

AGM and Conference

Saturday 23 June 2012
Royal Air Force Club,
128 Piccadilly, London W1
10.30am to 4.45pm.

This year we are looking forward to welcoming **Harry Benson** and **Dr Tony Sewell**.



Following careers as a Royal Navy pilot and as a businessman in Asia, **Harry Benson** founded the Bristol Community Family Trust in 2002 and has run over 400 marriage, relationship and mentoring courses in the Bristol area.

Married for 25 years with six children, he is the author of *Mentoring Marriages* (see Bulletin 122) and *Let's Stick Together – The Relationship Book for New Parents* (see Bulletin 143). He will speak on the subject of '**The Marriage Foundation**', which is also the name of the newly-formed organisation which he serves as director (see back page of this bulletin).



Dr Tony Sewell is the founder and director of *Generating Genius*, a project which takes children and young people from challenging social circumstances and encourages them to strive for excellence through high standards of self-

discipline, behaviour and academic performance. He has published widely on the experience of boys in education and is the author of *Generating Genius: Black boys in search of love, ritual and schooling*. He will address the conference on the topic, '**Rules, Rites and Rituals: The building of great families and schools**'.

Please let the office know if you are planning to attend. There is no charge for attending the conference, and we are able to offer a two-course lunch for the subsidised price of £25.00. To reserve a lunch, please send a cheque for £25.00 made payable to 'Family Education Trust'.

We hope you will join us if you are able.

Same-sex marriage: Time for action

Although it is styled a consultation paper, the government's document on 'Equal civil marriage' reads more like a declaration of intent. The fact that the document is framed in terms of 'how' to legislate for same-sex marriage suggests that the government remains determined to redefine marriage, regardless of what the public thinks. The government has also made it clear that it is not interested in a meaningful debate in which all the issues can be thoroughly explored and debated. Only four of the 16 consultation questions invite respondents to provide reasons for their views, and even then responses are limited to around 200 words per question, leading to the exercise being dubbed a 'soundbite consultation'.

Not a foregone conclusion

Nevertheless, all is far from lost. At the end of February, Family Education Trust helped to bring into the open the government's undemocratic approach on this issue by means of a letter published in the *Daily Telegraph*.¹ This, combined with the rapid growth of the Coalition for Marriage (C4M) petition, prompted the inclusion of a question asking whether or not the public agreed with the plan to introduce same-sex marriage. This is a question that the government had originally said would not be asked.

When the consultation was launched on 15 March, the C4M petition had around 200,000 signatures. Since then, it has continued to grow and is now approaching the half a million mark, making it by far the largest public petition in the UK since the 2010 General Election. A ComRes poll of 2,000 people in February 2012 found that 70 per cent take the view that marriage should remain an exclusive commitment between a man and a woman.²

The strength of public opposition to the government's proposals appears to be getting through to the Prime Minister. At a Downing Street reception for church leaders before Easter, David Cameron spoke in terms of 'if' same-sex marriage were introduced rather than 'when', although he indicated that he remained personally committed to it.

Time to act

Family Education Trust encourages supporters to act in three ways to support marriage:

- If you have not already done so, please sign the C4M petition at www.c4m.org.uk
- Write to your MP at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
- Respond to the public consultation before the closing date of 14 June 2012.

♦ **Government Equalities Office, Equal civil marriage: a consultation**
<http://homeoffice.gov.uk/equal-civil-marriage>

Responses may be submitted in one of three ways:

(a) online at <http://homeoffice.gov.uk/equal-civil-marriage>

(b) by email to equalcivilmarriage@geo.gsi.gov.uk or

(c) by post to: Equal civil marriage consultation, Government Equalities Office, 3rd Floor Fry, 2 Marsham St, London, SW1P 4DF.

Notes

1. *Daily Telegraph* letters, 27 February 2012.

2. Marriage Survey, ComRes, 23-24 February 2012, Table 1, page 2.



Government resorts to legal fiction in flawed consultation

Norman Wells critiques the government's public consultation on same-sex marriage

Marriage is defined in law as 'the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others'. Defined in this way, marriage is an institution which has benefited couples, children and communities for centuries. It takes a man and a woman to produce a child and all the available evidence confirms that children tend to do better

in terms of health, education and social development when they are raised by their natural parents in the context of a married relationship.

