



Source 1

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TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

It is requested that special care may be taken to  
ensure the secrecy of this document.

MOST SECRET.

W.P. (41) 105.

COPY NO. 1

WAR CABINET.

RATIONING OF CLOTHING.

Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade.

1. As my colleagues are aware, supplies of raw material for civilian clothing have been drastically curtailed; the amounts of cotton and wool available are not more than about 25 per cent. of the pre-war normal. Hitherto consumers have been drawing on the large stocks held by traders and have not felt the full impact of the severe cut in supplies. Stocks are now giving out and shortages are beginning to appear. These shortages will increase rapidly, and I fear that unless either supplies are increased, or the distribution of the existing supplies is equalized (which means rationing), some part of the population will have to go short of clothing in the autumn and winter; there will be panic buying and shop queues, prices will rise and the shops will be cleared by the better-to-do, leaving yet smaller supplies or none at all for the poorer classes. I need not dwell on the social consequences of such a condition of affairs.

*War Cabinet memorandum on the rationing of clothing, 1941*



Source 1 (pg2)

## RATIONING of Clothing, Cloth and Footwear from June 1

There is enough and to spare for all if we have *fair shares*. Rationing is the way to get fair shares. *Fair shares*—when workers are producing bombs and aeroplanes and guns instead of frocks, suits and shoes. *Fair shares*—when ships must run the gauntlet with munitions and food rather than with wool and cotton. *Fair shares*—when movements of population outrun local supplies. Rationing is not the same as shortage. Rationing, or *fair shares*, is the way to *prevent* a shortage without interfering with full war production.

So, from now on (June 1st, 1941) you will have to present coupons to buy clothing, cloth, footwear and knitting wool. At present the coupons to be used are the Margarine Coupons in your Food Ration Book. (You don't need these for margarine, and it is a great saving of paper to use this page for the clothing ration). There are 26 coupons on the margarine page. The numbers printed on them are to be ignored; each coupon counts 1 only. You will receive 40 more coupons making 66 to last you for a full year.

How much will the coupons entitle you to buy? Here are a few examples taken from the long list which will be printed in your paper to-morrow. *Watch out for this list!* A woollen dress will need 11 coupons, a man's trousers 8, a pair of socks 3, and 1 coupon will allow you to buy two handkerchiefs, or one collar, or two ounces of knitting wool. You can use your coupons on whatever you need, when you need it. You can shop anywhere without registration—the

retailer will simply cut out the necessary number of coupons for you. *It is illegal to sell or buy coupons—for this would defeat the purpose of "fair shares."*

Special cases are being looked after. Here are a few examples. Clothing for babies won't need coupons at all. Because children grow fast their clothes are rated at less coupons than grown peoples'. Mending wool, boiler suits, sanitary towels, elastic, hats, caps, and clogs are among the articles which you can buy without coupons. So are all second-hand articles. Blitzed households will be able to get special replacement coupons.

This rationing scheme is as much a surprise to your retailer as it is to you. Of course it had to be kept secret, or some people might have tried to get in first. It must take a few days to sort things out. You will lose nothing by postponing your purchase, because from to-day it is illegal, as well as against his own interest, for any retailer to sell rationed goods except against coupons.

### To Retailers

This will come as a surprise to you, but you will agree that secrecy was essential. The scheme will benefit you as a trader no less than as a loyal citizen. Your replacement stocks will depend not on previous dealings with your wholesaler, but on the number of coupons you are able to turn in. Suppose your present stock is small: even so good salesmanship will turn it over fast in exchange for coupons which will secure your replacements. Of course there will be teething troubles, though the scheme has been made as simple as possible. Your Trade Organisations have agreed to answer enquiries.

ISSUED BY THE BOARD OF TRADE

War Cabinet memorandum on the rationing of clothing, 1941



## Source 2

**NEW OFFICIAL LIST  
of COUPONS NEEDED for  
CLOTHING and FOOTWEAR** 1st JULY  
1941

Here is your new reference list. Cut it out. It is the official record of the correct number of coupons for each rationed article, and it takes the place of earlier lists.

