



HISTORICAL **SW&S** PORTRAITS OF
IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL LEADERS IN **SOCIAL WORK**

Dame Eileen Younghusband (Jan. 1902 – May 1981), United Kingdom

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Introduction

Dame Eileen Younghusband died in a car accident on a lecture tour in the USA at a point when preparations had commenced for her 80th Birthday celebrations. Her working life had spanned a significant era in the history of the development of social work and education for the profession in the UK and more widely; and she herself had made a major contribution to these developments. She differs from earlier pioneering figures presented in these historical portraits in representing ‘the next generation’ of significant women in the history of social work. Nevertheless, she *was* a pioneer in the sense of initiating radical changes as described later in this portrait.

The task of presenting a rounded picture of the life of Eileen Younghusband has been aided not only by written records, including texts and reports bearing her name, but also by the existence of a few recordings of her later presentations and the written and verbal recollections of many people. These include former colleagues, students and friends - people who knew her in one or more of her many roles as teacher; organiser; committee member; chair; or president. While these various individual sources present a partial picture and give rise to contradictory information, in combination they help us form a clearer picture of the life and contribution of this eminent woman.

While not a ‘founding mother’, Eileen Younghusband led or contributed to radical changes in social work education and organisation in the UK in the post-second world war period. Her influence was also felt more widely through her European and international activities, and particularly through her role in the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). To social workers trained in the UK in the second half of the 20th century her name was associated with major government reports and with the establishment of the National Institute of Social Work in London. It was there that, until summer 2002², some of the

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² In summer 2002, following the establishment of new systems and institutions for the regulation and training of social workers and for research in the UK, the National Institute of Social Work was disbanded. The historic

archives relating to her life and work were stored and her portrait made her face familiar to generations of social workers engaged in post qualifying training and research. To social workers throughout the world she has been commemorated in the biennial Eileen Younghusband Memorial Lectures (inaugurated 1984) when a current social work educator is invited to speak at the IASSW Congress on a topic of relevance to international social work.

Biography and character

As a social worker it is inevitable to speculate on what made Eileen Younghusband the person she became. Material from different sources (Jones 1981; Jones 1984; Wilson 1982; and various websites) indicate that she came from a privileged background but suggest that her early home life (in Westerham, Kent, and also in India, (Desai 1982)) may not have been easy. There is emphasis on her father's status and talents (variously described as a distinguished mountaineer and explorer; a military and colonial services officer; and an author and mystic); and mention is made of her devotion to him. However, the few passing references to her mother describe her as a 'socialite' who found it difficult to understand her daughter's passions (Jones 1981) and from whose 'social expectations' Eileen needed to escape. She was educated by a governess and lacked the qualifications to gain entry to University (Wilson 1982), although many sources refer to her love of learning and incisive mind.

Biographers and tributes (gathered in a special Silver Jubilee Volume of *International Social Work* 1982³) indicate that the adult Eileen Younghusband was a very private person who remained single. However, she reputedly had a great capacity for friendship. One testimonial noted 'she was not particularly at home in music or the visual arts but...friendship was her own particular aesthetic gift' (Wilson 1982, p.3). Friendships across years and continents were maintained through letters and telephone calls as well as visiting and entertaining at home (for the last forty years a flat in West London). Several sources note her love of travel, for example, 'travel excited her. It ... offered glimpses of how people thought, lived and organised themselves in different territories and societies; it brought many enduring friendships and challenged her to new thinking about ... old problems' (Cooper 1982, p.17). Eileen Younghusband reputedly loved nature and, while not a member of any organised Church or other religion, she 'continued her father's work as President of the World Congress of Faiths' (Obituary, *The Times* 30/5/81) and was described in one testimonial as a 'humanist ... (and) a down to earth visionary' (Desai 1982, p6-7).

Various sources state that Eileen Younghusband entered working life (at the age of 22 years) as a social worker in South and East London (1924-29) and through work in Settlements in Bermondsey and Stepney became familiar with the lives and conditions of working girls and women (Jones 1981). This first step in a social work career was apparently prompted by a friend who impressed upon her the importance of having a purpose in life (Philpott 1981) although we might also see it as a sign of rebelliousness against social expectations already noted. Her work clearly led to heightened understanding of the privations and resourcefulness

building, formerly a settlement serving the urban housing estates near the busy stations of Euston and Kings Cross/St Pancras in North London, was sold. Its functions and resources were variously distributed and the DEY archives have been relocated to Warwick University.

