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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,  
AT KNOX GRAMMAR SCHOOL SPEECH NIGHT  
5 DECEMBER, 1974

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IT IS NOT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE - AND NOT WITHOUT A CERTAIN IRONY - THAT THE JUBILEE OF KNOX AND THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT ARE BEING OBSERVED IN THE SAME WEEK. I AM PROBABLY THE ONLY PERSON IN AUSTRALIA WHO HAS ATTENDED BOTH CELEBRATIONS AND DERIVED KEEN PERSONAL SATISFACTION FROM EACH. I MUST CONFESS THAT THE ATMOSPHERE IN DIAMOND VALLEY ON MONDAY NIGHT WAS A TRIFLE MORE RAPTUROUS THAN IT IS IN WAHROONGA, BUT LET ME NOT BE STINTING IN MY GRATITUDE. THERE IS NO OTHER FORUM WHERE I CAN ACHIEVE SO LARGE AND CIVIL AN AUDIENCE ON THE DEEP NORTH SHORE AS I CAN AT KNOX ON SPEECH NIGHT. THIS IS EASILY THE BEST MEETING I HAVE ADDRESSED IN THE ELECTORATE OF BRADFIELD.

IT IS A VERY GREAT HONOUR - AND A VERY GREAT PLEASURE - TO BE BACK AMONG YOU. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE SCHOOL HAS CHANGED A GOOD DEAL SINCE I WAS HERE. THE BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS ARE MORE RESPLENDENT THAN EVER. THE UNIFORM I AM WEARING TONIGHT IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE I REMEMBER.

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KNOX HAS JOINED THE SELECT BAND OF SCHOOLS WHOSE OLD BOYS INCLUDE A PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA. SOME OF YOU MAY THINK THAT IN AN IDEAL WORLD THAT HONOUR MIGHT HAVE FALLEN MORE FITTINGLY ON ONE OF THE OTHER OLD BOYS WHO HAVE MADE THEIR MARK AT KNOX AND THEIR FORTUNES IN POLITICS - IAN SINCLAIR, JOHN FULLER, JIM FORBES. BUT I WAS DETERMINED THAT NONE OF THEM WOULD BEAT ME TO IT. FOR MANY YEARS I NURTURED AN OVERWHELMING AMBITION - I WAS RESOLVED TO BE THE FIRST KNOX BOY TO LIVE AT THE LODGE. WHAT BETTER WAY TO BRING HONOUR TO THE SCHOOL? FIFTY YEARS AGO, WHEN I CAME HERE, NO ONE DREAMED I WOULD ONE DAY BE PRIME MINISTER. IF ANYONE HAD KNOWN I WOULD BE A LABOR PRIME MINISTER THEY MIGHT NEVER HAD LET ME IN. LABOR MEN RARELY WENT TO KNOX - THEY PREFERRED THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOX.

I SUPPOSE WHEN I FINALLY MADE IT THERE WERE SOME MISGIVINGS IN THE A.L.P. AND NOT A FEW MISGIVINGS HERE. YET LOOKING BACK, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME REMARKABLE PARALLELS IN OUR FORTUNES AND ACHIEVEMENTS. KNOX AND THE LABOR PARTY HAVE BOTH TURNED OUT A FAIR QUOTA OF JUDGES, DIPLOMATS, AND HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS - EVEN PRIME MINISTERS. WHEN A VACANCY OCCURRED ON THE HIGH COURT LAST YEAR IT WAS OBVIOUS TO ME THAT MR. JUSTICE JACOBS HAD EXACTLY THE RIGHT BACKGROUND. SOME OF MY AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTMENTS ARE QUITE WELL KNOWN. PERHAPS I CAN CONFIDE TO THIS AUDIENCE THAT MR. ROB LAURIE, WHO ACCOMPANIED ME HERE TONIGHT, WILL TAKE UP A POSTING AS HEAD OF ONE OF OUR ASIAN MISSIONS NEXT YEAR. MR. LAURIE LEFT KNOX IN 1953. MY PRESS SECRETARY LEFT IN 1951.

I UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE PAST YEAR KNOX AND THE A.L.P. HAVE BOTH HAD BUILDING APPEALS. IT WOULD NOT SURPRISE ME IF ONE OR TWO BUSINESSMEN HAD GIVEN SOMETHING TO BOTH OF US. AND OF COURSE WE HAVE DONE GREAT THINGS TOGETHER FOR EDUCATION. EDUCATION HAS BEEN OUR COMMON GOAL - THOUGH OPINIONS MAY DIFFER ABOUT OUR RESPECTIVE ACHIEVEMENTS.

