

4/30/40

Dear Cameron,

This memo is a response to Helen Kay's query.

Enclosed are two samples and a pair of the government-styled lisle hose.

The samples are taken from a "travelling kit", seven of which, each containing 20-24 items, are constantly in circulation throughout the country among consumer groups, extension groups, colleges, etc. There are two complete kits in New York City, each containing all of the 142 items in their full color range that are now developed. The complete exhibits in New York are at the Cotton Textile Institute, 320 Broadway, and at the Mercerizers' Association of America, 470 4th. Ave.

The pair of hose are made by the Gotham Gotham Silk Hosiery Co. (Gotham Gold Stripe), ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ 200 Madison Avenue. This company is the only one which to date has met the style specifications of the Home Economic division of the Department of Agriculture.

Because, from what I was able to learn today, there seems to be a misunderstanding on your part of what this thing is I am repeating what I found out from David H. Young, a specialist well-known in the trade, who was brought into the Department to take charge of the manufacturing and styling work under Ruth O'Brien, in the Home Economics section.

Various experiments have been conducted during the past year and nine months, under a special appropriation for the purpose. In addition to improving the quality and saleability of lisle hose one of the objectives is to make women

"cotton conscious" to ~~that~~ the end that they buy more cotton.

In the laborstorjes of the Depa tment the hose developed has been subjected to every known physical test. In addition, nurses in one of the local hospitals are participating in experiments and tests. They are supplied with hose and the soiled hose are called for by Department of Agriculture messengers who take them to the labs where they are laundered by specialists. This experimant is not completed, but thus far the results have been gratifying. This test is in its ninth month.

As the work has progressed and as the appearance and quality of the hose has improved manufacturers have become increasingly interested. There are now many inquiries from the trade. The project actually commenced on July 1, 1938

To date 56 different types have been styled by the department. 31 are what they classify as "novelties" and 21 are "plain knits". These range from heavy-weight hose for rough wear-garden and outdoor work, heavy work, etc., to sheer hose suitable for formal wear. This hose is distinguished from the old type of lisle hose which is tubular in design in that it has been built up following the technique of making full-fashioned silk, and the very same machines have been employed. It, unlike the old stuff, fits the leg and has shape.

One of the experiments has been with exotic coloring-deep reds, etc, following Mme Schiaparelli's recent French styling illustrated in the 4/15/40 issue of LIFE.

The formal hose is now made in sheer of a two-thread knit.

Gotham was interested in this by Dean Hill, president of the Mercarizers' Association of America. They are going into production slowly, but thus far are

quite pleased with the results and response and expect, in the near future, to distribute the line through 10,000 accounts from coast to coast. To date they have refrained from any promotional advertising, but in a few weeks will start this, in Memphis, Tenn., in connection with the Surplus Commodities Corp. cotton program (see that memo, to follow.) The slowness in increasing production is deliberate.

The sample paid inclosed, size $9\frac{1}{2}$, is what is known as "pertinet rib mesh", light-weight.

These hose have also been styled in two-way stretch tops, etc. Gotham's line will sell for \$1, and to those who participate in the cotton program (see memo), they will, in effect, be 2 prs for \$1.

Also enclosed is a release by the division and several pictures of the styles, etc., which I thought you could use. Attached to the leg photo is an enlargement showing the stitch in greater detail. These people say it is best, if you superimpose the enlargement, to do so in the toe.

There is no subsidization by the government of their manufacture of these hose, except that the government has saved the manufacturers money in conducting the experiments and performing the tests. There is no connection between this project and the stamp plan, as I will explain in that memo. I am rushing this because Kay says she must have this today. The oil-filter memo will follow later today. There is no subsidy under the stamp plan, also.

Harold Weisberg