

COUNTER INFORMATION

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 1988

E.T. BLASTED



SHOCK.....HORROR.....how did THEY get in? Consternation for the bosses as anti slave labour protestors disrupt the launch of the Employment Training Scheme at the Crest Hotel, Edinburgh, on 1st September.

NEW SLAVE LABOUR SCHEME STARTS

The new Employment Training scheme started on 5th September. Modelled on American "Workfare", E.T. is a cynical con-trick to reduce unemployment figures by forcing the unemployed to work for dole. "Benefit Plus" is an insult - it might just cover travel/work costs. "Training" is either a pathetic farce or just non-existent - as in the Lifeline project in Edinburgh where "trainees" walk the streets with clipboards all day, 5 days a week. It's great news for the bosses - unpaid workers replacing paid ones; wage levels dropping and profits rising.

SABOTAGED

On 1st September the Government attempted to launch E.T. with a glossy P.R. stunt - inviting thousands of bosses to plush receptions in seven regions, all video-linked to a main event in London - at which carefully selected and briefed "positive" new E.T. participants were presented as a cross-section. Leaked documents gave anti-Workfare activists a chance to sabotage these plans. In Edinburgh, proceedings at the Crest Hotel were disrupted upon commencement. Protestors shouted questions, waved placards, gave out leaflets and refused to sit or leave until questions were answered. Though we were outnumbered by hundreds, the bosses looked scared, gladly leaving when the meeting was adjourned after half an hour of chaos.

In Manchester activists chained and padlocked the doors of the Polytechnic lecture hall where the launch was to be held, delaying it by 1½ hours, thus preventing the video-link taking place. While guests waited in the lobby the protestors loudly demonstrated refusing to leave until the star guest, Junior Employment Minister, John Lee, finally gave them an interview. Like Thatcher and Fowler he ducked the question of whether E.T. will be made compulsory. The protestors decided to stay on and followed the guests into the hall where they took over the stage and microphones and finally left just in time to avoid arrest. Both this and the Edinburgh disruption got excellent local media coverage. Security in Bradford was tighter and protestors couldn't get in - so they sent in a message demanding to be allowed

WE WANT JUSTICE

Supporters of the 'Tottenham 3 are Innocent Campaign' marched round Wormwood Scrubs jail on 5th August. The Campaign is demanding freedom for Mark Braithwaite, Winston Silcott and Engin Raghip - wrongly convicted of the murder of P.C. Blakelock - and the release of all prisoners of the 1985 Broadwater Farm uprising. Massive repression followed the uprising - over 400 arrests and systematic violation of legal rights.

Despite police violence and arrests the Campaign continues to hold street meetings in London. They intend to build up activity in advance of the 3 prisoners' appeals, expected in December.

Info., pamphlets, etc. from Tottenham 3 are Innocent, c/o Grass-roots Storefront, 71 Golborne Road, London, W10. Tel: 01 969 0687.

access officially, as representatives of the unemployed who the scheme is supposed to benefit. Naturally the demand was refused, but the refusal was made the focus of sympathetic press coverage, including an hour-long slot on local radio.

In Newcastle on Tyne demonstrators entered the Royal Station Hotel to attend the E.T. launch but were ejected.

PROTEST ACTIONS

In Merseyside protestors climbed up scaffolding on the office of Liverpool's biggest E.T. agent, G-Force, and covered it in anti-slavery banners. They obstructed the street - a major thoroughfare - and stopped the traffic, handing out leaflets to drivers and passers-by. Meanwhile the Training Commission's local HQ was occupied. In the Wirral, with the support of the local TGWU, two C.P. schemes were occupied and had to close for the day. All actions got excellent local media coverage.

In Brent, where the local authority is backing E.T. and cutting all funds to the Unemployed Centre because of its opposition campaign, Centre workers and activists held an anti-E.T. press conference. The paid workers are losing their jobs due to the funding cut, but activists intend to keep the centre open and fighting.

There were also protest actions in Lambeth and Waltham Forest on the day of the launch, and probably many more places we don't know of. On 3rd September in Cardiff, a small demonstration was held outside the Law Courts/Civic Centre. On 16th September in Bathgate West Lothian, protestors "greeted" Prince Charles with shouting and banners when he visited C.O.W.L., an E.T. agency.

