



THE COLONG BULLETIN

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. NBH 0318 Category B. Annual Subscription \$5.

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD. 18 ARGYLE ST, SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA 2000. TELEPHONE: (02) 27 4714

From the loggers' highway, next summer, a herringbone pattern of roads will cut right and left. From these roads the gangs of chainsawmen, followed up by the D9 bulldozers, skidders and logtrucks, will come to kill ("animals die when you log, I don't deny that at all" - says a logging spokesman) and cart away. Some of the world's greatest hardwood forests will be disintegrated. Finally, incendiaries will be dropped from helicopters so that not one green blade or leaf, not one pink nose or peeking pair of eyes, is left. And from the totally wrecked landscape, rows of sterile, imported pines will one day needle into the otherwise lifeless air.

We human beings, locked into the present, cultivated nowadays by the religion of instant-gratification, find it hard to understand just what we are doing to these forests and almost impossible to have a proper say. But, if the magnates and ministers and union secretaries have their way, the heartland of the Southern Hemisphere's most stately lifezones will be gone forever, before our children have a say, before any sort of sensible consensus or opinion has had time to influence this history for the better.

Dr. Bob Brown - Habitat, August 1988

ECONOMICS OF SOUTH-EAST WOODCHIPPING

The following well informed report by Gordon Taylor, which analyses the economics of the woodchip industry and explains how the people of NSW subsidise the export of our forests for the benefit of Japanese industry, was broadcast on Peter Hunt's 'Earthworm' programme on 30th March. Our thanks to Peter Hunt for his kind permission to reproduce the report.

The Australian woodchip industry began in NSW, in 1967, when a company called Harris-Daishowa was formed to exploit the forest resources in the South East of the state.

COLONG BULLETIN NO. 110, Sept 1988

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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Today Harris-Daishowa is a wholly owned subsidiary of a Japanese company called Daishowa Seishi - or in English, Daishowa paper manufacturers. It is one of Japan's biggest paper and cardboard manufacturers, in an industry that, in size, is second only to the United States!

In the early days, the industry was virtually self sufficient in chips, which were produced from trees grown in Japanese forests. But over the last 30 years as the industry has expanded, the import of chips has steadily increased.

Today Japan accounts for 75% of the international trade in woodchips and with production in their forests declining, there is increasing pressure for still more woodchip imports. Although the wood comes from many countries, Australia is the most favoured source. Eucalypt woodchips are preferred because they are of such high quality.

So the woodchipping operations at Eden, and the South East forests are a vital cog in the wheel of the Japanese paper industry.

In the 60s Daishowa was looking for a cheap source of woodchips for its mills and in 1967 it teamed up with the small Australian timber firm, Harris Holdings, to form Harris-Daishowa. At that stage Harris owned 51% of the company, the remaining 49% owned by Daishowa. The relatively unknown Harris and their new-found partner tendered for, and won, the contract to export woodchips from Eden.

But Harris Holdings ran into trouble trying to raise the necessary cash and eventually the Australian interests sold out to Daishowa.

The Federal and State Governments at the time allowed 100% Japanese ownership partly on the condition that Harris-Daishowa obtain some Australian ownership, "at a suitable time". 17 years later "a suitable time" has not yet been found. So Australia's largest woodchip export scheme, and one of our most important forest industries remains 100% foreign owned.

But does the ownership really matter, so long as Australia benefits? The reality unfortunately, is that the benefits haven't been as great as you might expect.

For instance, in its first 8 years of operation Harris-Daishowa declared no profits and hence paid no company tax. Ironically, in that same period, the Japanese parent rose to be number three amongst Japan's giant paper manufacturers. It made after tax profits of \$25.5 million in that same 8 years.

This suggests that at least for that period the wholly owned subsidiary was selling its woodchips to its parent company at a price very similar to the cost of production. While things have obviously changed since then, it's hard to see where the incentive is for Harris-Daishowa

to push for maximum prices - and hence maximum income for Australia - when Daishowa is selling chips to itself.

We approached Harris-Daishowa for its views on this matter, but at present, the company is refusing all media requests for comment.

