

PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS

MANIFESTO

GENERAL ELECTION 1989

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST



FORCING REAL CHANGE

FRIDAY JUNE 2 1989

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST



This election is all about the needs of ordinary people. Its about the 230,000 people on the dole; the 40,000 people forced to emigrate each year, and the 22,300 ill people on hospital waiting lists around the country.

The outcome of this election, and the alternative we are providing, must and will give all these people a better deal.

It must also give a better deal to those lucky enough to have a job, who are ground down by excessive taxation.

Fianna Fail has failed in all these areas.

The Progressive Democrats are determined to give this country a Government that will not only get the public finances in order, but will also look after the real needs of people. These are the dignity of having a job, hospital care when sick, reward for hard work, and security from crime and vandalism.

In just three years, the Progressive Democrats have changed the face of Irish politics for the better. A strong Progressive Democrat party in the next Dail is the best guarantee that there will be real change for the better to improve the welfare of our people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Des O'Malley". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a dark ink on a light background.

VOTE PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS - FORCING REAL CHANGE

EMPLOYMENT, ENTERPRISE & TAX REFORM

The fundamental challenge for Irish Society and all political parties is to create an economic environment where substantial extra jobs are generated to reduce unemployment and, consequently, to reduce both emigration and poverty.

The root cause of poverty in Ireland today is mass, long-term unemployment. A pro-jobs policy is the **real** poverty fighter.

THE PUBLIC FINANCES.

The Progressive Democrats believe that a budgetary strategy that will reduce the Exchequer Borrowing Requirement to 3% or less of GNP by 1993 must be pursued. The control of public spending, with an increased emphasis on value for money, must be a central feature of overall government economic and fiscal strategy.

A FIVE YEAR PROGRAMME OF TAX REFORM TO GET IRELAND WORKING.

The craziness of our present tax system is illustrated by the fact that it costs an employer over £3 to give a worker on the average industrial wage an extra £1 in take-home pay.

This "tax wedge" between take-home pay and the cost of employing somebody is the worst in any OECD country and it appears to all Irish workers, married and single, and at all levels of income.

The primary aim of the Progressive Democrats tax policy is to reduce this wedge substantially, and thereby boost work, investment and employment, and through that fight poverty, unemployment and emigration.

WHAT ARE THE PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS PROPOSALS?

A phased five-year programme culminating in:

- * Income Tax will be paid at a rate of 25% on income up to £12,000 for single tax payers and £16,000 for married taxpayers.
- * A higher rate of tax (40%) to apply to incomes over £12,000 in the case of a single tax payer and over £16,000 in the case of a married tax payer.
- * The present system of tax allowances to be replaced by tax credits.
- * Widows and widowers with dependent children will be treated as married.
- * Tax relief on house mortgages and medical insurance to be retained.
- * Employee P.R.S.I. to be eliminated.
- * Tax relief on pension provisions to be retained.

FINANCING THE TAX REFORM PROGRAMME

By the end of Year Five the cost of the tax reform programme will be £750m. approx.

1. It is proposed that £355m will be raised by further reforms of Income Tax, Corporation Tax and taxation of the financial sector.
2. It is proposed an extra £100m will be saved in debt repayment and current costs by a sustained 5 Year Programme of commercialisation and privatisation of state and semi-state industries and assets.
3. It is proposed to put in place a vigorous campaign to bring the Black Economy into the tax base at the rate of £30m extra each year for 5 years yielding £150m in extra annual revenue by Year Five. Conservative estimates suggest that tax lost to the Black Economy is about 400m - £500m per annum.
4. It is proposed to transfer £150m from the income tax base to be raised by a completely reconstructed system of Local Government from years 4 and 5 of the tax plan.
5. Any remaining costs will be made up by expenditure cuts and savings, in addition to those already necessary to achieve an Exchequer Borrowing requirement of 3% of GDP.



PAYING FOR TAX REFORM BY WIDENING THE TAX BASE

CORPORATE TAXATION

The corporate tax yield has declined by 66% in the past twenty years. The Progressive Democrats propose:

a. A Minimum Tax

This is to ensure that no business entity, through a combination of allowances, off-sets or other deductions, can so arrange its affairs as to totally write off its liability for corporate taxation.