³ Warm acknowledgements are due to Kathleen Kendall for the loan of the special edition of *International Social Work*; and to Rachael Pierce for the loan of the tape recorded presentation by Dame Eileen Younghusband at Birmingham Polytechnic in 1981. I would also like to express my appreciation to other people who volunteered additional reflections, but whose offers I was unable to fully exploit for lack of time).

of people in poverty and laid an experiential basis for her future activities as an educator, organiser, policy analyst and consultant, as well as establishing or consolidating ‘an acute sense of social injustice and an instinct to serve’ (Jones 1981, p.46). Her interest in children, young people and families continued as a strand in her working life, partly through her role as a Justice of the Peace from 1933-66 (Stafford 1982), (including a long period as Chairman (*sic*) of Hammersmith Juvenile Court Bench), and also through her later association with the work of the Institute of Marital Affairs (Sutherland 1982); and during ‘war work’ as the Principal Officer for Employment and Training at the National Association of Girl’s Clubs (1939-44).

Overlapping her early settlement work, and in spite of illness from poliomyelitis, in 1926, Eileen Younghusband took another decisive step in her career. She enrolled at London School of Economics and took a Certificate course in Social Studies and a Diploma in Sociology. She then served on the staff at LSE as a lecturer in social studies from 1929 until 1939, returning from 1944 to 1958/9. It was in this role that she was credited with ‘attempting to integrate theory and practice in social service’ (Obituary, *The Times* 30/5/81); and pioneered from 1954 a new generic social work course⁴ for post-graduates (which later replaced a system of smaller, specialised courses). As an ex-student (and subsequent educator) from the first generic course wrote, Eileen Younghusband established herself as ‘a wise and supportive head of a new departure in social work education and training. Bringing together the varied vested interests in training – government departments, professional bodies, educationalists – in a bold experiment was no mean achievement’ (Pierce 2002).

In 1955, Eileen Younghusband, described as a Lecturer and Director of Fieldwork Studies, and Director of an innovative new generic course in social work at LSE, was awarded an Honorary Doctorate (of Laws) by the University of British Columbia. Academic recognition also came through Honorary Doctorates from the UK universities of York, Nottingham and Bradford, as well as further international recognition from the University of Hong Kong (1972). She was publicly recognised through the British Honours system, being awarded an MBE (1946), a CBE (1955) and created a Dame in 1964⁵. These public honours were mainly for her significant work on various national Committees, including two in the 1940s that resulted in the ‘Carnegie Reports’ of 1947 and 1950. Over thirty years her committee membership and leadership spanned a broad field (including penal reform, child care, youth service, care of old people, family welfare, social work education and international social work) reflecting her wide-ranging professional interests and knowledge as well as her ‘creativity’; ‘a tough and incisive mind’ and ability to provide ‘quiet but firm leadership’ (all qualities identified in various tributes penned after her death).

Despite her positive qualities and prodigious output people who knew her have also suggested that Eileen Younghusband did not suffer fools gladly, liked her own way and could be obstinate. Her high public profile and personality might have generated envy or antagonism in academic circles. There was also some feeling that a social work course should be run by someone holding a professional social work qualification (Jones 1981). For whatever reasons, all did not run smoothly in her later years at LSE and in 1959 she resigned (She was,

⁴ Sometimes referred to as the Carnegie course reflecting the sponsorship of the Committee that Eileen Younghusband had chaired and which produced recommendations for such a move.

⁵ MBE -Member of the Order of the British Empire; CBE - Commander of the Order of the British Empire; Dame - female equivalent of a knighthood in the British Honours system awarded by the Monarch on the basis of recommendations.

however, awarded an Honorary Fellowship there in 1961). At the age of 57 years Eileen Younghusband was still fully engaged in public life, notably chairing a Committee that produced radical recommendations about social work in the Health and Welfare Departments and a new form of education and training in a report frequently known as the Younghusband Report. She also took on new professional tasks mainly in the area of consultancy in the UK (particularly through her association with the National Institute for Social Work) and abroad (of which more later), as well as undertaking most of her writing during this later period.

