

Some Sartorial Confusion

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By Maxine Cheshire

It isn't the emperor's clothes, but President Ford's, that everyone at the White House is pretending not to notice.

When the Chief Executive, on the first trip to Japan by any American President, was greeted by Emperor Hirohito in Tokyo yesterday, both men were supposed to be wearing the same formal attire:

Cut-away coat, dark vest, soft-collared shirt, gray silk tie and striped trousers.

Instead, President Ford was dressed in a "Father-of-the-Bride" outfit that featured an ascot, a pearl-gray doeskin weskit and a stiff-winged collar.

To make matters worse, his striped trousers bagged at the knees and were three inches too short.

White House advance men, coordinating sartorial details with the State Department, had sent around two memos—on Nov. 13 and Nov. 16—advising members of the presidential entourage that the Japanese, as the host country, had specified what was to be worn for every official occasion.

Yesterday, State Department officials were wondering if Mr. Ford (or Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for that matter) ever got the messages and if not, why. Kissinger was also wearing an ascot.

A protocol officer said last night, "We gasped, along with every tuxedo rental company in the Yellow Pages, when we saw his picture on the front page of this morning's paper. We can only assume that his tailor used to be the head football coach at Michigan State."

Actually, Mr. Ford played center for the University of Michigan Wolverines and his tailor is Brooks Brothers.

A spokesman for First Lady Betty Ford, who did her husband's packing, says she took her cue from a "booklet on clothes and accessories" put out by the famous menswear firm.

But Brooks Brothers is not ready to accept all the blame. The manager of the Washington store, Robert Mallon, says:

"We supplied the coat only—the c-o-a-t o-n-l-y—plus the ascot and shoes. The controversial trousers belong to the President."

The trousers, according to the White House, were left over from "an inauguration." No one remembers which one.

"He tried them on for Mrs. Ford and they fit—around the waist anyway," said Mrs. Ford's



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President Ford greeted Emperor Hirohito last Tuesday in Japan but the President's formal attire left some gasping.

press secretary, Sheila Weidenfeld. "Maybe he hitched his suspenders too high."

As for the rest of the outfit, Brooks Brothers takes no responsibility for the fact that their booklet's description of proper formal daytime attire in the United States conflicts with that worn in Japan.

"I don't think it matters what the Japanese were wearing," said Nancy Hower, Mrs. Ford's personal assistant. "Suppose they had all been wearing kimonos. Can you see us trying to fit the President (who is 6-foot-1) in a kimono?"