

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

July 30th, 1951

Description: In this segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt the proper amounts to tip service workers in Europe.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Ben Grauer

[ER:] How do you do, this is Eleanor Roosevelt. Every Monday through Friday my son Elliott and I have the opportunity to visit with you here in my living room at the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City. Each day it is our desire to bring interesting guests that we are hopeful you will enjoy meeting. Elliott, will tell our listeners today's plans?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] There is an organization known as the Baker Street Irregulars which boasts many prominent members. They concern themselves purely with fantasy, the fantasy and charm of Sherlock Holmes' writings. Mr. Rex Stout, the well-known author and the mystery writer himself is with Mrs. Roosevelt today to tell us about his club and some interesting Sherlockiana. We will hear from Mr. Stout after Mrs. Roosevelt and I answer a letter from a listener. Now it's time to let our announcer have a few words.

(Break 1:00-1:14)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Our letter today is from Miss A. Fisher of New York City. She's concerned with the matter of tipping, both here and abroad, as she's off on a European trip. She says, "Dear Mrs. Roosevelt, even though I appreciate that some people who render public service may be underpaid, I feel that the matter of tipping has gotten all out of hand and should be abolished. We are actually doing someone a favor not really required of us when we tip. But if we don't, what abuse can we bring upon ourselves? I'm going on my first trip abroad in a little while. I have been told that a certain percentage is added to hotel and restaurant bills for service, but that one has to tip anyway. Is this true and if so, could you give me some clue as to the proper amount because although I don't approve, it's bad enough being abused in English, much less in a language I don't understand. I'd appreciate your discussing your views on this matter." (2:20)

[ER:] Well, in Europe of course it's an age-old custom to tip. There, you tipped uh even when you went to dine with a friend, the servants in the house in many European countries. Um you never left your hat at the door uh or left after dinner without leaving a tip. Um so that ah when you are in a hotel or when you take a public vehicle or when you do anything, actually, eh um you tip in Europe and-and it's usually um a ten percent uh tip of-well it used to be a ten percent now it's a fifteen percent addition to whatever your bill is. Now you will find on your bill a charge for tips and if you're staying a long time in a place um I think you can tip on a weekly basis. And um try to calculate about what your weekly bill is and then usually a ten percent addition will seem munificent to almost anyone. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And--but um not to tip uh simply means that the people don't earn enough because that is actually included, supposedly, in their wages in um European places. They actually don't pay many of their people a living wage. Now in this country we are--we are supposed to pay a living wage. Now, we know that waitresses and people in restaurants uh were not in the past always paid a living wage. But um it is now fairly well um considered to be a bad practice--uh a bad practice for any business not to pay a living wage. But ah the tip is still a prevalent custom and here it is as a rule fifteen percent of your bill, or about that. [Elliott

Roosevelt: Yes.] Um and uh the same thing holds good in your taxis or--but here it is not the custom and never ah has been uh to tip, for instance, if you dine in a private house. (5:00)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] No, [ER: ah, but--] but if you go stay in someone's house---

[ER:] But if you go stay in someone's house it's always the custom to tip before you leave. [Elliott Roosevelt: Now, listen--] Unless, I have been in houses where they made special arrangements. For instance, I remember one house where there was a little notice in every guest bedroom which said, "Please do not tip any of the servants. They are given a full month's extra wages every year with the understanding that they will not accept tips" [ER laughs] and so that-that I found that in several houses, and much to my interest, I found that was done uh in royal houses in Europe. Because [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] the old way, which had been uh for the master of the house to uh tell whoever was staying there how much uh was the proper amount to leave uh became a little difficult when they were not always asking as guests people with large sums of money uh at their disposal. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And um I find that it's very much more limited today. eh In fact in some houses uh I found it had been stopped completely in some um uh royal house—households. And um I think in-in many ways that was a good thing because um I think it's-it became almost an abuse. (6:46)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, well you know it's interesting um that this lady should object to the system of tipping uh because I've had occasion in going around in uh taxicabs, for instance, to inquire of the taxi drivers uh what their income uh major income came from. And uh in most cases they told me that it is uh--that they are taxed by the federal government on the basis of an arbitrary amount that they uh [ER: The tip--] have received--I think it's fifteen percent that they figure on what shows on the meter [ER: mhm.] uh that they are taxed uh regardless of whether they get a tip or not so that uh the government recognizes that a taxi driver's major income comes from the tips that he receives.

[ER:] That's true. Um but I've-I've always felt personally that you were worthy of, you-you should be paid for the work you agreed to do and tipping should eventually eh go out in this country. I think it would be difficult in another country where it's so deeply rooted. But, I've always felt that here uh we engage to do a certain amount of work and we should be paid a full wage for that work. But, if that is not done, then-then tipping is essential. For instance, the porters in the station now how um a certain amount they pay eh um because they are given a bigger wage, but they don't make as much as they used to on tips. So unless the rest of us give them plus what goes to the station um an extra tip, they don't make as much as they used to. (8:49)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I'm interested by the fact that in the-in some of the railroad stations they have almost a set charge that uh [ER: They have in all of them now.] Elliott Roosevelt: In all railroad stations.

