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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Tuesday, December 12, 1944

QUESTIONS:

- Why few cigarettes?
- Repair old purses?
- How fold shirt?

ANSWERS:

From tobacco specialists of the War Food Administration and home economists of the United States Department of Agriculture

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Our questions today deal with some of the wartime problems in homemaking. One woman wants to know where all the cigarettes are. Another asks if there's anything she can do to make her purse last another season or so...and a third has laundry troubles. The answers are from specialists of the War Food Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Our first homemaker says that the cigarette situation reminds her of the old game, button button who's got the button except that everybody's asking cigarette, cigarette who's got the cigarettes. "If manufacturers are making more of them than ever before," she writes, "Why is it my husband has so much trouble finding his favorite brand?"

Well...here's what the Tobacco Branch of the War Food Administration tells us. It's true, manufacturers are making more cigarettes these days than they used to. But the market for them has grown a lot. And cigarette factories can't get enough labor to keep up with the market. So a shortage of workers in tobacco factories is holding back further increased production. It's that old manpower problem again.

Now about the growing market. We can't get around the fact that our demand for cigarettes is on the increase. Chalk it up to jangled nerves or blame it on larger incomes...both probably contribute to it. But whatever the cause, we're asking for more cigarettes these days.

Another thing. Of course everybody's heard that a good part of our cigarette output is going to the armed forces. And it is. It amounts to a great deal more

than in 1943. Slightly more than one in every four cigarettes made during the first seven months of this year went abroad, mostly to the boys in uniforms. And that rate is still holding strong.

Lastly, there are many reports of diversion of cigarettes to the black market. The reports also mention that some dealers keep their supplies hidden for regular customers. Where ever that's the case, we naturally will have trouble finding a normal cigarette supply for sale.

And there we are -- a labor shortage in cigarette factories, an increased demand on our part, a good portion of our output going to the military services abroad and some black marketing -- these are the four main reasons accounting for the present cigarette shortage.

Turning from cigarettes to pocketbooks, our next homemaker wants to know if there's anything she can do to stiffen up her last winter's purse. It's an envelope purse, she says, made from good leather. But it's gotten so wilted looking that she's wondering if anything'll get it back in shape again.

Well...not promising any miracles, the United States Department of Agriculture's clothing experts say we can do a lot with old purses if we know how. For that dog-eared look our homemaker describes her purse as having, they prescribe a restiffening.

Did you know that most stiff purses have a cardboard lining? I didn't until now. But when that cardboard gets bent the purses begin to lose their shape. So to restiffen an envelope purse, the first thing we do is rip the purse seams apart and then rip out the lining. A razor blade's the best thing to use. Under the lining you'll usually find a cardboard backing. Remove it. But leave the felt backing that's between it and the outside of the purse. Then cut another paper backing to fit inside the purse. Make it about one sixteenth of an inch smaller than the stitched line around the purse. One-sixteenth of an inch is barely inside the line. If we use soft heavy paper, the specialists tell us, we'll get about the right



effect and it won't crackle when we carry the purse. The next step is to stick the new backing in place. For that, either mucilage or glue or rubber cement will do the job. And after the paper backing's firmly in place, the purse is ready for relining.

Relining isn't as hard as it sounds. We use the old lining to cut the new one by...leaving about a fourth an inch extra all around for seam allowance. Before the new lining is sewed in, attach to it the mirror, zipper, snap fastening or whatever fitting it needs.

In putting the lining in the purse, use even back stitches. For thread, the clothing experts advise either buttonhole twist or heavy duty or linen thread. If you wax the thread, it'll pull through more easily. This may sound like a lot of trouble, but it's not so difficult. And a restiffened, relined pocketbook's good for a lot more wear. What's better, you'll have something more to put inside it if you've saved yourself the cost of a new purse.

Now for our third question. This homemaker is suffering from a common ailment. We might call it wash-and-ironitis. She says she doesn't like to do all her washing and ironing...(and who among us really does like it?)...but that the most discouraging part about her job is that after she's finished ironing a shirt, she can't seem to fold it to keep it looking fresh. By the time she's wobbled it around trying to get it folded, the shirt looks almost as if she hadn't ironed it at all. Well... there's more than one way to fold a shirt. But here's a way recommended by the Home economists of the USDA. First...button the shirt up...all the way. Then turn it over...flat. Fold the sides back so that about ten or eleven inches of the center front will be smooth. The sleeves? Fold them once...at the shoulder. Do it diagonally and bring them straight down the back-longways. Placket should face out. Of course, part of the sleeves will overlap...but that's okay. Now...we have a long fairly narrow shape. And the tail of the shirt will be longer than the sleeves. So we turn it back over the cuffs. The last fold is across the shirt to bring the cuffs just under the collar. And there you are. Only one...two...three...four... five...six folds in the whole shirt...and it's neat as pie.

If you'd like a picture of the way to do this, along with a number of other suggestions on washing and ironing...send a postcard to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. and ask for Farmer's Bulletin number fourteen ninety seven. The name of it is Methods and Equipment for Home Laundering. That's...Methods and Equipment for Home Laundering, United States Department of Agriculture...Washington 25, D. C. Be sure to give your own name and address.

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