

International Women's Day

International Women's Day provides an opportunity each year for women's organizations to come together around certain central demands of the women's movement and demonstrate our solidarity and our strength.

This year International Women's Day activities — which span the week of March 4 to March 10 — focus on the economic attack being waged by governments and corporations against the standard of living and rights of women. The main slogan of the March 10 rally and demonstration is "Jobs and rights for women! Resistance against the cutbacks!"

Governments apparently believe that women, who traditionally have lacked the protection of strong organizations, will submit to this attack. But the experience of the past year is proving governments wrong. International Women's Day 1979 is both a protest against government policies of unemployment and cutbacks

and a celebration of victories won by women.

Trade union women have played an important role in the fight against government and corporate attacks on women. The York University Staff Association, whose membership is mainly women, took on the Ontario government cutbacks and forced York University to accept a reasonable settlement. UAW members at Fleck, the majority of them women, took on the company and the provincial police and won. Women workers played an

important part in the success of the strikes of the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union against Purtex Knitting and of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union in the community colleges.

Last year's International Women's Day demonstration marked an important step forward in the unity of the women's movement. Women carrying trade union banners marched side by side with their sisters carrying signs and banners from various women's organizations. This unity is again evident in the

activities marking International Women's Day 1979.

Another important feature of recent International Women's Day celebrations is the growing involvement of the trade union movement as a whole. Again this year, activities have been endorsed by the Metro Toronto Labour Council and the Ontario Federation of labour, which represent many thousands of workers — women and men — in this city and across the province.

Organized Working Women

welcomes these developments. We are proud of the role OWW has played in encouraging unity between trade union women and the rest of the women's movement and in helping to bring trade unions more actively into the struggle for women's rights.

The trade union movement has historically been the most powerful force for social change. Its active support to the struggles of women, whether members of trade unions or not, can only strengthen the entire women's movement.



UNION WOMAN

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Union women are "gutsy as hell"



On January 24, 4,300 members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union support staff bargaining unit went out on strike to back their contract demands. These members are employees at 22 community colleges across the province. This was their first strike.

Two weeks later, on February 7, the support staff returned to work ending what the union has termed an "effective, successful struggle".

The impact of the strike on the colleges varied across the system from a very slight impact to serious disruption which could have

caused college closures had the strike continued.

Sixty percent of the strikers were women — cleaners, secretaries, kitchen and library workers. And they received support from their trade-union sisters on January 31 when OWW and the OPSEU Women's Committee organized a "Women's Day" on the picket line as a show of solidarity.

"Women are proving they're gutsy as hell when it comes to their rights in the labour force", says Sean O'Flynn, OPSEU president.

Gov't restraint means lost jobs, lower wages

By HOLLY KIRKCONNELL

Federal government "restraint" policies are, in fact, an attack on public employees and their unions.

Policies of decentralization, contracting-out, average comparability of total compensation, and technological change all have their particular effects on female public employees.

In an attempt to redistribute (un?)employment opportunities, the government is moving all or parts of various departments to other areas of the country, usually to ones with higher unemployment levels. This is called "decentralization" and it works as follows. Employees in one centre are given the option of moving to a new centre and retaining their positions, or losing their jobs. Many of the positions to be moved are in the administrative support categories which are filled largely by women. As an employment-creating strategy this makes good sense — from the government's point of view — women are generally less mobile than men and therefore less likely to move with their jobs. Employment then will truly be created in the new location.

The "contracting-out" to private industry of work normally done by public employees is a growing practise of the federal government. Permanent positions are being eliminated either through attrition or direct lay-off and temporary labour from usually non-unionized employment agencies is being used in its place. This has the net effect of decreasing the number of unionized permanent positions in the public service, as promised by the Trudeau government, but results in little actual saving of tax dollars.

"Average comparability of total compensation" is the proposed formula under which public service pay and benefits will not be allowed to exceed that of the average in the private sector. In nearly all clerical and office occupations, ACTC means tying wages and benefits to largely non-union firms, as any "representative" sampling would have to include banks, insurance companies, etc. This will have a depressing effect on wages to say nothing of making equal pay for work of equal value a virtual impossibility.