Instead of coming clean and admitting that the government's plan is to change the definition of marriage - and thus to change the nature of the institution for everyone - the consultation paper engages in a piece of legal fiction. The document repeatedly refers to a non-existent distinction between 'civil' and 'religious' marriage and there are no less than 14 references to lifting a non-existent 'ban' on same-sex marriage in the document. But there is no more a ban on same-sex marriage than there is a ban on two-storey bungalows or three-wheeled bicycles!

There are four key elements in the legal definition of marriage: it is voluntary, it is monogamous, it is lifelong, and it is heterosexual. All four are fundamental to the character of marriage. Parliament should no more be asked to redefine marriage so that it embraces same-sex partnerships than it should be asked to redefine it to allow forced marriages, polygamous marriages or marriage contracts of temporary duration.

Serious issues

The claim is sometimes made that the campaign for same-sex marriage is simply about allowing two people who love each other to marry, but it's not as straightforward as that. Brothers and sisters and other close family members who are closely attached to each other would not be permitted to marry under the government's proposals. As Professor Haldane of St Andrews University notes (see letter opposite), the consultation paper offers no explanation for their exclusion from the government's new all-inclusive version of marriage.

But let us assume that the reason for denying marriage to close family members of either sex is that the government views marriage as a sexual relationship and considers that it would be inappropriate to give legal recognition to incest. If it is this acknowledgement of a sexual dimension to marriage that is preventing the government from allowing any two people who love each other to marry, its refusal to grasp the thorny nettle of defining what constitutes same-sex consummation and same-sex adultery is all the more inexcusable.

These are serious issues that need to be addressed at the outset, not brushed under the carpet and left for the courts to clear up later. And nowhere does the consultation document consider the wider social implications of the government's

proposals, including the implications for what schools would be required to teach pupils about marriage.

Profoundly undemocratic

The fact that the consultation paper is framed in terms of 'how', not 'whether', to legislate for same-sex marriage suggests that the Home Secretary and Minister for Equalities are set on pursuing the unproven social experiment of redefining marriage, regardless of what the public thinks.

Bearing in mind that same-sex marriage did not feature in the manifesto of any of the major parties, the government has no mandate to introduce highly controversial legislation that would have far-reaching consequences for our culture. By stating a firm commitment to change the legal definition of marriage at this stage, the Home Office is pre-empting the outcome of the consultation and acting in a profoundly undemocratic way.

The charge of 'homophobia'

Same-sex marriage is being presented as such a fundamental issue of equality and social justice that its opponents are commonly dismissed as hate-filled bigots and homophobes, no matter how measured and reasoned their arguments. But if this really is a fundamental issue of equality and social justice that cannot wait to be addressed, it is strange that it escaped the attention of all the major political parties when they put together their manifestos only two years ago. Same-sex marriage certainly did not appear high among the political issues of concern to the electorate in the run-up to the General Election.

The Minister for Equalities, Lynne Featherstone, has attempted to suppress debate on same-sex marriage by claiming that its opponents are 'fanning the flames of homophobia'. Yet no one suggested that the Labour government was homo-

phobic when it insisted in 2004 that civil partnerships fully satisfied the needs of same-sex couples and that it had no intention of legislating for same-sex marriage. Neither did anyone level the charge of homophobia against the homosexual lobby group Stonewall before it started to campaign on this issue less than two years ago.

For too long, cries of 'homophobia' have been used as a mechanism to intimidate those inspired, not by personal hatred and animosity, but by genuine concern for the welfare of society. Instead of rushing to legislate without seriously considering the views of the electorate, the government should be encouraging a measured public debate on the nature and meaning of marriage. That way, all the awkward questions and implications can be calmly and openly addressed and not side-stepped as they are being at present.



"But, you see, Madam, bungalows come in all shapes and sizes these days!"

It is time to back marriage

Allowing husbands and wives to transfer unused tax allowances to each other would be a much more effective way of fighting poverty than increasing the personal tax allowance to £10,000, according to a report published by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) in advance of George Osborne's Budget in March.