[ER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.] Twenty-five cents per piece of baggage. [ER: Twenty-five cents per piece of baggage, so--] That seems to me to be a rather--[ER:] And that-that goes to the uh railroad management, but the railroad management now pays a better wage than they used to pay when practically everything a porter uh made was in tips. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Uh however, the porters say that their wage does not equal what they used to make out of tips and therefore, unless you do give some tip in addition, they don't make uh as much as they used to. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm, well--] But I must say it is a temptation not to give quite as much in a tip as you used to. [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's true. Uh but to go back to Europe again, and the uh the habit that they have over there of putting on so much for service[ER: They do that here too.] onto your bill [ER: at many hotels.] I know, and in many hotels they follow the same custom in this country. Uh but where you made the statement ten percent of the overall bill, you meant ten percent between all of the various people, from the doorman, and the [ER: Oh, yes.] waiter, and the-and the chambermaid. Everybody in the hotel who

serves your needs [ER: Yes.] you split approximately ten to fifteen percent [ER: Ten to fifteen percent of the total bill.] of the total bill each week. [ER: Yes.] Uh now as far as--[ER: But that's only when you're staying over a long period.] Mhm, now as far as uh as travelling around in Europe, it's roughly the same as it is uh--[ER: Here.] over here, is it not? [ER: Roughly the same.] Now do you feel that this uh this system that you talked about in private homes, of course there aren't--

[ER:] That's almost gone. You see it very little anymore. But one reason is that you go very little into private homes because private homes have so little now that they cannot afford to entertain or to have-- there are very few homes except in a few homes in the big cities but um you-you will find that in Great Britain for instance, uh it's very, very difficult for people to entertain because their-their food ration is so limited. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] So it would be very rare that you will be asked to go into private homes. And um that same thing uh will hold good of uh many uh many other continental countries which were devastated in-in-in the war.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well what-what do you do when-when you go to a very large official function of some kind, say given by uh a public official, and it's held in a semi uh public building or uh and [ER: There you'd tip.] you have to check your-your [ER: There you tip. You tip.] hat and coat. You tip? [ER: Yes.] And you chi- you tip attendants in the dressing rooms [ER: Yes. Oh, yes.] And so forth. [ER: Oh, yes.] Well, I hope that this uh answers this lady's feeling about tipping in her trip that she is taking to Europe and uh I-I'm interested by the fact that you hope that in this country as we gradually evolve our whole social system that pay will be high enough so that the tipping system will pass out completely. I think that it's uh pretty deeply rooted though and I doubt very seriously whether it will go out as quickly as some of us might hope. (12:40)

[ER:] Well, you may be right but I do think in the United States it would be better to get rid of it.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Alright. Well now I see that we must go on to another part of the program and so in a moment we'll come to our interview of today.

(Break 12:55-13:-01)

[Elliott Roosevelt] I want to tell you today about something important which is being done by UNESCO. That's the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Did you realize that there are one thousand two hundred million people in the world today who cannot read or write? Seventy million of them live in Latin America. I think we all know that wherever you find so many illiterate people you always find hunger and poverty and disease. And we're all eager to see something done about it. It seems that one of the big problems is that there aren't nearly enough teachers to go around. That's why I was glad to hear about the new international school which has just been opened at Pátzcuaro, Mexico by UNESCO to train new teachers from Latin America in fundamental education. That means that while the people are learning to read, they are also learning how to protect themselves from malaria, about practical farming methods, better housing, proper diets, and perhaps even to organize a ball team to bring a little fun into their lives. The interesting thing about the new school at Pátzcuaro is that the graduates will work in teams of five, each a specialist in one of these subjects and will then go back to their own countries and start similar teams so that the teachers will be trained by a kind of chain reaction. It seems to me that Mexico is a fine choice for this school because Mexico has done a good job herself with just this kind of education. You've heard about their schools on wheels for the rural areas and even today every Mexican who learns to read and write believes it is patriotic duty to teach somebody else. Their motto "each one, teach one" could pay big dividends throughout South America. (15:08)

(Break 15:09-15:21)

[Ben Grauer:] This has been the *Eleanor Roosevelt Program*, recorded in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room in the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City. Today Mrs. Roosevelt's guest was the famous author of mystery stories Mr. Rex Stout. Looking at the guest list now and tomorrow we'll have a visit with Oscar Pogge, the director of the Bureau of Old Age and Survivors Insurance division of the federal security agency, the Social Security Administration. Wednesday August first one of the great favorites of radio and moving pictures will be with Mrs. Roosevelt: Phil Regan, the singing cop. You all know the outlines of Phil's story; he originally was a policeman and he abandoned the uh career for the theater, for singing, movies. A great success he is. He's Mrs. Roosevelt's guest on Wednesday, followed on Thursday by Mrs. Eleanor Herrick, who's personnel director and member the editorial staff of the *New York Herald Tribune* and an expert in the labor management relations field. And we'll close our guest list for the week on Friday with an interview with a member of the public advisory board, Orin Lehman, who just returned from a tour of Southeast Asia to see at first hand the work being done there by the ECA. Mrs. Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt will be with you again tomorrow when our guest is Oscar Pogge of the Social Security Administration. And every day Monday through Friday from 12:30 to 1:15 pm. Til tomorrow then, this is Ben Grauer, bidding you all good afternoon. (16:56)

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