SLAVERY FOR YOUTH

Since 5th September Income Support for 16 - 17 year olds has been stopped, causing even greater stress, poverty and homelessness for young people. The only way they can get any income is by doing the two year hard labour sentence called Y.T.S. Regular jobs that may have existed before are mostly part of Y.T.S. now - £39 a week for full-time labour with no training, no rights, no safety at work. Y.T.S. and E.T. are both "Workfare", both slavery, and must be abolished - by all of us, youth and adult, fighting together.

Contact: Campaign against Workfare, c/o EUWC, 2 Cranston Street, Edinburgh.

AUSTRALIA: 30 - 40 unemployed people leafleted, performed street theatre, and occupied dole offices throughout Melbourne on 24th May in opposition to compulsory "work for dole" measures in the August Federal budget.

CHINA CRISIS

Over the last few years workers' rights in China have been declining. The State's economic reforms are eroding workers' job security, fringe benefits and welfare provision. Increasing managerial power has led to massive redundancies (particularly of women) and further discrimination against women by removal of maternity rights. Prices have rocketed while real wages have fallen by 40% in the last year.

But, the people are fighting back. Prasant and student protests in Peking, unrest in Tibet and street disturbances in Hainan Island. In addition 100 million city workers have taken industrial action. This

year 49 strikes have been officially reported. Recently in Hangzhou 700 textile workers struck after being refused bonuses and unions report that several strikes involving 1,500 workers have occurred recently. Industrial unrest is rampant in Shanghai. The state is obviously worried and has announced a 5 year economic plan to reform wages and prices and ordered an immediate 20% wage rise across the board. Measures to strengthen the role of the unions are also planned. Workers, however, remain cynical that these concessions will significantly improve their lot.

POLES APART

"The atmosphere is so festive that we don't want to leave. And more people have joined us by climbing over fences"

A striking Polish miner

Once again, workers in Poland have been in the news, with a wave of strikes and occupations in mines, docks and factories during the month of August.

The strikes began at the Mani-fest Lipcowy pit in Jastrzebie where the traditional leaders of Solidarnosc have little influence. The demands were for equal pay for women workers at the pit surface and an earlier retirement age - and for recognition of the banned Solidarnosc union.

Strikers issued leaflets calling for local people to bring them food and defending the strike. The leaflets declared *"The miners of Mani-fest Lipcowy make demands concerning our lives and our right to live in dignity and a life without queues and increasing prices"*.

Two other pits struck in solidarity and started the ball rolling!

Next, dock and transport workers in the northern part of Szczecin joined the strike. Tram and bus depots were occupied as more workers walked out in support.

After hearing that the shipyard workers in Gdansk were out on strike about 1,000 steel workers occupied their plant in Stalowa Wola.

ANGER

Threats from the government, riot police storming occupations, and curfews only served to increase the anger of the strikers and communities.

At Stalowa Wola the original hard-core occupiers grew to 5,000 (half the workforce!)

In Szczecin dock workers prepared to defend the port physically - barricading it with trucks, cranes and containers.

And, in one pit, 130 miners barricaded themselves 1,800 feet underground.

With over 80,000 on strike nationwide the workers' 'friend' and leader of Solidarnosc called for a return to work in exchange for talks with the government.

At a 5,000 strong rally in Gdansk he was heckled and jeered and forced to declare *"I have not been a traitor and I will never be a traitor"* while at the same time *"I extinguished the strikes and I will extinguish any others that happen"*.

Source: Overthrow

HUNGARY STRIKE

HUNGARY: Miners at the Istvan pit in the Mecsek coal-field downed tools and refused to start their shift in protest at swingeing taxes, which cut bonuses almost in half and also to proposed pit closures. The strike spread to nearby Komlo colliery where hundreds were

involved.

On 24th Aug. after talks between strikers' representatives and government ministers, the strikers revealed all immediate demands had been met!

LAND & LIBERTY!

Guatemala, January 1988.....Three massive demonstrations of 30 - 50,000 each.

The most surprising and perhaps significant was the 50,000 strong Campesino and Indian demo on January 8th in rural Totonicapan - the largest protest in this area in 20 years.

The protestors demanded cancellation of new land taxes and electricity rate increases of 40%.