If we look at the figures on a national scale though, one thing is very clear - Australia gets a very low price for its woodchips.

Figures supplied by the Japan Trade Centre indicate that of the major exporters of woodchips to Japan, Australia receives the lowest price per tonne. This is despite the fact that we are the largest exporter and produce the most uniform, highest quality chips.

Ultimately, the responsibility for these low prices rests with the Federal Government. The Department of Primary Industry monitors the price but the minister, John Kerin, has so far not seen fit to set a more realistic level. Our chips continue to be sold at rock bottom prices. Ironically, while contributions to the coffers of the political parties by Harris-Daishowa has taken the current political limelight, over the last 20 years the company has been the recipient of considerable funds from both state and federal governments.

One past source was Export Expansion Grants from the Fraser Government. The money came from an export incentive scheme where the incentive was a direct grant paid for simply increasing the amount exported. Harris-Daishowa received at least \$600,000 under these arrangements. But it seems this wasn't quite what the government had in mind as in July 1979 they specifically EXCLUDED incentive payments for woodchip schemes.

State governments have also made a number of very useful contributions to Harris-Daishowa's operations. For instance, the company had almost \$400,000 knocked off their royalty payments to help them build a road to the chip mill. Other assistance has included a \$125,000 grant from the Department of Decentralisation, and housing assistance for company employees.

It's generally assumed that such short term assistance will pay off with economic benefits in the long term. One example of such a claimed benefit is the profit made by the NSW Forestry Commission, who manage the forest operations at Eden. They're paid royalties for the timber which pay for road building, erosion and fire control, and for all the other expenses incurred by the Commission. And as part of the current review of the export license the Commission has stated that over the last 16 years revenue has exceeded outlays by \$8.3 m.

But what these overall figures obscure is that until recently, royalties paid by Harris-Daishowa have been very low. A substantial increase in royalty rates occurred in the early 80s and this, according to an academic from the

Australian National University implies a massive subsidy to Harris-Daishowa over the previous 15 years. Using 1985 as a fair royalty he's estimated the subsidy to be in excess of \$19 million.

These arguments aside, one aspect of economics that's rarely been considered is the concept of resource rental - a payment by the company for the use of the forests. If we accept the Forestry Commission figures the Eden operation is now returning about \$1.5 million profit each year to the tax payers. But let's get that in perspective - that's in return for the forest industries having at least 290,000 hectares of state forest dedicated primarily to their use.

On the positive side, the financial subsidies involved, have provided benefits for local communities in terms of jobs. Several hundred people in the region are employed as a result of the woodchip operation. But even here things didn't work out quite as planned.

The fact is woodchipping is the most capital intensive, and least labour intensive of the forest industries. Saw mills employ many more people and to the extent that woodchipping is displacing logging for sawn timber in the region, the employment opportunities are actually diminishing. Furthermore, this is part of an Australian wide trend. A recent study has shown that in the 15 years to 1985, employment in Australian forest industries actually fell by 24%, or 26,000 jobs.

The promise of really substantial employment opportunities was dangled as a carrot when the woodchip operation was set up in the late 60s. At that stage it was intended to provide a base on which to build a local paper industry and Harris-Daishowa won the tender partly on the basis that it would construct a pulpmill at Eden to process chips locally.

This industrialisation of our forest resource would have meant a substantial value added to the resource and vastly increased numbers of jobs.

The man responsible for giving the go ahead for woodchipping back in 1967 was Jack Beale, a minister in the Askin government. He insists that the company undertook to build a pulpmill within 7 years. The company claims it only agreed to conduct a feasibility study. 17 years later Harris-Daishowa still promises to look at the feasibility of a pulpmill.

But such a mill would require a huge capital outlay, and a massive subsidy to be profitable. Besides, why would Daishowa build a mill in Australia when it has 6 mills of its own in Japan?

And of course we could expect an even more vocal reaction from the conservation movement if such a mill did get the go ahead. Pulp

So nationally, we now appear to be locked into a low value added, raw material exporting industry, with little prospect of any further processing. And as the more labour intensive saw log industry continues its decline, so forest jobs will keep disappearing.

