

# LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST



## THE BATTLE OF ORRELL MOUNT PARK

Orrell Mount Park (Silcocks) in Litherland might not be the grandest park, but it is somewhere where local residents can walk the dog, play five-a-side or simply get a bit of fresh air. Unfortunately, the Labour-led Sefton Council have had their eyes on developing it into a full size 3G artificial football pitch for some time now. From reading the Echo, the dispute between the Council and local residents might seem merely like a difference of opinion. The council believe it will help develop Bootle and Litherland, providing a space for fee-paying football teams.

On the other hand, residents are concerned about the fact that if developed the space would exclude most of the community; about noise, light and traffic pollution; and lower house prices.

They also have environmental concerns: grass will be torn up and replaced with plastic, known to have only an 8-10 year lifespan before it needs to be disposed of; and trees and wildlife will be lost (including bees, bats and squirrels). The local community are also concerned about potential

health risks, for example some research suggests there is carcinogenic material in the proposed pitch's rubber crumb.

Interestingly, there may be more going on behind the scenes. Bellway Housing, who are the contractors responsible for the St Wilfrid's housing project in Litherland, were initially asked by the Council to bring two disused football pitches on that site back into use. However, it seems that, rather than develop and open up pitches within that housing project, Bellway and the Council have attempted to use Orrell Mount Park as the

location of the pitches – a process incorrectly referred to in planning documents as an attempt to 'bring back into use' the pitches. In reality it was a means of building more houses (which can be sold for higher prices), also generating more council tax - at the expense of local residents. The consultation regarding the development was rushed through and approved back in February 2021. Only about 12 houses were consulted, and those that opposed it were unable to door-knock, inform other residents or protest due to the lockdown, meaning that until construction work began, very few people in Bootle and Litherland knew about the scheme. The only reason the development is now well-known and may even be scrapped, is because local residents took direct action against it.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, lorries turned up unannounced to put up fencing. A local resident quickly parked his car on the public driveway to the site. Others soon followed suit, and so they managed to prevent large construction vehicles from gaining access. Surprisingly, the police were friendly and told them they had a right to protest (some protesters even commented on how much they liked their local police afterwards). Residents then started picketing at the entrance from early

morning until evening every day. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, another lorry arrived and around 25 residents amassed again, this time without any vehicles, since the Council had locked all gates to the park a week earlier preventing any public access. However, after a lengthy stand-off, the police told them that by blocking the park's access to the vehicles they were breaking the law, and that if they continued they'd be arrested. The protestors did move out of the way allowing access, but remained too close to the lorry on the side of the road for the fencing to be taken down safely. Eventually the construction workers, who had previously been frustrated by the protest, packed up and left, many wishing the community good luck in their fight to save their green space, perhaps feeling bad about their involvement in the dispute. In the following days, the park remained closed to the public to 'protect the protestors', before Sefton Council reopened it on November 12<sup>th</sup>, announcing work on the pitch would be postponed pending further consultation.

For now it seems like the campaign to Save Orrell Mount Park has left the domain of direct action, the residents committee are now lobbying councillors and gaining signatures for their petition (1,600+ at the time of writing). An investigation could be a means for the council to save face (claiming to change their minds due to new information rather than disruptive protests), but also an opportunity for residents to build popular support. At the time of writing, residents are still picketing daily, showing that they don't trust the council not to try the same underhanded tactics again. In the ongoing struggle against the scheme and similar schemes such as Rimrose Valley, it's worth remembering that it was ordinary local people taking collective action that won the Battle for Orrell Mount Park.

If you're interested in supporting the ongoing campaign by Friends of Orrell Mount Park you can get in touch at [friends@foomp.org.uk](mailto:friends@foomp.org.uk) •

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## STUDENTS DRIVE OUT ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVISTS

On November 25<sup>th</sup>, a small number of activists gathered outside the Victoria Gallery and Museum, on Brownlow Hill, to show they opposed a woman's right to choose to have an abortion, carrying explicit and unsettling images of aborted foetuses. While that area is in the middle of the University of Liverpool campus, it is actually a public space, and so the University could not have them removed.

