

Newsweek

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Silk Shutdown

After a week of uncertainty, the American silk industry was told last Friday by the OPM that when the existing three-week supply of processed silk is used up no more raw silk can be processed without authorization by the Director of Priorities. Fabricators had about a four-month supply of raw silk in sight, but the Army and Navy declared these stocks represented the minimum required during the next two years for parachutes and powder bags, although synthetic and cotton-yarn substitutes respectively are reported satisfactory



Girls prepared for a silk shortage

for each. Unless the Administration decides to admit more silk from Japan, most of the 175,000 workers in hosiery, necktie, and underwear mills may soon be out of work. In any case, the order brought the war home to the public with a smash by threatening the supply of silk stockings, the American woman's most characteristic article of clothing, which is consumed at an annual rate of 47,000,000 dozen pairs.

All last week hosiery sales were heavy everywhere as the ladies prepared for the worst. Meanwhile, government officials anxiously conferred with silk industry and labor leaders on plans to soften the economic blow. Saturday night, OPACS set price ceilings for raw silk and waste and ordered rayon-yarn producers to set aside one-tenth of their output and stocks for allocation to the silk weavers and knitters. The other major silk substitute, nylon, already accounts for 20 per cent of full-fashioned hose shipments. Emil Rieve, CIO Textile Workers Union head, estimated that a 10 per cent expansion of existing synthetic-yarn capacity, even now inadequate, would be required to replace silk.

One possibility is that women may have to turn to cotton stockings, though they unanimously snubbed a new sheer, mercerized lisle hose hopefully introduced last year. Other rumored developments include wide adoption of the collegiate bare-legged fad, painting of legs and, to the distress of many men, longer skirts.

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