

# Clothes Remain Mirror of Status

**S**NAPPY slogans such as "clothes make the man" and "well-dressed is well-dressed" are rarely seen nowadays, but clothing still is a badge of a person's position or ambition in life.

The Oklahoma City Board of Education backed away from a proposed prohibition of formal wear at high school social affairs, wisely deciding that tuxedos and evening gowns should neither be "prescribed nor recommended."

Formal clothing styles were introduced as status symbols, becoming a sort of uniform for the affluent. Others wear them occasionally, perhaps for a psychological or social boost.

High school students justifiably objected to the expense of buying or renting fancy clothes. It could be that some shied away from the thought of abandoning their frayed, faded jeans and flapping shirts because these garments also are a sort of status symbol or uniform for that age group.

In ages past, kings, warriors and

tradesmen decked themselves in garments, some fancy and others plain, designed to advertise their heritage, their strength, their trade or loyalty.

None went as far, probably, as present-day young people have done in use of what is called "logo tie-ins." They wear shirts advertising soft drinks, beer, bananas, movies or underwear and adorn their cars with oversize brand labels.

In the 1920s the college crowd painted cartoons and wise cracks on their rain slickers and model-T cars, predecessors of the now generation's garments displaying caricatures, photos and odor-emitting picture transfers.

The wearing of a beard has been attributed to a desire to demonstrate manliness in times when men felt a need to intimidate others. In this day when male and female clothing and hair are so similar, a beard also helps to tell the sexes apart.

In the business world, the terms "white collar" and "blue collar"

are used to identify office workers and factory workers. The terms are figurative, especially since some of the better-paying jobs now require safety shoes and overalls, rather than white shirts and neckties.

There is a growing trend toward use of uniforms by companies ranging from fast food restaurants to banks and retail stores. However, uniforms now are called "career clothes," with "mix and match" variations allowing employees a choice of attire as they dress for work.

Reasons given by corporate firms for requiring (and often providing) career clothes include neater dress standards for employees, reduction of pilferage by making employees more visible, company image and just plain advertising.

Most people resent being told what to wear but at the same time they usually conform to group customs. Even those who rebel against established dress codes may create new "uniforms" for their peer group. Clothes still reflect a person's status.