However, students rapidly gathered to oppose them. They stood in front of them brandishing pro-choice placards, singing and chanting over them, and covering up their images with bed-sheets and umbrellas. When the anti-abortion protesters gathered again the next day, several student societies called for another counter-protest, where over 75 students gathered, eventually causing the anti-abortion activists to leave - good riddance! These tactics can of course be reproduced in the city centre, where most anti-abortion protests take place. •



*"We envisage an anarchist society as a society where people are free to make choices about their own lives. We picture a society where decisions are made at the lowest effective level. For women, this includes the decision whether or not to become pregnant, whether or not to remain pregnant, whether or not to have children."*

**Aileen O'Carroll**

# WAGE SLAVERY

We need to work in order to produce the things and services that we need to live, and grow, as human societies, so common sense tells us. And from this seemingly irrefutable basis, everything else follows as if by necessity: the coercion, subordination, exhaustion, boredom, misery, stress, and anxiety of work.

But we are not working for human needs. All the work of billions of people across the planet, enhanced by modern science and technology, is directed towards generating profit for bosses and owners while the majority of people live in poverty, working themselves to an early grave because they have no other choice.

Forced labour underpins the capitalist economy no less than the feudalism that preceded it. The instruments of production are owned and managed by a minority of people - the capitalist class - who can invest their capital to generate ever more. The working class owns nothing but their personal possessions and must sell themselves by the hour to whoever will hire them.

Economists will call it a free contract of employment, but a "choice" between working or starving (or at least living in miserable poverty, if a welfare scheme is available) is nothing but coercion. The worker is dependent on a wage in order to live, and so is at the mercy of those who give the wages. Where the world of work begins, so-called democracy ends. For fear of being punished, humiliated, or sacked by the boss, the worker must be compliant and productive at all times. It is a relationship of command and obedience.

We are told when to work, where to work, how to work; we are always pushed to work harder, faster, more efficiently; we might be told who we can talk to, where we can go, and when we may have a break or use the toilet; we must follow orders no matter how arbitrary, unreasonable, or unethical. We have no say in any of this, no control over our own activity and conditions. The workplace is a dictatorship with its own system of discipline, its enforcers and informants.

This loss of freedom is keenly felt at the personal level, but the ramifications go far beyond the individual. Does our work produce things that people need, or useless commodities? Is it ecologically viable or are we destroying the environment? Is it safe or will it put public health at risk? We have no power to decide. In fact, work is not only the production of commodities but also the maintenance and renewal of capitalism itself. We are building our own prisons and digging our own graves.



Some people refuse the burden and live off benefits. But life on the dole is still determined by work: the lack of it, the pressure to get it, the work involved in meeting the job centre's expectations, and exclusion from a society organised around working for and spending wages. Many hope to become their own boss - but find themselves caught in the same miseries of work, only imposed directly through market competition. Others find they have no choice - excluded from employment by ill-health, disability, or caring responsibilities - for which they suffer doubly by lack of wages and loss of independence. Even the wage slave's "free time" is spent preparing for, travelling to and from, and recovering from work.

But the truth is that none of this is necessary. We could be creating, cooperating, and distributing freely, meeting everyone's needs unconditionally. And we can build our own power as workers here and now, to defend our dignity and begin wresting control over our work and ultimately our lives. Through class struggle, wage slavery must be abolished. •

# STRIKE NEWS

Care workers employed by Anchor Hanover in Salford have been campaigning with Unison for a pay increase (they were paid minimum wage, £8.91). After protesting outside a local care home on November 13<sup>th</sup>, they will now be getting paid at least £9.90 from December onwards, not just in Salford, but for all Anchor employees across the UK. This pay rise is apparently worth £19 million, and was gained without having to resort to strike action; however, striking can still be necessary in some cases. Care, domestic and maintenance workers at the Sage nursing home in North London managed to win an 11% pay increase for workers previously earning the minimum wage (and 5% for all the rest). Despite the care home having a billionaire trustee, this was only won after a lengthy struggle by members of the United Voices of the World (UVW). Workers had to go on strike three times (in January, February and October), they even boarded a “solidarity bus” and surprised the home’s trustee by delivering a demand letter at his offices. I personally know of workers in Leeds and Liverpool (who would rather remain anonymous), who have won improvements simply by sending a collective demand letter, without having to take action, or even being members of a trade union. The threat of strike action, employees quitting en masse or even just a scandal, is often all it takes.

