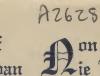
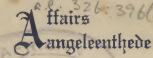
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THE SOCIO-ECOYOMIC PROBLEMS

ARISING FROM

THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE

OF

BANTU WOMEN IN URBAN <u>AREAS.</u> -----------

A Paper presented to the

SIXTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BY --

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#### THE SOCIO-ECOMOMIC PROBLEMS ARISING MRCM THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF BANTU WOMEN IN URBAN AREAS.

"Various methods have been applied to determine the extent of the established Bantu urban population. The conclusion has been drawn that there may have been a minimum of 1,036,000 and a maximum of 1,618,000 of such Bantu in 1951, and the actual number cannot differ much from 1,500,000. On the basis of data relating to family dwellings for the Bantu it may be assumed that 314,000 families have already accepted the urban areas as their abode. <u>Migration of Bantu women to the towns</u> is usually of a permanent nature.

At the end of 1951, there was a shortage of 167,000 family dwellings, and provision for this need will require the expenditure of approximately £35,000,000."

(Summary : Tomlinson Report Page 28).

In other words in 1951, the distribution of the Bantu population between the Bantu Areas and the rest of the country was as follows :

The figures quoted are the most recent and reliable at my disposal, but there is no reason to believe that the position has improved since 1951. In fact the total number of Dantu in the Urban Areas and particularly the population of Bantu women has almost certainly increased considerably since then.

That then is the background against which the problems arising from the presence (or absence) of Bantu women in the Urban Areas must be viewed, and I propose to deal with the subject under the following main headings :

> (a) Bantu women in Bantu Areas (i.e. Bantu Townships) in the Urban Areas, and

> (b) Bantu women in European Areas in the Urban Areas.

I have done this because as I see it the socio-economic necessity of the Bantu woman in the Urban Area is mainly two-fold. Firstly she is required there to serve her own people in the Bantu Township and secondly she is there as a worker in the employment of the European.

(a)/...

1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF BANTU WOMEN IN BANTU TOWNSHIPS.

(i) In the service of her family.

### (a) Presence.

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It is accepted in both European and Bantu Society that the family is the fundamental unit upon which the community is built and that maladjustment arises from broken family ties. The presence of the Bantu housewife in the Bantu Township therefore, has a stabilising effect on the family and on the community in general. Primarily she is there as a wife and mother, to care for her husband and children in much the same way as the average European housewife. Frequently we find that the family includes one or more aged parents and often one or more orphaned or illegitimate children. Such a woman, where she is the wire of a permanent or semi-permanent Urban Bantu worker, needs a dwelling house. That in itself is such a major economic problem that we should make the most efficient use of Urban Bantu marpower in order to keep the number of families to be housed in the Urban Areas as low as possible,

My experience has been that not much more than 25% of Bantu women who are well housed in Urban Bantu townships take up fulltime employment to augment the family income. The percentage of such women who take up casual employment, e.g. washing of clothes, cleaning windows, etc. is higher and may reach 35%. The majority who do go out to work take up domestic employment, which is an aspect I propose to deal with later.

Where all the children in the family are young the ideal state of affairs, in my opinion, is for the mother to stay at home to care for them, to prepare food and clothes for father and children and where the stand permits to cultivate a little home garden. When the children grow older and can look after themselves or where there is an older relative to look after them, the mother can go out to work on a casual basis, away from home, e.g. scrubbing and polishing floors, cleaning windows, etc., commonly referred to as "skropwerk". This can be a lucrative and congenial type of employment for married women, who are anxious and able to augment the family income, but who do not wish to be away from their homes all day and every day of the week. Unfortunately the well-housed Bantu housewife is often more of the exception than the rule in many Urban Areas, although the position is rapidly improving.

The working housewife, however, presents other difficulties.

Firstly there is the need for the care of the young children where there is no older child or relative to look after them. The obvious answer is to leave them at a creche, but to provide and run a creche is expensive, not only to the State and Local. Authority who have to subsidise it, but also to the mother who usually has to contribute sorething towards keeping her child there.