This is to be achieved through the introduction of a minimum tax liability, regardless of entitlements to relief.

The creative use of tax incentives, originally designed to encourage more enterprise and more employment, has frequently served to do little else but secure the writing off of even minimal tax bills from some of the largest business corporations.

b. Eliminating completely accelerated capital allowances.

c. Reducing the "Section 84" tax concession.

d. Increasing the tax take from the Financial Sector through additional taxation on trusts and bonds.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

Local Government is at present in a state of crisis, needing major reform.

The Progressive Democrats propose:

A comprehensive Local Government Reform Act, which would include review of a present administrative structures; efficiency audits of a representative series of local authorities and the extensive contracting out of local services.

Subject to this fundamental series of reforms, and to ensure we do not throw good money after bad, we propose a Local Government Charge to replace the present arbitrary local charges and the Residential Property Tax.

The Local Government Charge would be based firmly on ability to pay with a universal waiver system.

People on social welfare, unemployed, pensioners and low-income families will be entitled to waivers.



TACKLING THE BLACK ECONOMY

The Progressive Democrats propose the following Ten-point plan:

- * The introduction of severe sentences as the ordinary consequence of conviction for serious tax fraud.
- * The establishment of an effective Civil Tax Court which, on a non-adversarial, investigative basis would summon suspected fraudsters before it for the purpose of investigating their tax affairs generally.
- * A greatly enhanced investigation branch for the Revenue Commissioners with an active "on the ground" role in detecting tax evasion.
- * A single tax and welfare number and card for all citizens and a tax number for all suppliers of goods and services.
- * The modification and updating of rules of evidence to permit effective prosecution of tax fraud.
- * The use of spot-checks to record failures to make a written tax record of taxable transactions.
- * Rigid obligations on persons making tax deductions to forward and account for all taxes with personal responsibility, civil and criminal.
- * Well-understood and advertised public penalties for infringement of the tax code.

- * A lifting of the "veil of incorporation" in relation to certain tax infringements.
- * An ending of the preferred status of the Revenue on insolvencies.



COMPETITION AND PRIVATISATION

The Progressive Democrats believe that competition and privatisation have a significant contribution to make to the achievement of a pro-enterprise, pro-work society by:-

- * enhancing competitiveness.
- * offering greater value for money.
- * achieving public sector costs cuts without loss of services.
- * offering preferential share options to employees to give workers a real stake in their workplace



FARMER TAXATION

The Progressive Democrats believe in a uniform system of personal taxation for all sectors. Most farmers' incomes unfortunately are too low ever to be liable for tax by any reckoning.

Farmers share a common interest in seeing taxation reduced to 25% and 40%. But there are anomalies which penalise farm families, such as having no PAYE allowance equivalent, which must be rectified.

The Progressive Democrats favour the payment of tax on actual profits with the proviso that none but the larger farmers who are obviously liable for tax should have to have formal accounts prepared.

We also believe it is important to recognise that farmers' income tax yield understates the full tax on farming. Two-thirds of farmers have off-farm sources of income and their overall tax payments are included in PAYE and Self-Employed Tax Returns.



EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND 1992 PROGRAMME

Tax Reform over the coming 4 years must also take account of the E.C. proposals to reduce the difference in taxes between member states. These are an obstacle to the free movement of goods and services among member states. To help overcome this, it is proposed to bring VAT and excise duties broadly in line between all the member states as a first step.

PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS PROPOSAL

The Progressive Democrats propose that we commit ourselves to the EC goal of tax harmonisation, and that we should begin by aiming to reduce the gap between British and Irish rates. This does not mean that we must have equal tax rates, but that the differences should be narrow enough to reduce the incidence of cross-Border shopping and smuggling.

As long as the United Kingdom remains outside the EMS, the exchange rate between the Irish Pound and British Pound will continue to fluctuate.

The U.K. applies a single VAT rate of 15% to taxable items, whereas our two rates are 10% and 25%. However, there is no strong case for reducing drastically Irish VAT rates on some of the 25% items. The obvious examples are tobacco and alcohol. Here the aim should be to persuade the Community to maintain higher levels of tax on these items on health grounds.

