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CONSULTATION OR JOINT MANAGEMENT?

*A Contribution to the Discussion
of Industrial Democracy*

by

J. M. CHALMERS
IAN MIKARDO, M.P.
G. D. H. COLE

Prepared Jointly by



THE
FABIAN
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&

THE UNION of
POST OFFICE
WORKERS



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NOTE : This pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective view of the Society but only the view of the individuals who prepared it. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving the publications which it issues as worthy of consideration within the Labour Movement.

DECEMBER, 1949.

Introduction

THIS pamphlet is essentially an exchange of views. Its main purpose is to take a stage further the discussions in the Labour Movement about the practical possibilities of democracy in industry.

The fore-part of the pamphlet has been prepared by J. M. Chalmers, Editor of the "Post," for the Union of Post Office Workers and at the invitation of the Fabian Society. After 30 years' experience of joint consultation between employees and the Post Office, the Union is convinced that there should be an extension of staff participation in administration—a system of joint management.

These views on industrial democracy and its application are commented on by Ian Mikardo, M.P., who, among his many activities, is a member of the National Joint Council for Civil Air Transport. He thus brings to the discussion the point of view of someone actively engaged in joint consultation in a newly-nationalised industry and in one where an advanced form of consultation is being applied.

Finally, G. D. H. Cole, for long the leader of Guild Socialist thought in this country and author of a recent Fabian study on the National Coal Board, adds a postscript commenting on the ideas of the U.P.W. and of Ian Mikardo.

The U.P.W. Viewpoint

BY J. M. CHALMERS

I. THE PROBLEM

It is being impressed upon us almost daily that if we are to make the best use of our resources and thus achieve a new society based on social justice and class collaboration, the old antagonism between employer and worker must be abandoned and replaced by a spirit of understanding and goodwill. The need for this improved relationship has been emphasised on the wireless, in articles and editorials, and in books and pamphlets. A New Status for Labour is on the programme of every political party. All accept in principle the right of the worker to have a say in the management of the industry in which he is engaged.

Despite, however, this seeming unanimity on the need for a more democratic control of industry, disappointingly little progress has so far been made. There is general agreement on the *principle* of Industrial Democracy, but widely divergent views as to how and to what extent the principle should be applied.

The view held would seem to be determined by what it is hoped to achieve. To the Government, conscious that the success of its efforts towards recovery depends on the goodwill and co-operation of the men and women in the factories and workshops, Industrial Democracy is the lubricant that will assist the smooth running of industry and so ensure maximum output. They realise that co-operation can best be gained by raising the status of the workers in relation to management. In the nationalised industries provision has, therefore, been made for consultative machinery and for trade union nominees to have posts on the boards of the public corporations to which the administration of the nationalised industries has been entrusted. In the private sector of industry also, the Government has endeavoured, through the Ministry of Labour, to have workshop democracy accepted and applied in all the major industries.

In that endeavour, they have been only partially successful. Both the employers and the trade unions have shown a reluctance to change their ways. Despite the loss of power arising from full employment and powerful trade unionism, and notwithstanding the advice of their own associations, employers are not disposed to give up managerial authority and to submit administrative matters to round-table discussion with representatives of the staff. In many cases where they have done so, it has been from necessity and not from choice. They have been made to realise that in present circumstances a new attitude must be adopted if they are to ensure good relationships and staff acceptance of methods and developments that in other days would have been resisted.

Some of the trade unions have been equally cautious in their approach to the new situation. Determined to preserve their independence and chary of departing from traditional functions and policies, they have so far shied clear of participation in administrative

decisions and have shown no strong desire for even such a modest development as Joint Consultation. In its report to the Productivity Conference held in London on 18th November, 1948, the General Council of the T.U.C. had to regret that "over wide sections of industry these joint bodies are not being formed with the enthusiasm that Congress resolutions would appear to indicate."

There is undoubtedly opposition from the employers and inertia among the workers and to these factors the lack of progress can be attributed. But even among those who accept the need for a change in industrial relationships there are conflicting views as to how this can best be achieved, and this also is hindering advance. Their differing approaches are reflected in the various proposals put forward, ranging from the Co-partnership schemes of the Conservatives and the Liberals, to the full-blooded demand for Workers Control on syndicalist lines.

The divergence of views on how Industrial Democracy should be applied is not merely between the employers and the workers or between one political party and another. The cleavage is greatest within the Labour Movement and may be summed up by the question, "Consultation or Joint Management?" The nationalisation of the basic industries has revived within the movement the 20-year-old controversy as to what should be the rôle of the trade unions in a socialised industry. Is it to the interest of the community and the worker that the unions should undertake administrative responsibility or is it better that they should maintain their independence and their traditional functions, participating only on a consultative basis?

That is the question upon which there are divided counsels on both the political and industrial wings of the movement. This pamphlet, written from the standpoint of a union that has had 30 years' experience of both nationalisation and Joint Consultation, will endeavour to summarise the arguments for and against both propositions and to indicate what it has done and is doing to further the application of democracy in its own industry on lines which it believes could also be applied to other industries.

II. CLEARING THE GROUND

Though it can be assumed that the principle of Industrial Democracy is generally accepted, there are two objections which are often stated or implied in discussion on the matter.

The first objection is, that to give the workers an effective voice in administration would lead to unsound decisions.

Industrial organisations, it is pointed out, must be run efficiently. This is always imperative, but particularly so at the present time when this country is fighting for its economic life. If industry is not run efficiently, everybody will suffer, the producers no less than the rest of the community. The workers may be very knowledgeable about their own jobs and capable of useful suggestion in workshop matters, but how (it is asked) can they have the wider knowledge, ability and experience which is essential in those responsible for the

formulation and application of policy? In the interests of all, surely it is better to leave administration to those who are skilled in this type of work.

The argument would have considerable force if, in using the term "workers" we were speaking only of the operatives. But the advocates of Industrial Democracy do not mean only the operatives. The term for them embraces all who work in the industry (by hand and brain) from the machine-minder to the managing director.

It will be agreed that this definition changes the whole picture. It means that all the ability and enthusiasm of all the workers—operative, clerical, technical, scientific and administrative—would be pooled to ensure that the industry is run efficiently in the interests of the community and those employed in the industry. In combination, the "workers" as thus defined are quite capable of administering industry. It is perhaps because such a combination would render them unnecessary that employers have so far refused to allow those above the operative grade to sit on the staff sides of joint consultative committees. Rather than militating against efficiency, such a pooling of experience and ability would add immeasurably to productivity. There would no longer be "two sides" with the antagonisms, non-co-operation and obstructive practices that in the past have kept output far below what it could have been.