From December 1<sup>st</sup>, the University and Colleges Union (UCU) staged a three day strike across 58 universities, fighting against issues including pension cuts and the gender pay gap. At the University of Sheffield students showed their support by occupying a university building. University of Manchester students went further and occupied 6 buildings. In Stirling, Scotland, a car aggressively drove through a picket line of students; the campus security’s immediate response was that they had seen this take place and would not be taking any action against the driver. In Sheffield, a majority of Labour Councillors crossed the UCU’s picket line to have a meeting (where it was confusingly decided not to have a meeting on campus during a strike). On leaving, one of the

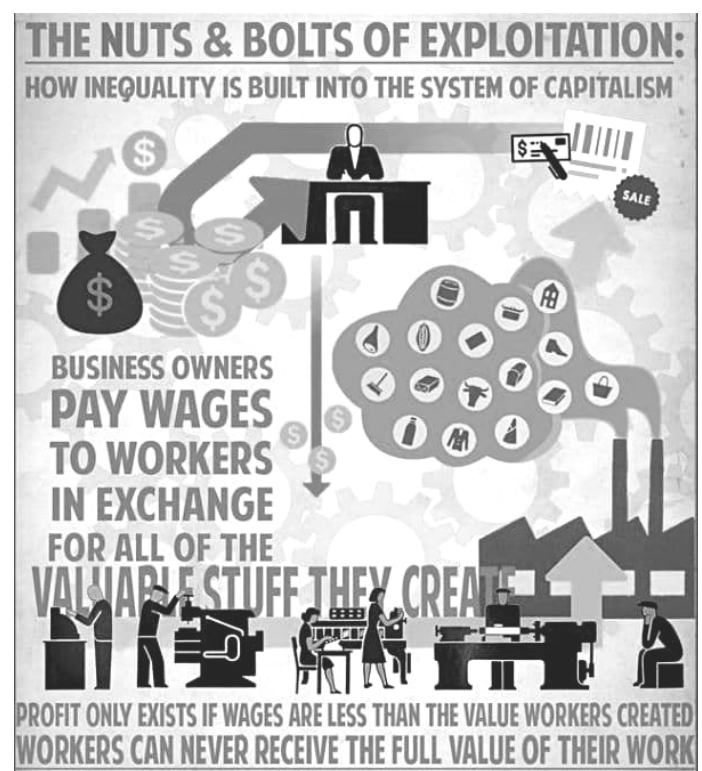
strikers pointed out they were scabs since they had already crossed their picket line. In the argument that followed, their chief whip, Tony Damms, was accused of attempting to assault one of the strikers.

There is also an ongoing dispute at the luxury department store Harrods in London. Restaurant workers in the UVW have been balloting for strike action, demanding £12 an hour. Before a result was even announced, management raised hourly wages

from £9 to £11.50 (with Chefs getting over £12.50). Back in 2017, restaurant workers at Harrods managed to increase the proportion of the service charge (or tips) they kept

from 25% to 100% after a highly disruptive protest (where the police made 6 arrests, even arresting the UVW’s general secretary after the protest had ended).

Through our labour, we uphold society and create all of its wealth. This is why we can win such significant concessions through withdrawing that labour, or misusing it in acts of industrial sabotage. If society runs off our labour, then why shouldn’t we run society and decide how to distribute its wealth? Why not use the skills developed through industrial disputes to fight for a society without hierarchies or economic exploitation, a society without employers and their guardian: the state. •



