

Women's Activities

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THE FRESNO BEE

Who Decides What She Will Wear?

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Does a wife have the right to buy the dress of her choice?

When our founding fathers drafted the constitution, they guaranteed the rights of the citizens in the Bill of Rights. But, being men, they forgot all about rights for women.

Hence it took us nearly 150 years to win the right to vote, another 30 or 40 years to achieve equality in business and who knows how many more years it will be before we achieve that basic feminine right—the right of a wife to buy a dress which her husband may not like.

Women in many areas of the world are exercising that right every day, but for some reason Fresno women have been hesitant to do so. We have let our husbands dictate color, style, pattern, design without rebelling. We wear blue because he likes it, avoid green because he hates it, etc. And until now, most wives went along with this arrangement with only a few complaints.

But now a revolution is brewing in the fashion field that will put a wife's rights to the test. The arguments about color or price are minor compared to the battle now raging. Why, the outcome could affect the rights of thousands of women.

At the moment, husbands are leading in this battle of the neckline. While necklines are plunging down, down, down, everywhere else in the world, those in Fresno have remained static. It is not that we are unaware of this fashion trend or that our girlfriends elsewhere are braver. Rather it must be that our husbands are more old fashioned and dictatorial than their counterparts in the big cities. How else can one explain the current rage for these daring low necklines in San Francisco and Los Angeles and the total lack of same in Fresno.

It has been said that Fresno women are not ready for these extreme styles, but more likely it is the husbands who are not ready.

But ready or not, the decision should not be left up to them. After all, who gave husbands the right to be fashion arbiters? Most of them cannot tell a pleat from a gore or a Chanel from a Dior.

It is time that we women take a stand. You may think those new necklines are terribly immodest and something you would never wear. BUT you ought to have the right to decide that for yourself without any prompting from your husband. If on the other hand, you find that the low, wide neckline is flattering, then wearing one is your right, too.

Husbands should not be allowed to make such arbitrary pronouncements as "no wife of mine is going to wear a dress like that," especially when they think these same styles look great on somebody else's wife.

Armed with this bit of philosophy and a copy of the Bill of Rights under your arm, you march down to a local store to test your theory. You ask the saleswoman to show you the most daring frock in stock and you do so in a firm, clear voice. Do not let the thought of your husband's reaction intimidate you.

Ignore the saleswoman when she says, "But, my dear, what will your husband say?" Just keep reciting the Bill of Rights and do not weaken. And another thing, this is not the time to take anyone shopping with you. Your best friend will either dare you to take the plunge or hide her face in embarrassment and neither attitude will help your frame of mind. Your mother can be counted on to make some choice comment like "Well, dear, I can always sew some little ruffles on it from here to here," indicating chin to waist. Your husband, needless to say, should be nowhere in sight.

Armed with the dress which the saleswoman has procured for you, you excuse yourself and look for a dressing room. Do not invite the clerk to accompany you. This is a matter between you and your conscience.

You bolt the door and slip the dress on. After making sure that you do not have it on backwards, you take it off, return it to the clerk and quietly leave the store.

Does a wife have the right to buy the dress of her choice? Of course she does—provided she has the nerve to wear it.