If to the sceptical the picture of the workers of all classes working harmoniously and effectively in a common purpose verges on the Utopian it can be pointed out that half a million civil servants, from the lowest to the highest grades, have been doing just that in Civil Service Whitleyism during the past thirty years.

The second objection is that effective participation by the workers would result in exploitation of the consumer by the producer. The natural desire for higher wages and a shorter working week would in all probability lead to prices which would put goods and services beyond the reach of other workers.

It is a fear born perhaps of a guilty conscience. The producer has been so much exploited in the past that he might well be expected to take advantage of the power which participation in control would bring. If the worker seems at times to be primarily concerned with his sectional interest, it is the inevitable result of his subordination to the private ownership of industry. Under the autocratic administration of an employing class, his views on the conduct of industry were neither sought nor welcomed. How and when he should work, what he should make were managerial matters on which he was not allowed to intrude. His Union (where it was recognised), was not consulted on policy decisions; its sole function, in the employers' view, was the negotiation of wages and conditions.

It was only under the stress of war that the Government and the employers sought the assistance which was hitherto undesired. Bitter at their treatment in the past, the workers might well have refused co-operation. But despite what had been, trade unionists responded readily to the invitation to serve on Production Boards, regional councils and workshop committees. Not only did they give freely of their knowledge and experience, but in the interest of the nation, they sacrificed many of the rights that had been won only after years of struggle.

These things they did not only in time of war; they have continued to subordinate their sectional interests in the no less difficult days of peace. Since 1945, the contribution of the unions to the national effort has not diminished, but increased. In co-operation with the employers and the Government, traditional policies and practices have been modified and in some cases abandoned. The T.U.C. and the trade union executives have given the lead in the endeavour to achieve the greatest possible production, and in the voluntary restraint on wage demands, but they could have achieved nothing had they not had the loyal support of the mass of their members.

What the nation owes to trade unionists is hardly realised. Much publicity is given to the unofficial stoppages, but little credit is given to those who stay on the job, working long hours under arduous conditions on very modest rates of pay. The figures of time lost through industrial disputes in recent years—*nine and a-half million days in 1945-48 as against 148 million days in 1918-21*—eloquently indicate the remarkable growth in the workers' sense of social responsibility.

There seems, then, little justification for the assertion that, given administrative power, trade unionists would exploit the community. On the contrary, their refusal to take advantage of their strong position is the despair of those who seek for their own purpose to disrupt the national unity.

But, obviously, exploitation of the community would be guarded against in any scheme of joint administration. Workers are consumers as well as producers and no group or industry would be allowed to determine their own conditions without regard to the interests of the rest of the community. Unlike the past, when prices for goods and services were inflated in the interests of shareholders, those who would run industry on the basis of joint administration would be responsible, in a truly democratic state, to the elected representatives of the people. At the present time, disagreements on wage issues are referred to arbitration. There seems no reason why this machinery should not continue to be used even under joint administration.

III. T.U.C. & GOVERNMENT POLICY

Having attempted to answer the two main objections to industrial democracy, we pass now to an examination of the conflicting views within the Labour Movement. The official policy of the movement on the conduct of industry is set out in the Interim Report in Post-War Reconstruction which was submitted to and endorsed by the Trades Union Congress in 1944. The recommendations of that Report were accepted by the Government and have been applied to each of the industries brought under public ownership.

In its first pages, the Report states the case for the public control of the basic industries and goes on to consider the most suitable form of administration. It rejects control by a Government Department (on the lines of the Post Office) on the grounds that the Civil Service has neither the knowledge nor the experience to run an industrial undertaking. It argues also that control by a Government Department,

with the consequent liability to the Parliamentary Question, would result in timidity, caution, and the keeping of unnecessary records.

It is much better, in the view of the General Council, that the administration of a nationalised industry should be entrusted to a Public Corporation (like the B.B.C.) which would combine national ownership with the expert management, flexibility and initiative claimed for non-Government administration. The Corporation would be free from parliamentary interference, being responsible only to the Minister answerable for the industry to Parliament. The Governing Board of the Corporation should consist of persons selected by the Minister solely on the grounds of experience and ability. There should be no sectional representation. Each member would be responsible only to the community through the Minister.

In order, however, that "the views of the industry's workpeople shall receive full understanding and consideration," there should be, among those appointed, persons with trade union experience—it being understood that these "workers' representatives" would not be elected by, or in any way responsible to, the workpeople. So that they should be accountable to no interest other than the public, trade unionists appointed to the Board should be required to sever their trade union connection.

The Report argues strongly against the trade union itself participating in administration. It would not be to the advantage of the workpeople, it declares, to have representatives on the Board committed to joint decisions. The position of such a representative, torn between his duty to the community and his loyalty to the workers, would be "impossible." The union, says the Report, can best serve its members by retaining its complete independence of the executive and employing authority. Only by doing so can it exert its powers of independent criticism and advance the workers' interests through the normal machinery of collective bargaining. It could participate in joint consultation, *but executive responsibility should remain with the Public Corporation; consultation does not imply a diffusion of executive authority.*

As has been said, the Report has been applied to those industries that have been nationalised by the Labour Government. During the past two years criticism of its operation has found expression at the Labour Party Conference and Trades Union Congress. Members of Parliament resent the iron curtain that protects the activities of the Public Corporations from Parliamentary discussion, and trade unionists complain of the undue preponderance on the governing boards of ex-employers and persons thought to be out of sympathy with the policy of nationalisation. As a consequence of these criticisms, both the Labour Party and the T.U.C. have set up committees to examine the structure and conduct of nationalised industries.

It is possible that this consideration may result in some provision for periodical Parliamentary discussion on the work of the Corporations and that more seats on the Boards may be made available for trade union nominees. But it is unlikely that they will recommend any fundamental change in present policy.

As the criticism has been directed mostly at the implementation of that policy, such improvements as the committees are able to suggest may allay the dissatisfaction which exists. There are those, however, who believe that the real weakness lies not in the operation, but in the principles and assumptions on which the policy is based. To their point of view the next chapter will be devoted.