The CSJ paper argues that reducing the financial deficit and securing economic growth will involve addressing failing schools, intergenerational worklessness and skyrocketing levels of family breakdown. Of these three, family breakdown is the most significant driver of social instability and poverty.

It is commonly assumed that increasing the personal tax allowance to £10,000 will benefit the poor more than the rich, whereas the middle classes stand to gain most from a transferable married couples allowance. However, the CSJ report demonstrates that the opposite is the case.

Analysis

Drawing on an analysis of statistics from the Institute of Fiscal Studies undertaken

by the policy think-tank CARE, the CSJ shows that 75 per cent of the benefit of increasing the personal tax threshold to £10,000 would go to the richer half of families, whereas 70 per cent of the benefit of a transferable tax allowance for married couples would go to the poorest 50 per cent of families. In fact, a fully transferable tax allowance would benefit poorer families to a greater extent than raising the income tax threshold. The CSJ

report explains:

'Higher tax thresholds favour the better off because those in the top 50 per cent of families are more likely to have two people in work. Both individuals would benefit from the higher threshold and between the two of them they have a tax free income of £20,000. Those in the poorest half of families are more likely to have only one person in work and can only earn £10,000 tax free.'

On the other hand, a transferable tax allowance would benefit married couples lower down the income scale where it is more likely that there will be only one spouse in work and even where both husband and wife are working, there is a greater likelihood that one will not be earning up to the full personal tax threshold.

Sending a signal

The CSJ rejects the charge that a transferable married couples tax allowance would constitute 'moral finger-wagging or telling people how to live their lives'. Rather, 'it would play a part in tackling the perverse incentives which currently persuade people on low incomes to reject couple formation and marriage' and send a signal that 'marriage is positive for children, adults and communities'. The report states:

'It also acknowledges that family breakdown is a leading cause of poverty, and that it is far more likely to occur when parents do not make an explicit commitment from the outset, usually through marriage. Furthermore, it requires a clear legal relationship: cohabitation is usually characterised by a lack of clarity; for example there is often no agreement as to when cohabitation actually started.'

In response to a recent parliamentary question, the Exchequer Secretary, David Gauke, stated: 'The Government's commitment to bringing forward a proposal to recognise marriage in the income tax system remains firm. We want to show we value commitment and will consider a range of options and bring proposals forward at the appropriate time.'¹

Note

1. HC Hansard, 23 April 2012, col 604W.

• Centre for Social Justice, *It is time to back marriage*, February 2012
www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk

If a gay couple can marry, why not also siblings?

SIR – Speaking to the Conservative Party conference in 2006, David Cameron said: "[Commitment] means something whether you're a man and a woman, a woman and a woman or a man and another man." At the 2011 conference, Mr Cameron said: "Conservatives believe in the ties that bind us; that society is stronger when we make vows to each other and support each other. So I don't support gay marriage despite being a Conservative. I support gay marriage because I'm a Conservative."

In 2010, Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, wrote: "Love is the same, straight or gay, so the civil institution should be the same, too. All couples should be able to make that commitment to one another." At this month's Liberal Democrat conference, he said: "If you are a young gay person, your freedom to love who you choose is a fundamental right in a liberal society – and you will always have our support."

A consistent pattern of argument emerges from these passages. People who love one another, whatever their sexuality, should be free to commit themselves to one another, and society should value that commitment and honour it by making marriage available to them.

In those countries where the arguments for same-sex marriage were first pressed, various polyamory and genetical sexual attraction groups now deploy parallel arguments in support of multi-party and sibling marriage (hetero- and homosexual). It is not a rhetorical question, therefore, to ask whether Messrs Cameron and Clegg are willing to extend their own reasoning to accommodate these further campaigns, and if not, why not.

In what particulars, if any, would they dissent from the following: "Commitment means something whether you are two or more, brother and brother, sister and sister. Conservatives believe in the ties that bind us. Love is the same, one or more, straight or gay, related or unrelated. Your freedom to love who you choose is a fundamental right in a liberal society – and you will always have our support"?

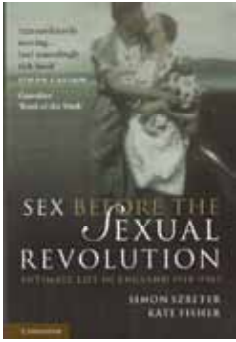
To repeat, this is a genuine question and it calls for a genuine answer.

