricted budget to the needs of a family on a more efficient basis.

The Department in the Government which is the most helpful to the housewife is the Bureau of Home Economics in the Department of Agriculture. In the Consumer Guide which came out on October 15<sup>th</sup>, and which is entitled: "Mrs. America Volunteers," there are marketing lists for both low cost and liberal diets. They give an emergency diet which can be used if a family is temporarily reduced to a very low standard, but as soon as possible it is advised that the low cost, adequate diet should be reached.

It is very difficult to help people with their total budgets, because so many factors enter into ~~#~~ them<sup>3</sup>, like rents which vary so greatly from place to place. The advice given by the Bureau of Home Economics is that every family should first take care of an adequate food supply and needed medical care. Everything else should be secondary.

There is at present in the Government Printing Office, a leaflet entitled: "Three Marketing Lists for Low Cost Meals," and as soon as this is available, it can be sent free upon request to housewives who write to the Department.

(MORE)

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

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There are three things that can be of great help to those who are planning on very restricted budgets. One is the food stamp plan, the second is the school lunch program, and the third is the granting of surplus commodities when they are available to people who are on relief. In so many States, relief is so utterly inadequate it seems foolish to even try to help these people to use their money wisely. . . and it is, of course, here where the surplus commodities have been of the greatest value. In these same communities, the school lunch program has had to be carried on largely by what food could be obtained from surplus

commodities, and very often with WPA personnel. All of this may come to an end at any time, and that will add to the difficulties of obtaining even a minimum food standard for both children and adults in these particular areas.

~~I was enormously interested in a plan which is being put into operation in a typical rural community in Morrow County, Ohio, by the people themselves. It is called "Production Now." I hope the local defense council is making it their plan and that this effort made by the people to work out a plan for themselves may have elements in it of value to other communities.~~

A friend of mine sent me the other letter I wish to discuss, but first I am going to read it to you.  
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MRS. ROOSEVELT:  
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That is to say, I am going to read it through to the end if I can do so without tears, because I think it is one of the most moving documents that I have read, and the fact that it is a true story and not something we read as fiction, or see in a play, but a real situation of one of our American citizens, is what makes it so poignant.

"Anna Polansky is a Polish woman who lives down the lane from my house, and today on my way to town I saw her walking along her fence-row, hunting turkey nests, I supposed. We always wave, but this morning, since it was Sunday and no mail delivery, I thought she might like for me to bring back her letters to her. She called: 'Please, and stop a while when you come back.'

"I got the mail and hurried back for a little visit with her. I hadn't seen the latest picture of her boy and I hadn't seen the letter the President had written, thanking her for the three dimes she had sent him for his birthday - one for each of her sons in his service.

"She was in the garden when I got back. She had something bright around her head and I could see her a long way off. She wore heavy work shoes, and coarse stockings, and a man's cast-off coat across her shoulders. I didn't have any letters from her boys, but we went in to read the old ones. Her family consists of a girl and four boys, the husband having died many years ago. The girl works in the city tending to some little children, one boy is in training in California, one in a Texas Camp, and one with General MacArthur.

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MRS. ROOSEVELT:  
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The fourth son helps with the farming, but as the land they cultivate is about ten miles from the home place she is alone much of the time.

"Her daughter had just had a few days vacation and had been out, cleaning up the house and getting a lot of things done. 'I guess you passed her as you were coming along,' she said, 'she just left.' Mary has always been a favorite of mine and I was sorry I missed her.

"Soon the treasure box was opened and we looked at enlarged pictures of her soldier son - snapshots taken in camp, enlarged and sent to the mother for her birthday, silk pillows from the camps with Mother's Day poems painted on, the mottos woven in red, white and blue, and postcards from all the places where these boys have been, and empty boxes - such pretty ones - which had been filled with chocolates and sent home for Christmas, and the telegram with but the one word 'love' just received from the Philippines. And then there was a rosary, sweet-smelling from California, and an exquisite little neck chain from across the border in Mexico, which she told me 'cost \$8.00.' 'I got after him for spending so much', she said, 'but he just told me - 'Well, a gift's a gift.'"

"Always I tell the boys to save. They get everything now so they should save and take out insurance for when they come back. . .if any of them come back they will need it, for it will be hard then.'

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MRS. ROOSEVELT:  
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A letter from one of the boys answered, by saying he had all the insurance he could get, but for her not to save for them, but please get some help for herself, please! Evidently with this in mind, the daughter sent her a dime bank filled with dimes, and one of the sons expressed to her \$15.00 in dimes. She told me they called this 'bread money.' 'But this,' she said, 'won't be used for bread. It won't be used for anything but the Red Cross, or stamps, or the President's Birthday.' And then she said:

"They can have everything I got, but Frank. They mustn't take him. I need him. I can't do much, my head beats so and my heart - I go to the doctor and I cry, but it is the heart that beats so that the bed shakes. If they have to, they can have all I got. I will give them my mules and when we have to give all, I give all. But now, when so many boys are left home, I need this one. Oh, I hope they won't take him now.'

