

Mode in New Zealand

SPRING has already officially been programmed, and next week sees another event not unconnected with the season—National Fashion Week. From October 7, women all over New Zealand will be receiving the forecast for the next season's fashions in shapes, colours, accessories and make-up. More important, in this first nation-wide fashion week, the manufacturers and retailers are combining with the press to present New Zealand's own fashion collections.

Some indication of the scope and nature of New Zealand's fashion industry will be given in a programme for the National Women's Session, *Mode in New Zealand*, to be heard from the YAs and YZs on Wednesday, October 9. In this manufacturers in various centres will discuss the way they design and make clothes, underwear and accessories, for the New Zealand market.

The Listener, remembering trenchant criticisms of the New Zealand fashion scene, made some preliminary investigations into our assets and liabilities, as a preparation for the forthcoming acquisition of new stock.

An overseas model now working here had seen a very wide range of clothes in New Zealand streets. "Everything," she said, "from a cocktail dress doing the afternoon shopping to a pair of jeans that should never have left the backyard. It's not easy to dress well in New Zealand, because there's little indigenous style sense. The shops bring in the 'very latest' from New York—perhaps a shirt-blouse—and then an 'absolutely essential' skirt from England, and a 'newest craze' hat from Italy. Without thinking, buyers put all these together and the result is a terrible mess. New Zealand fashions are all governed by this overseas complex, but there's little attempt to blend the styles together into a coherent whole."

Overseas the styles change very quickly, but basic trends can be seen in the clothes in the shops. "People have come to expect extremes in Paris," she said, "where competition is intense. The socialites will say 'I must have something absolutely different,' and cheerfully go off to Paris to buy it. In America the exclusive manufacturers buy a model and copy it three or four times. While these copies are being advertised, another manufacturer is allowed to copy the skirt or bodice or general line in a less expensive range, and because people know it's fashionable, it sells quickly and in quantity. That doesn't happen here, for if any Paris models are brought in, we almost never see them."

An English girl agreed with the fashion model. She missed the way the latest lines were brought into the less expensive English shops, and criticised the general "niceness" of New Zealand clothes.

"Here," she said, "if you want a really striking dress that doesn't cost the earth, you have to make it yourself."

Both girls agreed that in New Zealand the new lines come in only the

most expensive ranges, and that it's several years before they seep down into the mass-produced lines. The model has spoken to several manufacturers and buyers. "They are very conservative," she says. "Especially in the mass-produced lines. They say that the styles are good for New Zealand, that New Zealanders don't want the new lines, and that we mustn't judge by overseas standards. I still think their products—and I'm speaking of the mass-produced lines—are so ordinary. But I have been delighted by the work of the young local designers, who are turning out some wonderful clothes, entirely suitable for most occasions here. And they are not expensive."

The materials themselves compare well with any overseas, since they come in a wide range and are all of high quality. Clothes in New Zealand are generally well finished and made to last. Overseas there is some very shoddy work done because fashion clothes are not always made in the best quality materials or expected to last. An expensive model blouse may be sold with unfinished facings.

The fashion scene has changed in the last few years, she thought. There had been a great improvement in general clothes consciousness, and a greater willingness to accept new and attractive styles. Fashion shows and fashion weeks had done a great deal, but it was still possible to pick out the fashion-conscious girls, the ones who read magazines, collected tips, and thought about their clothes as they put them on as well as when they bought them. High fashion was only right in some settings on some people, but was best left alone by many. Certainly in the city, the office girls, with their "dressed-up" appearance, were most attractive, and she appreciated the difficulties of housewives with small children, while deploring their habit of wearing clothes that did not go well with each other.

A sales manager in a big city store thought that New Zealand fashions were improving all the time. The overseas styles were reaching the shops more quickly, the New Zealand-made clothes were more attractive than ever, and the average woman better dressed, although she still could do more in co-ordinating her clothes and accessories.

As the field is expanding so rapidly, the scene will become even more confusing. The fashion conscious woman needs to keep a level head, since fashion sense is only common sense. She needs to take a good look at what is smart and new, and then ask herself, honestly and without prejudice, whether it can be adapted to herself. Then she has to choose the best colour available, and the detail and fit of the garment.

The fashion model passed on her experience. "In find it needs quiet concentration," she said. "I usually watch the new lines, then eat an apple and sit in the bath, just thinking, for hours. I suppose a bath is the right place for a fresh outlook on fashion."



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Authority and the New Zealander</i> - - -	4	<i>Woman Wins BBC Quiz</i> -	22
<i>Auckland Letter</i> - - -	5	<i>Vaughan Williams at 85</i> -	23
<i>From the Police Files of N.Z.</i> -	6-7	<i>The 64 Hundred Question</i> -	23
<i>The Art of the Village</i> - -	8	<i>Radio Review</i> - - -	24-25
<i>Shepherd's Calendar</i> - -	9	<i>Films</i> - - -	26
<i>Editorial</i> - - -	10	<i>British Opera</i> - - -	27
<i>Letters from Listeners</i> - -	11	<i>Programme Guide</i> - - -	28-29
<i>The Aunt Daisy Story (10)</i> -	12-13-14	<i>Dr Turbott's Health Talk</i> -	30
<i>Books</i> - - -	15-16-17	<i>The Minstrels</i> - - -	31
<i>"The Listener" Crossword</i> -	18	<i>Ask Aunt Daisy</i> - - -	32-33
<i>Madame Bovary</i> - - -	19		
<i>Open Microphone</i> - - -	20-21		

PROGRAMMES DAY BY DAY
Monday to Sunday, Oct. 7-13 35-55