John Haldane
St Andrews, Fife

• This letter was published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 21 March 2012 and is reproduced here by kind permission of the author.

John Haldane is Professor of Philosophy at St Andrews University and Director of the Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and Chairman of the Royal Institute of Philosophy.





Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England, 1918-1963

Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher,
Cambridge University Press,
2010, viii + 458pp, £19.99,
ISBN 978-0521149327

As a result of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a marked change in public attitudes towards sex and sexuality, and patterns of sexual behaviour. This has frequently been characterised as a positive development and described in terms of a liberation from repression and patriarchalism, and an entrance into a culture of openness and equality.

However, as the authors of this groundbreaking study point out, the architects of the history of sexuality have not been neutral observers, but are, rather, active participants in the revolution with an ideology to promote and an agenda to pursue. In addition, they express concern that 'historians have approached the history of sexuality during the twentieth century too strongly influenced by recent debates and the current agenda about sex, pleasure and gender politics'.

Positive change?

One such historian is Dr Hera Cook of the University of Birmingham, who describes the sexual revolution as a period of 'immense positive change' that has 'improved the lives of women' and delivered them from the fraught and unhappy 'emotional and sexual life of previous generations'.

But is that a fair depiction of marriage prior to the 1960s? In this volume, Professor Simon Szreter from the University of Cambridge and Dr Kate Fisher from the University of Exeter, provide the first rounded, firsthand account of sexuality in marriage in the early and mid-twentieth century. The book does not claim to be a definitive study of sex in the twentieth century; neither does it attempt to provide a comprehensive approach to all aspects of the history of sex in marriage. What it does, however, is to present the findings of in-depth interviews with a socially and geographically diverse sample of 89 men and women born between 1905 and 1924.

Most of the interviewees featured in this study contravened the dogmas of modern sex education orthodoxy: most of them did not engage in pre-marital sex; husbands and wives performed distinct roles; bodies were regarded as private and personal; sex was not a subject that was discussed in polite company; love was primarily regarded as a matter of caring and sharing; and in their youth they were more attracted by modes of dress and behaviour in members of the opposite sex than they were by other aspects of physical appearance.

Stable and content

Far from considering themselves to have led deprived, limited and unfulfilled lives, the interviewees considered their marriages to have been more stable and content than the transitory relationships that have become more prevalent among 'enlightened' and 'liberated' people following the sexual revolution. According to the participants in this research, 'any benefits or pleasures [that had been] gained

were outweighed by the negative effects they engendered: a high divorce rate, marital infidelity, illegitimacy, sexually transmitted diseases, the public visibility of pornography, unrealistic expectations of sexual pleasure and the supposed lack of respect between men and women'.

As the advice columnist Bel Mooney observes, 'They might not have had sex education, but that didn't stop them learning how to love.' On reading the book she was struck by 'how happy and contented men and women could make each other — without all the openness about sex which can put so much pressure on young people today', and by the 'remarkably gentle and unselfish approach to sex' shown by men born in the early years of the twentieth century, compared with the letters in her postbag.¹

Challenge

The findings of this study present a challenge to those who disparage privacy, modesty and restraint in relation to sexual issues. In their concluding section, Szreter and Fisher note that:

'Interviewees often focused on the experience of initial marital innocence as joyous and exciting; this journey from innocence to greater and greater experience provided the first few years of marriage – and beyond for some – with an inbuilt dynamism. Both male and female testimony focused on the practice of learning about sex together as an exciting personal process of discovery, and individuals placed great significance on and remembered with joy the ways in which they learned about sex without external assistance and developed ways of pleasuring their spouses independently as a couple.'

In an age in which we are told that it is never too early to start talking to children about sex, when pupils are told that no question is off-limits in sex education classes, and it is recommended that couples engage in sexual intimacy before they marry in order to ensure that they are sexually compatible, this volume offers plenty of food for sober reflection.

