

# Up Your Midi

Lorna Pollock

1970

(Women's News Co-op) Ladies—are you ready for the Midi? The designers say women are bored and need a change to a more feminine look. The fashion world has announced that this Fall women will be wearing their skirts at mid-calf length, ready or not.

The exploitive and repressive world of women's fashions has long been with us—or more correctly, against us. While women have little control over the clothing industry, economics and politics exert major pressure in the fashion world. The exploitive economics of capitalism, based on the continuing need for rising profits, seeks constantly to create a demand for new products.

To this end, designers busily prepare the prototypes for the coming season and reveal them at semi-annual showings. The idle rich, with egos as big as their purses, flock to commission new wardrobes from exclusive fashion houses, and the trends are set. Manufacturers grind out imitations—the question ceases to be whether or not, or which style, but becomes a problem of no alternative at all.

As the new styles roll out to the stores, the economic gap widens and the pressure is on. Who among us—students, career women, housewives, welfare recipients—can afford the luxury of discarding a wardrobe of wearable items each year? In the past while there was some hope of achieving the “in” look by shortening older garments, dropping the hemline means starting from scratch. The clothing stores say they plan to stock only midis this Fall, cutting off all choice in the matter. Of course, one can always shorten the midi to one's own taste, but rest assured you will pay aplenty for that extra yardage, like it or not.

The working woman is hardest hit by fads in fashion. Most occupations employing women require that they be “attractively” dressed. For women, in the sexually oppressive business world, promotions, and in some cases, keeping the job, depend heavily upon one's physical appearance. The economic necessity of dressing “fashionably” bites painfully into inadequate paychecks.

From a political-historical standpoint the strength of women's liberation can be plotted as almost a direct parallel to the height of the hemline. The ankle was showing when women won the right to vote in 1919. The succeeding decades brought a gradual rise in hemlines as women left their homes to join the ranks of labor. (The upward trend was slightly retarded by the Depression.) While women kept the nation alive during the war years, there was a peak in prestige and hemlines.

The post-war years saw women retreating (or being pushed) back into the kitchens. The Eisenhower era is marked by three recessions and political impotence. Hemlines plunged. The “soaring” sixties saw the hemlines returning to their upward trend just as civil rights, women's liberation, anti-poverty campaigns, peace and prosperity became the issues of the day. Enter Nixon, enter repression, enter recession—enter the Midi.

The elongated length and all previous fashions are the products of the European garment industry. Thanks to these mainly homosexual (men) designers, women have been forced for years to deform their bodies to fit unnatural and imposed beauty standards. Like ancient Chinese foot-binding, waist-cinching, padding and silicone treatments meet the demands of fashion pretense while depriving women of the freedom of their natural state of being.

Women's liberation, like the liberation of all the people, will bring an end to all the anti-human aspects of our society as manifested in the exploitive repressive fashion: industry.  
Up your Midi, Monsieur Cardin!

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