



Bill Smiley

It's a long time since I read as much misdirected garbage as I have in the past weeks, concerning meat prices. Directed garbage is when you hit the target. Most of this hit the wrong target — the farmer.

For some mysterious reason, a lot of people look on the farmer as a flinty, money-grubbing character who takes a particular sadistic pleasure in gouging the poor working-man, not to mention the downtrodden executive, professional man, or school teacher.

It's just the opposite. For years, generations in this country, the farmer has been gouged by the rest of us, and here's one consumer who not only believes, but knows, that the average farmer has had a tinier share of our twentieth century affluence than any other segment of our community, including those on welfare, proportionately.

There are a few exceptions. There are a few wealthy farmers. Just as there are a few wealthy school teachers. In the case of the farmer, it is the man whose forefathers were lucky enough to clear a farm near a big city-to-be. His land has become valuable for building and he can sit on it and watch the value appreciate. But he's not a real farmer any more.

The real farmer is the fellow who works hours-per-week that would have an industrial worker screaming for the union, owns one suit, hasn't had a holiday in years, owes money at the bank, and has a net income of about \$4,000 a year.

He's got to be a gambler, a fatalist, and a man in whom hope springs eternal. He gambles on the weather and the market, must accept disaster with a shrug, and must begin each new season with optimism.

More and more, in regions of marginal farming and small, mixed farming, we see that the farmer must have a job in town if he is to enjoy more than a frugal living.

More and more we see that it is only the big farmer or the specialist who can meet the bills and make a decent living.

More and more we see that farming has become an industry in which the investment in land, machinery, supplies and labor is inordinate in comparison to the returns.

If an average farmer charged himself wages for his own work, he'd show a net loss. He'd be better to put his money into a hot-dog stand.

Let's take an average beef farmer. He has no sock of gold under the bed. He must borrow money to buy stock, machinery, feed, fertilizer. He must pay interest on this money to our established banks, which are no less greedy than they were in the depression. They merely have a better "image" because they have a big public relations program.

While his beef is becoming beef, this farmer has nothing coming in, except interest charges on his loan. When his beef is ready, does he set the price? He does not. He sells it at auction. Who drives up the price? The beef-hungry consumer, that's who.

Marie Antoinette, of ill-fated fame, said of the peasants who protested that they had no bread, "Let them eat cake." I'd reverse that a bit and say of people who say they can't afford beef, "Let them eat barley." It's very nutritious.

Perhaps I'm prejudiced. I grew up during the depression. If we had beef once a week, it was probably hamburger. As a kid, I was sometimes sent to the store for some "dog bones." These were beef bones with some meat on them, and they were free. The butcher knew darn well what they were for — a good pot of soup — but he winked at it.

Many a time our "dinner" was pea soup and home-made bread, with some preserves — wild berries picked by ourselves — for dessert. Nobody suffered malnutrition in that family.

Sometimes our "meat" was the ground-up skins of baked potatoes, mixed in with onions and fried potatoes. They gave it the appearance and roughage of meat. If not the flavor. Jolly good stuff.