Contribution to Social Work

In summarising Dame Eileen Younghusband's significant contribution to social work, two areas of her major influence will be highlighted here - social work education; and analysis and development of social work and social services organisation and practice (in the UK). (Her international work will be discussed in the next section). Apart from her particular role as a social work educator and consultant, it was through her Committee work that Younghusband's impact was felt in social work services and social work education. Cooper (1982) suggested that, like Beatrice Webb (an earlier British social reformer), Eileen Younghusband 'equipped herself to make full use of the committee system and the published report as a way of achieving social reform'. Cooper also attributed to her a proper understanding of the importance of systems and institutions, but as Wilson (1982) noted, 'though much of her public work was about institutions she never forgot that their purpose was to care for persons' (p.3).

Dame Eileen herself gave a lucid description of the British context in a speech at the then Birmingham Polytechnic in 1981 (In appearance she has been described as slight and fragile (Stein 1982) but her voice is strong and clear in the recording). She focused on the origins of a new form of social work education in 1961; the fortunes of social work (or lack of them) in 1981; and looked ahead to the prospects for 2001, quipping 'apart, of course, from some of us being dead'. I shall paraphrase some of her comments in italics while describing the changes to which she made such a significant contribution.

The 1950s in Britain were typified in a Prime ministerial remark of the time as the 'you have never had it so good' years, although the 'rediscovery of poverty' by researchers and academics in the mid sixties somewhat undermined this claim. Dame Eileen described *welfare work in the local authority departments of Health and Welfare as a 'rag bag' of activities after the upheaval of the dismantling of the Poor Law in 1948*. The period 1944-48 had seen the introduction of several major pieces of legislation as the basis for substantial changes in health, education, income maintenance and in child care (already developing as a specialist area of social work under the Home Office -together with Probation, rather than within the then Ministry of Health). *Different workers (in local authority Health and Welfare departments) dealt with a diversity of needs in people with problems related to mental illness; mental disability; visual and auditory disabilities, physical disabilities; old age, homelessness and unmarried motherhood*, conditions which, when allied to poverty and/or concerns about moral character, would have driven some people into the workhouse or the asylum or necessitated outdoor or charitable relief under (New) Poor Law legislation, dating from 1834 and operative in some guise until 1948.

Dame Eileen noted that *the enquiry* ('Younghusband' Report, 1959) *delved into this complex and varied range of provisions*. It found that *there was no existing research ...nor systematic data collection about the numbers of people in need or the nature of their needs*. There was (also) *'no understanding that medical classification was not necessarily synonymous with*

social work analysis; (and) no related demographic studies or social policy for social services'. Additionally the social workers (in these departments) were 'almost wholly untrained'... and although salary levels were 'not bad' for the period, there was a lack of opportunities for promotion or specialist practice – and the concept of 'staff development' was unknown.

Dame Eileen summarised the situation as '*chaotic, with some good work, some pointless and some damaging*': *crucially it had 'no sense of direction based on evidence' and included no preventive work... there was a lack of professional standards with no supervision, case reviews or adequate records. The task facing the Committee of Inquiry therefore was 'how to break through and modernise a stagnant service'. The Committee saw the main key to change as training (but) judged that the few specialist social work courses in the universities could not expand to train the numbers needed and thus made the 'revolutionary proposal' that 'two year courses of a good standard should be started outside the universities' in colleges of further education⁶. Dame Eileen described the courses as *successful and a decade later (as) turning out more trained social workers (including for child care work) than the mostly post-graduate courses in the University sector.**

There was indeed a huge increase in the number of qualifying courses in the late 1960s (continuing into the 1970s) associated in part with the establishment and expansion of the Polytechnic sector, but it is an irony that this bold experiment might also have had the undesired consequence of marking social work as an occupation trained to sub-degree level. This has been a position that has been difficult to shift, although from the 1970s some of the Polytechnics and a few small universities chose to introduce degree courses (with social work training usually 'integrated' into four year sociology or social science degrees). In 1989, the government was deaf to arguments for a general upgrading of all training to (minimally) degree level at the time of the European Directive on Professional Training; and, under government influence, CCETSW proposed significant changes to basic training and to the qualifications system for social work, continuing the firm anchoring of much of social work training at sub-degree level (Lyons 1999)⁷.

