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Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

Crow Collection Association Incorp.
Ecological, Social and Political Discourse

Number 2/31

June 1994

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News from the Crow Collection

The Crow Collection has acquired a number of reports from recently held seminars. The following are now available from the Collection or can be acquired from the addresses supplied.

"The Heart of the Matter... Families at the Centre of Public Policy." This is a summary prepared by the National Council for the International Year of the Family, March 1994.

This discussion paper concludes with "A Statement of Social Responsibility for Families" which raises the question :- How can we promote the involvement of the whole community in supporting families ?

To help find the answer to this question a seminar will be held in Melbourne on Tuesday, July 5th. This will be addressed by Don Edgar, Jenny George, Kaye Setches and other speakers. (More information about the document and the seminar from toll free 1800-676-446)

"Wealth, Welfare and the City : Developments in Australian Urban Policy." This document is the inaugural lecture by Martin Mowbray who has recently been appointed Professor of Social Work at RMIT. The paper deals with the trend towards more privatised infrastructure services and urban management. To illustrate this trend an examination is made of long term residency in relocatable dwellings, such as caravans. Particular attention is paid to the role of the state in facilitating this mode of housing and infrastructure provisions and to its social implications.

"Living with the Energy Industry. Asbestos Use within the Power Industry, its Social and Environmental Impact." This is the name of a paper prepared by Anne Bailey and presented at a recent seminar organised by the People's Committee for Melbourne.

Anne quotes Helen Coldicott's words "A corporate mentality encourages greed, selfishness and consumerism, not compassion for people or for nature". (For more information about the People's Committee for Melbourne phone 326. 8245. For information on Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support Network phone Anne Bailey 051.27.5555).

Anne's material complements the information in the State Electricity Commission's 1993 publication "Yallourn Power Station; 1919 to 1989" by Colin Harvey. This will be a useful handbook for all who are associated with the Latrobe Valley and many others. In this issue of Ecoso there is a snippet from this history of the power station which may whet the appetite for more.... See page 7, "All that Man Desires... Except Freedom !"

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"Streetwise... Taking a New Angle on the City" is a kit which has been published by the Inner Melbourne Metropolitan Regional Association to help promote residential development in the inner urban shopping strips. (The kit is available from IMRA, 568 St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004, phone 510.3466 or FAX 510 5951)

On page 8. in this issue of Ecoso Ruth Crow writes about the experience of her family living above the shops in Brunswick in the 1940s, It is aptly sub-titled "Crows' Nest in Brunswick".

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"Infokit- Information Kit for the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, Beijing, September 1994" This kit has been prepared by CAPOW (Coalition of Australian Participating Organisations of Women) which is a network assisting NGO's (Non-Government Organisations) to prepare for this world conference.

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"Just Like a Family" examines the experiences of women and children in the Victorian Rental Housing Co-operatives Programme and presents some implications for policy. The report has been auspiced by WISH (Women in Supportive Housing) and funded by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Housing. The report was prepared by Neville Barwick and Carole Hamilton.

At the launching of the report Gib Wettenhall, raised several matters of concern about the report. Gib looked at the report during its growth phase from 1981 to 1985 during which he was the Co-ordinator of the Rental Housing Co-operative unit. He said :-

"'Just Like a Family' purports to be a comprehensive evaluation, making sweeping statements about the nature of the rental co-operative movement. Yet its viewpoint is both selective and one-sided, based as it is on interviews with women and children tenant members from only 6 of the 21 co-operatives.

"As we all know, there is always more than one side to reaching the truth, And it needs to be remembered that oral history is

the stuff of which myths are made." (Copies of the WISH reports are obtainable from WISH, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne. Copies of Gib's paper are available by phoning (03) 380.1876)

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"A Positive View of Ageing - Jane Williams, One of OPACs Pioneers" is the title of a talk by Ruth Crow to the Annual meeting of OPAC, (the Older Persons' Action Centre).