Local tax approximation with Britain would have other advantages.

- * No VAT on food.
- * No significant effect on overall prices, with reductions offsetting the increases.
- * Cheaper petrol, oil and vehicles, to help the competitiveness of Irish business.
- * The virtual elimination of North-South price differences.



**DEVELOPING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES:
TOURISM, HORTICULTURE, FISHING, FORESTRY
AND SERVICES**

These are the sectors that hold the key to real economic recovery. But a proper tax climate and business environment are essential.

Internationally competitive transport, telecommunications and energy costs are pre-requisites to any significant development in these sectors.

Ireland cannot sell holidays, food or fish products, financial services, or any other product in the EC, or other world marketplaces, unless our prices and quality at least match those of our competitors.

That is why we place so much emphasis on tax reform, competitiveness and getting our energy, communications and transport costs down.

ROD LICENCE DISPUTE

In May last year the Progressive Democrats attempted in the Dail to get a Bill adopted that would have suspended the Rod Licence legislation. This would have enabled a sensible compromise to be worked out between the Government and angling interests to end the appalling damage being done to the tourist industry in many parts of the country, and to the reputation of this country as a holiday destination.

Since then the damage done to the country has accelerated, and is out of all proportion to the issue in dispute. We believe it is possible to arrive at a reasonable compromise on this issue through negotiation involving all parties.



MAKING ENTERPRISE WORK

Company law should promote the entrepreneurial spirit in the community which in turn leads to wealth-creation and more jobs. It should provide necessary safeguards for individual creditors and the community. It should also recognise the special needs of small business, who should not be over-burdened with administrative detail which is time-consuming and expensive.

It is disappointing that reform of Company Law was again left in abeyance in the last Dail. We propose:

(a) The creation of an Official Receiver whose task it will be to go after "rogue" directors who can at present deliberately run down a company leaving creditors stranded.

(b) Abolition of the statutory preferences in favour of the Revenue Commissioners. At present, the statutory preferences encourage the Revenue to be lax in their efforts to collect overdue taxes for companies.

(c) A certain percentage of all the assets realised on an insolvency should be set aside to meet the claims of unsecured creditors who often get nothing in a liquidation.

(d) The Courts should be given greater power to disqualify directors of insolvent companies from ever trading again, and where necessary to investigate the personal accounts of such directors to ensure that they did not wrongfully siphon off funds from the company at the expense of the creditors.

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

The Country's health services have been decimated over the last two years by Fianna Fail. It is an absolute scandal that there are so many people currently on hospital waiting lists around the country.

In the past three years, 24 hospitals have been closed in this country and 3,000 acute hospital beds have been lost. Of the 22,380 people waiting to get into hospital for essential treatment, at a recent count, some of them are waiting 18 months: others even longer.

The National Open Heart Surgery Centre in the Mater Hospital in Dublin will carry out only 700 operations this year, because of a shortage of money. Yet there are 300-400 people on a waiting list there and the number is growing.



NEW FUNDING SYSTEM FOR HOSPITALS

Hospital services account for 80% of the total health services budget of £1.3 billion this year. The present system of block granting Voluntary Hospitals and Health Boards militates against any policy of equality of access.

The Progressive Democrats propose a National Health Insurance Scheme to enable everybody in the State to be insured against the cost of essential hospital treatment. This would abolish the distinction between public and private patients. There would be no such thing as a public patient.

Instead of incurring costs through admitting public patients as at present, each hospital would gain an income from each patient admitted. Hospitals would only receive income for treating patients and consequently the greater number of patients treated, the greater would be their income.

The funding of a National Insurance Scheme would replace the existing Health Contribution Levy. The Government would pay the full insurance contributions of the lower income groups; it would pay part of the contribution of the middle income group and top earners would, as now, fund their total health insurance costs.

This Scheme would cover basic hospital costs, and it would be open to anybody to take out additional insurance to fund private accommodation.

Hospitals would be autonomous, no longer dependant on the Department of Health for their financing. The Department of Health's role would be altered to one of a licensing, standards and policy body. The National Health Insurance Scheme would also require competition in this area and an ending of the VHI monopoly.