Note

1. Bel Mooney, 'When love had to come before sex', *Daily Mail*, 25 June 2011.

Publications available from Family Education Trust

- **UNHEALTHY CONFUSION: The impact of the Healthy Schools Programme on sexual health messages in our children's education** £5.00 inc p&p.
- **TOO MUCH, TOO SOON: The government's plans for your child's sex education**, Norman Wells, £3.50 inc p&p (5 copies - £12.50; 10 copies - £22.50; 25 copies £50.00).
- **EDUCATION AND CULTURE**, Irina Tyk, £2.50 inc p&p (5 copies £10.00)
- **WAKING UP TO THE MORNING-AFTER PILL** Norman Wells and Helena Hayward, £5.00 inc p&p.

Please make cheques payable to Family Education Trust.



Out of the Ashes: Britain after the riots

David Lammy

Guardian Books, 2011, 266pp, £9.99
ISBN 978-0852-65267-1

In this book, Labour MP and former government minister, David Lammy, gives a personal account of the riots that broke out in his Tottenham constituency in August 2011 and offers his explanation as to why they happened, what they tell us about modern Britain, and where we go from here.

In the view of the author, the riots need to be viewed against the backdrop of two revolutions with which Britain has yet to come to terms: the social and cultural revolution of the 1960s and the economic free market revolution of the 1980s.

Together, they have made Britain a wealthier and more tolerant nation, but they have come at the cost of a hyper-individualistic culture. David Lammy writes:

'The riots were an explosion of hedonism and nihilism. People with little to lose lashed out at authority and took what they wanted. The violence and the looting were driven by the sense that, for a few nights only, people could do whatever they pleased. Lives and livelihoods were treated as collateral damage in the pursuit of self-gratification. It is this culture that must be challenged if we are to prevent these scenes from happening again. People need a proper stake in society and a much deeper sense of responsibility towards others.'

Blizzard of rules

In an individualistic culture in which we tend to be less judgmental, but also less compassionate, civil and supportive of one another, we have looked to the government to make society more fair, safe and virtuous. The result, Lammy writes, is 'a blizzard of rules, regulations, targets, measurements, instructions, inspections and initiatives'.

Between 1997 and 2010, the Labour government passed more crime legislation than had been seen in the entire previous century. A new offence was created every day for a decade. 'A new rule or initiative was almost always the answer to every problem' and 'too often it felt as if we were nationalising society rather than reinforcing it':

'New Labour appeared to become interested only in what the state could deliver on its own. With that, our politics lost a language of care, generosity, neighbourliness, compromise and cooperation. We revered public services but spoke too little of public spirit. We became statist because we appeared uninterested in the other forces for good in society.'

Writing as someone who was himself raised by a lone mother from the age of 12, David Lammy is quite clear that family breakdown is a major factor behind high levels of youth offending and anti-social behaviour: 'it becomes twice as hard to set boundaries with half the number of parents'. The government has stepped into the void with more laws, police and powers, yet a mighty central state cannot manage people's behaviour, either with a stick or a carrot. At heart, people are social beings who respond to more than just incentives and penalties.

Parents undermined

It is in the family home that children's characters are formed and boundaries are first established, yet as David Lammy admits, 'in recent years parliament has dedicated more time to telling parents what not to do than to offering practical support'. He cites attempts by MPs to criminalise parents for smacking their

children and highlights the confusion and climate of fear among parents that has been created as a result of the little-understood restriction on the defence of reasonable punishment that formed part of the Children Act 2004.

With many parents left feeling that 'they are no longer sovereign in their own homes', Lammy calls for a repeal of the 'unhelpful and unworkable' provisions introduced in 2004 and for a return to the previous legislation and to a culture in which government learns to 'trust the judgment of ordinary people again'.

Rights and wrongs

Reflecting on the deep unpopularity of human rights in Britain, David Lammy notes the widespread concern that 'a broadly defined human right might be manipulated in the courts to undermine laws made by a democratically elected government' (see below). He is also clear that 'having the right to do something does not make it the right thing to do':

'Only in a dictatorship can the law police every aspect of morality. Yet too often, in an individualistic culture, we are content to reduce important moral debates to questions about what is legal rather than what is ethical.'

Few readers will agree with the author at every point in this wide-ranging book. Nevertheless, David Lammy makes a thoughtful and thought-provoking case. In particular, his arguments in support of greater government respect for parental authority and against the rush for a legal fix to problems that are social and cultural in origin are worthy of careful consideration.