OFF ROAD VEHICLES IN NATIONAL PARKS

An open letter to The Hon Tim Moore, Minister for the Environment, from the Colong Foundation.

Dear Mr Moore,

Thank you for your letter of 1st June telling us that there would be no decision concerning off-road vehicles without consultation with conservation organisations. However, your letter to Mr England states that you are prepared to deal with each particular case (of previous road closure) "on its merits" and "to preserve access for responsible four wheel drive groups to appropriate trails and camping and recreational areas that they have previously used". This means not only the admission of such groups to parklands, but the extension of such usage. Nor will it be possible to exclude "irresponsible" drivers, including arsonists, rubbish dumpers, rock and timber thieves, shooters, etc. Consultation with conservation organisations on "each particular case" would require a great deal of both your time and ours. It would be time wasted, because we are opposed to the use of vehicles beyond the existing public roads within parks. "Traditional" or "previous" use is not a justifiable reason for allowing ORVs to continue gouging, scarring and laying bare considerable areas of parkland. A number of "traditional" and "previous" damaging uses, such as grazing, logging, bush rock collection, hunting and broad area burning have been rejected as being inimical to the object of creating parks - the preservation of the natural environment.

The environmental damage caused by the off-road use of recreational vehicles was thoroughly investigated in the SPCC Inquiry of 1979, which listed 21 environmental problems caused by their use (see Wilderness Society letter of 28th July, 1988). These problems will arise whether or not the vehicles are used by "responsible drivers". It is notable that all public authorities represented at the Inquiry, with the exception of the Department of Lands, opposed the use of these vehicles in the lands they controlled. The Lands Department was prepared to make areas available for ORV use. Only two local councils have provided such areas. In our view this environmentally damaging form of recreation should not be encouraged by the Government. If, however, off road vehicle usage is considered worthy of

accommodation on public lands, the place to provide it is on the 3.5 million hectares of State forests, where the damage of ORVs would be minimal in comparison with that already inflicted by clear felling and overcutting. The Forestry Commission doesn't want ORVs in its lands, but neither does anyone else. The NPWS has therefore become the land use "bunny" for an unwanted form of land use, as it so often has in the past, and will be once more if the Marulan-Point Piper power line is routed through the Kanangra-Boyd NP.

The use of ORVs in wilderness areas is contrary to the wilderness management policy of the NPWS, as given to the Colong Foundation by Mr Carr on 8th March, 1985, following extensive discussion with the Service. It is also contrary to the provisions of the Wilderness Act and principles of the draft Blue Mountains and Wollemi management plans. The fact that few wilderness areas have as yet been defined in management plans should not prevent the remainder, which are reasonably well defined, from being protected from vehicle intrusion by being declared under section 59 of the National Parks Act.

ORV owners, like anyone else, can enjoy the parklands unspoilt by vehicular pollution provided all vehicles are confined to public roads and they are prepared to leave their own vehicles. If the off-road use of their vehicles is as benign as they claim, they could negotiate the use of private property for a sum well within the means of the owners of such expensive recreational equipment. The protection from damage claims provided for public authorities, which has now been extended to private land owners under an amendment to the Recreational Vehicles Bill should facilitate such arrangements, thereby, in the words of the Hon. Virginia Chadwick (Legislative Council, 22nd May) "substantially reducing the environmental damage and public noise nuisance caused by the indiscriminate operation of vehicles off-road".

ORV drivers have access to 95% of the state via the public road system. It is not much to ask that the remaining 5% be reserved for the enjoyment of those who appreciate the natural environment unpolluted by vehicular intrusion.

WE PROFLIGATE CONSERVATIONISTS

There is a real requirement to take care of the environment but what the Labor Government in Canberra is doing is pandering to a few people, most of whom don't understand trees or soil, are not interested in jobs and really think that everybody can live on a system of borrowed money to maintain living standards and that is all nonsense.

Ian Sinclair, reported in Bega News, 11/8/88

(That sure is nonsense - Ed.)

