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Career Clothes Offset 'Sloppy Chic'

THIS is the era of "Sloppy Chic" styles in clothing and it's nothing to brag about, for sex, unisex or unsex.

A shapeless, slept-in bagginess of pants or dresses is the "in thing" for both men and women who follow the fads. Some don't wear enough garments to acquire a really sloppy look, while others can look vulgarly sloppy in frazzled shorts a size too small, and very little else.

Genuine sloppiness, however, must be attributed to the revolt against discipline and achievement. Lacking status themselves, faddists seem to be trying to drag others down to the same level by dressing like bums and calling it stylish.

Clothes don't make a man or a woman, but they certainly give an impression of the wearer and the wearer's attitudes.

Inflation makes it difficult to afford a lot of clothes, and weather has encouraged abandonment of the necktie, but it is something else

which causes people to stop trying to look neat.

A news report says that nurses in an Illinois hospital have abandoned their uniforms and caps, resulting in confusion among patients and a rash of complaints.

Last month, President Carter was pictured reviewing troops in uniform at Fort Hood, Texas. The commander-in-chief was bare-headed, coatless and tieless, with shirt cuffs turned back in a manner definitely not full dress.

As the leisure suit has waned, some men have reverted to conservative styles which are easier to mix-and-match, while others seem to be wearing yard clothes to places of business.

Offsetting the sloppy look is a growing trend of business firms to require employees to wear uniforms or "career clothes."

Uniform manufacturers say that color-coded garments are becoming popular, such as green for garden-

ers, black-and-white for TV repairmen, and colorful blazers to identify workers in various professions, including hamburger broilers, newsmen and real estate salesmen.

Businesses might require wearing of career clothes in order to create a company image for consumer identity or for other reasons. Employees probably are accelerating the trend by coming to work in nondescript attire that lacks appeal for customers and reflects no credit on the firm.

One of the most inspiring sights is a snappily uniformed band stepping briskly along in time with a Sousa march, but uniforms aren't the answer to everybody's apparel problem.

A magazine writer interviewed executives on how men should dress for success. One said: "The key is to avoid extremes without getting so bland one blends into the carpeting."