When 'human rights' bypass democracy...

People see attempts to force a smacking ban under the auspices of a right to freedom from torture, and it does not feel open or democratic. They do not feel that a right inspired by the horrors of the gas chambers in Auschwitz should be updated to address questions about how they bring up their children. The same people see bankers challenge taxes on City bonuses citing the right to 'peaceful enjoyment of possessions' and are understandably shocked. They find the idea that such cases are even plausible offensive after a financial crisis that has cost so many their homes and their jobs...

Liberals may well want to ban smacking outright. Bankers may well want to avoid taxes. But no one voted for these policies. No elected politician put them in a manifesto. Instead they are the priorities of those who seek to get their own way without bothering to persuade everyone else. It is a model of social change driven not by open argument, deliberation and persuasion but rather by the most skilful lawyers...

The riots revealed, once again, that many people feel embattled rather than protected by human rights. There is a feeling that commonly held values are being eroded and disregarded by an elite that believes it knows better. If we continue to set human rights up in opposition to democracy, they will always be vulnerable, always be unpopular, always be blamed by prime ministers who find themselves in a hole...

The law inevitably evolves as individual cases set precedents. But all of this should be in a framework of legislation set by the elected representatives of the people, not judges who are answerable to no one.

Out of the Ashes, pages 145-147

Marriage Foundation launched

Following more than two years of careful planning, the High Court judge, Sir Paul Coleridge, launched the Marriage Foundation on 1 May at Middle Temple Hall at the heart of London's legal quarter.

With the support of some 28 judges, the core aims of the Marriage Foundation are 'to increase the rate of marriage and reduce the rate of divorce'. The Foundation's first newsletter notes that family breakdown has significant and widespread consequences for society and observes that almost every child in care or the youth justice system comes from a broken home.

With 3.8 million children caught up in the family justice system in England and Wales, and with family breakdown costing an estimated £44 billion per year, society simply cannot afford the financial and human costs of family breakdown. The Marriage Foundation will therefore give priority to championing marriage as the gold standard for human relationships.

Initial projects

The Foundation has announced three initial projects:

- **'Mind the marriage gap'** – a practical programme to help young people appreciate the nature and benefits of marriage. The project will involve investment in social media, viral videos, sessional youth work and mentoring programmes.

- **'Making the case for marriage'** – through informed comment and authoritative research across all media. The project will engage in 'data-mining' research from the Census, panel surveys and longitudinal studies in order to address many current debates, including the variation in stability between different types of relationship and differences in fathers' engagement with children following family breakdown.

- **'Becoming the Go-to Destination'** – to promote access to high quality marriage support. While the Marriage Foundation will not be a service provider itself, its website will act as a signpost to existing services and it will work with providers to promote better access to services on a national basis.



◆ The Marriage Foundation, 3 Hooper Street, Cambridge CB1 2NZ. Tel: 01223 341290;

Website: www.marriagefoundation.org.uk

Email: info@marriagefoundation.org.uk

Have we gone too far in putting the child first?

A former director of children's services has raised his head above the parapet and questioned whether social workers and other professionals working with children have gone too far in putting the rights of children above the concerns of their parents.

Writing in the weekly magazine, *Children & Young People Now*, John Freeman states:

'I know that this is going against the accepted flow, but I'm starting to think that we may have gone too far and that some rebalancing is needed. I'm not thinking about the clearest cases of abuse or neglect where it is obvious that the parents are just not capable of providing proper care. But where there are loving and caring parents – I sincerely hope, the large majority – I'm not sure that we have the approach quite right.'

Parents should be informed

Taking the provision of contraception for girls under the age of consent by way of example, the former director of children's services for Dudley Council and former joint president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services dissents from the widespread professional view that the need for confidentiality is paramount.

In John Freeman's judgment, 'there are strong arguments that parents should be informed, on both moral and practical grounds':

'After all, parents have their own duties, as parents – how can they possibly protect and support their children if they are not even aware of the fitting of a contraceptive device? And what happens to relationships when they do, inevitably, find out? A little embarrassment now would be a small price to pay for a more honest relationship in the future.'

◆ John Freeman, *Have we gone too far in putting the child first?* *Children & Young People Now*, 21 February 2012.

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