In Guatemala City, two other major street demos took place on January 13th and 18th. Carrying banners and placards, demonstrators linked arms and chanted in unison, defying the hundreds of heavily armed national police. Slogans on the walls called on the people to refuse to pay their electric bills and taxes.

Source: Overthrow

A DEMOCRACY OF RESISTANCE

Worldwide in the last few years there has been a dramatic upsurge in struggles to achieve democracy.

The mass protests in the Philippines, Brazil, South Korea and now Burma demonstrate the continued attraction of instituting democracy and banishing the oppressive features of dictatorial and corrupt regimes. In the eastern bloc, the need to promote 'perestroika', and liberalise stagnant economies, has given rise to demands for greater autonomy and national self-determination in Armenia, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Within national liberation struggles in South Africa and Palestine there is the goal of establishing a 'democratic state' by overthrowing systems based on the blatant exploitation of majority ethnic groups.

In the course of embarking in mass protests there are pronounced swings in consciousness. In Burma, the coincidence of acute food shortages intensified by the lifting of controls on profiteering and the privileges of the ruling Socialist Programme Party provided the spark that lit the democratic fuse. In the course of massive protests in mid August, attempts by the military to suppress the popular mood led in turn to a discarding of passivity in favour of active resistance. "Before they were full of the joys of liberty. The manner of many demonstrators is now grim" wrote a news-journalist, after documenting the capture of police stations, beheading of police who had earlier advanced with fixed bayonets on unarmed demonstrators and the setting up of Peoples Councils to replace abandoned local government.

What lies behind the demands articulated in Burma and elsewhere, is a belief in the myth of Western parliamentary democracy and by association the modern consumer society. The images of the West stimulate demands to be integrated more fully into the global markets and attract multinational exploitation of cheap labour costs. In the eastern bloc, many of the protests have developed around environmental concerns and more accountable industrial development. In Estonia, mass protests prevented the development of a huge open phosphorite mine, and in Hungary opposition to the Czech dam funded by Austrian finance is being encouraged with 'glasnost'.

Democracy is the process by which opposition is integrated into the workings of the State, and class or local interests are expressed in elected parliaments. The split between society and the State, often open and violent in dictatorships such as Chile and Romania, is compromised by electing non-recallable representatives on the Western model. For an international opposition to develop within mass struggles there needs to be an alternative energetically promoted which counters the myth of Democracy and which builds on common sentiments for equal access to the world's resources, the overthrow of privilege and for a workers democracy which resists the destruction of the world's environment in the pursuit of profit and development.

ANGRY AND ORGANISED

Nurses at Maudsley psychiatric hospital in London struck for three weeks, till mid September, to demand the government fully fund a fair implementation of the nurses' regrading. Nurses also staged short walk-outs in Sheffield, Manchester, Glasgow and London during August.

On 1st September Lothian Health Board voted to sack 800 staff and privatise domestic contracts at nine hospitals. Immediately, ancillary workers and nurses walked out at Gogarburn and Royal Edinburgh Hospitals. This was followed by overtime bans and work to rules, but much

stronger, more widespread action is needed to win a struggle which has been sabotaged by Union officials.

ABERDEEN: 700 off-shore workers have demanded strike action from next April unless the Oil companies improve safety, conditions and wages. The call, presented to a 250 strong meeting on 31st August, follows the 167 deaths in the Piper Alpha disaster.

CHILE: Thousands demonstrated and erected barricades in Santiago and elsewhere on 31st August and again 10 days later. 3 protestors were shot dead. As dictator General Pinochet was declared the sole candidate in a Presidential plebiscite, demonstrators kicked footballs with his name on them!



Homeless people take over the government OPHLM building in Paris on 22nd June.

VOLGA SOCIALISM

When the French government housing body OPHLM obtained a court order to evict homeless families from Rue du Volga in Paris, the residents quickly fought back.

200 of them invaded OPHLM's Paris HQ on 22nd June. While the 50 children involved played gleefully in the spacious offices, the occupiers from the "Committee of the Badly Housed" displayed banners and informed passers-by of OPHLM's callousness.

The Rue du Volga building had been long empty. The homeless families had offered to pay rent. Nevertheless, OPHLM

were determined to throw them onto the street. OPHLM prefers to profit from housing speculation rather than meet people's need for homes.