With regard to other possibly 'unintended consequences' Hearn (1992) and others have also suggested that improvements in pay and working conditions as well as the development of career structures within the revised departments (together with changes a decade later) contributed to the increase of men in social work, and their disproportionate representation in management posts up to the present day. Perry and Cree cite a more direct relationship between Younghusband's earlier work and men's position in social work: 'men were seen as critical to the professionalisation project since only then would social workers command a salary 'better than that of a shorthand typist'' (Perry and Cree, forthcoming, quoting from the 1947 Carnegie Report).

Dame Eileen concluded that *in 1961 British social work had 'much to learn about practice, policy, management, professional services and support, training and the use of qualified social workers' but that...reflection showed how much had been learned in the intervening 20*

⁶ Birmingham College of Commerce (a predecessor body of the Birmingham Polytechnic) was one of four institutions chosen to pilot the new course, Certificate in Social Work, from 1961)

⁷ Agreement to three year/ degree level training has only recently been achieved and at the time of writing British social work educators are engaging in consultations with government and local agencies to bring on stream new programmes and awards from 2003 or 2004.

year period, notwithstanding the 'pretty depressed' state that British social work found itself in by 1981. Dame Eileen noted that Birmingham Polytechnic course syllabus of 1981 was *'better presented, more analytical, based on more coherent knowledge, (and) more sophisticated than 20 years ago'... but that 'the subjects (taught) are essentially the same except that history (of social work) is left out'*. She concurs with the view that *'you can't know where you are going unless you know where you have been'*. Unfortunately the omission of a historical perspective is still widespread in British social work as surveys in the mid 1990s and again in 2000 demonstrated (Lyons 1999; Lyons 2000) although the recent establishment of a Social Work History Network might suggest some growing interest in this area.

A new review of the diverse statutory services in 1968, resulted in the Seebohm Report (1968) and the unification of most forms of children's and adult services (with the exception of and Probation and Education Welfare services), under new legislation (the Local Authority Social Services Act (LASS), 1970) and the establishment from 1971 of the new Social Service Departments. This period was described by Dame Eileen as *a time when 'the barriers between services came down and separate specialised courses merged into new generic courses offering one award, the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work'*. This major change occurred from 1971, when the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) replaced the Council for Social Work Training. Both the wholesale move to generic courses, and the unification of social work training into one professional award, built on the developments initiated by Eileen Younghusband herself a decade earlier.

Dame Eileen contrasted the situation of the early 1960s when *'everyone knew that the services...were set to change and expand (and) experiment... was in the air' relative to the 'contraction' and internal 'confusions and uncertainties' of 1981* and notable in her published work (and not surprising given her range of experience), are her references to preventive work, group work and community work, traditions almost lost within the current local authority social service departments and now only surviving (or being reinvented) outside the formal boundaries of social work agencies and posts in the UK (Jordan with Jordan 2000).

Dame Eileen also referred to develop 'management and good agency practice and policies' – but one wonders what she would have made of the subsequent managerialist agenda and style and the later advent of the commercial sector in the provision of social work and social care. Certainly, in looking ahead to 2001 she did not foresee the rapid and substantial shift to the mixed economy of care that now characterises social work. Nor did she make any mention of European policy developments or international perspectives, although clearly in many respects she was a committed 'internationalist' (see later).

What Younghusband did hope for in 2001 was *a situation in which the British economy was booming, with concomitant improvement in living standards for all, when the microchip revolution would be established and when society would have devised ways of giving a 'good income and interesting life free from stigma, with or without paid employment'*. This last point relates to an emerging discourse about the nature of citizenship (rights and responsibilities); and how society might value the unpaid contributions of many not in the formal workforce (Jordan with Jordan 2000). The bringing in to full citizenship of all marginalized and excluded groups, and the notion of 'global citizenship', are aspirations that would surely have appealed to Dame Eileen Younghusband.