Some Ecoso readers, particularly those involved in planning for elderly people, may be interested in reading a discussion paper prepared by Sheila Byard for a meeting of the United Nations Association's Status of Women Committee on protecting women's rights. She raises issues presented in the Federal Government's Economic Advisory Council publication "Australia's Ageing Society" (Background paper No 37). (Copies of Sheila's paper and Ruth's paper are available by phoning (03) 380.1876.)

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"Campaign for Public Education - Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training". The submission focusses on Reference 2.- The Implications of Commonwealth funding arrangements for schools for the quality of and equity of access to, primary and secondary education. (Copies of this very timely paper are available from the Campaign for Public Education Box 1300, Middle Camberwell 3124, Fax/phone (03) 882.7019.,

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Celebrations in the Western Region

CELEBRATING OUR PAST, DIRECTING OUR FUTURE these were the two aims for holding a celebration in the Footscray Town Hall on April 29th, Directing our future was mainly achieved through holding a seminar, and a display of documents the main way of celebrating the past. But the two aims naturally overlapped. For example, the keynote speaker, Rennis Witham described the early days of establishing the Western Region Commission from 1973 explaining how local people were involved in identifying needs, collecting information, letting people know, and developing a sense of cohesion through working together "We had a value system that underpinned what we were doing. We believed we could do it, and we actually did it !" she said.

Rennis paid a special tribute to the older community activists, such as George Seelaf and Bill Millar. "They showed us what the past meant to them, They passed on their skills to us, showing us how fundamentally important democracy is in empowering community movements." she explained,

As a result of the seminar 13 issues for the Western Region were identified ... thus the first steps are being taken for "Directing our Future". These were backed up by the launching of 7 reports on the Western Region ;-

"The Forty Percent Factor" by Angela Munro (Customer Service in Local Government to those of non English Speaking Backgrounds).

"Western Region Ethnic Meals Project" by Katharine Wositzky

"Western Region Ethnic HAAC Project" by Betty Haralambous.

"Western Region Food Services Project" and "Western Region Senior Citizens Access Project" both by Julie Prideaux

"The Planning Process and Council Human Services, Two Case studies in the Western Region" by Astrid Reynolds and Greg McVicar.

Community Transport in the West of Melbourne by Shirley Watters.

At the end of the seminar Joan Kirner opened the Display of Documents. She paid a tribute to the work of the Museum of the West and the Victoria University of Technology for ensuring that documents from the past have been preserved (For more information about the seminar and reports write to Western Region Commission, Private Bage 10, West Footscray 3012 or phone (FAX) 03. 830.4224

TWO OTHER RECENT EVENTS IN THE WESTERN REGION

1. On May 21st the Sunshine International Women's Committee organised a seminar "to Focus on Australian Families". This was addressed by Senator Rosemary Crowley.

2. On May 31st the book Keilor Pioneers- Dead Men Do Tell Tales" by Angela Evans and the Keilor Pioneer Research Collective was launched by Olwen Ford from the Living Museum of the West.

Regional Employment Strategies

(Contributed by Peter Gibbons, Assistant Secretary Auto-motive, Metals and Engineering Union. Peter chairs the Crow Collection Association)

The regional unemployment crisis is not well understood by people living in Australia's major cities. The demise of rural and regional industry in Australia and the consequent population drift to cities is seen by the uninformed as inevitable, rather than an integral feature of capitalism and economic rationalism. Most areas in regional Victoria saw growing jobless numbers during 1993 recording an increase in dole numbers - almost 40% greater than Melbourne.

RESOURCES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

The recession is only highlighting the problems due to the narrow economic base which exists within regional communities throughout Victoria. Regional development policies have to be underpinned by planned effective allocation of sufficient capital, providing the infrastructure for the people who live there.

Crossing the Suburbs

This is a policy document for the Public Transports Users Association. It has been written by Paul Mees

THE PROBLEM

We've all heard the complaint a thousand times; many of us have experienced the problem ourselves. While public transport serving Melbourne is becoming worse, people trying to travel across the suburbs have virtually no service at all.

Most tram and train lines are radial, and suburban buses are worse than useless with poor frequencies, slow indirect routes and hardly any service in the evenings and weekends.