New and more efficient office

machinery is being developed all the time. What we are beginning to see is a rationalization in the white collar sector which will have profound effects on the labour process itself and the types and numbers of jobs available.

As our brothers and sisters in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers have found out, the introduction of technological change can cause lay-offs, reclassifications of jobs to lower wage rates, deterioration of working conditions and worker alienation. We must demand that technological changes which are brought in to improve work processes also improve our working conditions.

We also must expose these policies of the government for what they are — political manoeuvres with no sound economic basis. Decentralization will not solve the unemployment problem; contracting-out and ACTC will only serve to seriously weaken the unions, and poorly planned introduction of automation will create more problems than it will solve.

Holly Kirkconnell is a member of OPEIU 343.

OWW Annual Meeting

In May, Organized Working Women will be holding its Third Annual Meeting. This is the time OWW policy for the coming year is decided.

Date: Saturday, May 5.

A social will be held Friday May 4 in the evening.

Place: 1901 Yonge Street, 9th floor (at the Davisville Subway)

All trade union women are welcome to join OWW and attend this important meeting.

For more information, phone 447-7462.

UNION WOMAN

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**Union Woman, 15 Gervais Dr., Suite 301,
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How it began...

By TINA CARTWRIGHT

At the beginning of the century, garment workers toiled fourteen hours a day for wages that couldn't support themselves, much less their families. They were herded together in broken down tenements or in basements and were helpless victims of speed-up. The air was saturated with dust and stench due to poor ventilation. They suffered eyestrain due to the poor lighting.

These terrible conditions led to the tragic Triangle Shirt Factory fire in which 146 died. This forced the government to make safer working conditions mandatory. Out of this tragedy the International Ladies Garment Workers Union grew to a membership over 100,000.

The historical roots of International Women's Day begin on March 8, 1908, in the midst of the strike by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York's East Side. Their strike against intolerable working conditions was supported in the main by im-

migrant mothers and by socialist women who were campaigning for votes and also for women to join the needle trades union. This support led to huge demonstrations.

Their successful demonstrations were felt all over the world so that at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen 2 years later, the great fighter for woman's rights, Clara Zetkin, proposed that March 8 be set aside each year to show the solidarity of all women for full equality for women and for economic security.

This year in Toronto Mayor John Sewell, at the request of women's organizations and trade unions, has declared March 4th to March 10th International Women's Week. The week opens March 4th with a Celebration featuring Nadine Hunt, President of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, as the main speaker. It closes with a rally and demonstration March 10 starting from Convocation Hall.

Taxpayers pitted against teachers

By ANN KENNEDY

The provincial government, aided by boards of education and the media, has been successful once again in its attempts to mystify the public's understanding of the issue of declining enrolment.

The government and the boards maintain that declining enrollment means fewer teachers are required in our classrooms. What they fail to articulate is that declining enrollment is not decreasing the number of children in classrooms in our schools. In fact, as enrollment declines, class size has increased at an alarming rate.

In Toronto, since the firing of 259 teachers, class sizes have increased to as many of 30 children in the primary grades. Programmes have been cut which affect immigrant and working class children. What has really declined is the quality of education.

Lowering class size to coincide with lowered enrollment does not necessarily cost more money. No new buildings are needed, less money is required for supply budgets, and if the same number of teachers are kept on, the salary budget remains the same, apart from negotiates raises and salary costs. Furthermore, declining enrollment in no way reduces the revenue governments collect through taxes.

At a time when inflation pushed up education costs, the provincial government demonstrated its unwillingness to invest in the education of the children of the province. Grants to Metro Toronto in

1975 were \$201 million; by 1978 they were \$184.7 million. At the same time, between 1973 and 1975 corporation taxes decreased by 41.5% while income tax increased by 148.2%. The government effectively pitted the taxpayers, fed up with paying higher and higher taxes, against teachers.

The government has used the excuse of declining enrollment to cut its spending in education, through the firing of teachers and the phasing out of vital programmes. Teachers, like other public sector workers, are feeling the squeeze of a system in crisis as the government attempts to unload the effects of the crisis on them.