In considering her place in British social work education we should take a brief look at Eileen Younghusband's academic writing. Walton (1982) suggested that Younghusband did not make a major contribution to social work theory but that her writing was always 'clear and refreshing'. She made useful contributions to the British literature being established by the National Institute for Social Work in the 1960s and her final major work (*Social Work in Great Britain, 1950-75 (1978)*) was judged by Walton to be the 'definitive work on the period'. Barker (1982) noted that this text was criticised by some as lacking analysis but she summarised Younghusband's own view that 'a detailed and factual analysis would speak for itself'.

International Activities

Finally, turning to Eileen Younghusband's role in 'international work', this could be seen as starting during the Second World War years and then running alongside her national activities until her death. The 1982 Memorial Edition of *International Social Work* carried numerous tributes from representatives of Schools of Social Work and national associations in Europe; from educators in Commonwealth countries; and from representatives of United Nations bodies and other international associations, reflecting Dame Eileen's global interests and impact. Interestingly, Cooper (1982, p.4) noted that her international activities, 'gave her a wider sphere of influence than the political or social work establishments would give her at home', despite the apparent stature attributed (retrospectively) to her nationally.

With regard to her first experience of 'international work', this came in the form of employment by the British Council to run a course on 'Social Work for Allied Nationals' that aimed to train Czech, Polish, Dutch, French Greek and other refugees/ students to work in UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration programmes (to aid post-war return of refugees and national reconstruction). This not only tapped into Eileen Younghusband's experience as a social worker and educator but also her ability to relate to people from a variety of different backgrounds, as illustrated by one student's experience 'we felt wholly understood and safe and wholly supported by her' (Powell 1982, p61). Younghusband was also involved in the late 1940s in launching a UN Fellowships programme and led seminars in the early 1950s for the European Social Development programme aimed at training social workers for practice in a range of European countries (Iliovici 1982).

Her involvement with the International Association of Schools of Social Work began when she joined the Board of IASSW in 1950. In 1961 she was made President (after seven years as Vice President), a post she held until 1968, after which time she became Honorary President. The period 1954-66 were credited by Kendall (1998) as the 'years of consolidation' in the history of IASSW, and Eileen Younghusband played a significant part in this phase, both through her 'direct work' in training and consultancy, and (for part of the time) through her leadership of the Association. Strategically, she was credited by Desai (1982) with assisting in the formation of two regional associations (of Schools) in Africa and Latin America; and by Kendall (1982) with shifting IASSW from 'a predominantly Western organisation ... into a worldwide association closely linked with the UN in establishing schools of social work throughout the developing world and promoting high standards of social work education in all countries' (p.13). Ensuring global (as opposed to western) representation; maintaining links with other international bodies, assisting new national associations; and promoting high standards in social work education in all countries are tasks that continue to engage the efforts of the Association today.

It was also during the 1950s that a long association with a number of American colleagues began, although the influence of American ideas and practises in social work and education on her thinking and proposals for UK developments were evident from the 1940s (Jones 1981; Walton 1982). In relation to individuals, her work in IASSW brought her into close association with another significant person in the field of international social work, the then General Secretary of IASSW, Katherine Kendall. She also came into contact with an eminent American academic, Charlotte Towle, and was so impressed by her ideas about generic social work (Towle 1953) that she arranged for her to come to the UK on a Fullbright scholarship to act as a consultant to the new generic course at the LSE (Rall 1982). Meanwhile, Younghusband's own expertise in the area of criminal justice was also being sought on the other side of the Atlantic and she provided consultation to the Council of Social Work Education staff working on a Corrections Project in 1960 (Witte 1982). Apparently these early contacts often laid the basis for longer term friendships (for example, with Kendall and Towle) and one commentator suggested that she particularly enjoyed 'working holidays' in the USA where she felt more free to be herself (Barker 1982).

Another strand in her international work was through her activities in relation to former British colonies or Commonwealth Countries. Her strong personal and professional relationships with Canadian leaders in social welfare (Splane 1982) have already been indicated; but additionally she spent a period at the Tata Institute in India in 1953, assisting in a review of courses there (Desai 1982); and was an adviser to the Hong Kong Government in 1960 on plans to establish social work education and in-service training in Hong Kong (Hodge 1982). These were both countries to which she returned at a later stage in her career as well as advising on social work education in Singapore in 1979 (Wee 1982); and preparing reports on social work training in East and West Africa and in the West Indies (Desai 1982).