# EVACUEES OF THE CLASS WAR

In August 1913, over 20,000 workers were fired in Dublin for being members of a union. 6 months later, and with two of their number dead, the workers gave in and returned to work, in what is probably Ireland's most well-known strike, the "Dublin Lockout". What is less well known is that some of these strikers' sent their children to Liverpool so that they wouldn't starve. The "Save the Dublin Kiddies Scheme" was devised by Dora Montefiore, and supported by Jim Larkin. Leaving on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, via the Carlow, only 18 children (all Catholics and led by Grace Neal of the Domestic Workers' Union) made it to Liverpool. Plans had been made for far more "evacuees"; but priests, police and lay Catholics had (often violently) stopped them. This was because the Catholic Church supported the employers and (with the support of Sinn Fein) was spreading the idea that in England the children would be converted to Protestantism (which of course was false). Plans to "evacuate" a further 300 children were abandoned after the press started to print the names and addresses of their parents. Upon their arrival, the stonemason and syndicalist Fred Bower (who was raised a protestant), was responsible for the children. However, some Catholic priests reported him to the police, and later made the children cry by asking them about their religious practices. In the end, Bower was allowed to be responsible for them, since he had parental consent, and they were ferried to the Wirral, where they would stay before being sent to individual homes (3 stayed with Bower). The Liverpool Weekly Mercury photographed the children, and reported Father Leech was responsible for them, which was false and highly ironic given the Church sabotaged the whole affair (Bower was cut out of the picture, but can be partly seen on the far right). When they returned to Ireland 3 months later, Bower noted the children looked far better than when they arrived barefoot, due to being well-fed and reclothed.

This type of support also took place in London's East End in 1912. At the time anti-Semitism was rife, and there was a large population of migrant



Eastern European Jews in East London who spoke Yiddish. When the primarily "native" West End tailors went on strike, they expected the primarily Jewish East End tailors to undermine them and continue to work. Instead the Yiddish anarchist paper *Arbeter Frait* (edited by Rudolf Rocker) called for them to join the strike, which was later agreed upon in a mass meeting. In the end, both sets of tailors won. However, primarily native dockers were still on strike and many were starving (their strike lasted over two months, and was ultimately unsuccessful), the Jewish tailors felt they should do something to help them. *Arbeter Frait* started a campaign for the Jewish families in Stepney and Whitechapel to take in the children of striking dockers. If the tailors could accommodate them, the anarchist Milly Witkop would pick their children up from the docks to temporarily house, feed and clothe them; over 500 children were taken in. The dockers were of course grateful, and would mingle with Jewish families while visiting their children. In 1936, the favour was returned, when dockers were at the forefront of the opposition to fascists marching through Jewish neighborhoods at the Battle of Cable Street. •

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*"The syndicalists are principled opponents of every Church, in which they only see an institution for the mental domination and damnation of the working people, cultivating willing objects of exploitation for the bosses and loyal subjects for the State."*

**Milly Witkop**

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# MEETING INSULATE BRITAIN

I think my jaw literally dropped last month when I saw the cruelty of the sentences handed down to nine Insulate Britain protesters. For causing traffic delays of a few hours – hardly a rare occurrence in this country – each received either three or four months in jail. With their online fundraisers taken down, I hoped to contribute to them at one of their upcoming talks, hosted at Christ Church on Linnet Lane, Liverpool.

The three speakers that night had to be admired for their bravery. They had been arrested for protesting, they said, 18, 15 and 9 times each; two expected to return to prison for several months as their comrades did. Several audience members had also personally blocked motorways or had partners who had been jailed. One commented that she had left four children behind by going to prison.

And there were also signs that the group is well organised. There was a discussion of how quickly the police had adapted to the tactics which initially grabbed national headlines, and so Insulate Britain was moving on to multi-day and “agile” protests, presumably in the same vein as the old flying picket lines. Hints were given that a new, novel form of protest was being prepared for Spring next year. I was also assured by participants that the group’s program for preparing each member for arrest and supporting them while inside was impressive.

However, I have my doubts. The demands of the group were, they acknowledged, “boring”. They only ask the government to provide every house with insulation by 2030, as the name suggests. Due to this, they seemed genuinely baffled that after a few days of protest the government did not endorse their proposal. But should they have been? We were also told the group did not court popularity and it has long been clear that the government will win support from the media for bullying peaceful protesters like Insulate Britain. Likewise, at other times the promise to prevent a 1.5°C rise was

branded a “lie” and “impossible” to achieve. So why propose only minor reforms to a problem integral to our political and economic system, that is overconsumption and the capitalist fantasy of unlimited economic growth?