As the occupation continued, the head of OPHLM refused all demands for a meeting and riot police menaced the occupiers. Locals defied the police to bring the occupiers food. Extensive media publicity was gained.

After more than 27 hours the occupiers - having obtained a guarantee of no arrests - left triumphantly.

Info: Le Monde Libertaire.

TENANTS HIT BACK

A Manchester Council worker writes:

Tenants have occupied the Council Housing Project Office in Hulme, Manchester. The action, begun in early September, is against staff cutbacks and the subsequent disciplining of two Project staff for "colluding with the occupation".

The Labour Council are slashing jobs and services. The Unions have persuaded workers to co-operate with cuts involving 4,000 job losses in one year.

The result - chaos in Council services. Workers are being compulsorily transferred in a vain bid to plug the gaps.

The Hulme occupation only involves a small group of tenants, and to date divisions amongst both tenants and workers have weakened resistance. But, as the cuts spread and frequent disputes break out, there is the potential for a unified fight-back against both the authorities and their Union lackeys.

August: Glasgow pensioners occupied a Day Centre and initiated protests against the imminent closure in September of 25 MSC funded Day Centres. Because of this opposition, the Labour Council agreed to fund 19 Centres for 7 months. Clearly the aim is for all Centres to be funded permanently but in the meantime - Round 1 to the pensioners the fight goes on!

A WORLD TO WIN

For 3 months 2,000 miners and 250 power station workers at Gardanne (S. France) have been on strike for better wages and against the introduction of flexible working. Nearly 100 workers have occupied the pit and power station halting production. 12 women from the support group are on hunger strike in solidarity. These same workers supported British miners in 1984/85 by preventing coal entering Britain from Marseilles.

A French delegation recently attended a rally at the Durham Coalfield and one held at Dover by the P & O strikers. At both events the need for making links between workers and international solidarity was stressed.

Info: Gateshead Unemployed Action Group

BRAZIL: 300 rubber tappers occupied the government Institute for Forestry Development office in Xapuri on 25th May. They were demanding a halt to illegal destruction of Amazon forest by cattle ranchers and land speculators. Subsequently unidentified gunmen shot three rubber tappers, killing one.

NAPLES: A steel workers demonstration stormed and ransacked the local Council buildings on 15th June in protest at the proposed sacking of 20,000 workers and the closure of the Bagnoli steel plant.

NEW YORK: East Village residents clashed with 450 police on 7th August as locals defied the imposition of a 1 am curfew at Tompkins Park. Next day Mayor Koch lifted the park's curfew.

SYDNEY STRIKES

10,000 secondary school students belonging to the School Students Union went on strike and marched in Sydney, Australia on 1st July.

They were protesting against measures to introduce such things as compulsory maths and science, the introduction of corporal punishment and larger classes.

The students were stopped from marching on Parliament House by the police and instead were herded away to hear the usual boring speeches.

Future strike action is planned with calls for real democracy in schools.

Source: Activate

MALE ORDER FIGHT

Canada May '88....Women postal workers are not allowed to carry handbags to their work stations because Canada Post management is accusing them of stealing mail and drinking on the job. They are demanding that women keep their belongings in lockers away from their stations where break-ins have occurred - especially by nosy management.

The women refuse to accept this, saying they need the bags to carry sanitary towels. Canada Post say they can report to male guards during their periods for permission to carry them!

Many women have been suspended for disobeying this crazy rule. The mail has been slowed down in protest.

Source: Ecomedia Toronto

WOBBLY JAILS

In Ohio, U.S.A., 400 prisoners have demanded Union recognition but have been refused by a local court, but nonetheless, it has been accepted as an official branch of the International Workers of the World [IWW], the radical grassroots organised Union.

The section was set up to fight against all the injustices of prison,

A LURKING DOUBT

Tom Curtis is 'doing life' for murder. In the best tradition of Timothy Evans, revenge was seen to be done.

However, at Tom's trial, three senior policemen perjured themselves to perdition. The judge - as blind as Justice - stated that he didn't believe them, but accepted their evidence anyway. After the trial it was discovered that these three guardians of order each had identical handwriting.

The prosecution damned Tom by placing him in a bank and a Post Office on the day of the murder. It has since been shown that this day was a Bank Holiday - every such

and in this particular case, day-rooms being closed down.