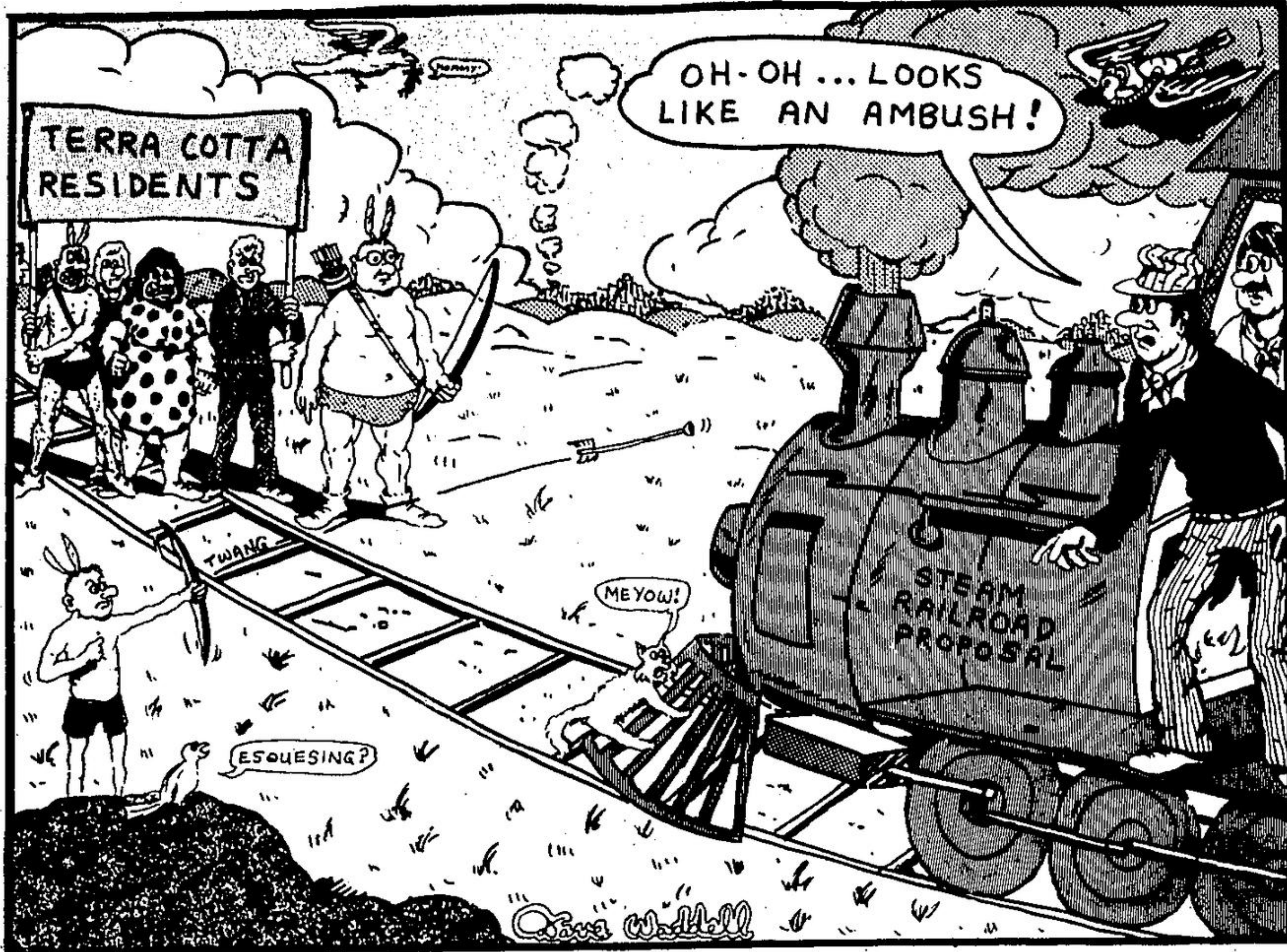
In prison camp, meat was merely something you thought about, like going to heaven. But a bowl of sweetened barley! Now, that was heaven.

I'm afraid it rather irks me to listen to a working-man who will buy a case of beer and a bottle of liquor on Friday night for \$11 whining in the supermarket on Saturday afternoon about the exorbitant price of meat.

And even more disgusting is the executive type. He's just finished regaling you with the details of his \$1,000 holiday in the south, snorkelling, rum punch cocktail parties, the works, when his wife starts howling like a hyena because their food bill is up three bucks a week.

There are some holes in the chain of food prices. But don't blame the farmer. He's the last to benefit when prices go up, the first to suffer when they go down.

Show me a rich farmer and I'll show you a rich weekly editor, or a rich school teacher.



Old steam locomotives fiery dragons?

It is fashionable nowadays to take a poke at anything that moves, suggesting the environment will be polluted, noise intensified and people discomfited.

Nevertheless we were surprised, as we are sure the representatives of the Ontario Rail Association were, when their proposal to run a railway museum on rails from Cheltenham to Georgetown, was attacked so vociferously by the reeve of Esquesing and a member of a citizens' group from Terra Cotta opposed to the scheme.

We had figured the sight of the steam locomotives pulling passenger and freight cars through the most picturesque parts of Esquesing would more than compensate for the small amount of noise, smoke and vibration weekend trains would cause.

We were wrong.

Those steaming engines are really fire breathing dragons anxious to swallow houses, spew pollutants into the air and spread misery everywhere they go. Never mind the historical mish-mash, nor the preservation of a way of life which has almost vanished and attracts an increasing number of steam buffs.

This is dangerous stuff, man!