RESOURCE EXHAUSTION THREATENS EMPLOYMENT

The assault on resources down Eden way is by no means confined to the forests. Mr Kerin has stated that recent scientific evidence suggests that the stock of Southern Bluefin Tuna could be down to 20% of the pre-fishing level, and could be as low as 15% by 1990. It has become necessary to restrict the gemfish catch to 3000 tons but the Trawler Owners' Association wants it doubled. Mr Hatton, Member for the South Coast, warns that fishing, the basis of the Coast's popular tourist industry, is threatened by development of wetlands. Tens of millions of dollars of development capital are in the offering from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Japan. If the assault on resources continues at the present rate, there will be very little employment for anyone within a few years.

DEBT FOR FORESTS SWAP

On the international "secondary market" (where debts unlikely ever to be paid back in full are bought and sold off by the banks at a percentage of their face value) Bolivia's debt was going cheap - at just 10 per cent of its face value.

So conservation International bought \$650,000 worth of Bolivia's debt from a Swiss Bank and began negotiating with the Bolivian authorities. Five months later an agreement was announced which involved setting aside nearly four million hectares of habitat for 13 of Bolivia's 18 listed endangered species. Laws were passed to protect the land and plans made to carry out research on how local inhabitants could use the area without damaging it. In addition \$250,000 worth of local currency was put into an endowment fund for management of the new conservation area.

Within two weeks a similar arrangement was announced in Costa Rica, with the World Wildlife Fund buying debts to channel donations into the Costa Rica National Park system.

From 'The New Internationalist' published by Conservation International, an offshoot of the U.S. based Nature Conservancy Program.

On the morning after his last election win in 1984 I asked the former Premier, Mr Neville Wran, what action he was most proud of after eight years in office.

Without hesitation, he replied: "Beyond doubt, it was the decision to save the rainforests in national parks. What we have saved in the rainforests will last forever."

Joseph Glascott, 'The Greening of NSW', SMH 16/8/88

A REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN FOR NEWNES PLATEAU

Our representative on the Newnes Plateau Working Committee, Rodney Falconer, has made a submission to the Committee on behalf of the Colong Foundation, the Colo Committee and the Nature Conservation Council, for the preparation of a Regional Environmental Plan for Newnes Plateau and adjacent tablelands. This is not the first submission for an REP, one having been proposed by the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs in 1981 and another shortly after that by the Department of Environment and Planning in its environmental impact assessment of the proposed Birds Rock Colliery. Despite these proposals, scattered and often uneconomic development has continued to degrade the natural environment of the Plateau.

The Plateau is an important social, cultural, recreational and educational resource of major landscape significance on local, state and national bases. It contains features which, in our extensive knowledge of Australia, are not found elsewhere, the most notable being the distinctive "pagoda" formations.

There have been repeated proposals for incorporation of the area in the national parks system, the first being Myles Dunphy's 1934 Greater Blue Mountains National Park plan, and the latest the comprehensive and thoroughly researched "Gardens of Stone" proposal submitted by Rodney Falconer and David Blackwell in 1985. Meanwhile, damage by coal and sand mining, unsuccessful pine culture, unnecessary roading, wild fires, logging, hunting, rock poaching, etc. continues unhindered.

Despite this damage, many natural features could be preserved or rehabilitated. Much of the region's resources are of marginal or sub-marginal economic value. They are far from being unique and could be duplicated elsewhere. Its scenic, recreational, and many other of its natural attributes cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

By reason of the region's proximity to the state's population centre it would be a very valuable addition to the Blue Mountains National Parks system.

We have written a letter to Mr Greiner enclosing the submission, incorporating the above facts and asking for his support. Also enclosed is the description from Bulletin 104 of cliff collapses caused by mining which we first reported to Mrs Crosio and Mr Sheehan in June 1984, and a summary of the "Gardens of Stone" submission. Copies of the letter and accompanying papers have been sent to Mr Moore, Minister for the Environment, Mr Hay, Minister for Local Government and Planning, and Mr Berry, Member for Bathurst, asking for their support.

We are sharing with the Colo Committee the cost of a pamphlet on the proposal.