Still, perhaps the lack of a rigorous ideology is a strength for Insulate Britain. People spoke movingly and in common sense terms of their desire for a better world, and any advocate of direct action ought to recognise how inspiring that can be. I personally feel compelled to support them. •



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If you prefer a paper copy you can usually find some in News From Nowhere, the radical bookshop on Bold Street. •



# ROAD BLOCKADES AND THE WORKING CLASS

For causing traffic jams Insulate Britain and Extinction Rebellion are regularly attacked in the mass media for inconveniencing ordinary hard working people. This is pretty ironic given who these critics are and the aims of these movements.

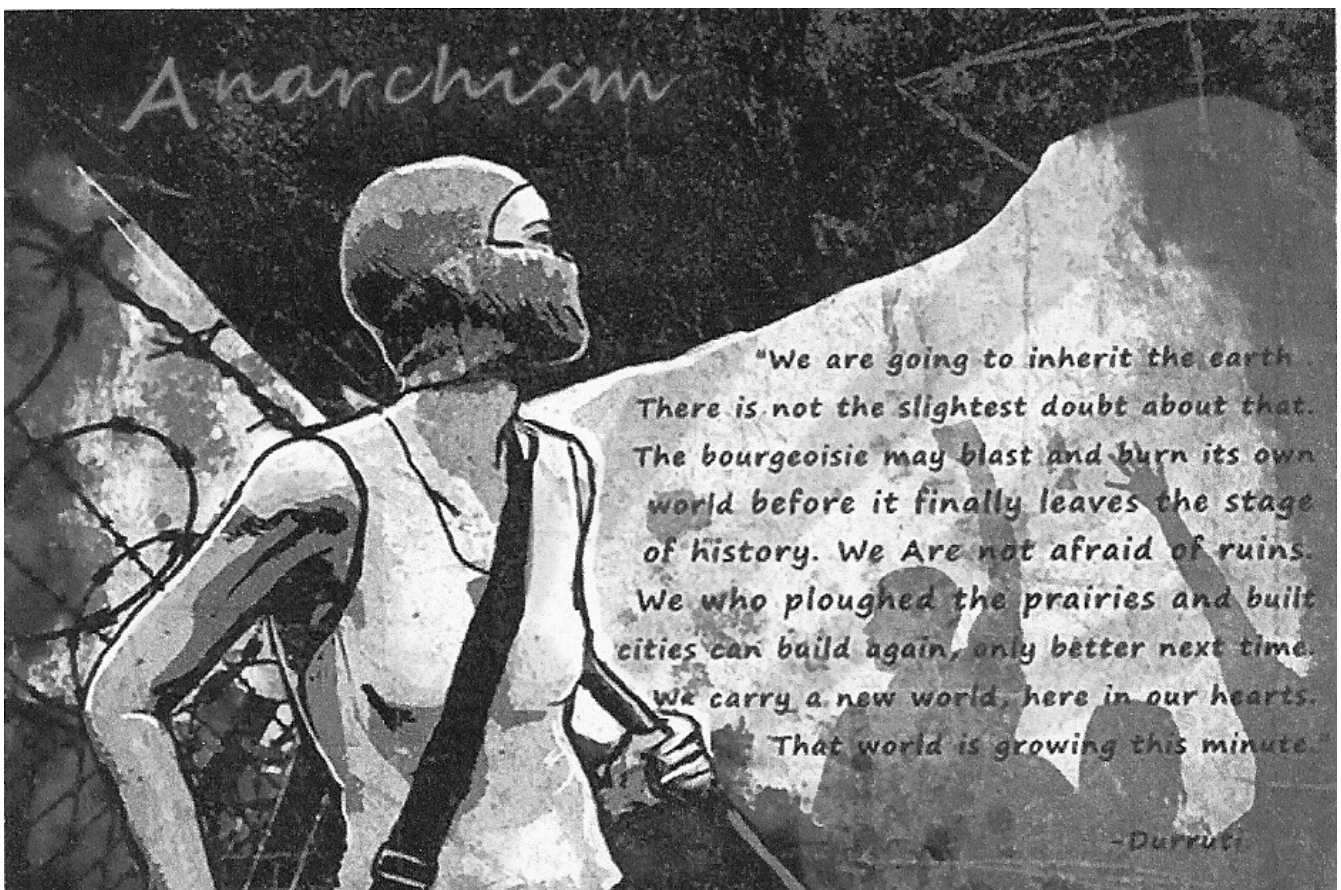
We would not deny that the above mentioned groups are generally “middle class”, but often their critics are politicians and police chiefs who make the lives of the poor a living hell. It has been pointed out that by blocking roads, Insulate Britain are preventing people from getting to hospital, which could even result in deaths. While we would not agree with blocking an ambulance, beyond that, traffic jams are already an ordinary part of life. It also pales in comparison to deaths due to the underfunding and mismanagement of the NHS.