Perhaps it is because we have lived near a railway for most of our lives, seen the big steam giants replaced by diesels that never did attract like those steaming, gleaming iron horses, we can't get too alarmed about the revival. True, they quite possibly will bring many city people to the country eager to take a ride into Canada's past with as much of the authenticity as possible. And why not? It

is their country, too. We can't believe people can be too upset if their city cousins visit.

Surely, those of us who live in the countryside don't want to deny people from the city the advantages many of them miss through necessity in their concrete jungles and antiseptic heavens.

"What did they ever do to be refused a passport into the country?"

If these steam trains were going to be a daily feature that rocked the old northern rail bed with noise and vibration and spewed soot over the countryside, then it would be an iron horse of a different color. However, the steam buffs who intend to operate this page from the past are taking many precautions to ensure few people would ever be annoyed by infrequent weekend trains.

The average speed of these iron

monsters will be a pacifying 10 to 15 miles an hour, hardly enough to rock too many houses off their foundations. The coal they use is a special blend of sulphur something or other which falls well within the air pollution control laws. Crossings will be suitably guarded and these steam buffs declare the trains will be preceded by a man with a flag, if necessary.

The tranquil countryside will be disturbed—but only momentarily. Perhaps they will even create some pleasant diversion for those in the country who find the days long, without any artificial stimulation.

We can find little wrong with the Ontario Rail proposal to use the old CN "peanut" track a tourist trail. We doubt it could ever be as bad as painted and first-hand observation of the Gold Coast Railway in Florida, a similar operation, confirms our belief.

A newspaperman's dream - no typo errors

Sometimes this newspaper runs into a period when typographical errors have us almost tearing out hair in large gobs to feed to the computer that grinds out reading matter for this family journal.

They occur in the most embarrassing places—in headlines, people's names, sometimes disrupting the entire passage or paragraph, or putting a slant on the story the writer never intended. When it is deemed necessary, we run corrections because the pain they produce here must be worse

than for those who read them.

We were almost glad to see they are having problems in other places as well, as an editorial in a recent issue of the St. Marys Journal Argus attests.

"What this means," says the St. Marys paper, "is that human beings when setting type make mistakes. Their eyes skip over lines, miss words, see the same thing twice or press the wrong letter key. When the typesetter sits looking at printed material all day and part of the night, the chances

for error increase.

"The truly remarkable thing about the whole process is that relatively few errors do get into print."

"Newspapers operate against deadlines, so the whole matter of setting type, proof reading and correcting it, is carried on under pressure. Because of the way new machines space type, a single word error sometimes needs an entire paragraph reset, so when one error is corrected, another may occur.

"Despite the most rigorous

efforts to control them, some typographical errors get by everybody."

Alas, we have seemed to run into more than our share in the last few weeks. It has caused us severe embarrassment. But we continue to fight the enemy of all newspapers and like the Journal-Argus dream of the day when we all become perfect and errors are no more.

The sub-title of that dream is "A Newspaperman's Heaven."

Mini-Comment . . .

The Staff of the Georgetown Herald bid publisher Walter Biehn adieu last week after 33 years of association with the town's only newspaper. Walter has left the Herald, a business he bought in 1940, and then sold to Thomson Newspapers Limited in 1958, although continuing as publisher. They have been rich years for a highly respected member of the Georgetown community, decades in which the town grew from a relatively small 3,000 people to a population of over 17,000. With the growth came expansion and the attendant problems Walter took in his stride. There has always been a pleasant and close association between Walter Biehn and all of us at the Free Press, which we hope will continue as he takes over the position as manager of the North Halton Golf and Curling Club. We wish him every success in his new

venture. The good wishes of his many friends and admirers go with him.

Although the scores of the Stanley Cup eliminations favor Montreal Canadiens and Chicago Black Hawks at this writing, many of the road hockey games in town and country are coming out differently — in one case a band of eight year-old Toronto Maple Leafs clinched Lord Stanley's Basin.

When the Credit Valley Conservation Authority finishes its purchase of land in the Silver Creek area for another large conservation park, this town and district will be ringed by parkland operated by the various

authorities. The Credit Valley Authority has the Terra Cotta Limehouse and Silver Creek areas, the Grand Valley Authority has the Rockwood Conservation Park, another dam planned for Everton, and the Halton Region Authority has Kelson near Milton as well as the new Hilton Falls reservoir and the land adjacent to it. Much of the conservation of land is being done along the Niagara Escarpment, in conjunction with the provincial government's plan to preserve it along its length from Niagara Falls to Tobermory.