John Perotti, who is unionising the prison, is being kept in solitary, all belongings and legal documents have been confiscated - which hampers him in his fight in representing prisoners in cases against the screws. Contact: John Perotti, 167712, P.O. Box 45699, Lucasville, Ohio, 45699-0001.

Black Flag/ Res. News.

institution in England was closed.

Tom has a wealth of new evidence, including proof of police perjury. His Leave to Appeal was denied 'not a lurking doubt case' - they said. He has been denied Legal Aid and told to behave, or he will spend his life inside.

The three police were promoted. Tom contacted us in desperation. We are doing what we can.

"A Lurking Doubt" c/o Counter Information. Letters of support and books [preferably about the sea] to Tom Curtis N54982, H.M. Prison, Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX.

ALL OUT TO NON-PAY!

A massive challenge now presents itself to the activists mobilising against the Community Charge [Poll Tax].

The 'send it back' period of querying registration details is over. It has involved thousands in protest action, and 50,000 received 'Final Warning' letters in Strathclyde alone.

'ThePhony War' has left a few determined individuals prepared to refuse to register. In areas like Govan, in Glasgow, individuals known to the anti poll tax group will enlist the support of community groups and street committees to achieve collective backing for further resistance. This will assume more importance if the Regional Council imposes fines before payment of the Poll Tax is due in April 1989. Otherwise the recovery of such fines will coincide with the arrestment of wages or benefit.

STUFF THE LAW

Encouraged by the backing away from confrontation and the upholding of the Law by the Labour Recall Conference on September 17th due to Trade Union bloc votes, the 'popular press' has been pushing the lie that the "poll tax revolt" is over. Because protest was identified with the hindering of the Register now compiled by Regional Councils, people have been confused into thinking that the fight is over.

The East of Scotland and Strathclyde Federations of anti poll tax groups are now pledged to mobilise for **MASS NON-PAYMENT**. The Scottish

National Party is trying to capitalise on persistent support for non-payment (32%, Marplan Opinion Poll) and achieve an electoral breakthrough at the forthcoming Govan by-election. Local anti-poll tax activists have also had to counter the Press identification of the anti poll tax movement with 'Militant'.

In case a mass movement for non-payment erupts in April, the S.T.U.C. leader Campbell Christie has said they would step in at this point and seek to regiment it. During the S.T.U.C. 'Week of Action' 10-17th September, the Union leadership tried hard to confuse workers and only in isolated workplaces (especially in East Kilbride, Dundee and Rosyth dockyards where there was a half-day strike) on September 13th, 11 minute stoppages were organised. On this day local groups in Glasgow signalled their defiance and blocked roads in George Square (City Centre), Woodlands, Castlemilk and Pollok and held street meetings in Govan and Rutherglen. Tory Councillors who tried to give out pro-Poll Tax leaflets in central Edinburgh had to be rescued from public anger by the police. Community and workplace organisation must draw on that anger, and put the Regional Councils busily implementing the tax on the spot so that there remains one clear choice **NON PAYMENT** or surrender.

POSTIES BITTER

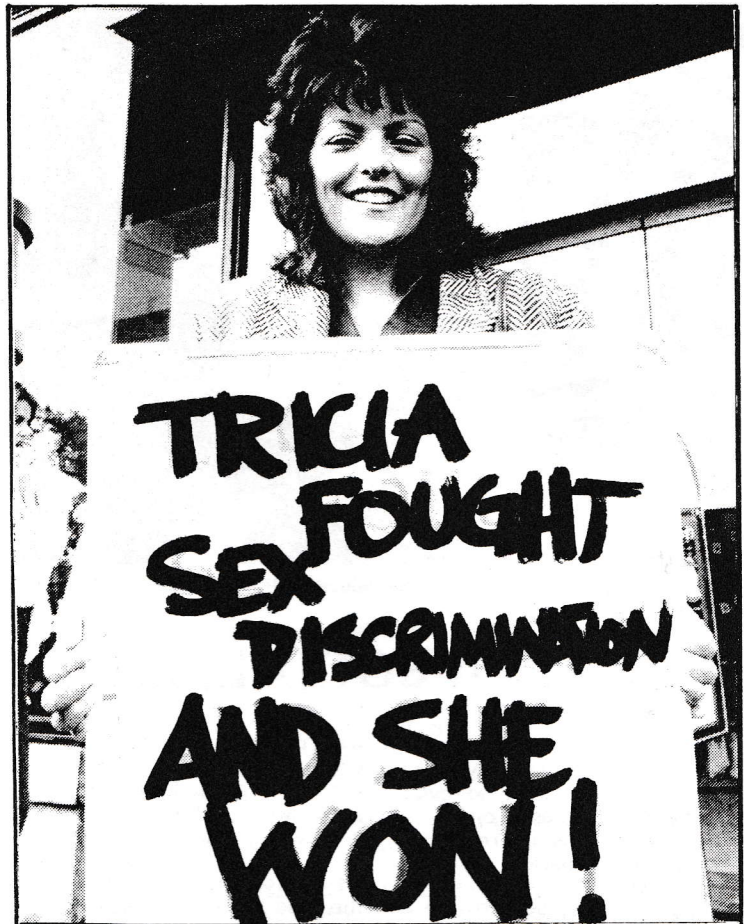
A London postal worker writes:

On 31st August the Union of Communication Workers called a one day national strike over management's refusal to negotiate over Difficult Recruitment Area Supplements (DRAS). DRAS means new recruits in the south east can get an extra payment which is not payable to PO workers elsewhere. 97.62% of workers struck, though as was expected this didn't get rid of DRAS.

Management's response was to stick the boot in; using casuals, changing duties, directing people to cross picket lines and suspending workers for refusing to handle blacked mail. This resulted in a series of fragmented local walk-outs turning into a national strike.

Immediately the workers had walked out the Union was trying to get them back to work. In an attempt to control the strike they made it official. They then made a deal which won nothing and basically said the return to work should be negotiated at a local level, thus destroying the unity and dividing office from office.

The workers gradually drifted back, with several major areas returning after the return date laid down by the Union. Even before everyone was back at work sixteen offices in South Wales walked out over a local issue. The workers are still angry and another national Post Office strike is on the agenda.



TRICIA FOUGHT SEX DISCRIMINATION AND SHE WON!

Tricia Jennings celebrates outside Burtons in Edinburgh after winning her industrial tribunal. Burtons had to pay £1,780 compensation for sacking Tricia because she was pregnant.

Burtons shops country wide were picketed by Tricia's supporters. Though Tricia didn't win reinstatement, the outcome will hopefully encourage workers to fight such sackings in future.

Ingi Helgason

COMMON CAUSE

The Baillifs and their police escort were sent packing when they tried to evict workers and local residents from 3 libraries in Hackney, east London.

The Libraries have been occupied since March to stop Labour controlled Hackney Council closing them down to save money. The attempted eviction on 9th September failed when the occupiers called in reinforcements. 200 Council workers struck for half the day in support of the occupiers.

NALGO Union leaders are trying to dampen things down, but to ensure victory the action needs to spread to involve other workers and residents hit by a whole range of cutbacks.

K O P & O

The sacked P & O ferry crews are fighting on at Dover. Since February they've been resisting P & O's plans for - 500 redundancies - £25 per week wage cuts - less holidays - lower safety standards, due to longer working hours.

Contact: Womens Support Group, Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. Tel: (0304) 367840.

Fed up of being ordered about and exploited? Sick of living in poverty while the profit system benefits a powerful few? Angry about men oppressing women? Disgusted at the many other injustices in today's society?

You're not alone. Lots of people round the globe are not only fed up, they're fighting back. In Counter Information we report this often-censored resistance, in the hope of encouraging more such activity.

We stress the importance of people directly controlling their struggles, outside the control of political parties, trade unions or any leaders. Replacing one set of rulers with another - as has happened in the 'Communist' Party - ruled regimes, and as left-wing parties and national liberation movements want - is no solution. We encourage today's resistance to aim for the complete overthrow of all relationships whereby some people oppress others. The world's resources should be owned and controlled by all, and used to satisfy human needs.

The Counter Information collective invites people to - send us articles and information - take bundles of the news-sheet to distribute - make a much needed donation towards our printing and postage costs - write for info on our Readers Meetings and the CI 'Supplement' - contact us if they'd like to join the CI collective. We wish to co-operate with all who share our aims.

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