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE MURRUMBIDGEE RIVER CORRIDOR

In response to a request from the Director, ACT Parks and Conservation, we have made a submission on the above which includes the following comments:

The undeveloped character of much of the river is its principal attraction, and we are pleased that its preservation will be a primary goal. The assessment (as the Plan provides) of the scenic effects of management proposals and of the intervisibility between the corridor and adjacent land is essential to the realisation of this goal. A great deal of the time of this Foundation has been spent opposing such management problems as the provision of overnight accommodation, use of parks for burning fire breaks and the building of resorts and tourist facilities on conspicuous sites overlooking park lands.

It is regrettable that no such plan was formulated for the Nepean and Wollondilly - Sydney's scenic river. Not only is it the site of extensive sand and gravel extraction and water skiing, but it is badly polluted by inadequate sewerage treatment in the Blue Mountains and other parts of the catchment. The Warragamba dam has flooded the Warragamba and the Burrigorang Valley and the possible raising of the dam wall threatens the rivers of the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness. We hope the Murrumbidgee does not suffer a similar fate.

We note that you seek to minimise the adverse effects resulting from necessary activities of other authorities. The effectiveness of this policy will depend on the definition of "necessary". In our experience the strongest opposition to conservation has come from authorities such as the Forestry Commission, the Mines Department and the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission. As a result of campaigns lasting up to 7 years, we have proved many of their proposals to be unnecessary.

WILL THE "TASMANIAN DISEASE" SPREAD TO THE MAINLAND?

The above is the title of an article by Peter Hay,

Lecturer in the Centre for Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania, published in the Current Affairs Bulletin of August last year. In the article he analyses the roots of the anti-environmental policy of the Tasmanian Government, stemming mainly from the abandonment of policy making to the bureaucracy and a few strong ministers. "There was", he writes, "No 'ideas' component in Tasmanian politics. The ALP, in other states the focus of challenge to orthodoxy, became entirely technocratic in Tasmania, and principles of democratic socialism were rarely raised in party forums. In keeping with an

ideology of technocratic decision-making, the focus of state political power became a small coterie of skilled bureaucrats and ALP strongmen (premiers and holders of development portfolios)." This is strongly reminiscent of the environmental policy of the Askin Government during the Colong and Boyd campaigns, though it did eventually change.

In Tasmania, Hydro-Electric Commission project proposals went direct to Parliament and were not presented until a significant amount of money had already been expended on roads, preliminary site investigations, consultants and so on. There was no EIS beyond reviews by consultants hired by the Commission. It directly intervened in election campaigns, something unparalleled in other Westminster-based political systems. Despite this political dominance, employment in energy-consuming industries has declined since the early sixties. In 1985

Electrolytic Zinc, the state's largest private employer, announced that, following an \$80m modernisation of its zinc processing plant, it would be reducing its workforce from 1800 to 1600. The Premier maintained that "new development" would soon soak up the losses. Dr Hay's comment on this was:

The Premier was giving subliminal voice to a key assumption within the dominant theology. It is not legitimate, in the dominant theology, to threaten jobs in the name of wilderness preservation. It is legitimate to destroy jobs via technological change, for such change is thought to occur under its own dynamic, is sanctified as 'progress' and is thereby always deemed a desirable thing.

The adherents of the dominant ethos have successfully used the threat of job losses to turn working class hostility against environmentalists. A perfect example of the technological ethos is that "at precisely the time when government and industry were threatening huge job losses in the forests should environmentalists succeed, the timber industry, with much ceremony, unveiled a spectacular mechanical snipper, capable of treating trees as sticks of celery, and which, it was explained, would cut labour costs by one-fifth. Television news ran the two items adjacent to each other."

The electoral success of the Liberals was due to their success in "wrenching the historical role as the standard-bearer of the virtues of hydro-industrialisation away from its traditional custodian, the ALP. Faced with a choice between the party of the old class enemy, which was nevertheless untainted by even the faintest hint of verdure, and the established party of workers, which had, however, given evidence of straying from the corporate hydro line, the workers turned their backs on decades of voting tradition and threw in their lot with 'the party of the bosses'". To achieve this transfer of allegiance the environment movement much be identified as the implacable enemy of the working class.