Women teachers have been particularly hard hit. Once a predominantly female occupation, now only 49% of teachers are women. While jobs have opened up for men in the elementary schools, the same has not been true for women. We have gradually fallen back to a secondary status. Many of us do not have degrees and often have lost seniority by taking half-time positions to resigning in order to stay home with our small children. Thus we are often the first to be laid off.

The Ministry of Education, in its most recent guidelines, states that it is the responsibility of each teacher to teach each child as a unique individual who learns at her or his own pace. With 30 or more children in a class, this be-

By LINDSEY COOK

The issue of government cutbacks to social services for women is full of bitter irony. The declining economy is creating greater stress in our lives; poverty, violence, family and personal problems are on the increase. More than ever, women need strong support services in areas of employment, day care, family planning, legal aid and physical and emotional health. Yet government response is to restrict funding to the services that meet these expanding social needs.

Two of Toronto's women's services may lose their funding entirely. "Times Change" started as an innovative community-based employment service for women in 1974. It is now operating on 6-month interim funding from Canada Employment and Immigration (expiring March 1979) and limiting its services to women with critical employment problems. The reason given for discontinuing support is that women are no longer considered an important target group in the area of unemployment! The "Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre" (WCREC), founded in 1975, counsels and refers women for therapy, legal aid, self-help, education and career counselling etc. It is also operating on an interim budget from the Provincial Department of Health and Welfare in a temporary location, with staff cut in half and salaries decreased.

The effects of cutbacks on other social services for women are less clear-cut, primarily because services are not localized or funding is more complex. Day care needs are escalating but government aid is decreasing. Federal support for family planning has been halved in the last year. Among other Toronto services feeling the pinch are the "Rape Crisis Centre", hostels such as "Nellies" (for homeless women often with drug and alcohol related problems), "Women in Transition" and "Interval House" (mostly for battered

comes an impossible task. The Ministry attempts to prove, through various studies, that class size does not affect the quality of education. Common sense dictates otherwise.

Teachers have always claimed that, if classes were small, schooling could be carried out in a way that would benefit all students. With declining enrollment, an opportunity presents itself to substantiate that claim. But our government continues to increase class size as enrollment decreases. This clearly demonstrates that the government is not serious about quality of education in Ontario.

Ann Kennedy is a member of the Toronto Teachers' Federation.

women with children), "Street Haven" and "Stop 86" (for young women) and YWCA which offers legal aid, a learning resource centre and a program for sole-support mothers entering the work force. These services are caught up in a morass of fund-seeking from all levels and branches of government, special short-term grants and donations from the private sector. They all agree that funds are becoming harder to get and those they do receive are not increasing at anywhere near the inflation rate.

How are these services coping? By decreasing salaries and staff, spending many valuable "woman-hours" fund raising and relying on volunteers (a practice not preferred by the services but many simply wouldn't exist without it). Common to these services is the attempt to offer more than short-term or physical solutions in times of crisis to women in trouble, but with shortages of

funds this is becoming increasingly more difficult; in many cases the basic service barely meets the growing demands.

Why are women's services losing out at this critical time? Through government rationalizations such as these: women trying to get into the work force raise unemployment figures and take men's jobs; the fewer women working, the smaller the need for day care; women in trouble tend to be able to take care of themselves (usually meaning dependence on a man, even if he is beating her); and if rape victims are not vocal, they aren't a problem. So as the needs of women become more complex and greater, we are told to solve them in the traditional male-oriented and dependent ways. Women have fewer places to go to find support and help themselves.

Lindsey Cook is a member of the Executive of CUPE 1996.

Union women.



Federal cutbacks

In the past year, the federal government has introduced a number of cutbacks in social benefits which particularly affect women. Here are some of them.

Unemployment Insurance. (1) UIC benefits have been cut from 66 per cent to 60 per cent of your previous salary. For a woman who was earning the average woman's salary of \$8,200 per annum, this means a cut in UI benefits from \$104 weekly to \$95. A man who was earning the average man's annual salary of \$15,000 is unaffected by the cuts. He still gets the UI weekly maximum of \$160. (2) UI has been eliminated for people working less than 20 hours a week. Most part-time workers work less than this and the vast majority of part-time workers are women. (3) UI has been made harder to get for people re-entering the labour force. Most re-entrants are women returning after having children.