Her influence as a consultant/ advisor on social work training partly resulted from her role in conducting the 3rd Global Survey of Social Work Training for the UN in 1958/9, which 'served as a guide for curriculum development, particularly in the new schools of social work' (Kendall, 1982, p.13). UN representatives referred to this study as presenting a keen analysis of trends and goals in social work education (Henderson and Branscombe 1982) and Rao (1982) suggested that it paved the way for the emergence of social welfare training closely linked to indigenous cultures as well as national development priorities – again continuing challenges in the work of development agencies and social work educators. The UN report was certainly credited as having a significant influence on the development of Swiss schools of social work in the 1960s (Stahel and Boeglin 1982), and this was another country to which she returned and continued to give inspiration through her presentations later in life, notably in a seminar on Gerontology in 1976 (Mannherd 1982).

Younghusband's role in IASWW also brought her into contact with the leaders of national, regional and other international social work associations. One tribute from a president of the International Federation of Social Workers recorded that Eileen Younghusband was 'primarily an educator, (but) she always realized that the chief aim of quality in education was to achieve quality in practice' (Alexander, 1982, p.32). It was the International Council of Social Welfare that honoured her later in her life when she was presented with the Rene Sand Award⁸ in Brazil in 1976. On that occasion she gave an address entitled 'Shall we make it?'

⁸ Rene Sand, a Belgian Physician, was the prime mover in establishing the 1st International Conference of Social Work (Paris, 1929) and subsequently with the formation of the International Council for Social Welfare. He also served as the President of IASSW from 1946 to his death (1953) (Kendall 1998).

Reflections on Equal Opportunity' (Katzi 1982) suggesting continued thinking that was ahead of her time.

Conclusion

So what meaning does Dame Eileen Younghusband have for us today? She has been described as not a Victorian, but exemplifying some of its values, for example, public service as a moral duty for people with privilege and endowment (Cooper 1982) and also as being able to use her position in 'the establishment' and influential connections to access financial and institutional support for social work. As such, she had a profound influence on the professionalisation of social work and social services in the post-war period in the UK and on the shape of social work education in the second half of the 20th century. She identified issues and proposed changes to systems and practices which still challenge us today, including the need for an iterative process between the field and the academy; educational opportunities for people without university entrance qualifications; and in-service training and other forms of support for all staff.

On the international stage she was described as 'very British but a true internationalist' (Kendall 1982) and clearly used her considerable knowledge and experience to make a significant contribution to the spread of ideas about organisation of services, training and practice beyond the UK. In both domestic and international contexts, despite the lack of a formal social work qualification she demonstrated *par excellence* the central and inter-related capacities essential in all good social workers, to think, to act and to relate. On this last point many sources attest to her capacity to 'reach out across the barriers of race, age and social class with genuine warmth and understanding' (Jones 1981, p.46); to ask pertinent but sensitive questions; to listen; and to provide wise counsel. Alongside these interpersonal skills, a picture emerges of a woman committed to a varied range of roles and tasks (usually concurrently), for whom work was an integral part of her life and itself an opportunity for stimulation and reward as well as a form of service and source of companionship. She clearly had vision but could also keep track of detail while thinking strategically.

One wonders what she might have made of developments since her death. I think that she would have been dismayed by the narrowing of UK social work to the point where preventive work; community work and Probation are now designated as 'outside' social work; although no doubt she would have been interested in the initiatives to address access to training; continuing professional development and equal opportunities in both social work organisations and training programmes. I suspect that she would have engaged energetically in debates about the role of the European Union in influencing national welfare policies and professional training patterns; in seeking to address concerns about migration and refugees; and in discussions and teaching about the relevance of globalisation for social workers and the impact of the process on the lives of citizens (particularly those in poverty) across the world. She was indeed a remarkable woman who contributed significantly to the history of social work, a fragment of which (in one place and time) she also chronicled. Finally, in the Swiss seminar on Gerontology mentioned earlier, Dame Eileen Younghusband quoted an English psychiatrist '*My dearest wish is that I should be alive when I die*' (Younghusband 1976, reprinted 1982, p.75) - an aspiration she certainly achieved.

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(More than a dozen books or reports bear her name or imprint)

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