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Where there are two or more children to leave at the creche, it becomes uneconomic for her to make use of such a service, particularly when as usual, she has to pay for transport to get to her work.

So much then for the urbanised Bantu women who have managed to adjust themselves more or less successfully to conditions prevailing in Urban Bantu Townships, but what about the ones who have escaped from tribal discipline, but have been unable to settle down or to adjust themselves to the strange conditions in the Urban Areas. They have been torn away from the old Social customs on which the Bantu tribal system is built. To them marriage has become unstable and lobola no longer has the same meaning e.g. lobola for them is usually paid in cash and not in the customary cattle. Their husbands consequently have lost the tribal right to return their erring wives because once the cash has been spent there is nothing for the husband to claim back, In better days the father of the bride made it his business to see that his daughter became a good wife for fear of having the lobola cattle claimed back by the disappointed husband. This type of undisciplined and unsettled Bantu woman usually manages to pick up one or more children with each succeeding husband, with the result that her offspring know no real father, grow up undisciplined and add considerably to our difficult Tsotsi problem, Amongst this type one must include the Bantu woman who started off as a legitimate and well meaning housewife, but lost her husband through accident, illness or desertion. According to tribal custom she should be absorbed by her husband's family, but that unfortunately does not happen in the Urban Area where, even where they are willing to do so, relatives are usually unable to help her. Consequently she is left to fend for herself and her children and more often than not she is forced to resort to illegal means for a livelihood. You all know that type of Bantu woman. She flourishes in the township which is near to a hostel or compound where large numbers of Bantu males, who have been temporarily separated from their families, are living. She knows what the men want and knows how to satisfy them. She usually operates after dark and is most difficult to control. She derives her income from illicit liquor traffic and other unlawful pursuits.

Her/ ...

Her children are often abandoned to the care of relatives or to an institution for which a local authority or the Government is responsible. There is, in my opinion, no room in our Urban Bantu Townships for such Bantu women who are a burden on their own communities as well as on the local authorities. They should, where possible, be returned to their Guardians in the Reserves, or in the Protectorates where they usually come from and can come under tribal and family discipline.

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It seems clear also that these associations of convenience in Urban Areas should be vigorously combatted and that <u>all</u> marriages and separations should be sanctioned officially and be registered by the Native Commissioners.

As emphasized above the migration of the Bantu woman to the Urban Area is usually of permanent nature. Which means, that in due course she will become a wife and mother and a house will have to be provided for her by the local authority. But the problem does not stop at the provision of housing, serious though that may be, but extends naturally to the necessity for medical services and educational facilities which have to be provided by the local authority and the central Government. (b) Absence.

It follows from what has been said that the absence of the Bantu housewife has an unsettling and detrimental effect on the family unit, Maladjustments arise from broken family ties, particularly in respect of Bantu males in compounds, municipal hostels, male lodgers in private families and female domestic servants living in domestic servants' quarters in European backyards. The problems arising from the present state of affairs seem almost insuperable, but I think that much can be done to improve the position. In the first instance I think that in our socio-economic structure in South Africa it is neither desirable nor practicable to accommodate all Bantu workers on a family basis in our Urban Areas. But even if it were possible to do so, a large proportion of Bantu male workers in the Urban Areas do not want to be accommodated there on a family basis. Think only of the Bantu male who practises polygamy or who holds an allotment in the reserves. Does he want to acquire three or four dwellings in the Urban Area and house each wife separately there, and does he want to bring his cows and goats to come and starve in the towns? Of course he does not! He is quite happy to have his wives and cattle behind in the reserves and to

return/ ...

return to them periodically. Fortunately he is not completely dependent for his living on what he earns in the Urban Area. He often works only to supplement his income from his allotment in the reserve and does not bother to leave the reserve during a good year. Moreover he usually does unskilled work in the Urban Area and extensive training is not necessary to fit him for his job. Also, the Bantu male who has strong tribal. affiliations in the reserve and who goes to work in the Urban area for short spells only, is not usually the one who strikes up a partnership of convenience in the Urban Area. He usually remains loyal to his family and saves his wages instead of squandering his money.