IV. THE CRITICS

As has been stated, the policy of the Government and the T.U.C. summarised in the preceding chapter, is supported in principle by most trade unions. Such criticism as has been expressed is directed at the application of the scheme rather than at the scheme itself.

There are, however, in those unions operating in nationalised industries, active minorities that demand for the workers a much more effective share in control than is provided for in the T.U.C. Report. Though they have not so far been able to steer their unions into direct participation in control, these minorities are making themselves felt in union branches and on trades councils.

One union (the Union of Post Office Workers) has been particularly active in its opposition to the present policy. It is an opposition of long standing, based on the Union's acceptance of the Guild Socialist conception of industrial control, and fortified by thirty years experience of Joint Consultation in a national service.

Because of the operation of Clause V of the Trade Disputes Act, 1927, which debarred civil service organisations from political and industrial affiliations, the U.P.W. was absent from the T.U.C. when the 1944 Report was discussed. It was unable, for that reason, to influence the decision of Congress. Since its return to the Labour Party and the T.U.C. (made possible by the repeal of the Trade Disputes Act) the Union has by resolution and by intensive propaganda within the labour movement sought to bring the movement back to the former policy of direct trade union participation in administration.

The first and fundamental criticism against the 1944 Report advanced by the opponents of the present policy is that it is based on the "two sides" conception of industry and on the traditional view that a trade union is primarily a bargaining machine concerned chiefly with hours and wages. The critics contend that the transfer of industry to public ownership should mean the sweeping away of the employer-employee relationship and the rise of an industrial fellowship in which all the workers would share democratically in the control and direction of the nation's industries. They argue that the Public Corporation form of administration, in which control is exercised by a governing board, of whom one or two members are selected from trade union nominees not liable to instruction by, or report to, the people they are supposed to represent, is a travesty of democracy that cannot be claimed to satisfy the legitimate aspiration for economic self-government.

They contend further that the so-called workshop democracy of joint consultation is not democracy at all but merely another method of securing industrial discipline now that full employment and social security have rendered inoperative the hire and fire authority of the employer.

The advocates of a more progressive policy declare that nationalisation has not altered in any fundamental way the relative status of the management and the worker. There has been no abrogation of executive power. Whatever the views the workers may express on the joint consultative committees, the final and vital decisions on policy still remain with the administration. They

maintain that if the workers are in fact to achieve a new status in which their worth and importance as individuals and as a social group are to be recognised and reflected in better wages and conditions, they must reject the cul-de-sac of Joint Consultation and insist on full trade union participation in the control of industry.

In support of their demand for a greater share in control, the advocates of that policy can quote very effectively from the T.U.C. Report itself. Like other documents emanating from the General Council, the 1944 Report is notable for the gulf between its statement of principle and its recommendations.

Nothing could be more positive, for example, than the following declarations taken from paragraphs 23, 24, 90 and 93 of the Report:—

The Trade Union Movement exists to extend the influence of workpeople over the policies and purposes of industry and to arrange for their participation in its management.

The claim to share in the control of industry rests primarily on the simple democratic right of workpeople to have a voice in the determination of their industrial destinies. It is supported by the knowledge that it is only by recognition of this claim that the potentialities, experiences and good sense of the workers can be drawn upon and the full productive powers of industry be effectively realised.

In relation to the publicly-owned industries, it is fundamental to any plan for the organisation of a public service that the workpeople have the right to a voice in the determination of its policy. This right does not rest only on the fact that their labour is indispensable to industry and that they are the group most immediately affected by its policy, but also on the interest of the public in the efficient conduct of the industry.

The right of its workpeople to a voice in the conduct of a public industry must, therefore, find a formal place in its organisation and operation. There must further be some guarantee that this expression shall be effective in the formulation of its policy.

In the face of such assertions, it seems incredible that the same document should go on to say that the unions must not participate in policy decisions and that executive authority must remain the prerogative of the administration. It is not surprising that this flight from principle has given rise to some scepticism as to the sincerity of the T.U.C. and the Government on the question of Industrial Democracy.

Nor can the critics accept the argument that it is in the best interests of the workers that their unions should decline administrative responsibility in order to remain free to pursue the traditional process of negotiation. They find it difficult to share this new-found enthusiasm for collective bargaining. They do not remember that it has ever obtained for the worker anything more than a subsistence wage, and they believe that, despite nationalisation, it is more than likely that the governing boards, manned largely by ex-members of the employing class, will still measure his worth by capitalist standards. In their members' interest, it is surely better that the unions should participate effectively in the making of policy rather than that they should contest executive decisions after they have been made by the Governing Board.

The suggestion that a trade union representative, elected by his fellow-workers, would find it difficult to serve them and the community

seems to the critics to be based on the erroneous assumption that the community and the workers are separate sections of society whose interests are necessarily at variance. To a great extent, the workers *are* the community and the best interests of the one are the best interests of the other. Even where there *is* a possible divergence of interest, the Report assumes, quite without justification, that trade unionists are incapable of seeing beyond their own sectional advantage. As has already been stated, the public spirit shown by the unions during and since the war has sufficiently answered that contention. The critics, therefore, see nothing incompatible in "dual responsibility." They point out that Members of Parliament, elected by and responsible to their constituents, do not apparently find it "impossible" to serve both them and the country.

Finally, the critics contend that the separation of the trade unions from administrative responsibility will inevitably encourage the sectional outlook which both the Government and the T.U.C. deplore. While control remains with a managerial hierarchy and the unions remain outside, the workers cannot be persuaded that they have an effective voice in the management of industry. Only by bringing democracy into the workshop, the office, and the laboratory will we harness the ability, the interest, and the enthusiasm that nationalisation has so signally failed to arouse.

V. WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE ?

Though the postal workers are extremely critical of present policy, they differ from other critics in two respects. First, they do not share the suspicion of Joint Consultation prevalent among other workers; and second, they have not been content to be merely critical. They have formulated alternative proposals for their own industry which they believe could be applied also to other socialised undertakings.

Since its inception in 1920 the Union of Post Office Workers (an amalgamation of various grade associations catering for postmen, sorting and counter clerks, telegraphists and telephonists) has had as one of its aims "Joint Management of the Post Office in conjunction with the State." This item was carried over from the sectional organisations which before amalgamation had accepted the Guild Socialist policy of management of nationalised industry on behalf of the community by the trade unions, organised as industrial guilds. It was in pursuance of that policy that, in conjunction with other Civil Service staff associations, the postal workers pressed for the application of Whitleyism to Government Departments.