DESPITE MY EARLY SCHOOLING AT KNOX I HAVE NEVER BEEN A SIMPLE PRESBYTERIAN. THE MOST CELEBRATED PRESBYTERIAN TO HOLD THIS OFFICE ATTENDED A METHODIST SCHOOL IN MELBOURNE. IT IS STILL GOING STRONG. I BEGAN MY EDUCATION AT TWO ANGLICAN SCHOOLS IN SYDNEY. THEY HAVE BOTH CLOSED DOWN. ONE OF THEM WAS MOWBRAY HOUSE. IN THE LAST TERM OF 1922, I ATTENDED THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL AT CHATSWOOD. IT WAS MY FIRST CONTACT WITH THE "MONSTROUS REGIMEN OF WOMEN" WHOSE INFLUENCE JOHN KNOX DEPLORED WITH SUCH VEHEMENCE. I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED HOW KNOX WOULD HAVE FARED IF HE HAD SET ABOUT REFORMING THE A.L.P. INSTEAD OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND. HE WAS A RATHER SUBVERSIVE CHARACTER. HE WENT SO FAR AS TO ADVOCATE RESISTANCE TO THE ESTABLISHED CIVIL ORDER - IF NECESSARY BY FORCE. HE WAS A BEARDED REVOLUTIONARY, GIVEN TO HARANGUING PUBLIC MEETINGS. HE FELT THOROUGHLY DISAFFECTED WITH THE "SYSTEM". HE DISPARAGED THE MONARCHY. IF HE HAD BEEN ALIVE TODAY HE WOULD HAVE MARCHED IN MORATORIUMS AND SUPPORTED THE PEACE MOVEMENT. I DOUBT IF HIS CHILDREN WOULD HAVE GONE TO THIS SCHOOL.

IN THE LITURGY HE DEVISED FOR THE CHURCH ONE IS STRUCK BY CERTAIN CONTEMPORARY PARALLELS. KNOX BELIEVED THAT MINISTERS SHOULD BE ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE BUT APPOINTED BY THEIR MINISTERIAL BRETHERN. THAT IS MORE OR LESS HOW WE RUN THE CAUCUS. HE BELIEVED THAT FINAL AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH SHOULD LIE WITH A GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONTAINING ELDERS AND MINISTERS. THAT IS RATHER LIKE OUR FEDERAL CONFERENCE. SO YOU CAN SEE THE SOURCES OF OUR INSPIRATION. YOU CAN SEE WHY I'VE COME TO YOUR SPEECH NIGHT. IN THE LABOR PARTY WE OWE AS MUCH TO KNOX THE MAN AS WE DO TO KNOX THE SCHOOL. HE ALSO HELD EXEMPLARY VIEWS ON EDUCATION. J.S. McEWEN, WHO WROTE A STUDY OF KNOX'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, POINTS OUT THAT IN THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE KNOX OUTLINED " A MOST ELABORATE EDUCATIONAL SCHEME FROM PARISH SCHOOL UP TO UNIVERSITY, COMPULSORY IN ITS EARLY STAGES FOR ALL AND FREE TO THE POOR, WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OF ADVANCEMENT FOR THE SON OF PEASANT AND OF PEER." ~~Now~~ THOSE WORDS ARE NOT MINE BUT I SHOULD BE QUITE HAPPY TO SEE THEM IN OUR PARTY PLATFORM.

IT IS TYPICAL OF KNOX THAT HE GAVE NO THOUGHT TO THE DAUGHTERS OF PEASANT OR PEER. IN THESE ENLIGHTENED DAYS WE PROVIDE GIRLS WITH INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS THAT ARE JUST AS EFFICIENT, JUST AS RESPECTED, JUST AS WELL ENDOWED AS THOSE FOR BOYS. I WAS ASTONISHED THE OTHER DAY TO FIND A BOOK WRITTEN BY THE FORMER HEADMISTRESS OF SUCH A SCHOOL. IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO MENTION THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL OR THE NAME OF THE AUTHOR, BUT THE BOOK WAS CALLED "INDISCRETIONS OF A HEADMISTRESS". I WAS CONNED BY THE TITLE.

