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# FORTIES FASHION

AND THE NEW LOOK

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coupons were required for domestic servants' uniforms; how district nurses were to obtain their uniforms; and that an extra allowance of fifty clothing coupons was available to expectant mothers. Most bizarrely the government had no objection to anyone purchasing a single shoe, sock or glove, 'if the shopkeeper doesn't object'. In theory, interchange of coupons was allowed only between people in the same family but, almost immediately, the poor began to sell their coupons to the better off – the beginning of a black-market ruse which flourished throughout the war.

Another loophole was the ruling that second-hand articles of clothing, if 'genuine', were exempt from coupons. This was an acknowledgment by the government that many of the working classes bought their staple items of dress at jumble sales and market stalls but, in fact, the ruling misfired, making the local market a Mecca for 'spivs' and a clearing house for black-market goods, including

items looted from bombed shops, warehouses and even homes. The government did not stretch the leeway given to second-hand goods to cover the other source of

**A hat and belt made from pre-war scraps of material, 'now coupons are scarce'.**



**Considerable ingenuity was employed to ensure that odd pieces of material could still create something 'presentable'.**

working clothing, the Clothing Clubs, where items were bought on 'the never-never,' so called, cynics claimed, because the buyer never owned the clothing as it was worn out before it was paid for, at 2d per week to the tallyman who called at the door. The ruling was that coupons had to be handed to the supplier before the goods were supplied. Payment was on the 'never-never', but coupons were not.

An almost immediate effect of the announcement of clothes rationing was the volte face performed by the glossy magazines. No more reports like that of Lady Mendl's famous circus ball at Versailles in 1939 – already seeming as if it had taken place on another planet – with its troop of white horses 'brought specially from Finland'. Inspired by the government's determination, editors were now preoccupied by the practicalities. And they were perfectly sincere in their monthly

