homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, February 9, 1942

SUBJECT: "JOB OF THE MONTH: REPAIRS." Information from household engineers and home management extension specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Let's talk today about how you can look ahead and prepare for the future. Here are tips from home management advisors of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to help you get ready for your part in winning the war. Women on farms will be some of the first called on one big war job. Millions of women on farms all over this country will soon be taking part in producing the tremendous quantity of food needed by this country and the other United Nations. So now is the moment--now before the big sprin push begins--for women, especially those on farms, to get all the necessary household equipment in condition for efficient running during the heavy days to come. Get repairs and adjustments made now while you still have time, and while the stores still have the materials for repairing.

Household management advisors suggest that right now is the time to take an inventory of your household equipment, so you'll know what you have and can compare it with what you need. You can also check on what needs repairing. Take a pencil and paper. Write a list of the equipment you have. Examine every peice carefully as you list it, and make a check mark beside any piece that needs repairing--or looks as if it soon may need repairing. The stores still have most extra parts and other materials for repairs. You can still buy metal pieces, rubber, paint, oil and so on. But if you let things slide--if you don't bother to look over and fix up your household equipment, a break may come when repairs are difficult or impossible. Look ahead and imagine what a fix your whole family would be in if, right in the midst of harvesting next summer, the grate in your stove gave way, and you couldn't replace it; or your washing machine broke and couldn't be fixed. What if your canning kettle or your

canning boiler sprang a leak right in the midst of canning season, and you couldn't mend it? What if the guage on your pressure canner proved to be out of order just when you had a fine batch of new peas or green beans ready to process?

For your country's sake and your own, check and repair now.

What to check first? The most important and necessary equipment, of course. Start with the stove, since feeding the family well is your first job. You'll probably have extra help to cook for this summer, or have extra canning to do if you live on a farm. So the stove needs to be ready to give you the best possible service. Check on grates, chimney and firebox first, if you have a coal or wood stove. If any part looks likely to break in the near future, better replace it at once. Any part that has rusted thin and might go through, that's the place to repair now. Whatever kind of stove you have, go over it all carefully. Get it in condition now to give you several years of good service.

Every housewife who plans to can this summer--and that's almost every woman on a farm and many in villages, too--needs to check now on her canning equipment. Get down all your empty jars, for example. Be sure each jar has a top that fits perfectly. Replace all broken or imperfect tops and see that every jar has a good jar-rubber. Do this now while stores can still supply your needs. Look at your canning kettles, your colanders, strainers, measuring cups--all the tools you need for canning. Be sure your pressure canner is in perfect condition. Your State college will check your pressure guage or tell you where you can have it checked. Buy every new part you need and repair wherever necessary. Don't wait.

Family washing like family cooking must go on even in national emergencies. So check now on your laundry equipment--your washing machine, tubs, boiler, even your scrubbing board and clothes line. If you've been getting along, washday after washday, with a boiler about to go through on the bottom, or a tub that may leak any minute, better not put off having them fixed any longer. Look at your clothes

wringer. Are the rubber rollers wearing out? Then now is the time to replace them, and to replace any broken screws or metal parts on the wringer.

And what about the utensils for cleaning your house? They are also essential tools to put in condition right now. Now may be the time to replace that old, bent, stubby broom with a good new one that will last for years. Some of the best fiber for making brooms has come from India and is not coming in anymore. If you've been struggling along with a bent, rusty dustpan that does a poor job of taking up dust, now is the time to get a new one while the store still has supplies. These are days to invest your cash in necessities--in the articles you'll need most for several years to come. These are days to get your house in the best possible running order, so that you'll have more time to work for your country.

Many people will be making clothes at home from now on, and making over clothes. If you have a sewing machine, now is the time to put it in perfect order. Get the extra parts that may break down. Buy an extra bottle of sewing machine oil, rubber rings for bobbin winders, bobbins, shuttles and a new belt, extra needles--whatever you will have to replace within the next few years.

Needless to say, you'll also want to check on small equipment in the kitchen--kettles, pans, paring knives, egg beaters. How is the wheel on your beater? Have you plenty of good knives and a good knife-sharpener? Will your coffee pot last several years? Does your food chopper need a new plate or screw? Are the handles loose on some of your favorite pots and pans?

These suggestions are just to start you off. You know better than anyone else the things you use most in cooking, canning, washing, cleaning and sewing. The essentials are the ones to concentrate on now. They are the things to repair and replace, for your sake and your country's sake.

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