Garments not listed take the coupon rating of nearest like garment	Men Women Child		
Single texture mackintosh, raincoat overcoat, cape, cloak—unlined or saddle lined—other than woollen, leather or fur ... ..	9	9	7
Mackintosh, cape, raincoat—other than those above	15	15	11
Overcoat lining (detached) ... ..	7	7	4
Jacket, blazer, bolero blouse-type jacket—if lined and woollen, leather or fur ... ..	13	13	8
Jacket (including blouse type), blazer—if unlined and not woollen, leather or fur ... ..	6	6	4
Jacket (including blouse type), blazer—other than those in the two categories above ... ..	10	10	6
Cardigan, sweater, jersey, jumper, pullover, waistcoat—with long sleeves, and woollen, leather or fur	8	8	5
Waistcoat, jumper, jersey, sweater, cardigan—other than those in previous item ... ..	5	5	3
Shirt†—if woollen ... ..	7	6	6
Shirt—other than woollen; boys' woollen blouse ... ..	5	4	4
Blouse, shirt-blouse, shawl—if woollen ... ..	6	4	4
Blouse, shirt-blouse, shawl—other than woollen ... ..	4	3	3
Trousers, slacks, over-trousers, breeches—if woollen ... ..	8	8	6
Trousers, slacks, over-trousers, breeches—other than woollen ... ..	5	5	4
Shorts—if woollen ... ..	5	5	3
Shorts—other than woollen ... ..	3	3	2
Skirt, divided skirt—if woollen ... ..	6	4	4
Skirt, divided skirt—other than woollen ... ..	4	3	3
One-piece shelter suit,—if woollen ... ..	11	11	8
Men and boys' overall—other than woollen ... ..	6	4	4
Dressing- or bathing-gown—if woollen ... ..	8	8	6
Dressing- or bathing-gown—other than wool ... ..	6	6	5
Pyjama Suit, nightshirt ... ..	8	8	6
Nightdress ... ..	6	5	5
Combinations—if woollen ... ..	7	4	4
Combinations—other than woollen ... ..	5	3	3
Woollen vest; non-woollen vest with sleeves; woollen pants or trunks; non-woollen pants (long legs); cotton football jersey; bathing costume ... ..	4	2	2
Undergarment not elsewhere listed; athlete's vest ... ..	3	2	2
Pair of stockings, socks, bathing trunks—if woollen ... ..	3	1	1
Pair of socks—other than woollen; cotton swimming drawers ... ..	1	1	1
Collar, shirt-front†, pair of cuffs or sleeves, tie ... ..	1	1	1
4 handkerchiefs (each of area less than 1 sq. ft.) ... ..	1	1	1
2 other handkerchiefs (less than 2 ft. in length or breadth)	1	1	1
Scarf, pair of gloves or mittens ... ..	2	2	2
Pair of slippers, goloshes, rubber overshoes, plimacolls, football boots, and certain specialist sport shoes ... ..	4	4	2
Pair of rubber boots or overboots, sandals, rubber-soled canvas tennis shoes ... ..	5	2	2
Pair of boots, shoes, overboots—other than those in previous two categories ... ..	7	2	2
Pair of leggings, gaiters or spats ... ..	3	3	2
Dress, gown, frock—if woollen ... ..	11	8	8
Dress, gown, frock—other than woollen ... ..	7	5	5
Gym tunic, girl's skirt or bodice ... ..	8	6	6

\*Sizes exempt from Purchase Tax.  
†With or without collars attached

ISSUED BY THE BOARD OF TRADE

Official Coupons list issued by the Board of Trade, 1941



# EVERYDAY LIFE

Why did people have to make do and mend?

Source 3

SUNDAY TIMES, June 1, 1941

87

**K.L.G.**  
Sparking PLUGS  
"Serving the Services"

**Sunday Times**

Established 1822

No. 6164 LONDON, JUNE 1, 1941 LATE LONDON EDITION TWOPENCE

### CLOTHING NOW RATIONED

*Surprise Scheme in Operation To-day: Footwear Included*

### 66 COUPONS FOR A YEAR'S NEEDS

*One Suit Takes 26: Concessions For Children*

By OUR POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Beginning to-day, clothing, cloth, footwear, and knitting wool will be rationed, and coupons will be necessary for purchases.