Although budgets at most municipal councils are set with much discussion and explanations, the usual procedure at Esquesing council is to strike the mill rate by simply passing a by-law. Figures

have been perused by council at committee meetings, we presume, and only legalities are observed at the regular meeting. This method has a lot to commend it but the public sometimes could use a few explanations of the budget which we also presume can be obtained by contacting any member of council.

The provincial government's new property tax stabilization plan is also an incentive for municipalities to hold the spending line. Any municipalities which keep 1973 expenditures growth rate to eight per cent or lower will receive a grant of six per cent of its municipal levies in the next year. The rate for municipalities which increase spending by 12 per cent or more will drop to two per cent.

Free Press Back Issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, April 20, 1953.

In spite of skies that wept all day and cold spring winds that made any shelter better, Peanut Day of Acton Rotary Club had the spirit of "the show must go on" and the funds must be raised. It appears Peanut Day netted between \$400 and \$500.

Acton Citizens' Band started things off with a parade and between showers the Peanut float with the Peanut Queen and dancing peanut men paraded and made headquarters at Mill and Willow. President Johnny Goy and fellow Rotarians carried on till six o'clock. Winner of the Force electric hot plate was Pat Patrick with a guess of 198,000 peanuts on the float.

Walker Lodge ladies' night was held in the parish hall. There were cards and entertainment by Bob Redfern and Crawford Douglas and accordion solos by J. Candler. The Rhythm Ramblers orchestra provided music. Bro. S. Snow headed the committee.

Acton lost one of its well-beloved citizens when the Rev. H. L. Bennie M.A. passed to his rest at his home Thursday after a long illness patiently borne. He was the minister of Knox church from 1930 to 1942 and following his retirement in 1948 he came to Acton to live.

Limehouse hall board sponsored the final euvre of the season with Hull's orchestra playing for dinner. Norman Perong held the lucky ticket in a draw.

The Duke of Devonshire chapter of the I.O.D.E. entertained the Basic English class at the high school at the conclusion of the season.

Joan Aitken is president of Osprings willing Gardeners. Leader is Doris Fines.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 26, 1923.

Mr. Fred Blow addressed Council proposing erecting a factory. He requested a free site, free power and a fixed assessment. His motor parts factory would employ 12 hands. It was decided to call a public meeting to ascertain the views of citizens.

In commemoration of the fourteenth anniversary of the organization of Woodgreen Lodge of the Sons of England a banquet was held at the Station Hotel last Thursday evening. Fifty or sixty of the members, visitors and Supreme Officers partook of the following elaborate menu: canapés of anchovies, consommé royal, baked fish à la epicurienne, croquettes of veal, roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, petits pois, potatoes au gratin, deep apple pie in whipped cream, Welsh rarebit, cheese biscuits, dessert, coffee. Mr. Fred Coles, a member of the local lodge, was catered ably assisted by the members' wives and lady friends. Bro. J. Precious was toastmaster and toasts were proposed by Bro. Theford, Bro. G. Musselle, Bro. H. Harwood, and Bro. J. P. Scarrow.

Mr. Roy Brown, son of John Brown Esq., Willow St., has completed his course in electrical engineering at the School of Practical Science. He won honor standing. He has a bright future before him.

Beardmore and Co. wish to install water in all their houses. They hope that mains will be laid to Cameron St.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 28, 1898.

One of Acton's oldest and best known landmarks had ruthless hands placed upon it the past week. No building in our town has more hallowed memories clustering about it than the old edifice used by Knox church as a place of worship for half a century and many will feel a pang at its demolition. Mr. John Cameron, who dismantled it, will put it to a good cause. The front section on Main St. will be converted into very comfortable homes.

The first stacks of timber for the building were brought to town in 1845 and the building was finished in 1847 in time to collect a gratuity of \$200 offered by a Mr. Buchanan of Hamilton to each of the first ten "Free Churches" erected after the date of his offer. For three years the pulpit was filled by resident ministers in the vicinity and students from Knox College. Rev. John McLachlan was the first stated minister in 1851. The first elders were Duncan Kennedy, James Lindsay and John McKinnon. The first addition to these pioneer elders was Donald McBaine. First deacons were Ninian Lindsay Sr. and Archibald Campbell.

A score or more of big dogs are to be seen in Acton which are worthless to their owners and a nuisance to everyone else.

The Toronto morning and evening papers are in great demand and the latest news of the U.S.-Spanish war is eagerly read.

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