The Committee set up by the Government during the First World War to inquire into the causes of industrial unrest reported that, in its view, disputes arose through lack of continuous contact between the employers and the representatives of the workers. The conciliation machinery that existed at that time only functioned after the conflict had reached an acute stage and relations had become embittered. What was needed, said the Committee, was regular meetings between appointed representatives of both sides. It, therefore, recommended the setting up of national, district and works

councils, where matters of common interest could be discussed, the machinery to be purely consultative, executive power remaining with the management.

The Whitley Councils (named after the chairman of the Committee of Inquiry) were intended for private industry only. Though they had the blessing of the Government, it was with considerable difficulty that the Civil Service staff associations were able to get them extended to Government Departments. The councils set up in private industry were short-lived, but Whitleyism has continued to operate in municipal and Government services with varying degrees of success.

When they joined in the demand for the application of this form of joint consultation to the Civil Service, the postal workers did so without prejudice to their own policy of joint control. They were well aware of the limitations of Whitleyism; they knew that it would give them no decisive voice in administrative matters. Nevertheless, they saw it as a step toward their ultimate objective. They believed that, used to its fullest extent, it would enable them to influence the policy of the administration and that the knowledge and experience gained would fit them for an ever-increasing share in the management of the service.

At first, the Official Side in the Post Office, like their counterparts in other Departments, rather resented the new machinery and did little to make it a success. Indeed, the Staff Side of the National Whitley Council, giving evidence before the Royal Commission on the Civil Service (1929-31), had to complain of the unco-operative attitude of departmental administrations. In their evidence they said:—

“ Criticism is general throughout the Civil Service that Official Sides show little or no initiative in the use of Whitley machinery, and that the initiative is nearly always left to the Staff Sides. There is ample scope within the functions of Whitley bodies to permit of Official Sides bringing matters forward, but it is found that they show little enthusiasm.”

Since that time, the cause of such criticism has practically disappeared. Whitleyism has become an integral part of Civil Service administration with considerable advantages to both sides. No change of policy or development affecting working conditions is embarked upon without the fullest consultation with the staff, and representatives of the staff associations participate in a wide range of joint committees and study groups upon whose recommendations new policy is generally based: there still remain, however, certain matters of high policy on which the staff associations are not consulted.

The Civil Service Whitley machinery consists of a National Whitley Council which covers half a million workers in all grades of the service. It functions at the national level only. In addition to this over-all body, there are Departmental Councils dealing with the problems of the Department concerned, and the departmental application of the general agreements reached on the National Whitley Council. The Departmental Councils operate both nationally and locally.

At the local level, Post Office Whitley Committees deal with attendances, revisions of force, leave schemes, welfare, training and many other items. The staff also have a voice in the selection of their supervising officers. Staff Sides are notified of impending vacancies

for supervising posts and may submit nominations to the Promotion Board. Written or oral evidence can be offered in support of the nomination. It may be said in passing that, in deciding on their nomination, local Staff Sides consider carefully the relative merits of possible promotees, and do not necessarily recommend the senior officer. A recent questionnaire revealed that only at one-third of the offices did the staff adhere rigidly to seniority in their selection.

There is no staff representation on the Promotion Board, but the procedure has been improved recently by making provisions for three representatives of the Staff Side to meet the Board for a free and frank discussion on the relative merits of the Staff Side nominee and the Official Side nominee, should the nominations differ. It is hoped that both sides will come to the discussion with an open mind and that as a result of the discussion it will be possible to reach agreement. If not, officers senior to the official nominee who would be passed over were he appointed, will be given an opportunity to appeal to a higher authority *before* any decision is taken. This is an advance on the previous position where the appellant was appealing against a promotion *already announced*. As promotions were seldom rescinded, the staff had lost confidence in the appeals machinery.

It will be seen that through the operation of Whitleyism, Post Office workers are able to influence administrative decisions. Nevertheless, the fact that the machinery is purely consultative and that the Official Side can and do take executive action, despite staff opposition, makes it at best a partial recognition of the right of the staff to have a say in the administration of the service.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE OR ADVISORY ?

During the war, when the staff associations gave invaluable co-operation to the Department, U.P.W. members felt that, after 30 years of Whitley working, the time had come for a further advance in their status in relation to management.

As a result of a Report carried at its annual conference in 1942, the Union is seeking the setting up of a Joint Administrative Council for the Post Office. The Council would be composed of an equal number of members appointed by the Postmaster-General and the staff associations. It would be presided over by the Postmaster-General and its vice-chairman would be elected by the Staff Side. To this Council would be entrusted the administration of the Post Office on the basis of an Annual Report and Budget to be presented to Parliament. The policy of the Council would be subject to direction by the House of Commons.

The composition of the Staff Side would be determined by the recognised staff associations. Seats would be allocated on a proportionate basis, due regard being paid to the representation of the smaller interests.

In order that it should not be unwieldy, the Council would be limited in number, possibly ten to each side. There would be sectional councils dealing with the work of the various branches of the service—Postal, Telegraph and Telephone—and with such matters as Accom-

modation, Staffing, Discipline, Promotion, Health and Welfare. In addition, therefore, to limited representation on the main council, there would be ample provision for each association on the sectional councils and their sub-committees.

The policy of the Trade Union Side would be determined by the trade unions concerned, but it would be the responsibility of the Council, as a body, to hold the balance between justice to the staff and the obligations due to the community. These responsibilities should be regarded as complementary rather than conflicting.

The decisions of the Administrative Council would be determined by majority vote. Individual members of the Council would accept the majority decision or would disagree. If they agreed, they would justify their action, if necessary, to their staff association. If the point on which they disagreed was of sufficient importance, they would report the matter to their association, which could pursue the matter by normal trade union action.

To gain acceptance of the above policy, the U.P.W. sought to enlist the support of the other staff associations in the Post Office. The proposal was carried by a majority vote on the Staff Side of the Departmental Whitley Council, which covers the manipulative, clerical and executive staffs.