Each person will have sixty-six coupons for a year. No special issue is ready, but there is a spare page in existing ration books, and this page, containing twenty-six margarine coupons, will be used for the articles newly rationed. Clothing cards with forty coupons more should be available in August.

Main features of the rationing scheme, which will be the subject of a broadcast at nine o'clock this morning by the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, are:

### ANXIOUS DAYS IN CRETE

#### IMPERIAL TROOPS' DESPERATE FIGHT

#### NAZIS' FREYBERG LIE EXPOSED

"There is no doubt that there is a desperate position in Crete," Mr. P. C. Spender, Australian Minister for the Army, declared in Sydney, yesterday.

"The Imperial troops," he added, says Britain, "are fighting desperately and have inflicted great losses on the Germans, but the next few days are anxious ones indeed."

In London last night German newspapers said General Freyberg, P.M., the Commander in Crete, had been killed, were denied. "We are glad to be able to announce that he is alive and with his troops," said the Star today.

The official German news agency said last night on Friday that according to Cairo Radio, General Freyberg had been killed in a plane crash while flying from Crete to Alexandria. Cairo, however, made no such broadcast.

CRETE

### CRETE BATTLE GAINS TIME

#### PROBLEMS IN NEAR EAST

#### VICHY'S HELP FOR GERMANS

By the Diplomatic Correspondent

Whatever the result of the battle of Crete, authoritative quarters in London hold that it has given the command in the Near East a precious interval in which to consolidate our position elsewhere and to put an end to the dangerous long re-advance.

If Crete is lost, the question arises whether the Germans will invade Egypt or Syria and Cyprus, and also, whether Crete will be used as a base for the attack on the Suez Canal. It is clear that the Germans are not likely to stop the operations against Crete and Iraq, the latter.

The defence of Crete would be much easier if we, and not the Germans, controlled the forces there.

### AIR BATTLE VI

#### Essential To Fo

No THE "SUNDAY"

The struggle has structure of Germany is the old struggle of sea power. But the influence of air power.

Air bases provide can master and hold.

### NAZIS WITHDRAW PLANES FROM IRAQ

#### Baghdad Asks For Armistice

Following an announcement in London that a request had been made for an armistice in Iraq, it was reported from Cairo last night that a number of German planes had been withdrawn from the country.

Control of Iraq has been taken over by a committee of four under the leadership of the Mayor of Baghdad, Ashraf Al-Nasr, and it is presumed that it was this body which asked for the armistice.

It was stated earlier from Cairo that British forces had reached the outskirts of Baghdad, and had penetrated into the suburbs.

### U.S. GIVING CHINA RIGHT

#### Mr. Hull Rev Post-War Pl

"Long range" planes United States for the out need of key strategic rights in China on the 1st of June have been issued as a letter, received Mr. Cordell Hull, United States Secretary of State, to T. T. Tsiang, the Chinese Ambassador in London, and Mr. Hull's reply stated that the United States will continue to support the Chinese Government in the war against Japan.

### GERMAN CLAIMS

No definite news of the fighting in Crete was available in London, yesterday, but Berlin reports that 900 soldiers from the British Army have been killed, which was said to be a German estimate of the number of British troops in Crete. It was also stated in the report that the German High Command

### HESS'S NAVAL FRIEND

#### Reported Suicide In Oslo

The news of the request for an armistice was also given by a message from Berlin's correspondent in Baghdad, the first received from the capital since the coup d'etat on April 1.

A Baghdad report received in Oslo said that the armistice had been signed and took effect from 10 p.m. local time.

The Marine, according to a

### STYRAN INDEPENDENCE

Great importance is attached to the news that Mr. E. E. Schattschneider, expressing the British Government's sympathy for the Styrian independence movement, has been announced by General Smith, the French High Commissioner, that the Styrians have only the will that no union can be granted to any Vichy after the war.