Training Allowances. Canada Manpower's job retraining allowance is cut from \$45 weekly to \$10 if your spouse is employed or you are living at home with your parents.

Outreach programmes. Funding of specialist agencies teaching job hunting skills to women is gone effective April 1979. Women have been removed as a target group for government employment strategies, despite the fact that the unemployment rate among women is 58 per cent higher than among men.

Family Allowance. The federal government has cut the monthly family allowance cheque from \$28 to \$20 a month and replaced the principle of universality with a means test in the form of a refundable tax credit.

Family planning. Health and Welfare Canada has cut its family planning budget by 50 per cent at a time when teenage pregnancies are increasing and enforced sterilization is being practised.

Housing. The government is phasing out CMHC's involvement in providing housing for poor families. Sixty per cent of female single parents are poor.

Thanks to Upstream, an Ottawa-based newspaper for women, for most of the information in this article.

Commentary

Commentary is a forum for debate and discussion on issues of interest to trade union women. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Organized Working Women.

The ideology of restraint

By NAOMI WALL

"For most women 1978 has been a year of struggle. As the economic crisis deepens, the pressure on women in all areas of our lives intensifies". International Women's Day Committee.

None of us can deny the fact that women in Canada today are under extreme economic and political pressure. The government has launched a concerted attack on us, both ideologically and through legislation, at a time when inflation and the spiralling cost of living demand our participation in the workforce.

Because women have never been considered as primary members of the workforce, but solely as secondary workers, our position has always been precarious. When the economy is in a "boom" period, we are drawn into the workforce. During World War II, Canadian men were fighting in Europe. We were needed to expand production in essential industries. After the war, we were no longer required in the workforce, as the men had returned and needed jobs. The economic and social conditions which prevailed following World War II created the need for a return to the ideology that "women's place is in the home".

It became necessary for the government to alter the attitude people held during the war regarding women at work: that we were necessary to the economic growth of the country, that our services were desirable in the workforce. But ideology alone will never turn the tide. It was necessary to promote legislation which had the effect of forcing women back into the home. After World War II, the provision of day care services, which had burgeoned during the War, was cut drastically. And, as in the current crisis, women were told that our presence in the workforce causes unemployment.

It is clear that the attitudes held by the Canadian people, the ideas they adhere to regarding the proper sphere of women's work, change as economic conditions change. And it is also clear that these attitudes are popularized by the government, which has the power to make them stick. Through the media, primarily, Canadians are again being told that women are causing

unemployment, destroying family life, and that our proper place is in the home.

And, as has occurred repeatedly throughout this century, legislation is again being passed to force this ideology down our throats. UIC benefits have been cut from 66% to 60%. UIC has been eliminated altogether for people working less than 20 hours a week. Canada Manpower's retraining allowance has been cut from \$45 weekly to \$10 if your spouse is employed or if you are living at home with your parents. Outreach programs, which fund agencies teaching job skills, have been eliminated. The family planning budget of Health and Welfare Canada has been cut by 50%. Gains made in abortion legislation have been eroded, childcare subsidies are again being phased out, Family Allowances have been cut, and transition services have been denied funding.

Some of this legislation is designed to force us back into our homes. Some of it is intended to keep us in the workforce as low-paid secondary workers: to keep us in, or to force us to return to, the job ghettos which have traditionally held us down. The attack is thorough and deliberate. But the time is marked as well by our resistance to this attack.

In 1978 we led strikes for better working conditions, higher pay, and improved job benefits — and won. We have organized and are carrying out a campaign for equal pay for work of equal value. We united against the phasing out of the support service systems we need in order to remain in the workforce.

Our intention is clear: we will maintain our struggle against an ideology which seeks to undermine the gains we have made; we will fight the legislation which would force us out of the workplace back into our homes where we are expected to carry the burden of the current economic crisis. But we must keep in mind that the government, and the interests it serves, will not cease in its effort to set us back. It is essential that we understand and analyse our position in the current crisis in order to develop strategies which will be effective.

Naomi Wall is a member of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario.

Year of Struggle



Marg Moore

Freedom to choose

By BARBARA CAMERON

A central concern of the women's movement for over a decade has been woman's right to choose freely her part in reproduction. The slogan "Every mother a willing mother, every child a wanted child" expresses this concern.