An approach was then made to the Staff Side of the P.O. Engineering Whitley Council. The Engineering Staff Side replied that they could not agree to trade union participation on an administrative council by means of elected representatives. They did not think the U.P.W. proposal a practicable policy in existing political and administrative circumstances. They preferred an Advisory Council, at the level of the Post Office Board, on which policy could be discussed at the formative stage. The Advisory Council would be above the present Whitley Councils, which would be retained for the formulation of Staff Side policy and discussion on the implementation of administrative policy agreed at the higher level.

Replying to this counter-proposal the U.P.W. expressed the view that an advisory council would be no advance on the existing position. The facilities for discussion on policy matters were already available through the Whitley machinery. The Union pointed out that an advisory council would still leave staff participation in the formulation of policy on a purely consultative basis.

There was disagreement also on the status of the staff representatives, *vis-a-vis* their associations. The Engineering Staff Side held that, as members of the administrative board, the responsibility of the representatives must be solely to the community. While they would be expected to have regard for the interests and aspirations of the staff, they should not be subject to precise direction by their organisations. In other words, there should be no dual loyalties.

The Engineering Staff Side was particularly opposed to any suggestion that the staff representatives should be the vehicle of trade union representation. That should remain the function of the union, either individually or as a constituent of the Whitley Staff Side. The function of the staff representatives on the Council would be to give due weight to the representations when they came before the Council. The U.P.W. felt that the objection to direct trade union participation in administration was based on the assumption that

the interests of the staff and the community were necessarily at variance. The U.P.W. held that the interests were not antagonistic but complementary, and that the staff associations had at all times shown consideration for the interests of the community.

If the elected persons were not to be liable to instruction from their Association, declared the U.P.W., they could not then be regarded in any sense as "representatives" of the staff. It was surely an elementary and fundamental condition of staff participation in policy-making that they should be able, through their representatives, to influence effectively the decisions of the administration.

As it was not found possible to resolve these differences, the U.P.W. tabled a resolution for the Trades Union Congress 1948, instructing the General Council to sponsor the setting up of a Joint Administrative Council for the Post Office. The P.O. Engineering Union submitted an amendment, substituting "Advisory" for "Administrative."

The P.O.E.U. amendment was preferred by Congress, but the General Council invited both unions to collaborate in the drawing up of a common policy, in the light of Congress decision. This has been done, and by concessions on both sides it has been possible to agree on a document for submission to the Economic Committee of the T.U.C. The document is likely to be of interest to other unions seeking an alternative to present policy and is, therefore, briefly summarised below.

After detailing the present administrative set-up in the Post Office and the existing facilities for staff participation, the memorandum continues:—

WEAKNESS OF PRESENT MACHINERY.

The staff associations which constitute the Staff Sides of the two Departmental Whitley Councils have ever before them the need for an efficient Post Office service. With that objective, they have made the fullest possible contribution to Whitley working and have in return been able to secure many agreements beneficial to their members.

The associations believe that the greater the co-operation between the administration and themselves the greater the benefit to the community and to the staff.

As the result of experience in administrative matters they have gained from thirty years of Joint Consultation, and the evidence they have given of a responsible approach to such matters, the Staff Sides feel that there is room for an even greater measure of co-operation than is possible under the present Whitley machinery.

While it has been possible by accommodation to achieve agreement on most matters, the Staff Sides have always felt it a weakness that items are not brought to the Whitley Councils by the Official Sides until they have reached a fairly advanced stage in the Official mind.

This has meant that the Staff Sides have had no opportunity to make a contribution at the formative stage of policy making. It means also that when the items come before the Whitley Councils the Official mind has crystallised and there is a tendency to resist opposition or modification.

The fact that they are being presented with proposals in the formulation of which they have had no voice tends to engender a critical approach on the part of the Staff Sides with a consequent loss of the co-operative goodwill which would flow from consultation at the initial stage of policy making.

These circumstances inevitably militate against an unprejudiced consideration of Whitley items; they accentuate and perpetuate the atmosphere of "two sides"; and so are not conducive of "the greatest measure of co-operation" which, according to the Whitley constitution, is the main object of joint consultation.

PROPOSED CHANGES.

To eliminate what they regard as a serious weakness of the present machinery the Staff Side suggest that, without infringing administrative authority and without prejudice to the desire of certain staff associations for a greater share in administration than is here being sought, provision should be made for the expression of Staff Side views and suggestions at the early stages of policy making. This can best be done, they believe, by seeking as an immediate object the setting-up of a Joint Advisory Council for the Post Office on the following lines:—

1. The Joint Advisory Council to consist of representatives of the Staff Sides and nominees appointed by the Government, in equal status and in such number as is mutually agreed upon.
2. The Council to be presided over by the Postmaster-General or, in his absence, by the Assistant Postmaster-General. Its Vice-Chairman to be elected by the Trade Union side.
3. The Joint Advisory Council to be entrusted with the task of advising the Post Office Board on all matters relating to the policy and administration of the various Post Office services.
4. The Council to be above the present Whitley Councils, which would be retained for discussion on the implementation of policy within the limits prescribed by the present Whitley Constitution. The Staff Sides would continue to be the machinery for the formulation of Staff Side policy within these limits.
5. The Staff Side representatives to be appointed by the Staff Sides, the allocation of the Staff Side places to be a matter for agreement between the two Whitley Staff Sides.
6. The period of service of a Staff Side representative to be two years, with eligibility for re-election.
7. So that the Staff Sides may, through their representatives on the Council, participate in the making of policy decisions, the proceedings of the Joint Advisory Council will normally be reported back to the Staff Sides, it being understood that this might not be possible in confidential matters.
8. The Staff Side representatives to be free to seek the views of the Staff Sides on any matters (other than confidential) which come before the Advisory Council.
9. The Staff Side representatives to be supplied with all documents relating to policy matters.
10. The decisions of the Council to be by agreement between the two sides.

VII. A LIVING FAITH

The proposals summarised in the previous chapter constitute an advance on the present position in the Post Office and are probably as far as postal workers can hope to get in the light of present T.U.C. policy. They leave the final decisions on policy with the administration and preserve the independence of the unions from administrative responsibility. To that extent, they are likely to be acceptable both to the T.U.C. and to the Government. Nevertheless, they fall far short of

the U.P.W. claim for joint control, and they are accepted by the Union, as Whitleyism was accepted thirty years ago, only as a step towards the ultimate goal.