"I promised that I would see that the facts were given to the Draft Board and I tried to convince her that they wouldn't take this last one. There was nothing like resentment at all that her boys had been taken while so many others had been allowed to stay at home. She merely stated facts dispassionately - that this one must stay and work the land.

"I felt so humbled at her magnificence that I felt I must do something promptly about this son - not wait till he was in before we got him out. I got up to go.

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MRS. ROOSEVELT:

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"You go to town tomorrow?" she asked. 'Take this,' and she gave me a little dime bank with the handkerchief with ten more dollars of dimes. 'Take this,' she said, 'and buy me Defense Stamps.'

"The road was misty all the way home."

This beautiful letter brings me to the question of the community and its draft board all over the country. I am sure that every draft board is trying to do its level best, but they need the help of the community as a whole. The people who know the individuals drafted and their families. It is public opinion which prevents any one from asking special favors, no matter how important the situation may seem to them personally. The kind of public opinion which makes people take an interest in every boy drafted, and in the community situation created by his service, is needed everywhere.

We have a great enough population so that we can raise an army, navy and air force, and still keep our necessary production going at home. And so in every case, the necessity of food production on the farm and the person best fitted to do that work, should be considered. The necessary war production in factories for war purposes should be considered, and the person best fitted to do that work should be chosen. This will require real wisdom and experience on the part of the draft board, and a real interest on the part of the community will make it impossible for the man who happens to be selfish, to use undue influence which he may have either because of prominence in the community or financial control.

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MRS. ROOSEVELT:

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In other words, the conscience of the community must be at work to prevent that of any individual from becoming lax. Even in the Selective Service itself, it seems to me that more thought should be given by those in the Army, Navy and Air Force, in the choice of positions which they assign men. A real effort should be made to take into consideration not only the aptitude of the young man coming in, but his desire for occupation in his post-war life. In the case of older men, their experience and skill should be taken into account so that they may serve in the place where they will be of the greatest value. I heard of a case the other day where a boy had just obtained his papers as a third class mate in the Merchant Marine, and he was being assigned to the Infantry. Somehow this does not make sense.

It is often said that officers and public officials are too busy to do their work on draft boards and then on the assigning of men with regard to the individual uses. If that is the case, we had better change our system, because this war can produce for the future better citizens and more helpful ones, or break them

completely and give us groups of people who have been ruined for any type of constructive advancement in a democratic society.

Service with any of the Armed Forces can be a prelude to the most valuable kind of citizenship. These men will have learned that while the Government must use them, it is possible to help them to be placed where they may be most useful and where they learn things they care about knowing.

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MRS. ROOSEVELT:

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It is a tremendous stimulus to citizenship to have learned the valuable lesson of discipline, orderliness and cleanliness. They will be more determined to do good work as citizens in the future. Do not let us fool ourselves that these peace times are not going to demand the best that we have in us, and that we will not need a high quality of citizenship.

In closing, I want to leave with you one thought, namely, that your representatives in Congress really want to know what you think on these questions which touch your daily lives.

~~You know that enormous sums have to be spent on the war effort which is necessary to preserve our future, but will require from us work and sacrifice. At the same time, you know that unnecessary expenditures should be curtailed, but in many cases the idea of what is necessary or unnecessary expenditures varies greatly.~~

~~Some things pay dividends it seems to me, particularly those things which mean that the next generation will be healthier, better equipped to pay debts which freedom requires of us all continuously. Perhaps you, on thinking it over, will feel that certain things which only require a small percentage of what we must spend for destruction may be vitally necessary to help us do constructive work for the future. It is those expenditures that I think the people of this country must think over carefully, when appeals are made for reduction in non-military expenditures.~~

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MRS. ROOSEVELT:

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~~As the end of the last fiscal year, June 30, 1941, the Government spent about 533 million dollars on Surplus Commodities, NYA, WPA, Farm Security, Education, Public Health, Employment Service, Compensation Services of all kinds, which is about two percent of the total expenditures for military purposes, which amounted to over 26 billion dollars.~~

~~It seems to me that this investment in the future is almost the only guarantee we have that the next generation will be able to carry on the fight for a better world which must be carried on by this country, not only for itself but for the world as a whole.~~

ANNOUNCER: Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

At the beginning of this broadcast, we said we couldn't find words ~~beautiful enough~~, exciting enough to describe the ~~real~~ delight of a cup of coffee. There is one plain, simple phrase, though, that pretty well describes what coffee has become in recent months, and this is. . . America's Necessary Drink. For coffee does give the extra energy, the extra steady nerves we all need in these trying times. That's why we earnestly suggest to you that you try an extra cup with your lunch, an extra cup during the mid-afternoon let-down period, an extra cup with your evening meal and see for yourself how you GET MORE OUT OF LIFE WITH COFFEE.

Next week, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt will speak to you again at this same time. Until then, this is \_\_\_\_\_, saying good evening for the Pan-American Coffee Bureau. . .and remember, you, too, can GET MORE OUT OF LIFE WITH COFFEE.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The words “to” through “about” are a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>2</sup> This is a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>3</sup> This is a handwritten interlineation.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project