The response of traditional transport planners is to either give up or propose radio-controlled mini-buses operating like taxis. But, the problem is that this kind of service is really inflexible with unpredictable waiting times. Who wants to phone for a bus which arrives 20, 25 or 30 minutes later and then travels miles out of the way in order to pick up or deliver other passengers? The dial-a-bus experiment has been largely abandoned in North America.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SUCCESSES..... PARIS, ZURICH, TORONTO, PERTH

Visitors to Paris marvel at the metro which caters for precisely the sort of multi-directional travel we find lacking here. Paris does not have a single core focus; people travel in all directions, by changing trains at "correspondence" stations. The train service is excellent, changing trains is easy, waiting times are only a few minutes. The Paris Metro relies on high population densities near the stations.

The model applies throughout Switzerland (and is being applied in Austria). There the plan is called "a pulse timetable", trains converge from different directions, depart a few minutes later. Toronto also uses an interchange model, but they rely on frequent services rather than the pulse timetables. The rail system is basically radial, bus routes run directly to rail stations.

The Toronto bus service is everything their Melbourne counterparts are not, frequent, direct and comprehensive. Cross suburban patrons get a much better service by "sharing" routes with patrons heading for the rail stations. Multi-purpose routes produce the concentrated flows of patrons which are necessary to support a high level of service and minimises duplication.

The system is easy for patrons to understand. The latest city to apply this lesson is Perth, where the recently opened Northern Suburbs Rail line is integrated with local buses, giving rail and bus patrons a good service and producing good financial results.

THE LESSONS FOR MELBOURNE

It is not practical to build cross-suburban lines in Melbourne, because patronage is sparse and multi-directional, but it is possible to provide first rate bus services. This can be done by combining the rail-feeder and cross-suburban role through first rate interchange facilities and full timetable integration. The best of these may ultimately have the potential of light rail.

Our opportunities are even greater than in Toronto and Perth, because we already have many more rail stations to provide interchange opportunities, and because more of our stations are located at suburban activity centres (Footscray, Dandenong, Box Hill) which provide natural interchange locations.

The biggest problem for the Toronto Transit planners is the small size of its rail system. That is why it is extending its rail system. Melbourne, with five times as much urban rail as Toronto, should be leading not lagging behind.

(More information about the Public Transport Users Association is available from their office at 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000, phone 03.650.7898. Paul Mees will be preparing other policy documents).

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SUPPORT FOR PTUA POLICIES

In a recent article in the Age Kenneth Davidson expressed his strong support for the Public Transport User Association's (PTUA) policy. He wrote :-

"The vicious circle of improved service and better cost recovery is possible for Melbourne urban transport, provided the myths are abandoned in favour of integration and co-ordination of all three major transport modes."

All That Man Desires... Except Freedom !

Extract from Yallourn Power Station - A History 1919 to 1989

In 1944 Judge L.E.B. Stretton warned about the lack of freedom and lack of clean air in towns such as Yallourn which are dominated by one industry such as the State Electricity Commission.

In 1944 there was a fire at Yallourn and Judge Stretton, who had previously been a Commissioner for the tragic 1939 bushfires, was appointed to head the Royal Commission into this fire. Here is an extract from page 242 of "Yallourn Power Station - A History; 1919 to 1989" by Colin Harvey, published by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, 1993.

"Here indeed the townsman enjoys all that the heart of man may desire - except freedom, fresh air and independence. He lives his life on a great many fine days in a rain of

abrasive particles, perforce, the stench which comes from the neighbouring paper mills against which closed doors and windows are no defence."

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"Some of the workers here sought to escape the coal rain, the stench and the atmosphere of suffocating paternalism by going to live outside the jurisdiction of the Commission. There your Commissioners believe they are living comparatively deplorably unplanned lives.

"Yallourn Power Station - A History 1919 to 1989" by Colin Harvey is available from Gippslands Printers, Driffield Road, Morwell, 3840.