MANY PEOPLE BROWSING THROUGH THE PAPERBACKS AT AIRPORT BOOKSTALLS MUST HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED WHEN THEY READ IT. I DO NOT MEAN TO DISPARAGE THE BOOK. ITS CONTENTS WERE PIOUS AND ENTIRELY ADMIRABLE. IT WAS THE TITLE THAT GOT ME IN. IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT <sup>IF</sup> THE KARMEL REPORT HAD BORNE HALF SO SUGGESTIVE A TITLE IT WOULD HAVE ACHIEVED A MUCH WIDER CIRCULATION, IF NOT A WIDER ACCEPTANCE.

NOW I KNOW THE KARMEL REPORT IS A SORE POINT WITH SOME OF YOU, BUT I SHOULD LIKE TO TOUCH ON IT BRIEFLY. I HAVE DONE MY HOMEWORK, AND I NOTICED AN EDITORIAL ON KARMEL IN THE "KNOX GRAMMARIAN" OF JUNE THIS YEAR. IT WELCOMED THE REPLACEMENT OF OLD FASHIONED "ROTE LEARNING" BY MODERN CONCEPTS OF TEACHING. IT DEPLORED THE FACT THAT THIS TRANSITION WAS PROCEEDING TOO SLOWLY, AND THAT THE NECESSARY ATMOSPHERE OF DISCOVERY AND ADVENTURE IN THE CLASSROOM WAS BREAKING DOWN. IT WENT ON TO SAY: "THE BLAME FOR THIS STAGNATION IN EDUCATION CAN BE GIVEN WHOLLY TO THE POLICY MAKERS WHO FIND CHANGE INTOLERABLE. THE KARMEL REPORT IS, OF COURSE, THE BEST EXAMPLE OF THIS. THEY FOUND THAT PRIVATE SCHOOLS WERE TOO FAR AHEAD OF STATE SCHOOLS IN IDEAS AND APPLICATIONS. THE WAY THEY STIFLED OR HALTED THESE 'RADICAL' EXPENSIVE IDEAS WAS TO CUT OUT FUNDS TO THESE SCHOOLS. NOW THEY WANT TO STANDARDIZE EDUCATION ON THE SAME MEDIOCRE LEVEL."

I MUST SAY THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF FINDING CHANGE INTOLERABLE. AS ONE WHO HAD A LOT TO DO WITH PROFESSOR KARMEL'S APPOINTMENT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION, I CANNOT ALLOW THAT ACCUSATION TO PASS. ONE CAN ARGUE ABOUT THE MERITS OF MODERN EDUCATIONAL THEORY BUT I DON'T THINK ONE CAN ARGUE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MONEY TO EDUCATION. THE SCOTS, TO THEIR GREAT CREDIT, HAVE NEVER HAD ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MONEY. WEALTH DOES NOT NECESSARILY MAKE FOR A GOOD SCHOOL BUT POVERTY ASSUREDLY MAKES FOR A BAD ONE. OUR POLICIES ON EDUCATION ARE NOT INTENDED TO "STANDARDIZE EDUCATION ON THE SAME MEDIOCRE LEVEL". THEY ARE INTENDED TO RAISE ALL SCHOOLS TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL. I ACCEPT THAT IT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE POSSIBLE TO DO THIS. I ACCEPT THAT THERE WILL PROBABLY ALWAYS BE SOME SCHOOLS - NOT NECESSARILY PRIVATE SCHOOLS - THAT ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS. NO AMOUNT OF PLANNING OR FUNDING CAN OFFSET THE EFFECTS OF, SAY, INCOMPETENT MANAGEMENT, DISHARMONY AMONG STAFF, OR A LACK OF MORALE OR ESPRIT DE CORPS.

