



THE NEW YORK DRESS INSTITUTE: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNIONS AND MANUFACTURERS

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Before 1940, apparel manufacturers showed new lines only to store buyers, fearing that press coverage would open the possibility of stealing designs. When World War II silenced Paris' design leadership, the New York fashion industry reorganized its promotional efforts and held the first public fashion shows in September 1940. The New York garment unions wanted more to be done because other U.S. cities were challenging New York's dominance in manufacturing. In an effort to preserve jobs and profits, the garment unions and manufacturers formed a unique collaboration that launched the New York Dress Institute and Press Weeks.

In November 1940, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union announced that it would ask manufacturers to join in promotional efforts to advertise New York as a style center and introduce production methods designed to stop the exodus of manufacturing from New York. Julius Hochman, manager of the New York Dress board, presented a plan to manufacturers to raise \$1,500,000 to finance an advertising campaign and fashion shows. The unions offered to donate \$100,000 to begin the fund and asked manufacturers to match funds by purchasing a union label to be sewn in every garment.

The Institute began its promotions with patriotic advertisements, then expanded to Press Weeks in 1943. Newspaper reporters from across America attended the first public presentations by manufacturers and took the message of American design home to their readers.