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A Dwelling Above the Shops

"CROW'S NEST" IN BRUNSWICK

Contributed by Ruth Crow

The launching of the Inner Metropolitan Regional Association's report "*Streetwise...Inner City Living on Main Streets*" has prompted me to describe what it was like to live above the shops in the 1940s.

In 1943 when I had the opportunity of helping to establish the Brunswick Children's Centre we had to live near the proposed Centre. This meant the family (Maurie, two preschool age daughters and I) had to shift to Brunswick. So our first problem was to find a home. There was a great housing shortage, lots and lots of families were sharing houses, living in apartments and in all sorts of make shift accommodation, The story about our trials and tribulations in finding a home must be left to another time. We did eventually find a large space above the shops in Sydney Road, and we settled down so comfortably that we lived there for fourteen years.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE LOCATION

We greatly enjoyed the social advantages of the location...the access to shops, kindergarten, schools, library, swimming pool, public transport and to our work places. We appreciated the building's physical characteristics... the privacy provided by its thick walls, the large windows which let in lots of sun and provided an uninterrupted view across Sydney Road and down Merri Street to the Dandenong Ranges, the large (undifferentiated) floor space which, over the years, we adapted to changing needs of the family, the high ceilings which enabled us to build mezzanine storage areas. We also took full advantage of having no garden to maintain by using our weekend time on picnics and other family outings, and, as we were so close to public transport we could reach the beaches, the hills and the theatres, the parks and gardens very easily and quite cheaply (on family excursion tickets for public transport which ran very frequently... even on Sundays we could look out our window and see a tram in Sydney Road any time of the day).

An added bonus was the cheap rent which enabled us to have enough money to spend on outings and an occasional weekend away.

PLANNING TO COMBINE PRIVACY AND COMMUNITY

We shared a bathroom and lavatory and had some storage space on the landing. Not counting these areas our own private living space measured 20 feet by 30 feet. Within those six squares we were able to provide for a combination of privacy and community. Each of the family members had their own spaces, we had family spaces, and our furniture was so flexible and moveable we could arrange our whole flat for entertainment. For example we could seat 14 people at our table and squeeze in an extra child or two.

In later years I have observed that our family enjoyed a higher standard of privacy and community than is achieved by some families in three bedroom homes (possibly the families observed had little consciousness of the need for arranging spaces with this objective ...maybe, the more spacious homes did not make them aware of the need,)

Through necessity we made most of our fittings and furniture ourselves, for example cupboards into which the beds folded, tables which folded down, tables which could be easily extended, benches which could be used for seating and also for spare beds (and for gymnastic exercises), clothes lines which came down by pulleys, storage spaces in the mezzanines and also some ingenious devices for retrieving material stored behind shelves.

These were the days when folding beds, divans and stack-away-chairs were just coming on to the market, we actually made our own before we had seen any. We did not look for models for our furniture as it had to meet our own need, in any case we had no money to spend on "ready mades". We haunted the junk yards and second hand shops to find timber and furniture which we could dismantle to make fit our spaces. We were mainly driven by necessity."

PART OF LOCAL COMMUNITY

There was nothing unusual about families living above the shops in the 1940s. It was accepted that bank managers, fruiterers, butchers, and milk bar proprietors lived with their families in the shopping centres. All the dwelling spaces in the shops in our block were used as residences and there were about ten or twelve children on the block. So, we did not feel we were doing anything unusual. We felt very much part of our street and part of our local community.

In recent months our former home, 211 Sydney Road, Brunswick, has been advertised as a prestigious dwelling and home/ work place.

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Over the Hills and Far Away. !

BUSH WALKING IN THE 1940S - Contributed by Eureka

"Do you long to be up and away ? Then ride a BSA !" (Footnote 1.) This was the catchcry of a 1930s poster which showed a young couple on a hill top. Few youths could afford to respond, but it was not so expensive to heed another poster. This showed a young woman with an armful of wattle catching a train. It's V.R. slogan was "Travel by train to the hills !" (Footnote 2)

One of the daily newspapers ran regular mystery hikes when whole train loads of people travelled on cheap excursion tickets to where the metropolis ended and the country began. ..to Ferntree Gully, Eltham, Blackburn, Hurstbridge, Ringwood, Diamond Creek, Asburton and other outer suburban stations to enjoy sauntering and singing along the country roads.