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THESE THINGS ARE INTANGIBLE AND VERY LARGELY FORTUITOUS. IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT, HOWEVER, THAT MATERIAL DEPRIVATION CAN BE OVERCOME WITH ADDITIONAL FUNDS. IF A SCHOOL IS DISADVANTAGED, IF IT IS POOR, WE CAN HELP RAISE ITS STANDARDS BY PROVIDING THE BUILDINGS, THE EQUIPMENT, THE BOOKS, THE SALARIED STAFF THAT IT NEEDS. LONG BEFORE WE CAME TO OFFICE IT WAS MANIFESTLY CLEAR THAT MANY SCHOOLS LACKED FUNDS FOR BASIC NECESSITIES. SOME WERE IN GREATER NEED THAN OTHERS. I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT A VERY SIMPLE AND OBVIOUS PRINCIPLE - IT WOULD NOT BE PUTTING IT TOO HIGHLY TO SAY A CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE - THAT THE MOST DEPRIVED CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE THE FIRST CALL ON OUR HELP. WE DECIDED THAT THE SCHOOLS MOST IN NEED SHOULD BENEFIT MOST FROM ADDITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDS. WE DECIDED THAT THESE NEEDS COULD BEST BE ASSESSED BY AN EXPERT, IMPARTIAL, INDEPENDENT INQUIRY. WE SET UP THAT INQUIRY. WE MADE PUBLIC ITS REPORT. WE ACTED ON THAT REPORT. IT WAS NOT JUST A QUESTION OF REDISTRIBUTING EXISTING FUNDS. IT WAS A MATTER OF CHANNELLING VASTLY AUGMENTED FUNDS TO THE SCHOOLS THAT NEEDED THEM. THERE WAS NEVER ANY QUESTION OF LEVELLING DOWN. OUR AIM IS TO RAISE ALL STANDARDS. WE ARE DETERMINED THAT THE BEST EDUCATION AVAILABLE ANYWHERE IN AUSTRALIA SHOULD BE AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE IN AUSTRALIA.

I HAVE NEVER DOUBTED THAT OUR REFORMS IN EDUCATION HAVE BEEN THE PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT OF MY GOVERNMENT. WE ARE SPENDING FOUR TIMES AS MUCH AS OUR PREDECESSORS ON EDUCATION. WE HAVE ASSUMED FULL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION, AND HAVE ABOLISHED FEES. FOR THE FIRST TIME WE ARE GIVING ASSISTANCE TO TEACHERS' COLLEGES AND PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS' COLLEGES ON THE SAME BASIS AS UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION: WE ARE GIVING MUCH MORE GENEROUS ALLOWANCES TO STUDENTS AND HAVE MORE THAN TREBLED THE NUMBER OF TEACHING SCHOLARSHIPS. WE ARE TACKLING THE NEW AREA OF TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION.

I SHOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT THE MOST ENDURING RESULT OF OUR POLICIES ON EDUCATION HAS BEEN TO RAISE THE COMMUNITY'S LEVEL OF EXPECTATION. WE HAVE SET OUR SIGHTS HIGHER. THE WHOLE DEBATE ON EDUCATION HAS MOVED TO A HIGHER PLANE, FREE OF DOGMA, FREE OF PREJUDICE, FREE OF SECTARIANISM. THERE IS NO LONGER ANY QUESTION ABOUT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION; IN THE CASE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IT IS ACCEPTED ABSOLUTELY. THERE IS NO LONGER ANY DEBATE ABOUT 'STATE AID'. THERE IS NO LONGER ANY ARGUMENT ABOUT THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION. THE HISTORIC INCREASE IN EDUCATION EXPENDITURE WAS UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED AND WELCOMED, EVEN BY THOSE WHO DISPUTE THE WAY THOSE FUNDS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED.

IT HAS TAKEN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS NEARLY 100 YEARS TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE THAT EDUCATION IS A NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY. MORE THAN 30 YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE FIRST STEPS IN THIS PROCESS WERE INITIATED BY A LABOR GOVERNMENT. IN 1957, WITH THE UNIVERSITIES OVERLOADED AND DEPENDENT ON COMMONWEALTH FUNDS, SIR KEITH MURRAY'S COMMITTEE REPORTED ON THE NEEDS OF UNIVERSITIES AND IN 1959 A NEW UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION WAS ESTABLISHED BY STATUTE. THEREAFTER, UNIVERSITIES BENEFITED FROM SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED FUNDS AND WERE ABLE TO PLAN AHEAD ON THE BASIS OF GRANTS DETERMINED ON A REGULAR AND RATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF THEIR NEEDS. WHAT WE ARE NOW DOING FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IS PRECISELY WHAT SIR ROBERT MENZIES - A GOOD PRESBYTERIAN - DID FOR UNIVERSITIES.

FIFTY YEARS AGO THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS WAS MUCH MORE DISTINCTIVE THAN IT IS TODAY. WHEN I WAS AT KNOX IT WAS MORE OR LESS ACCEPTED THAT THE MAJORITY WHO ENTERED SUCH SCHOOLS WOULD FINISH THEIR SECONDARY EDUCATION AND, IF POSSIBLE, MATRICULATE. IT WAS UNDERSTOOD - AND NO ONE RESENTED THE FACT - THAT SCHOOLS LIKE KNOX OFFERED THE QUICKEST AND SUREST ACCESS TO THE PROFESSIONS AND THE HIGHER MANAGERIAL AND EXECUTIVE OCCUPATIONS. THAT WAS A PERFECTLY RESPECTABLE AIM - IT IS STILL YOUR AIM - BUT IT IS NO LONGER ONE THAT YOU HOLD EXCLUSIVELY. IN 1924, <sup>the year before</sup> ~~when~~ I CAME TO KNOX, 80 PER CENT OF ALL CHILDREN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES WERE AT GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS.

