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Transcript:

Fashion Parade

It all began when an outrageous notice appeared in the Daily Telegraph one Saturday, asserting that King's College was the best-dressed college in the University – a claim that seemed to have been uncalled for and, to the minds of several other colleges, totally unjustified.

Bedford was immediately up in arms. Having long enjoyed the (somewhat precarious) reputation for good clothes, good Balls and a fine appreciation of the social side of student life, it was felt strongly that Something Must Be Done. But what?

However, the determination was there, and the following morning both the News-Chronicle and the Daily Telegraph published an abbreviated version of our reply to King's, remarking that “an official communiqué was issued jointly by the Union Presidents of Bedford and University College, deploring the admission by King's College that mannequin parades should be necessary. It also issues a challenge that the women of Bedford and University College should be judged at work by the way they dress compared with the women of King's. A copy of the communiqué was delivered last night in person by Nr Watson.”

This phraseology, together with a passing reference to an ultimatum, put the proceedings on a “high level”.

The challenge was out; the University suddenly became fashion-conscious: our President was inundated with frantic telephone enquiries from other colleges. Unfortunately, though, too many colleges taking part in the competition would have made it unmanageable.

The rules of the challenge were then drawn up, and briefly were as follows:-

- (1) Each college was to produce six mannequins, wearing their own clothes.
- (2) These clothes were to be representative of six phases of a typical woman student's life,

- (3) These six mannequins were to parade at a given time before a judge, or judges, who would make the final decision as to the best-dressed college.

A general commentary will be given in our case by Miss Hutchinson; this will point out the attractiveness and practicability of the outfits being modelled, together with the cost, which, it is emphasised (and hoped) will come within the average student's pocket range. Once the rules had been formulated, however, the problems started. Where to find "a judge intrepid enough to try such a case"? Efforts to procure Norman Hartnell were unavailing but, due entirely to Miss Farr's perseverance and motto, 'Never say die,' Hardy Amies decided to come. Here was luck indeed. Then Winifred Jackson, of the Daily Telegraph, and Dorothy Fox both accepted invitations.

Since we had aspired this high, why not higher? And so on to television, Gaumont-British and Pathe-Pictorial, ITV, BBC – limitless possibilities. Several were interested and promised to try and publicise the competition. Be careful, Bedford: your views on fashion may be bruited around the countryside even yet.

The problem of choosing models was an acute one: thirty-three nominees were asked to parade in front of a General Meeting one Friday; this caused hilarity and some searching enquiries as to whether Bedford really **was** well-dressed after all. One disturbing point that arose was the fact that Miss Fox and Miss Jackson intend to descend on the College one day, unexpectedly, and take a good look at all the students imbibing coffee in Oliver-mind those tattered overalls, scientists!

The attendance at that General Meeting was excellent: why is it that reading of estimates never has quite the same attraction as that of seeing one's fellow-students making fools of themselves? Of course, it provides endless material for coffee conversation afterwards: "**Did** you see Molly Higgins' sack? And wasn't Gertrude's coat just **too** dreadful?"

The Fashion Committee made the final selection of the models and it is unfortunate that at the time of going to print we are unable to give their names. It is hoped that there will be a preview of the Parade one lunch-hour, for the benefit of those who will be unable to witness the actual competition in Tuke on Tuesday, October 29th.

Anyway, good luck to all those taking part in the Fashion Parade, either as mannequins or back-stage helpers, and our thanks to the President of

the Union for her initiative and hard work which have gone into making this such an enjoyable event.

Footnote: On looking at the illustration above, I am dismayed to notice that the latest trend in Bedford fashion is remarkably like the first...