In the 1940s two day hikes became possible when hike hostels provided cheap overnight accommodation. These were the days before there was light weight camping gear so hostels were essential.

A popular hostel was on the top of Mt Dandenong. The usual two day hike started with a train trip to Croydon early on Saturday afternoon (Footnote 3). Most of the 7 to 8 miles to the top of range was along the main road but usually the intrepid hikers would scramble up the Old Coach Road from Montrose. (footnote 4)

Hikers were rostered to prepare the meals. Dancing and singing were the expected evening entertainment. The next day's walk would be 10 to 12 miles ending up at Ferntree Gully or Bayswater.

Footnotes :-1. BSA was a brand of a very popular motor bike.2. This Victorian Railways poster showed no recognition of the need to protect the bush. 3. Many workers had to work on Saturday morning so the two day walks were really only for a day and a half. 4. The Crow Collection has no written information about the hike hostels but several Collection supporters (Ecoso subscribers) can provide oral information on hostel hiking in the 1940s

NEWS FROM SAVE THE DANDENONGS LEAGUE

Here is an extract from the most recent issue of "Greenprint" the newsletter of the Save the Dandenongs League :-

"For years Sherbrooke has provided rest and succour to the weary pollution saturated Melburnian. A careful watch on the developmental ambitions of interested parties in Sherbrooke has resulted in maintaining the sensitive balance of civilisation and wild places. To have been able to do this in a materially-orientated Western society is to the credit of the Sherbrooke Council, particularly over the past 20 years.

Very soon Sherbrooke as a Council will be no more. At the very best we can hope for amalgamation resulting in a Dandenong Ranges Shire which will have restrictions along the lines of the current Sherbrooke Shire.

At worst the adjacent shires could absorb what is now Sherbrooke Shire into themselves. Should this happen, then development resulting in housing density will sprawl continuously as far as the Great Dividing Range."

Currently the Save the Dandenongs League is campaigning against housing in the Lysterfield Valley.

(For more information on SDL and "Greenprint" phone 752.1064).

Fears of a redundant democracy

by ROYCE MILLAR

AFTER 30 years of service at the City of Melbourne, town clerk Mr John Young is redundant — courtesy of an amendment to State Government municipal laws and the corporatisation of local government.

Renowned for his professionalism and measured views, Mr Young has played the role of the impartial public servant to a tee.

But as he prepared to enter the job market for the first time since 1964, Mr Young cut loose on what he sees as the decline of "democratic representation" at the City of Melbourne. His main concern is that local government must fight to be representative and open.

"The package is this: you've got to have decent representation, public decision making and public disclosure," he said.

"If you have massive delegation (to staff) or decisions being made in camera, those people are unlikely to be called upon to explain themselves.

"If you're not called upon to explain yourself, you can decide what you want the way you want. You've got to be open, accountable — and delegation isn't the answer, it is asking for trouble.

"Things need to be aired; not in the annual report after the fact, but before the decision is made."

Mr Young warned that democracy had its cost — but a cost worth paying.

"In my department consultation and democracy is through comprehensive notice papers and servic-

Highway ² millions

v. a rail upgrade

from Robin C. Spragg

I refer to the reports of the completion of the Wangaratta section of the Hume Highway at a cost of \$80 million. This completes the highway's reconstruction from Melbourne to Wodonga at a cost of \$700 million, which is heralded as cutting an hour off the trip and halving the number of accidents.