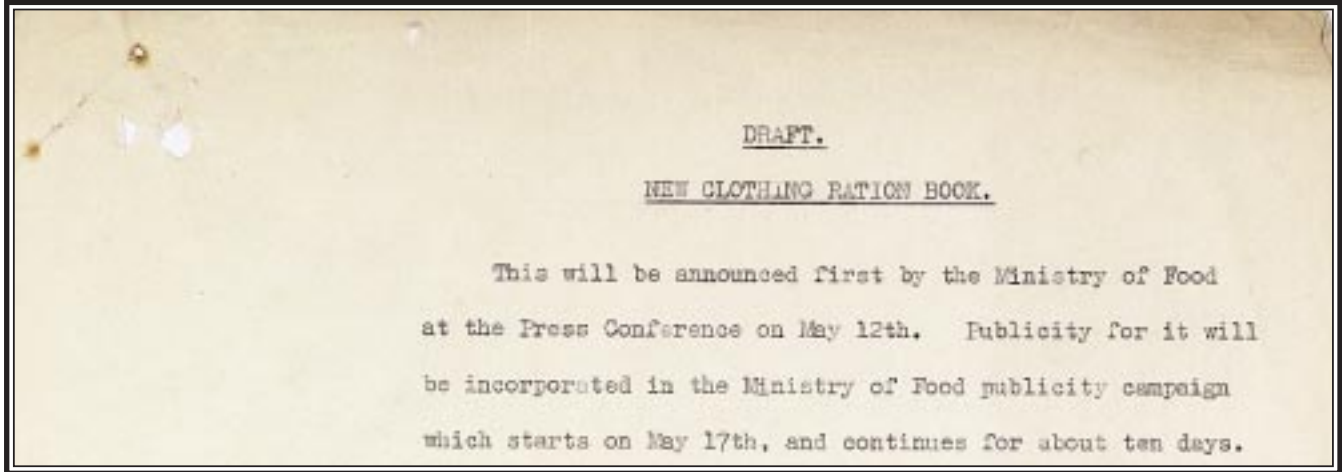
Report in the Sunday Times newspaper on the introduction of clothes rationing, 1st June 1941



# EVERYDAY LIFE

*Why did people have to  
make do and mend?*

## Source 4



*Draft notes on the introduction of the new clothing ration book*



Source 4 (pg2)

Parallel with this there should be an austerity campaign, of which the purpose would be

(1) to break down the tradition of "respectable" dressing, and

(2) to make people wear their clothes to the last gasp and to be impervious to the ~~world~~<sup>line</sup> of fashion.

This should be done editorially by news reel, shots and by casual mention in broadcasts.

I am inclined to think that this should all be indirect in its approach and should not be done by exhortation, the aim being to create the atmosphere in which this form of dressing is accepted and, indeed, regarded as correct.

The sort of indirect mention that I have in mind is a news reel shot showing the Prime Minister going in, e.g., flannel trousers to a War Cabinet meeting. (The Royal Family might well lend themselves to this campaign).

*Draft notes on the introduction of the new clothing ration book*



Source 4 (pg3)

# *Go through your wardrobe*



*A Ministry of Information poster for the 'Make do and Mend' campaign*



Source 5

# Foreword

## from the President of the Board of Trade

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The people of this country can congratulate themselves on the results of clothes rationing. In the first twelve months more than a quarter of a million tons of shipping space were saved in textiles alone. Nearly four hundred thousand men and women have been released from making cloth and clothing for civilians, and have gone into the Services or on to war production, while the workers that are left can be confident that they are making only the necessities of war-time life.

The increasing strain of war on our supplies has made inevitable a cut in the clothing ration. But the cut is least for those whose needs are greatest, the children and the industrial workers.

Any sacrifice of comfort or appearance, which clothes rationing may bring to any of us, will, I am sure, be cheerfully borne, in order that victory may come sooner. Many patriotic people have returned unused coupons to the Board of Trade thus helping our war effort by saving precious shipping space, material and labour. I hope that many more will do the same.

*Hugh Dalton.*

*Information issued by the Board of Trade on using clothing rations*