

## Wonders Are Achieved With Needles by Women To Brighten Homes During the Depression

### FERA Adviser Pays Tribute to Their Resource

Miss Claribel Nye Hails Response to Federal Assistance.

THE WAY a family is clothed and housed is more important psychologically than the way it is fed. A bit of bright-colored chintz at a window may give a destitute family the necessary cheer and courage to carry on.

Realizing this, Government relief workers have attempted to aid depression victims to meet their clothing and housing problems in a way that would inject some beauty into drab environments. And the women to which such help has been given have responded with a resourcefulness worthy of their pioneer grandmothers.

"Women faced with necessity have again become artists and manufacturers," said Miss Claribel Nye, who for the last four months has acted as adviser in clothing and housing problems to the women's work division of the FERA under direction of Mrs. Ellen S. Woodward. Miss Nye, who is State leader of home economics extension work of Oregon State College, left yesterday for a field trip through several States before returning to her college post.

#### Needles Achieve Wonders.

The home economics specialist pointed out that in many depression-ridden homes women had achieved miracles with their needles. Symphonies in cheese cloth, burlap and chintz, she said, had transformed many desolate dwellings into harmoniously cheerful homes, and children in such homes were frequently better dressed than formerly through the skill and artistry of their mothers.

"The size of a family income does not insure adequate feeding and clothing of a family," Miss Nye said. "Many children of wealthy parents are undernourished not only physically but psychologically due to the social preoccupation of their mothers."

As Miss Nye spoke, her eyes lighted with approval on an exhibition of cleverly designed garments sent her as samples of work relief sewing rooms throughout the Nation.

"Here are examples of skill and workmanship making the most of inexpensive materials," she said. "It is thus, through the utilization of surpluses in cotton and wool, that these gallant, economically pressed homemakers are contributing their bit toward recovery. They help the Government by helping themselves on a self-respecting basis."

#### Opportunity for Service.

The relief situation, Miss Nye believes, has provided home economists their big opportunity for service. Faced with an emergency problem greater than that of war time, many of them have taken leaves of absence from university jobs and volunteered their services to the Government.

"It has given home economics professors," she said, "opportunity to prove they are not theorists, but can practice what they preach. With a widened field for experiment, they have been able, through educational methods, to translate inexpensive food, clothing and housing resources into terms of health and happiness for thousands of demoralized family groups. Through the instrumentality of FERA they have been given the opportunity to show those most needing guidance the way to help themselves."

Before being called to Washington, Miss Nye, who volunteered her services to the Oregon State relief committee, was placed in charge of the food conservation program throughout the State. In this capacity she made up food preservation budgets for needy families and supervised large canning and storage projects.

One of her pet inventions was that of a portable cannery on wheels, which traveled from one community to another as a service to families on relief. Carrying pressure cookers, sealers and portable tables, Miss Nye's cannery accommodated thousands of housewives who brought fruits and vegetables enough to last their families throughout the winter.

"The meetings were as social as they were beneficial," Miss Nye said. "There was always a spirit of camaraderie and laughter among the women as they worked. And I think the experiment did a lot to raise the morale of many a discouraged housewife."

#### Toll Taken by Cannery.

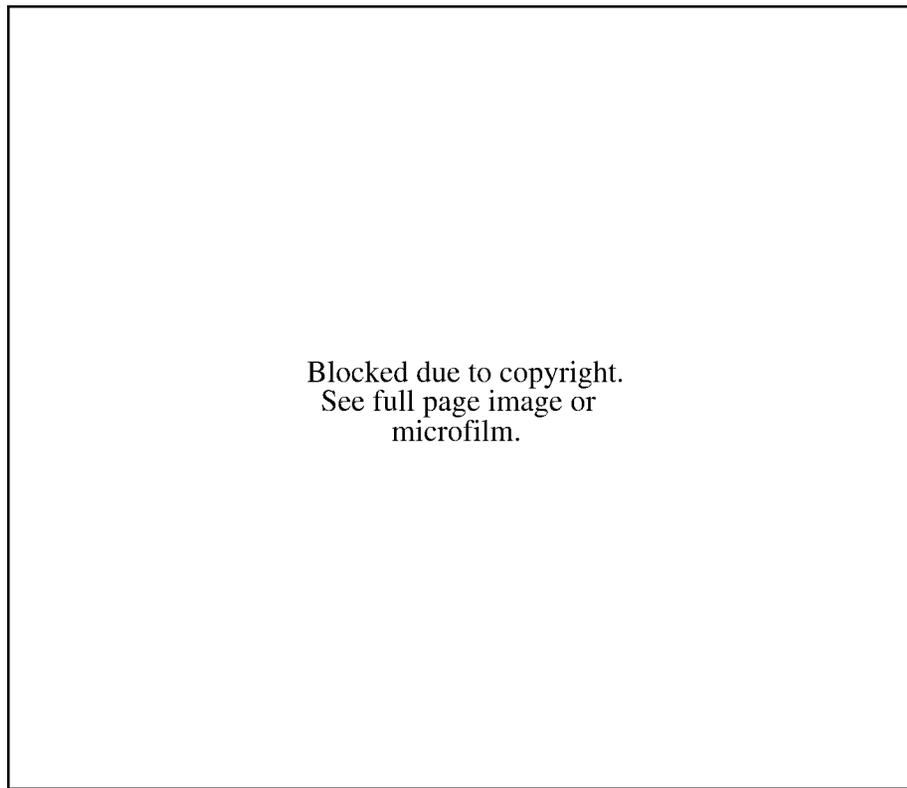
In order to keep the project on a self-respecting basis, the cannery exacted, in return for cans and use of equipment 20 per cent of the materials canned. This was turned over to relief organizations.

Miss Nye's first big problem as clothing and housing specialist with FERA involved the selection of 60,000,000 yards of cotton material to be used in making comfort coverings.

"It meant the choice of the very best color combinations and the designs for the greatest number of people," she explained. "Hundreds of samples were rejected before final decisions were made. Knowing that a certain portion of the material would be turned into dresses for children, we had to consider the selection of patterns sufficiently dainty and appropriate for this use."

Her next task was drawing up specifications for sheeting and toweling to meet the requirements of families on relief, by order of the Social Service Division of the Relief Administration in each State. The sheets, towels and pillow cases, along with the comfort covers, which disposed of a large portion of the Nation's cotton surplus, were made in the work relief sewing rooms throughout the country.

Miss Nye, a graduate in home economics from Cornell and Columbia Universities, spent 15 years



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How to dress their families attractively on little or nothing is a problem that many mothers have solved during the depression, says Miss Claribel Nye, home economics adviser. Miss Nye is shown with a garment made in one of the Government relief workrooms.

developing the home economics extension program of the State of New York, under the direction of Martha Van Rensselaer. During the war, Miss Nye served as assistant head of the home conservation division of the food administration. This office, skillfully handled, won her a Nation-wide reputation in her line.

"Lifting the morale of the average family during the war was not so difficult as it was through the recent depression," the specialist said. "Both times, the greatest burden fell on the shoulders of the housewife. In wartime, it was she who cheerfully sold her family on the use of food substitutes and made them like them. Recently, she did much to dispel the depression gloom by increasing her effort and skill in the preparation of inexpensive foods, as well as by the ingenious treatment of limited clothing and household materials."