HEALTH OMBUDSMAN

Our recent Private Members Bill proposes to establish the Office of a

Health Ombudsman to supervise the provision of hospital services to the public.

The Health Ombudsman would investigate complaints from members of the public about access to public hospital facilities, and could give mandatory directives to hospitals or Health Boards.



EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE PROGRAMME

Because of the scandalous level of waiting lists for various hospital treatment procedures, we propose that £30 million approx. be earmarked from the proceeds of the National Lottery for priority allocation to healthcare on the following basis:-

- £15 m. for orthopaedics (hip replacements etc.)
- £10 m. for ENT procedures.
- £8 m. for eye treatment operations.

CARING FOR ALL: SOCIAL WELFARE REFORM

The Progressive Democrats are committed to protecting the living standards of those dependant on social welfare. What social welfare recipients really want most of all is the opportunity to work, to experience the dignity and self-esteem of having a job, and being able to look after their own family by using their own skills.

Within the existing social welfare code we propose the following measures:-

- * a single, universal self-assessment means-test.
- * an independent Welfare Appeals Office should be established to consider all welfare appeals.

* a weekly payment, or tax free allowance, should be given to all persons who care for elderly and handicapped relatives in their own home.

* the complex range of different welfare payments must be simplified by a single payment for
(a) unemployed people, and
(b) one-parent families.

* we propose reducing the various rates for children to two - one for those up to ten years, and the other for children over ten.

* payment rates for dependant spouses should be increased.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

As we face into the 1990s, Irish agriculture will have to adjust to major changes in European and global markets. Since we joined the EC, the emphasis up to recently was on increasing production since access to intervention meant that all output could be disposed of. This situation has been changing rapidly in recent years, with quotas and levies as the CAP was reformed.

Agriculture and agri-business can contribute to national development in several ways. They represent a sector which has a significance way beyond the farming community:

1. Providing livelihoods for the optimum rural population;
2. Providing quality farm produce to processing plants and manufacturing industry, thereby securing considerable employment;
3. Contributing greatly to a favourable balance of payments for Ireland;
4. Preserving and developing a healthy natural environment.



MEASURES TO ASSIST FARMING

The future development of agriculture at farmer level should be assisted by:

- * Directing national and EC resources to achieve viable incomes for family farms by the use of EC Guarantee and Guidance Funds to develop secondary farm incomes.
- * The removal of co-responsibility levy from small producers throughout the entire country and not merely in the disadvantaged areas.
- * Banning EC access for New Zealand butter while that country places no quota limits on its own production.
- * Insuring no milk quotas are traded out of Ireland to other member States.
- * Directing resources to expand the national breeding herd.
- * Tackling the problem of seasonality which affects market continuity of supply of quality milk and meat products.
- * Campaigning within the EC to have animal and plant health standards harmonised upwards to the higher levels which exist in Ireland and Denmark.
- * Assisting producer groups in the main commodities to develop effective marketing.
- * Safeguarding cereal production which has declined from 14,000 specialist producers in 1980 to around 10,000 last year by ensuring adequate supplies of these essential inputs for the milling, brewing, distilling and other industries.
- * Ensuring that inputs such as fuel, feed, finance and transport are available as cheaply to agriculture as to our EC competitors especially for the intensive sectors like horticulture, poultry and pig meat.
- * Ensure the maximum extension of the Disadvantaged Areas and a formal right of appeal for farmers under the current review of the scheme.



MAKING IRELAND THE NATURAL FOOD CAPITAL OF EUROPE

With the greater health consciousness of consumers generally, and in light of the fears of nuclear contamination, particularly since the Chernobyl disaster, we believe that Ireland enjoys a distinctive opportunity for carving out the role of the Natural Food Capital of Europe. This would seek to exploit our image of being a relatively unpolluted, green and natural environment.

In an era of greater health and product consciousness, where there is growing consumer resistance to food additives and other preservatives, the emphasis should be to produce food by purely natural means, including horticultural and meat products produced organically.