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The position with the semi-skilled and sometimes highly skilled factory worker in the Urban Area is however, vastly different. Often it has taken years to teach him his job and industry cannot wait for him to return to the reserve for six months to satisfy his many wives, to reap his crops or to market his animals. For the foreseeable future, therefore, probably the only satisfactory solution is to endeavour to canalise the completely urbanised Bantu male into a skilled or semi-skilled job and to house him on a family basis in the Urban Bantu Township, but not encourage the Bantu male who is rooted in the reserve to his wives, his cattle and his allotment to settle on a family basis in the Urban Area at any time. In that way we could avoid much disruption of family life and at the same time minimise our housing needs and resultant economic problems.

But it is for vs as administrators to canalise that labour The industrialist usually does not enquire what the likelihood is of a worker remaining in the job indefinitely when he engages him and it is for us to advise him to select an urbanised Native if he wants to train him to fill a skilled or semi-skilled job. Of course it is a tremendous task to do such canalisation, but by doing so we can not only lessen the competition offered by the migrants to permanent residents of the Urban Area in the labour market, but also avoid much of the serious consequences in regard to housing, medical services and educational facilities. We shall than be able to provide more effective services for the already large numbers of urbanised Bantu in our townships.

## (ii) In the service of her community.

You have all, no doubt, encountered the Bantu woman in the following roles :

(a) The Trader.

It is common to find her as a fruitseller, coffee vendor,

dress/ ...

dressmaker and even as a general dealer. One also finds her as a basketmaker, beadworker, woolworker, etc.

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The socio-economic problems one encounters in this field are many indeed. There is for instance the problem of street trading. Most of us have the annual difficulty when peaches and green mealies are in season. When the first green mealies are ready the "Konka" appears on the first street corner and streets become littered with leaves and discarded mealie cobs. The Medical Officer of Health and his Inspectors declare war on the invading army of mealie sellers and blame us for being unable to control that type of street trading. There is good reason too, for the Doctor's indignation because frying green mealies on the sidewalks is often only a cloak for trading in other commodities, e.g. meat (not always fresh either), herbs, baken potatoes, "vetkoekies" and even liquor.

Then there is the problem of accommodation for traders such as dressmakers, basketmakers, beadworkers, etc. The view is commonly held that such traders or craftworkers should be allowed to trade on their dwelling sites. This has advantages in that the housewife does not have to leave her home to earn the extra penny and her family therefore, is not neglected. Those who argue that way have a strong case, but I am of the opinion that it is virtually impossible to control "trading on site" and that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, A "dressmaker on site" too often becomes a general dealer selling cooked meat, clothing, "vetkoek", concoctions and liquor. There are exceptions, but purely from a health point of view if no other, it seems undesirable. It is also unfair competition for the dressmaker who has her shop in the township's trading centre. In my opinion it is better to provide small workshops, fruit stalls and other trading facilities centrally for such Bantu females than to allow them to trade on their dwelling sites.

#### (b) The Professional Bantu Woman.

Bantu women are entering the professions in increasing numbers to serve their own people in Urban Bantu townships where there is almost unlimited scope for them. Think only of a few of the major Bantu housing schemes, like Vlakfontein, Meadowlands, Daveyton and the Johannesburg and Durban projects and you will realise how many women doctors, matrons, sisters and nurses as well as teachers and other professional women are needed. Such women are in fact doing excellent work, and serious problems would arise should they not come forward in adequate numbers. It must also be expected that Bantu women will soon be entering yet further professions. Likewise Bantu women are becoming professional stage entertainers in increasing numbers and as there is a popular demand for their services accommodation has to be found for them in Bantu Townships.

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The Socio-economic problem which arises from this rapidly growing number of professional Bantu women is that usually they do not mix socially with their illiterate sisters who, for better or for worse, no longer talk the same cultural language as they do. We have to face the fact that they have conquered their environment on a higher plane than the Bantu women of the kraals and demand for themselves better service, recreational and residential facilities, which it is our problem to provide in the Urban Bantu Townships.