To what extent do Canadian women today enjoy freedom of choice in this important area of our lives? According to a paper entitled "Women and the Control of Reproduction", written by Kathleen McDonnell, we have a very long way to go.

McDonnell argues that "The medical profession, social agencies and contraceptive manufacturers are all vehicles through which control of reproduction is removed as far as possible from women themselves, especially if they are working class or members of minorities".

Birth control manufacture today is a big business. Drug companies spend millions of dollars each year promoting their products to doctors. The companies themselves are the main source of information doctors

have about the medical effects of contraceptives. The one independent government source of information on contraceptives such as the pill was lost in 1975 as a result of government cutbacks.

McDonnell has found evidence of a double-standard for sterilization which operates by social class. Whereas doctors are protective and cautious when a middle-class woman has freely chosen sterilization, they frequently suggest this form of birth control to lower-income women. In both cases, the woman's decision is secondary to what a doctor believes is in the interests of society.

The Therapeutic Abortion Committees established in hospitals under the federal abortion law also take the right to choose out a woman's hands. Today even the limited access to abortion provided under this law is being eroded by the reduction of hospital "quotas" on abortions! McDonnell cites the example of Women's College Hospital in Toronto where twice in the space of three years public clinic patients lost all access to abortions be-

cause of the personal views of the doctors in charge.

McDonnell believes that the women's movement must distinguish itself from population control advocates who wish to restrict population growth for environmental or economic reasons. She argues that "Preventing women from having wanted children through social and economic coercion is equally oppressive as forcing them to have children they don't want through lack of access to abortion, sterilization and adequate contraception".

An example of this type of economic coercion was provided by a director of a family planning agency in Sudbury who reported that women were having abortions they did not really want after learning that their husbands would be laid off by INCO. In McDonnell's words "Our efforts around reproductive control must be linked to activities aimed at obliterating the economic and social deterrents to having the children we want — from the struggle for maternity leave and good daycare to the right of full employment."

Cuban Women Today

By JEAN DIRKSEN

A major goal of the Cuban revolution has been the realization of complete equality for women, cruelly exploited and discriminated against under capitalism. Cuban women have achieved their integration into the revolutionary process through several mass organizations, the most significant of which is the Federation of Cuban Women, founded in August 1960. 81.5% of Cuban women over the age of 14 belong to the Federation, which has worked consistently to educate and train women to participate fully in all spheres of society — social, political, economic.

OWW was to have met with a representative of the Federation in January, when a delegation from Cuba's Institute of Friendship with the Peoples had planned to visit Canada. Unfortunately, the Canadian government refused to grant the visas, giving no explanation for the decision. OWW sent a telegramme of protest, as did various other groups with whom the Cubans were to meet. Several OWW members were in Cuba recently, where we met with a representative of the Federation to discuss the substantial gains made by women since the triumph of the revolution, and the many problems yet to overcome.

The Family Code was passed during International Women's

Year, to eliminate many judicial norms that discriminate against women and children. The Code establishes the equal rights and duties of both parties in a relationship. The Cuban man must now share responsibility in running the household and in caring for children. The enforcement of this legislation is a painfully laborious process, as even the most militant of Cuban men are as yet instinctively "macho", and many Cuban women still find this quality attractive. However, the education process, formally and through the various mass organizations, is slowly overcoming machismo as an undesirable leftover from bourgeois society.

The gradual elimination of the double workload for women is enabling them to participate more fully in the economic and political process. Thirty percent of Cuban women now work full-time. (This figure excludes members of the armed forces, brigade workers, and part-time workers). While the percentage is obviously low, it does reflect considerable progress from pre-revolutionary times.

In an effort to bring women into the workforce, there has unfortunately been a tendency to create certain types of work which are totally female. For example, day care workers are female, which is an unhealthy re-inforcement of a tradition of women's responsibility for early childhood education.

ity for early childhood education.

The Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions has a women's front, which operates out of each work centre to deal with problems faced by women workers, and to build female leadership. Forty-one percent of the grass roots union leadership positions are filled by women, however, there is yet the need to build female leadership at the national level, as there is in Canada.