The demands of these movements would also benefit the poorest in our society. The effects of climate change will be disproportionately felt by the working class who will lack the money and power to easily adapt. It will be our

neighbourhoods that disproportionately flood, just as it is already our streets that have the worst air pollution. On the other hand, money and lives would be saved if every house was insulated.

Road blockades have a long tradition as part of the workers' movement. Back in the 1984-1985 Miners' Strike, motorways were blocked; earlier this year electricians also blocked roads in an unofficial dispute. Around the world, wherever mass struggles take place, you're likely to find ordinary people blocking roads. Whether it's health workers fighting for wage increases in Argentina, Gilet Jaunes opposing a fuel tax in France or metalworkers in Spain fighting to protect their working conditions, it is a widely accepted tactic. Most people support transport strikes despite the inconvenience, so why not climate campaigners?

Road blockades are an effective tactic precisely because they are disruptive, crucially hitting profit rates, the primary concern of the government. Anyone can participate in them, and they can be used to bolster other struggles. If we accept this demonisation of the tactic, then we will be limiting how we can respond when we need to fight back. If we cheer on heavy sentences for those activists currently in court, the precedent will stand for all future road blockades. •



# A HALF PENNY? HOW MANY?

At the Army & Navy Store on Ranelagh Street (Liverpool) in the 1980s, security accused a black 15 year-old of stealing the coat he was wearing. When he refused to show them its inside, they wrestled him to the ground and ripped it off, revealing that it was in fact his coat. He complained to the store through a solicitor, but was told that after a "full investigation ... we fully support the actions of our security staff". So he went to the Liverpool Black Organisation (LBO).

Halfpennies were still legal tender at the time, you could spend up to 40p. So the LBO visited the store on Saturday morning. The plan was that one group would try to pay for items at the 8 tills with halfpennies, while others would pretend to faint or untangle laces, hitting their profits and causing an inconvenience for staff and customers alike. There would be a vicar and solicitor on the door to deal with any issues. The plan was to repeat this every Saturday until their demands were met, but it only took 2 hours. All of the LBOs demands were met, including reimbursing the victim and pledging to become an equal opportunity employer. The LBO later apologised to the staff for the disruption.

The LBO also occupied the Carribean Centre after its Director made derogatory remarks about "half-castes". After the 1981 Toxteth Riots, the LBO became the L8 Defence Committee.

The above information was based on *A Liverpool Black History 1919-2019* by Dave Clay, a short and affordable introduction to the topic. •

# FOOD NOT BOMBS

**WHAT WE DO:** We set up a table in the city centre to share vegan food and beverages with anyone who wants some. We're not interested in making people jump through arbitrary and degrading hoops.

To do this we collect food donations then work out what can be made with what's available. This usually involves lots of washing, chopping, mixing and cooking which then results in a variety of foods, from stews and stir fries to banana breads. None of us are paid and we organise non-hierarchically.



**WHY WE DO IT:** Everyone needs food, it's pretty simple. A lot of resources are dedicated to bombing people in far away places, meanwhile people go hungry.

**HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:** We do our thing every Thursday from 2pm at Next To Nowhere on Bold Street, it's near the radical bookshop. Simply ring our doorbell and some nice person will let you in. You don't need to be an expert cook or know how to chop every strange vegetable (we sure don't). There will be always bits that need doing and someone willing to help you do them. •



**CRUEL BRITANNIA**

The *Liverpool Anarchist* is written by individual members of the Solidarity Federation, an anarcho-syndicalist union. We aim to publish monthly and welcome all contributions in accord with our basic ideas. We advocate working class direct action to improve our lives here and now while building a revolutionary movement to do away with capitalism, the state, and all other hierarchies.

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