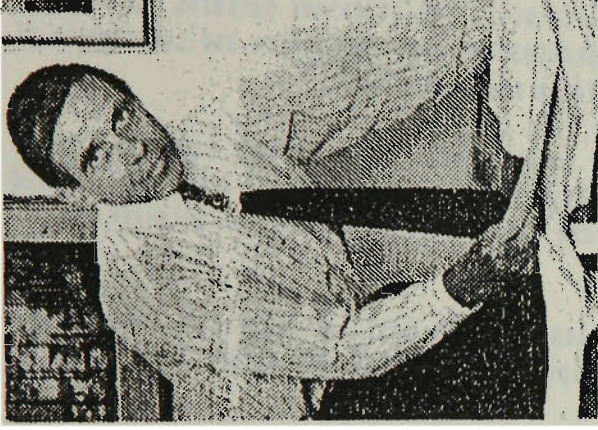
Before anyone gets carried away with this achievement could I point out that if this amount had been spent on upgrading the parallel railway line the benefits would have been much more startling.

We could have reasonably expected average speeds of 200-300 kph rather than 110 kph, which would have halved the journey time; and accidents to passengers would have been almost eliminated.

In addition, we would not have generated a large amount of extra road traffic which, while not noticeable on the highway itself, congests the more limited capacity of road networks in Melbourne and rural areas; rather, the railway would have abstracted most of the traffic from the highway leaving it clear for essential road movements.

Perhaps this could be borne in mind while spending the next \$700 million of taxpayers' money.

Robin C. Spragg,
Newtown.



● John Young: "You've got to have decent representation, public decision making and public disclosure".

the bureaucracy and an end to Melbourne "feather bedding" which he believes was an extravagance for many years.

But he described corporate behavior at Melbourne as at times unfair, unreasonable and even uncaring.

In his own case, Mr Young believes his experience and knowledge has been sacrificed by an over-zealous push for corporate leanness.

Over many months his role was progressively eroded to the point where Mr Young believed he was "marginalised" and had no choice but to accept a package.

The movement of records management to "InfoTech" is a sore point.

"To an extent it's right, but I think I understand the information better," he said.

"To rely on computers is too simplistic. Local government information is special information and its useful to have a good knowledge of it. My guess is that some important documents that we need to look at in 10 years or even three to four years won't be there."

ranks at Melbourne Town Hall from "assistant to the notice paper clerk" to town clerk.

His approach to local government does not sit comfortably with the "go get em" style of local government in the 90s.

And so when the State Government scrapped the requirement for the town clerk role in local government it wasn't long before Mr Young was following 500 other redundancy statistics out the door of the Melbourne Town Hall.

For years Mr Young has been a sounding board for councillors of all political complexions with grand plans for Melbourne, and presumably, themselves.

With a detailed knowledge of local government processes, Mr Young was a reliable guide to what was, and wasn't, possible for council.

Now Mr Young's town clerk' statutory duties will be handled by the chief executive officer.

And his control of council records will be left to the computer whizz kids in the information and technology area (InfoTech).

Mr Young recognises the advantages of the corporate approach and supports the streamlining of

Ecoso Exchange Guidelines

Adopted 1973

1. Ecoso has a value judgement in favour of regeneration and promotion of community participation meaning that it is humanising and enriching for people to relate to each other through one form or another of voluntary participatory activity both on the job and off the job, exercising a measure of control over such activities.
2. A consequent recognition of the necessity for change in life-style and behaviour patterns to one that sees the quality of life as an alternative to consumerism, understood as mass production and consumption of wasteful and unsatisfactory goods and services based on compulsion and manipulation.
3. Accordingly a policy of restricting the use of energy and non-renewable resources per head and hence a planned design of community including size of population, where people can relate to each other and to nature in order to reduce wasteful goods and services and at the same time guaranteeing an adequate minimum subsistence for all, using modern technology to this end.
4. The recognition that such objectives cannot be achieved either on the basis of practical, linear, one-level ecological remedies or with authoritarian and manipulative control of affairs and requires participatory effort to achieve global equilibrium.

(Subscription to Ecoso Newsletter \$10 for 6 issues. Ecoso was first published from 1967 to 1980. It was revived in 1988. The Crow Collection Association was formed in 1990. It has adopted Ecoso as its newsletter. More information about the Crow Collection and Ecoso from the address below.)



Crow Collection Association (Incorp.) A Living Library to Plan for the 21st Century

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