

# JOB EVALUATION AND EQUAL PAY

*a discussion paper by*  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is intended to open up the discussion on job evaluation and the extent to which it can be useful in closing the wage gap between the male and female job ghettos. This has not been the purpose of job evaluation in the past. The system was designed to compare only SIMILAR kinds of work, having close to the same labour market values, so that minor differences in pay which existed would not be arbitrary but would be based on the relative differences in their skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. Job evaluation was not intended to compare the relative value of DISSIMILAR kinds of work.

Because job evaluation compares the job and not the person doing the job, women have been led to believe that job evaluation is the answer to discriminatory wage rates for women. Those who argue this fail to take into account the high degree of job segregation by sex in our society: for example, 96% of all transportation workers are men and 98% of all secretaries are women. The failure thus far of job evaluation to compare different kinds of work has therefore meant its failure to compare the relative value of male and female-dominated work and consequently to compare men's and women's wages. New and imaginative approaches to job evaluation will have to be made if it is ever to fulfill this purpose.

## II. THE PROMISE OF JOB EVALUATION

The stated goal of job evaluation is to divide the total pay package amongst employees according to the relative value of their work. The implication is that the pay of the jobs in the establishment will be determined only by their relative value to each other, regardless of what these jobs are being paid in the labour market.

Such a goal is in the interest of women workers, most of whom work in female-dominated jobs (job ghettos). The wages of these jobs in the labour market are low because of past and continuing discrimination against women. Through socialization and training, women are qualified for very few kinds of work, forcing them to glut the labour market in these jobs and depress the pay. Furthermore, the pay an employer sets for a certain job is determined to a large extent by the sex of the person s/he expects to fill that job. Robert Laxer, in Canada's Unions states that "the most important single factor in determining the pay scale for a given job is the worker's sex." Women suffer the effect of the labour market even in organized work places, where unions usually base salary demands on "benchmark jobs" - jobs in other establishments which are similar to those for which they are negotiating - thereby dragging discriminatory labour market wage rates into union negotiations. Any pay system, therefore, which promises to relieve the wages of work from dependence on labour market conditions must be of interest to women.

## III. THE POLITICS OF JOB EVALUATION

Job evaluation is neither objective nor scientific. It is simply a tool which can be used to pursue various ends. Its purpose can be to iron out minor pay discrepancies between similar kinds of work, or it can try to radically alter the existing job hierarchy. It may aim to reduce the number of salary levels in the bargaining unit, or to maintain and justify huge differences between the lower and higher-paid workers. What determines the specific purposes of any one job evaluation plan are the politics, biases and work experience of the people on the job evaluation committee, or of the people whose principles are directing the job evaluation committee.

Because the idea of job evaluation originally came from management people, and because it continues to be dominated by management, job evaluation plans tend to reflect upper and middle class values. They suggest divisions between mental and physical work, emphasize the importance of intellectual over physical work, and imply that those who do physical work need the direction and supervision of those with greater intellectual capacities. A large number of points, for example, are usually given to jobs which require little or no supervision under the factor "Responsibility." Many of these points should probably be given instead to those who must spend their day at the beck and call of someone else under the factor "Mental Effort." Similarly, in instances where a job evaluation

plan suggests that a supervisor should receive fewer points than the people who report to him or her, points have been added to the supervisor's "Responsibility" factor so that his or her authority will not be undermined because s/he receives a smaller pay cheque.

Nor will management ever unilaterally, or jointly with a union, enter into a job evaluation system which could result in a job hierarchy seriously out of line with labour market values. Employers have no choice but to pay relatively high wages to skilled men if they are going to attract these workers to their establishment. To pay the same rates to female-dominated work which is of equal value, when these women could otherwise be hired at much cheaper rates, is a possibility that management will go to almost any lengths to avoid.

In the case of joint job evaluation, where management and the union together develop a job evaluation plan, the union's representatives are usually made up almost entirely of men from the middle or higher wage levels. The job experience they bring to the job evaluation committee, the number of years they have worked in the traditional job hierarchy, and their life in a society that does not value women's work, do not encourage them to look for a definition or weighting of factors which will result in this hierarchy being significantly altered. Unlike the men on the job evaluation committee, it is in the interest of working women, usually at the lower end of the pay scale, to seriously upset the status quo.

Value judgements made by both management and the union often reflect a lack of knowledge of work and working conditions in classifications dominated by women. Marc Lalonde, for example, announced that sedentary workers stand six times the chance of a heart attack as workers who can move around during the day. Should the fact that a person sits all day therefore be considered a work hazard and compensated accordingly, or should it continue to be considered an advantage? To take another example, exposure over a long period of time to fluorescent lights is considered to do untold damage to the eyes and nervous system. Should office workers sitting under fluorescent lights be compensated under "Working Conditions" to the same extent that an outside worker is compensated for exposure to the elements?