Women are gradually increasing their representation in the political arena. For instance, 22.4% of delegates to the National Assembly of People's Power are women. The Women's Federation is working hard with other mass organizations to increase the percentage, by challenging any prejudice among the voters against women in national leadership positions, and by pressuring women to run for these positions.

The Cuban woman has still a long road to travel to achieve full equality, power, and participation. Criticism of her situation has to be considered in light of the tremendous struggles she has overcome in the last twenty years. If she continues that rate of achievement, she will, before long, be a model for her own brothers to follow, and for her counterparts around the world. Jean Dirksen is a member of CUPE 1996.

OPP says "Women are asking for it"

By BONNIE ALTER

The Ontario Provincial Police recently released their "Survey of Sexual Offences" which covered a 6 month period from April to September 1978. This report has been criticized by a number of women's groups in Toronto.

The report, written "in the public's interest", outlines basic statistics on sexual assault on a female, indecent acts, indecent assault, intercourse with females under 14 and aged 14 to 16 and rape. The statistics include information on the age, sex, circumstances, relationship and involvement of alcohol for both the victim and the accused.

Indecent assault on a female and rape were the two most frequently reported occurrences.

Indecent assault comprised 34% of all reported occurrences. Three-quarters of the victims were between the ages of 11 and 29 years old. In over 80% of the cases neither drugs nor alcohol were involved. Younger victims tended to know or be related to the attacker while the older victims were usually involved in social situations or had accepted rides, drugs or alcohol. No breathalyzer tests were noted in the survey, however.

Rape comprised 26% of reported offences. Women in the 11 to 29 year range were most often victimized, especially the 16 to 19 year old group. Alcohol and drugs were involved in 40% of the rape cases.

The survey makes the following comment on the circumstances of rape:

"With the exception of 29% of the rape offences (unprovoked rapes) the victims have shown a great lack of

discretion. For example, they were hitch-hiking and accepting rides from strangers. Over consumption of alcohol often combined with drugs and promiscuity are predominant factors.

It is precisely these kinds of judgements that have angered many women. All good Canadians are taught to socialize with the help of drinks and, now, drugs. Bars and "swinging singles" and meeting new men are considered the norm until you get raped — then it is the woman's fault. The onus of responsibility is shifted on to the victim for showing "lack of discretion" or getting drunk, rather than on the offender who attacked her!

Based on the limited number of rapes reported, it appears to be true that the 16 to 19 year age group is the most often victimized. This is not because these women are young and sexy and "asking for it", as the common stereotype goes. It may be because they are more mobile, more trusting and therefore more vulnerable.

The OPP Survey does not make the important connection between rape and violence. Rape is a violent act. The motivating forces behind these sexual offences are anger and power and dominance. Studies have shown that 30 to 40% of the offenders already have access to sexual partners, many are married and many have sexual problems. Sexuality is merely the vehicle and women, the victims.

Only 10% of rapes are even reported. This survey, which blames the woman/victim will only further discourage victims from reporting future offences.

OWW Spring Solidarity Celebration

**Saturday
April 7, 1979
9 p.m.-2 a.m.
519 Church Street
\$5.00**

***Entertainment
*Cash bar**

A fundraising event for OWW.

OFL Women's Conference

Trade union women from across Ontario will be meeting in Toronto from April 20 to April 22 at the first ever Ontario Federation of Labour "Women's Conference".

The Conference will open on Friday April 20 in the evening with a keynote address by Mary Eady, Women's Director of the Canadian Labour Congress. On Saturday workshops and a plenary session on the theme of "Bargaining for Equality" will take place. On Sunday delegates will tackle the problems connected with "Working for equality in your union".

The Conference, which is a delegate one, will be held at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto. The delegate fee is \$15.00.

The "Women's Conference" is a product of the work of the OFL Women's Committee which was set up after the 1977 OFL Annual Convention. Members of Organized Working Women played an active role in urging the establishment of the Women's Committee.

Join OWW!



Membership in OWW is open to all women in the Toronto area who are members of bona fide collective bargaining units or a bona fide organizing committee of a union. Membership is \$10.00 per year.

To join OWW, send in this application form with proof of union membership to the OWW office, address below.

Name

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..... Telephone

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