It is of course Bantu women in the professions which are not "officially recognised" who create the real problems. One thinks immediately of the "SHEBEEN Queen" who makes her living by selling illicit liquor and unwholesome concoctions. Fortunately the establishment in recent years of attractive and well controlled beerhalls, where an adequate supply of municipally manufactured kaffir beer is available and the absence of home-brewing in most of the larger urban locations where there are large numbers of single native males present, is squeeping out the "Shebeen Queen". But she is a very persistent queen and in locations where homebrewing is allowed and in uncontrolled peri-urban areas where single native males are present in large numbers the problem is a very real one.

I come now to the second half of my subject, viz. : 2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF BANTU WOMEN IN EUROPEAN AREAS OF THE URBAN AREAS.

I would like to classify these women in the following categories :

- (a) Those in commerce and industry
- (b) Those in professional occupations
- (c) Those unemployed
- (d) Those in domestic service.

# (a) Bantu Women in Commerce and Industry.

"In 1948/49, female Bantu employees constituted only 6 per cent of all female employees in industry, that is to say 0.7 per cent of the total number of employees. These data must be viewed in the light of the limited part played by female workers in Union Industries; in 1948/49 they constituted only 11 per cent of the total number of employees,

as/ ...

as compared with 31,5 per cent in Britain, 25 per cent in New Zealand and 24.5 per cent in Australia."

(Summary Tomlinson Report : Page 36).

Except perhaps for the clothing industry and in dry cleaning and laundry Bantu women are therefore, not found in any great numbers in industries yet. The signs are unmistakable, however, that the present position is likely to change considerably during the next few years, when, in my opinion, Bantu women will be employed in large numbers in the clothing, textile, dry cleaning, laundry and other similar industries in the urban areas. In fact it is obvious that the number of Bantu women in secondary industry has increased considerably since the 1948/49 statistics, quoted in the above extract from the Tomlinson Report, were compiled. This seems a logical development, and may actually be a blessing in disguise. To quote but one example, it seems wasteful in the extreme to find so many able bodied Bantu males employed on washing, cleaning and pressing jobs in dry cleaning establishments and laundries, when those jobs could be done equally well if not better by Bantu females, Such a development then will serve the twofold purpose of making the able bodied males available for heavy manual or semi-skilled work in the factory and providing an outlet for the increasing number of urbanised Bantu females now growing up in urban Bantu Townships. It seems clear that all of them will not accept domestic service, neither will they all be required in or be suitable for teaching, nursing and similar professions. What then is to become of them? If left without an outlet for their skills and energies they will simply become female "Tsotsis", but if absorbed in industries to replace Bantu males, we shall be providing them with productive and remunerative employment and incidentally reduce the number of Bantu families to be housed in the Urban Areas.

In commerce, however, the position is vastly different. Bantu women are already well-established in wholesale and retail shops where they do wrapping, packing, cleaning and a multitude of other jobs which until recently were the preserve of Europeans or Bantu males. They are also found in increasing numbers as cloakroom and playroom attendants in hotels, waitresses in cafes and boarding houses, and counter hands, etc. in most of the larger urban areas.

In any large town the Bantu women found in the categories I have mentioned add up to numbers which present serious socio-economic problems because -

> (i) They do the work mentioned for lower wages and displace European men and women and Bantu males. But as I have said this may be a blessing in disguize as the persons displaced are usually badly needed in more skilled jobs and it actually reduces the number of Bantu families to be housed in urban areas.

(ii)/...

- (ii) Where present in large numbers, as they are in the larger towns and cities, they require a lot of transport to get them to and from their jobs.
- (iii) They need eating house facilities and rest rooms,

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- (iv) During meal breaks and often after working hours they wander about the streets and pavements unless proper recreational and efficient transport facilities to the Bantu Townships are provided.
- (v) They all need accommodation.

#### (b) Bantu Women in Professional Occupations.

Except perhaps in the entertainment profession Bantu women in the professions are rarely found practising in European Towns. With the improved educational facilities now available the scene is, however, likely to chauge rapidly and this will add enother problem unless a solution is found now. (c) <u>Unemployed Eantu Women</u>.