The Irish food industry could also be assisted to achieve its full potential by:

- * putting more emphasis in market-led research and product development.
- * more intensive export marketing using the necessary management, marketing and language skills to sell our goods to mainland Europe.
- * exploring the scope for Irish firms to enter joint ventures with partners from other EC countries or to buy in the necessary technology and product range in the way Waterford Co-op (now Waterford Foods) acquired the Yoplait franchise some years ago.



LAND MOBILITY

To ensure the maximum number of people on the land and in rural communities, we propose that the early retirement of farmers should be promoted through a combination of welfare and pension arrangements, as well as suitable tax incentives.

EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES

The Progressive Democrats see the allocation of greater resources in pre-school and remedial teaching as the key to helping children in disadvantaged areas aspire to equal educational and job opportunities.

At primary level the introduction of a European language is necessary and the extension of European spoken-language teaching at second level must be extended.

The system of third level grants must be reformed to increase third level participation by people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Falling student numbers will be used to improve and strengthen the primary education system, and to improve the pupil-teacher ratio.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

The Progressive Democrats believe in reform in the following areas:

- * abolition of the death penalty.
- * the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights as part of domestic law.
- * new laws to protect the privacy of the individual and to stop illegal telephone-tapping.
- * reform of the libel laws which are at present too restrictive of free speech and press comment.
- * new freedom of information laws to curb unnecessary government secrecy.
- * new legislation prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex, race or ethnic origin.

FAMILY LAW

Much progress has been achieved in recent years in this area. However, the following measures are also necessary:

- * reform of the laws of nullity to give clear principles to the courts on what should and should not be a ground of nullity.
- * raising the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 18.
- * new legislation dealing with family property, in order to ensure that both spouses have, in general, an equal share to the family home.
- * new family law courts.

DEFENCE FORCES

The Progressive Democrats believe that the Defence Forces should be accorded their proper respect as the pillars of our democratic institutions and that their members should be given the best pay and conditions of service possible within our resources.

In particular, the Progressive Democrats believe that Army pay should be restructured, with the aim of improving the basic pay, and reducing the dependence that soldiers have on Service and Duty Payments to get their present wages.

Improvements in Army pay must also take into account the level of the average industrial wage in the country.

At present, in many cases, serving Army personnel and their families are earning only very little more than they would if they were on Social Welfare, and this is totally unacceptable.

A GREEN CLEAN IRELAND

The Progressive Democrats recent document on the natural environment sets out a comprehensive programme for action to enhance and protect the natural environment.



In relation to the built environment, we propose:

- (1) radical changes in planning laws to end compensation in zoning cases, and to force builders to properly complete housing estates.
- (2) to make enforcement of planning law easier (we put forward proposals for this in our Planning Bill).
- (3) an Architectural Heritage Act to preserve buildings which form part of our heritage.
- (4) a radical new approach to Urban Renewal and Conservation based on inner city redevelopment.
- (5) extending planning controls to the State and semi-State areas, thus ending their current exempt status.



In relation to the Green Environment we propose:

- (i) immediate measures to protect the ozone layer
- (ii) the extension of smokeless zones
- (iii) measures to increase the use of unleaded petrol and controls on public and private vehicle fleets currently causing pollution.
- (iv) independent monitoring and enforcement of pollution, dumping and emissions.

GROUND RENTS

We see reform of the law on ground rents as an essential step in making the transfer of houses simpler and cheaper. It would also mean the abolition of a particularly iniquitous relic of the past. Our Ground Rents Bill provides for a cut-off date in 1993 after which ground rents would be abolished and with limited compensation in that intervening period for ground landlords.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

The plight of the victims of crime has long been disregarded by the State and the community alike. The trauma experienced by victims of crime is severe and virtually unrecognised.

The Progressive Democrats supports the work of the Irish Association of Victims Support and would make resources available to it to be able to deal effectively with a system of automatic referral of victims from the Garda Siochana.

The Progressive Democrats are in favour of the restoration of the "pain and suffering" provision which was removed from the Criminal Injuries Compensation scheme in 1986. Its restoration is estimated to cost 1.5 million in a full year.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

The Progressive Democrats are the only party who have spelled out in detail their ideas for constitutional reform. Our Proposals include:

- * abolition of the Senate;
- * ensuring that the constituency boundaries are drawn up by an impartial commission selected by the President;

- * reformulation of the property rights guarantee to ensure that proposed changes in the planning laws are not thwarted by the courts;
- * abolition of the death penalty and protection of the right to privacy;
- * no discrimination on the grounds of race, sex or religion.