The U.P.W. holds the view that though the solutions being put forward at the present times may be the best possible in the light of circumstances, real industrial co-operation will not be achieved unless the worker is encouraged to regard himself as part of an indivisible unity; that so long as the machinery of industry is based on the conception of "two sides," an administration and a body of workers pursuing a sectional interest, neither the fullest production, nor the greatest happiness of the staff will be achieved.

The U.P.W. believes that the trade union movement has failed to have the courage of its own convictions. The movement has declared for Industrial Democracy but has not faced up to the implications of that declaration. The unions must realise the logic of their own pronouncements. They cannot assert the right of the worker to share in the control of industry, and at the same time in pursuit of an independence which the economic situation has made illusory, evade participation in administrative decisions. Nor can they much longer keep up the pretence that Joint Consultation and the provision of a few places on the governing boards for trade union nominees is an adequate discharge of "the simple democratic right of workpeople to have a voice in the determination of their industrial destinies."

That right cannot be exercised by leaving administration to a new bureaucracy. The unions themselves must undertake the obligation of management. As R. H. Tawney said in "The Acquisitive Society":—

"Trade Unionism must accept the obligation of internal discipline and public responsibility however alien this may be to its present traditions. For ultimately, if by slow degrees, power follows ability to use it; authority goes with function. The workers cannot have it both ways. They must choose either to assume the responsibility for industrial discipline and become free, or to repudiate it and continue to be serfs."

Because they are convinced that any other policy can only result in apathy and cynicism, and because their own progress toward industrial democracy is being retarded by the reluctance of the movement to realise that new circumstances demand new policies and functions, postal workers in the U.P.W. will continue to propagate their policy of Joint Management in Industry. They wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Attlee's declaration in his recently republished book, "The Labour Party in Perspective":—

"A Socialist Party cannot hope to make a success of administering the Capitalist system because it does not believe in it . . . Socialism to me is not just a piece of machinery or an economic system, but a living faith translated into action."

Rejoinder

BY IAN MIKARDO, M.P.

This pamphlet by the U.P.W. adds to the debt of gratitude which is already owed to the Postal Workers by the Labour Movement and by everybody interested in the welfare of the British industrial community. The Union started thinking seriously about the mechanics of industrial democracy and about the effects of nationalisation on the traditional functions of trade unions whilst almost everybody else was content to toss off resounding phrases about workers' control without really knowing, or even wondering, what those phrases meant. For thirty years the U.P.W. has diverted more of its energy from bread-and-butter problems to the study of principles than has any other section of the Movement. Its consistent—as some people would say, its obstinate—adherence to its guild-socialist philosophy, and its persistence in compelling public discussion of that philosophy, have made us all more conscious than we should otherwise be of the importance of industrial democracy and of the difficulty of deciding exactly how it is to work.

The present high level of public interest in the problem of industrial citizenship, and the present rapid growth of joint consultative machinery, are the fruits of the seed which the U.P.W. and the other guild socialists sowed many years ago. But the plant, as happens in even the best regulated gardens, has shot up looking a bit different from the picture on the seed packet; and the sowers don't quite like the look of it. I think they are wrong. I don't think it matters what the plant looks like as long as the fruit is sound; and if we can create, as I believe we can create and are creating, a piece of machinery which combines industrial democracy with efficient management I don't care what that machinery is called. The question which the U.P.W. poses—"Consultation or Joint Management?"—seems to me to be no more than a question of nomenclature: in practice, as I shall try to show, joint consultation carried out fully (which means carried out much better than it has been up to now), is the only viable form of joint management. In practice, too, it can give the workers everything the U.P.W. rightly demands for them.

The T.U.C. and the P.O.E.U. are not being merely obstructionist in pointing out the practical limitations which are imposed by present conditions and by the effect of present conditions on workers' attitudes to their employers (whether public or private) and to the community. We are only four years beyond the end of two centuries of governments subservient to the employer class, and we cannot altogether rule out the possibility of another such government returning in the future. We are only a decade beyond the end of boom-and-bust, and we can't altogether rule out the possibility of full employment being (at least temporarily) sabotaged at some time in the future. Four years of Labour rule, a few steps towards the removal of social injustice, a few industries turned over to public ownership—these are not enough to wipe out of men's minds the inherited class memory of ten generations of exploitation and insecurity, or to induce them to abandon all the weapons they have fashioned against that exploitation and insecurity, or to make them ready to accept that, even in a

publicly-owned industry, there aren't two sides and two different sets of incentives as between the administrator and the worker.

In fact the U.P.W. is wrong to describe as an "erroneous assumption" the suggestion "that the community and the workers are separate sections of society whose interests are necessarily at variance." Of course the workers *in toto*, defined as widely as the union defines them, are the community, but that is not true of the workers in any one industry or trade. If boot and shoe operatives push up their wages disproportionately to those of other workers, of course they will lose a part of their gains when they turn into consumers on Saturday afternoon and go out to buy shoes for their children—but they will still be relatively better off than the rest of the community and they will still have a greater interest in higher wages for boot operatives than they've got in higher wages for postmen.

It really is an oversimplification to say, as the U.P.W. does, that the best interests of the workers and the best interests of the community must necessarily be the same thing. In fact, the best interests of the community are an amalgam of what is common in the interests of different groups of workers plus a compromise between them when they conflict, as inevitably they sometimes must. The Tobacco Workers are now saying that it is in their interests that new machines in their trade shall be used to shorten the working week of the operatives, but it is in the interests of all other workers who are smokers that those new machines shall be used to reduce the price of cigarettes. There's nothing wrong, and nothing to be ashamed of, in this divergence of interests it is of the very nature of things that, since any entity consists of parts different from one another, the object of the whole must be different from the objects of the separate parts and must represent an integration of those differences.

It is true, as the U.P.W. suggests, that the unions have shown a great sense of public spirit during and since the war, and that the nation is greatly in the debt of the organised working class for the willingness it has shown, in general, to subordinate sectional claims to those of the community. But, to be realistic, two things need to be said on this score. The first is that this community spirit owes much to the fact that the real wages of all workers have increased markedly since 1945; and the second is that this general altruism is not without some highly significant exceptions. Some of the best speeches in support of general wage restraint have been made by some trade union leaders in intervals of pushing large wage claims for their own members, some of them dictated not by real considerations of what their members are entitled to but by artificial considerations of maintaining traditional but meaningless differentials between their members and some other groups of workers. The N.U.R. doesn't equate its interests with those of railway workshop staff who happen to belong to other unions; and power-loom overlookers sometimes regard their fellow workers who happen to be weavers as less than the fluff beneath their Northrop looms. So far are we—and don't let us fool ourselves about it—from a situation in which every worker rates every other worker's interests as equal with his own. The guild socialist's day will come; but that day is not tomorrow, or even the day after, though ten years of full employment will hasten it along.