Unless constantly guarded against, this can become a major problem in the European part of an urban area. The difficulty usually arises with the unemployed or partially employed wife and family of a Native living in a back yard in a town, or where an excess of Native families are found on agricultural holdings in urban or in peri-urban areas. The solution of course is not to allow unemployed Bantu women or their children to live in European backyards at all, and to limit the number of such females on agricultural holdings in the urban areas to the wives and children of Native males bona fide employed as agricultural workers on holdings intended for and being used as agricultural land. This may sound impossible, but I wish to assure you that it can be done and has been done successfully and with beneficial effects for both European and Bantu in several Transvaal towns. Only recently, in my own town, the number of Natives on over 400 agricultural holdings newly incorporated into the urban area was reduced from 1,300 to 600 over a period of six months merely by removing unemployed families and those not gainfully employed on such holdings. Similarly all Bantu families, and there were over 1,000 of them, were removed from backyards and rehoused in the Council's Locations.

Those of you who are familiar with the pattern of peri-urban development in the Transveal, and particularly along the Reef, Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging, will agree that the thousands of Native families living on agricultural holdings just across the borders of the urban areas present a serious problem. But for the purposes of this paper I must confine myself to the women of such families, and in my opinion it is a most unhealthy state of affairs to have so many idle Bantu women living in such close proximity to an urban area, particularly where they are unemployed or only partially employed.

There is usually no influx control exercised in such areas, there is no licensing of premises, and illicit liquor traffic is rife. These then

are/ ...

are the difficulties the local authority has to contend with and the position is particularly difficult where large numbers of Bantu males live in compounds or hostels in the adjacent urban area.

Section 15 of Act 25/1945, as amended, is helpful in controlling peri-urban Natives, accommodated within 5 miles of the boundary of an urban area, but it is extraordinarily difficult to prove that a Native, particularly a female, is not <u>bona fide</u> employed by the owner of a farm or agricultural holding. The only effective remedy seems to be to incorporate agricultural holdings which are too near to the industrial or European residential areas of a town into the urban area or otherwise to extend the proclaimed area.

Unfortunately time does not permit me to elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages of such a step. Suffice it to say that the large numbers of semi-idle Bantu females on the borders of urban areas present a serious problem.

Once such holdings have been included into an urban area the Bantu females (and their families) can, as I have indicated above, be reduced to manageable numbers by the exercise of powers which local authorities possess.

The re-housing of surplus Bantu families removed from agricultural holdings and from backyards in urban areas naturally presents a problem, but with the rapid strides which are now being made with Bantu Housing and if preference is given to the re-housing of backyard and plot dwellers in urban areas the problem is not insoluble. The breadwinners of families which are surplus to the requirements of the agricultural holdings are in any case almost invariably employed in commerce or industry in the urban areas, which they adjoin.

#### (d) Those in Domestic Service.

In my opinion the Bantu female in domestic service in the European town presents one of the most serious socio-economic problems that we have to face in this country. The Bantu domestic servant (particularly the female) in the European household in South Africa seems to have become an indispensable person.

Many families firmly believe that they cannot exist unless the domestic servant is present in the house from dawn until dark and for seven days of the week. It has become such a firmly established custom that not even a modest dwelling house is built without a servant's room at the back. In Vanderbijlpark, a typical South African industrial town, there are 3,600 dwelling houses and 457 flats and there are 4,540 Native female domestic servants in registered employment. Of that number 2,794 sleep on the premises, and I have good reason to believe that the position is much worse in many other towns, particularly in those where the influx of Bantu females is not as strictly controlled as in Vanderbijlpark and where their contracts of service are not registered. Is such a state of affairs

really/...

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really necessary or desirable from the point of view of either the European or the Bantu? I say emphatically it is not. I say that it is neither in the interests of the European nor of the Bantu, nor is it necessary that such a large proportion of domestic servants should be accommodated in backyards. I do not say that domestic servants are not necessary, although I feel that they could with advantage be dispensed with in many cases. All I say is that they need not be housed in backyards in such large numbers as they are at present.