Is this likely to happen on the mainland? Dr Hay thinks not, pointing to the success of the Cain and Wran Governments in building a coalition of electoral support which includes both 'development' unions and environmentalists. But it did happen in Eden Monaro, and in every environmental issue the Coalition parties, though willing to accept loss of employment for technological or financial reasons, will not countenance it for the sake of environmental preservation. The campaigns of the last 20 years, however, have stimulated the environmental consciousness of the community and it is unlikely that we will see the Liberals openly championing the anti-conservationists in an attempt to detach the workers from the Labour Party.

A WILDERNESS IN NAME ONLY

The Tasmanian Government has proposed a 371,000 hectare central "wilderness" area containing 29,000 hectare of World Heritage listed areas. Under the proposal hydro-electric dams could be built (the Hydro-Electric Commission has put forward five schemes), proven mineral resources could be mined and forests logged. This is simply a Tasmanian version of the "multiple use" proposals of logging, mining and other developmental interests. Everything saleable would be removed and the useless, scarred remnants called a wilderness park. Dr Bob Brown described the proposal as a "giant step backwards". It is a myopic government which cannot find better employment for the workers than "mining" its forests and despoiling the National Estate.

Nor will the Federal Government's proposals save more than a small proportion of the tall trees. A letter from the ACF states that 65% of the Inquiry area is made up almost completely of mountain crags, button grass plains, alpine meadow, twisted snow gums and other non-commercial bush. Hence, that around 80% (compared with Helsham's 10%) may be set aside for World Heritage listing still means as much as 75% of the tall eucalypts will remain available for logging.

MEETING DATES

The Foundation will meet on 29th September, 13th and 27th October, and 10th and 24th November.

FORM FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS

To: The Treasurer
Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd
18 Argyle Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

The enclosed remittance or advice covers the item(s) indicated by a tick in the box beside it.

- Membership application (see form below), (Note: The membership fee covers Bulletin subscription fee)
- Life Membership (\$500)
- Membership renewal (\$20)
- Subscription for all issues of Colong Bulletin to 31/12/89 (\$5) (Non-members only)
- Donation of \$.....
- I have donated \$..... to the Australian Conservation Foundation expressing a wish that my donation be spent for the purposes of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd (see form letter below).

I would like this donation applied to:

- The fighting fund
- The Myles Dunphy Fund (investment only)
- Either fund, at the Foundation's discretion.

NAME: (Mr/Mrs/Miss)

ADDRESS: POST CODE

SIGNED: DATE

To: The Director
Australian Conservation Foundation
672B Glenferrie Road
HAWTHORN VIC 3122

I attach a donation to the Australian Conservation Foundation. I prefer that this donation should be spent for the purposes of (insert name of your organization). I understand that this donation is tax deductible and therefore look forward to your receipt.

NAME: (Block Letters)

ADDRESS:

\$ SIGNED: DATE:

MEMBERSHIP FORM

To: The Hon. Secretary
Colong Foundation for Wilderness
18 Argyle Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

I hereby apply for membership of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. I am nominated by and seconded by

(Note: If you are not personally known to the Foundation, the Hon. Secretary will nominate you and ask one of the directors to second your nomination. The signing of this application will be accepted as evidence of your support of the aims of the Foundation).

I subscribe to the Foundation's aim of preserving Australia's wilderness remnants.

I accept the liability provided in the Colong Foundation's Articles of Association to guarantee \$20 should it be needed in the event of the winding up of the Foundation.

Enclosed please find for \$20, being my membership subscription to 31/12/89. (Please note: membership fee covers Bulletin subscription).

Signed

FULL NAME: (MR, MRS, MISS)

ADDRESS

.....POST CODE

WILDERNESS CALENDARS - WILD PLACES POSTCARDS

These beautiful Henry Gold calendars (now the best selling calendars in the state) and his equally artistic Wild Places postcards are now available. The calendars cost \$8.50 if obtained from the Foundation or one of its directors, or by post for \$11. The postcards cost \$10 per set - post free. They are worth having just to put in your album.

The Secretary,
Colong Foundation for Wilderness,
18 Argyle Street,
SYDNEY. NSW. 2000.

Please post me Wilderness Calendars @ \$11 each and sets of 10 Wild Places Postcards @ \$10 each. Enclosed is for

Signed

Address

.....

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