That fact is so inescapable that in the end the U.P.W. draftsman, by a strange piece of inconsistency which he has not noticed, is compelled to recognise it. After arguing, in two separate passages, that we should get away from the conception of a nationalised industry as being "two-sided," he then produces a blueprint of a two-sided instrument. The Joint Administrative Council which he proposes is to consist partly of workers' representatives and partly of persons appointed by the Postmaster-General, "possibly ten *to each side*."* Now if one accepts the union's definition that workers and their representatives include everybody up to the highest level of executives and technicians, why do we need "the other side" at all? Answer: to hold the fort for the interests of the rest of the community where those interests conflict with those of the workers in the industry. And that answer applies equally whether the top-level joint body is administrative or advisory.

That is another point where we run into a dichotomy which is one of nomenclature rather than of fact. "Administrative or advisory?"—the short answer is that it doesn't matter. The extent to which workers get real power out of joint machinery depends less on the formal constitution of that machinery than on the skill and persistence with which workers' representatives make use of it. Joint production committees in federated engineering factories all have identical constitutions—but some of them work well whilst others are a joke, and a poor one at that.

Of course a joint consultative body is a waste of time if the management treats it, and is allowed to treat it, derisively; and if it is consulted only after the important decisions have been taken; and if it is not given the facts and figures on which to make judgments; and if its terms of reference are too narrow; and if the people who sit on it are incompetent; and if all the initiative comes from only one side; and if its members have no proper machinery for reporting back to their "constituents"; and so on. But the remedy for these defects is to take them one by one and put them right, and not to imagine that they disappear if you change the title of the joint body for a more grandiloquent one with an extra syllable in it.

Each of the nationalisation Acts requires the Corporation to consult with its workers not merely about the bread-and-butter things like wages, working conditions, health, welfare and safety, but also about "efficiency in the operation of the Corporation's services." No terms of reference for a joint body could possibly be wider than that. The one thing in the past which was the greater barrier to effective joint consultation was the claim that certain subjects were "the prerogative of management"; but those have now disappeared into "efficiency in the operation of the Corporation's services." Nothing is ever done in any industry which does not affect efficiency in one way or another, and therefore nothing is now barred from the conference table.

Resolute trade union representatives deal with managers who want to take decisions first and consult afterwards by refusing to communicate and explain those decisions to their members—a refusal which, in my experience, has such salutary effects that you don't have to repeat it more than once or twice. That does not mean, of course,

* My italics.

that a management cannot ever make a decision contrary to the views of the trade union side of its joint council; but it does mean that whenever they do so they have to carry the can for it themselves and face whatever consequences may arise; and it also means that if they make a large proportion of their decisions against the views of their workers' representatives they can expect a whole heap of trouble.

Now that's as far as you can hope to get, even with a Joint Administrative Council on the lines of the U.P.W. blueprint. Just imagine that Council in session. The Official Side wants, shall we say, to keep post offices open an hour later, and the Staff Side opposes. There is a discussion, followed by a vote. Each of the two sides votes solidly, and the proposal is carried only because one member of the Staff Side is away ill or at a conference of his International Trade Secretariat, or only because the poor Postmaster-General has been forced to give a casting vote. Now how much better off is anybody—manager or worker—than he would have been if, after the consultation and discussion, the decision had been made by the management instead of by vote?

In the final issue *somebody* has to make every decision—and a lot of them have got to be made quickly. In the long run the willingness of workers to accept an occasional unpalatable decision depends on the extent to which they have been able to put forward their views, on the extent to which they have been shown the other side of the picture, and on the extent to which they are confident that the management won't override the workers' views except for very weighty reasons. Whatever the constitution and whatever the title, only the spirit maketh alive.

Those who want to see in British industry an application of all our democratic rights as citizens—of representation, and of the accountability of the representative, and of public discussion, and of a judiciary independent of the legislature—will, I repeat, welcome all that the U.P.W. has done to keep our interest in this vital subject alive. They will also welcome the reaching of a compromise agreement between U.P.W. and P.O.E.U., and the willingness of the Postal Workers to step aside from their long-term road in order to do a worthwhile short-term job. Whitleyism, which has already done great things, can be made to do still greater ones. If we perfect the tool that lies ready to our hands we shall thereby be more competent, in the fullness of time, to fashion a new and better one.

Postscript

BY G. D. H. COLE

In responding to the request that I write a postscript to this pamphlet, I should like first of all to add to Ian Mikardo's my own tribute to the service done by the Post Office Workers in keeping the ideal of industrial democracy steadily to the front through the long period during which most trade unions seemed to have forgotten all about it. My personal connections with Post Office Unions in this respect go right back to the old Postal and Telegraph Clerks' Association, before it was merged in the U.P.W. The then Secretary of the P. and T.C.A., J. G. Newlove, whom I knew well, had a great deal to do with bringing the Guild idea prominently before his members; and from that Union more than from any other the idea of industrial democracy came to be a part of the set of beliefs on which the U.P.W. was built. Later, Mr. Francis Andrews, as editor of *The Post*, did much to keep the idea steadily before his readers; and the very fact that it had been written into the constitution of the Union helped to keep its members mindful of their long-run objectives even when there was no great hope of any immediate advance towards them.

I do not agree with Ian Mikardo in regarding the difference between "consultation" and "joint management," as he phrases it, as "no more than a question of nomenclature." On the contrary, I think there is an immense difference between the two. I do, however, agree with him that what a thing is called is no sure indication of how it really works, and that important approaches towards the reality of participation in management can be made through the effective use of machinery that is in form no more than consultative—but only with the proviso that such advances are not likely to be made unless the persons who are "consulted" have at their back a strong organisation which commands their loyalty and is in a position to ensure that their advice is taken seriously.