MAKING THE DAIL WORK AS A LAW REFORM BODY

One of Ireland's major problems is that the Dail is not working properly. The process of law-making is grinding to a halt. The Courts are being increasingly asked to solve problems because the Dail has not done the job it is supposed to do: enact new laws and keep the law up to date. We propose:

- * longer sitting hours and shorter holidays for the Dail.
- * reform of Dail procedures in order to give Private Members' Bills a greater chance of success. The success of the Judicial Separation Bill, the first Private Members' Bill to become law in 30 years, shows how desirable this is.
- * reduction in the number of TDs from 166 to about 120.
- * abolition of Ministerial pensions for sitting TDs., Senators, Judges and MEPs as proposed by our Private Members' Bill.
- * greater powers for Dail committees in order to allow them to take effective action against waste of tax payers' money.
- * greater use of Dail committees to ensure a more careful review of legislation.
- * co-operation between the Dail and Law Reform Commission.

WORKING FOR RECONCILIATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Progressive Democrats are firmly committed to working for peace and reconciliation between the divided communities in Northern Ireland.

We support the Anglo-Irish Agreement which represents a recognition by both the British and Irish governments of the need to create shared, devolved government.

Our primary aim in relation to Northern Ireland is to achieve reconciliation between the Unionist and Nationalist communities based on respect for the aspirations of both communities, and a realistic, working relationship between the Dublin and London governments.



EXTRADITION

The Progressive Democrats, recognising the need for greater security co-operation on both parts of the island, firmly support the extradition - subject to appropriate safeguards - of terrorist offenders to Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Instead of the present arrangements under the Extradition (Amendment) Act, 1987, involving the Attorney General, the British authorities should be required to prepare an outline of their case before the Irish Courts.

Moreover, we think that extradition cases should come directly before the High Court, instead of before the District Court as at present. This should shorten delays and speed-up the extradition process which is in everyone's interests.

The Progressive Democrats also believe that the best method of combatting international terrorism and international drug-trafficking is

through the establishment of a European Community Criminal Court based in Luxembourg. This would be a non-jury court, drawn from senior judicial figures throughout the Community.

It would have a limited jurisdiction and would try only serious cases and should be bound by the terms of the European Convention on Human Rights.

We see this as the logical step in the development of Europe after 1992 and an appropriate Community response to international crime in a world with disappearing borders.

IRISH LANGUAGE & CULTURE

The Irish language is the most unique and distinctive feature of our cultural heritage. However, it is in grave danger of extinction unless positive measures are adopted to ensure its survival.

The Progressive Democrats are committed to the survival, preservation, development and extension of the Irish language.

A new approach is needed if the Irish language is to survive in a healthy state into the twenty first century. This party believes this aim can be achieved by a combination of realistic and practical measures to preserve and strengthen the Gaeltacht areas and to encourage positively the greater use of Irish throughout the rest of the country. In the educational system there must be greater emphasis on proficiency in spoken Irish.

Our policy document on the language and Irish culture spells out how the language can be developed, and the Gaeltacht regions can be economically expanded.

EMIGRATION

The resurgence of emigration in the past three years is an appalling indictment of the failure of the Irish economy to date, and of the economic policies pursued by the present Government.

At present, up to 800 people are emigrating each week in search of work overseas in an exodus of 40,000 a year. The only lasting solution to this human tragedy is the generation on thousands of extra jobs at home, which will only happen when we create a pro-jobs, pro-enterprise society through tax reform and competitiveness.

The Progressive Democrats also believe that it is vital that the Government of this country should make a reasonable contribution to the welfare of our emigrants overseas, especially in Britain and the United States where they face particular problems.

Furthermore, we believe that the right to vote in Irish elections should be accorded to our emigrants who have departed in the previous ten years. They would be given a postal vote for the constituency where they were formerly registered. There is no constitutional bar on this, and seven of the 12 member states of the EC currently give the vote to their expatriate nationals.

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