YET OF ALL THOSE WHO WENT TO THE LEAVING - AND THROUGH THE LEAVING - IN 1924 ONLY 57 PER CENT CAME FROM GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS. THE REST WERE EVENLY DIVIDED BETWEEN ROMAN CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN AND PROTESTANT SCHOOLS.

• THE ANGLICAN AND PROTESTANT SCHOOLS PLACED MUCH GREATER STRESS ON CLASSICAL EDUCATION IN THOSE DAYS. BACK IN 1924, 126 CHILDREN FROM ANGLICAN AND PROTESTANT SCHOOLS PASSED LATIN AT THE LEAVING - ALMOST AS MANY AS PASSED FROM GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS (144). YET GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS HAD 20 TIMES AS MANY CHILDREN AS SCHOOLS LIKE KNOX. LATIN WAS MORE POPULAR WITH PRIVATE SCHOOLS. MORE THAN HALF THE PUPILS AT ANGLICAN AND PROTESTANT SCHOOLS WHO PASSED THE LEAVING IN 1924 ALSO PASSED IN LATIN (126 OUT OF 210). LAST YEAR MORE THAN 32,000 CHILDREN SAT FOR THE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE IN NEW SOUTH WALES; 446 PASSED IN LATIN. SO ALTHOUGH LATIN IS STUDIED BY A MUCH SMALLER PROPORTION OF THE SCHOOL POPULATION TODAY, WE ARE ACTUALLY PRODUCING MORE LATIN SCHOLARS. THAT IS SOME CONSOLATION FOR SOMEONE LIKE MYSELF WITH A CERTAIN PREJUDICE IN FAVOUR OF CLASSICAL LANGUAGES.

YOU MAY SOMETIMES BE TEMPTED TO IMAGINE THAT MY GOVERNMENT IS INDIFFERENT OR EVEN HOSTILE TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS. THAT IS NOT SO. I AGREE THAT WE ARE MOST CONCERNED WITH THE NEEDS OF THE LESS FORTUNATE SCHOOLS. BUT IT WOULD BE IRRATIONAL TO CONCLUDE THAT THIS CONCERN, URGENT AND VALID AS IT IS, BLINDS US TO THE QUALITIES OF SCHOOLS SUCH AS YOURS OR MAKES US ANY LESS MINDFUL OF YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY. YOU HAVE GREAT TRADITIONS. YOU HAVE A GREAT RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT. YOU ADHERE TO STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE AND A SET OF CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL VALUES THAT ARE WORTH PRESERVING. BY HARD WORK, BY GREAT EFFORT AND PATIENCE AND MUCH SACRIFICE YOU HAVE CREATED A SCHOOL OF THE VERY HIGHEST QUALITY, IN A SETTING OF GREAT BEAUTY. THERE IS AT KNOX AND SCHOOLS LIKE IT A VERY PALPABLE SPIRIT OF DEDICATION, OF STRIVING, OF TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THE WELFARE OF EVERY CHILD.

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THESE THINGS ARE ENVIABLE. IT WOULD BE ABSURD AND MEAN-  
SPIRITED TO DESPISE THEM. I HOPE THEY WILL SERVE AS  
EXAMPLES TO THOSE OF US WHO SEEK TO BRING TO ALL  
CHILDREN THE BENEFITS OF THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATION,  
PROVIDED IN THE BEST POSSIBLE SURROUNDINGS BY THE BEST  
POSSIBLE TEACHERS, AND GUIDED BY THE MOST HUMANE AND  
ENLIGHTENED PRINCIPLES OF SCHOLARSHIP AND DISCIPLINE.  
I CONGRATULATE ALL THE PRIZEWINNERS TONIGHT. I CONGRATULATE  
KNOX, - ITS COUNCIL, ITS HEADMASTER, ITS STAFF AND ITS  
BOYS - ON THEIR JUBILEE. I WISH YOU THE VERY BEST OF  
GOOD FORTUNE IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

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