On the other hand, I feel serious doubts about the U.P.W.'s scheme for a Joint Administrative Council, over which the Postmaster-General would preside, nominated, as to half its members, by the Postmaster-General, and as to the other half by the Post Office Staff Associations. These doubts turn partly on the position of the Postmaster-General, with his dual relation to the Council on the one hand and to the Government and Parliament on the other. Which master is the poor man expected to serve, should a conflict arise—as it well may, even if both parties are moved by considerations of national interest? If he is a mere outvotable chairman of the Council, how can he square such a position with his position as a parliamentarian and a member of a Government pledged to follow a consistent policy? I have no objection, if there is to be a Council of the kind proposed, to the Postmaster-General presiding when he attends it—much as the President of the French Republic has in the past presided over meetings of the Cabinet without being a member of it or necessarily accepting its views. Indeed, I think this would be an excellent arrangement; but I am sure the Administrative Council, if it is to work, must have a

regular working Chairman other than the Postmaster-General, and that the Postmaster-General must retain his position as a member of the Government transmitting directions to the Council on Government policy and representing the public interest in answering questions or discussing Post Office policy in Parliament.

This, however, is not my only, or my main objection to the U.P.W. plan for an Administrative Council. Such a body, in order to be effective, must consist mainly of persons who give their full time to the work and are administratively responsible for its day-to-day conduct. But a man cannot be at one and the same time a full-time administrator, jointly responsible with all his colleagues for the conduct of a great industrial undertaking, and a real representative of any other body. He cannot serve two masters *on those terms*. I am not at all suggesting that it is undesirable for members of the Staff Associations to serve full-time on the proposed Administrative Council, provided they do not serve as continuing representatives of their Associations. Nor am I saying that the workers in the Post Office should not themselves choose, or take part in choosing, the persons who are to serve on the proposed Council. On the contrary, I want this to happen; but I want the choice to come from the workers as participants in a co-operative, self-governing service, and *not from the Staff Associations*. I want direct election from inside the Post Office enterprise; not nomination by bodies which, however close to it, are none the less *external* to it as a productive service and concerned primarily with the protection and furtherance of their members' collective interests.

Workers' control of industry and trade union control of industry, I insist, are not the same thing. I believe in the one, but not in the other. I think democratic control must be developed inside the productive structure itself, and not by inserting people into it from the outside. And I think the Staff Associations must be regarded as outside bodies because they will continue to be needed for the protection of the workers' interests, and cannot double this function with the assumption of responsibility to the public for conducting the service, subject to political direction, in accordance with national requirements. I say this by no means out of any feeling of hostility to the trade unions, but rather because I do not want the trade unions to turn into agencies for disciplining the workers instead of looking after their legitimate interests.

Accordingly, if there is to be a Post Office Administrative Council, I want it to consist largely, as to its full-time members, of persons elected to serve on it, subject to their having the requisite qualifications, by the votes of the whole body of Post Office employees, each counting as one. But I do not see why all the members should serve full-time; and the objections which I have raised to full-time service by representatives of the Staff Associations do not apply to part-time service, which does not carry the same sort of administrative responsibility. I am very willing to see, as part-time members of the Council, both nominees of the Staff Associations and other persons from outside the service whose collaboration is likely to be useful—such as a member from the Railway Executive, or an expert in road transport or in, say, electrical engineering.

On an Advisory, or Consultative, Joint Council, such as the U.P.W. and the P.O.E.U. have now united in recommending as an immediate

measure, the difficulties of dual responsibility do not arise, and it is quite in order for the Staff Associations to nominate members. But this very fact should bring home the essential difference between joint consultation and real participation in management. The one does not involve full responsibility: the other does. A joint consultative body does not give orders: that is left, after consultation, to the responsible management. The moment consultation passes over into actual administration, responsibility shifts as well and those who are responsible for managing the undertaking successfully must have a clearly defined authority and must not be at the mercy of conflicting claims.

Now, it may be the case, as some people say it is, that the most the workers really want is to be consulted by the management and not to become partners in it themselves. But I do not believe this to be the case with the U.P.W. leaders who have been pressing for a whole generation for industrial democracy, though they already possess perhaps the most developed form of joint consultation that exists in any big industry or service—except for the medical profession. The U.P.W., to judge by its record, does mean what it says when it professes to stand by the Guild principle—and this is what I too stand by. I know it is sometimes said that there is a fairly general agreement in the Labour Movement on the principle of industrial democracy as distinct from the ways of applying it. For my part I have been able to discover no such agreement, either in the Labour Party or in the Trades Union Congress. On the contrary, I find in both, almost as much now as when I was a leader in the Guild Socialist movement more than thirty years ago, a deep distrust of the workers' power to run industry on self-governing lines or of their preparedness to do this in the common interest rather than in their own. The battle of principle has *not* been won, even in the socialist and trade union movement. It is still being fought—or rather, it is being fought again after a long interval during which the entire issue seemed to have dropped almost out of mind.

To-day, the interest is reviving sharply; but it is, I think, idle to believe that the advance towards the Guild solution can be either rapid or easy. The main body even of the active workers in the trade unions is not ready for the responsibility which sharing in management involves—not because they lack the native ability, but because they have not been thinking about the matter or trying to prepare themselves for the taking on of new powers of workshop democracy. Listen to any discussion on the matter even in a picked trade union group. I have listened to many, but hardly to one that has got beyond generalities to facing the concrete questions which the institution of industrial democracy presents. Even the present opportunities for the development of joint consultation are not being properly used, because so few trade unionists know what they really want to make of them. We have a long way to go before we can hope to get, even in the industries and services that are publicly owned, as far as the U.P.W. wants to go with its proposed Joint Administrative Council in the direction of industrial democracy.

That means that we shall have plenty of time yet for discussing what are the right and wrong ways of advancing towards our goal. In that spirit most of all, I welcome this pamphlet, with its imperfect

formulations and its record of divergent views between the two principal Post Office Associations. Perhaps discussion of its contents will get some people a stage nearer to a concrete and realistic formulation of what they are truly seeking to achieve.

1870

History of the County

Chapter I

The first settlement in the county was made by the Indians who were the first to inhabit the land. They were the descendants of the Algonquian people who had lived in the region for many centuries. The first white settlers came to the county in the year 1680. They were the first to establish a permanent settlement in the county. The first white settlement was made by the first white settlers who came to the county in the year 1680. They were the first to establish a permanent settlement in the county. The first white settlement was made by the first white settlers who came to the county in the year 1680. They were the first to establish a permanent settlement in the county.

Chapter II

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