In the first instance it is not essential that the domestic servant should be in the house from dawn until dark in so many cases. Where a household can afford a full-time domestic servant (and remember in cash and in kind it costs the average family approximately £9, per month to keep a full-time servant) the family can surely also afford the few modern household appliances which will make it possible for them to do without the maid until say 9 a.m. and again dispense with her services say from 5 p.m. In which case it will of course be possible for the maid to live with her cwn people in her own area where she can spend her leisure time according to her own custom. That in turn will free the European town not only of the financial burden of providing a servant's room for even the most modest European dwelling, but will eliminate very large numbers of Bantu females and their "boy-friends" from the European town after dark.

That, to my mind, is a solution which should satisfy both European and Bantu, particularly the European (and that includes most of us) who complains that his town is being turned into a location after dark. But I go further. I say that it is possible for one domestic servant to serve more than one European family. I have seen it work in my own town and it is to the mutual advantage of both European and Bantu. There are domestic servants in Vanderbijlpark who used to earn £4. per month in working for one household full-time (sleeping in the backyard) who now hold casual permits to do "skropwerk", for as many as 2 or 3 families, and what is more, they now earn up to £6. and live in the Bantu Townships with their families at their own free choice.

Think of the tremendous saving to the housewife, not only in wages. but also in food supplied to the servant and food wasted through misuse and pilfering!

No doubt many of my listeners will disagree with what I have said, but I know that what I have said is possible because I have proved it and I think it is desirable because it frees the European town of the backyard dweller and it opens up a normal life to the Bantu woman in her own township.

I don't say this can happen overnight. In fact I know it can't, because the European population, particularly the housewife, has to be convinced of the desirability and advantages of such a step, but it is worth

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striving for and I feel it is our duty as administrators to work in that direction.

To start with, domestic servants are in any case getting scarcer by the day, simply because of the many other avenues of employment opening up to Bantu males and females. But I think it is wrong for us to think in terms of introducing large numbers of migratory labourers (both male and female) from the farms or from the reserves in order to fill the vacancies. Let us first make more efficient use of the potential domestic labour available on our doorsteps and after we have exhausted the present untapped sources then only let us go outside our urban areas.

One method of making the available manpower go further I have already discussed viz., the possibility of one servant serving more than one family. The other is the possibility of making more extensive use of young Native males, including the Tsotsi type, between the ages of 15 and 18 years. Let me admit at once that there are many difficulties attached to such a course and that it is probably much easier to pack the Tsotsi away to a farm labour camp than it is to try and rehabilitate him by making a domestic servant out of him. But it is a very satisfying thing to pick up a bit of Bantu flotsam off your location streets, to place him in domestic employment with a member of the public who is willing to co-operate in the rehabilitation experiment and to see the Tsotsi going straight. It gives the young Native a wonderful chance to build up a healthy body, to learn the official languages properly and to prepare himself for the day that, at the age of 18 or 19, he is physically fit to enter industrial employment, and the surprising thing is that very often it is the domestic employer himself who eventually arranges for the youngster to enter industrial or commercial employment.

In this way we can help not only to solve our domestic servant problem, but also to reduce the housing problem by making more effective use of available manpower. And don't forget that last source, i.e. the children who are present in so many households where the shortage of Bantu domestic servants presents a problem.

History has repeatedly proved that the civilisation of a nation which loses its skill with its hands declines and eventually falls. That is the prospect which we Europeans in this country have to face unless we jealously guard and practise the skills which have been taught to us by our fathers and mothers. We cannot afford to become a nation of overseers, whether it be in the factory, on the farm or in the home. It is at our own peril that we are allowing ourselves to become so completely dependent upon the Bantu domestic servant. Our sons and daughters should not be too proud or lazy or incompetent to clean their own shoes, to cook a simple breakfast or to wash a few dishes when the occasion demands it.

In conclusion therefore, I would say that in our present day socio-economic structure the presence of the Bantu woman in the Urban Area

is/ ...

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