#### IV. HOW JOB EVALUATION HAS FAILED TO COMPARE THE RELATIVE VALUES OF THE MALE AND FEMALE JOB GHETTOS.

Management has no illusion as to the political nature of job evaluation and the ends it wants the plan to serve. It often manages to hide the political aspect of the decisions it makes in the job evaluation process, however, by making it appear as though these decisions were purely "technical" ones. As was stated earlier, management will never enter into a system which results in a job hierarchy seriously out of line with labour market values. To ensure

this does not happen, the job evaluation experts 1) compare dissimilar jobs or job ghettos in a way which benefits those classifications already higher paid in the labour market and/or 2) refuse to compare job ghettos either by failing to link up the job ladders from separate job evaluation systems or by excluding some classifications from the plan.

1. Comparing dissimilar jobs to the advantage of those already higher paid in the labour market.

Women are not only channelled into different kinds of jobs than men, they have access to fewer. Job evaluation manuals which compare the relative value of dissimilar jobs within the one manual tend to place at a disadvantage the kinds of classifications which are in a minority. A plan, for example, which covers 20 technical classifications, 5 clerical, 3 manual and 3 miscellaneous, will usually evaluate all of them according to factors which best describe the relative difficulties of technical work. The non-technical classifications must "fit in" as best they can. The only exception to this rule is if the minority positions are highly paid in the labour market (such as professional) in which case these classifications are excluded from the job evaluation process. This will be discussed in more detail later.

An example of the degree to which minority classifications are at a disadvantage is the following. A mining company decides to determine the relative value of the various classifications in its establishment. It has 30 mining classifications and 7 office classifications. It is decided that because there are so few office classifications, the office jobs will be lumped in with the mining jobs and evaluated by the same set of factors. Factors are then chosen which will throw light on the relative value of these classifications, and that factor is weighted which best explains what it is that the miners are being compensated for.

Let's say that "Working Conditions" and "Physical Effort" are given the most weight, and that "Working Conditions" are defined as "the length of time spent in the mine," "the depth to which one must go in the mine", "the degree of exposure to dust and fibres" and so on. The more one is submitted to these conditions, the more points one gets. (We are here referring to a point-rated plan which is generally conceded to be the best and which is most often used in organized work places.)

It is not difficult to imagine how the office workers, who were hired for a completely different purpose, fare under this choice and weighting of factors. The low number of points they receive for "Working Conditions" and "Physical Effort" alone is enough to ensure them a much lower wage than the miners. The alternative is equally unsatisfactory. If factors are chosen which adequately describe the demands made on the office workers, - education, mental effort, etc. - the mine workers would not be fairly compensated for the dangerous and difficult work they do.

The problems of trying to compare the relative value of dissimilar jobs exist because the work is so dissimilar, not because of any sexism within the job evaluation committee. These problems are aggravated for women, however, because of the predominance of men on the job evaluation committee, the lack of knowledge by these men of work dominated by women, and the degree to which the classifications dominated by women inevitably are expected to "fit in" to a manual designed by and for men who dominate different kinds of work. In some job evaluation manuals which compare both technical and office jobs, the least number of points under "Working Conditions" are given to the level described as "Office and comparable Conditions." The four higher levels then go on to describe, in minute detail, various shop conditions and different degrees of exposure to grease and acids. The evaluators, it turns out, were all technical people and were able to bring to the committee their years of experience with shop conditions, but they had no knowledge of the varying degrees of difficulty encountered in office conditions and wrote these classifications off in the lowest level.

Although job evaluators usually argue that they develop job evaluation manuals around similar jobs only, there always seem to be a sprinkling of dissimilar jobs in the plan which are at a severe disadvantage. Part of the reason for this in organized work places is the division of the workers into different bargaining units and in some cases, different unions. In very large establishments, such as the CBC, city governments and others, a job evaluation manual is planned - not for similar jobs - but for a specific bargaining unit, the jobs of which may or may not be similar.

## 2. Failing to Link Up separate job evaluation systems.

When unlike jobs are compared in different manuals, that is, when one set of factors is used to evaluate clerical work, another for maintenance work, another for professional work and so on, most of the problems just discussed are avoided. The problem here, however, is that although the various maintenance jobs have been compared to each other, and although the various office jobs have been compared to each other, the maintenance jobs have not been compared to the office jobs. There is a separate ladder of job classifications for each.

After the job evaluation teams have spent many years and several thousands of dollars doing all this evaluating, a salary scale is then assigned to each group of jobs by falling back on the labour market. For example, a salary scale is assigned to the maintenance workers by finding a maintenance job in another establishment that is very similar to, let's say, a Maintenance Worker 3. This wage is then given to Maintenance Worker 3 and the other workers on the maintenance ladder get more or less depending on their relative value to Maintenance Worker 3, as determined by the Job Evaluation Committee. The same thing is then done for the office classifications. The salary gap which results between the maintenance workers and the office workers, or between the men and women in the union, is exactly the same as it was before the whole process started. From the point of view of the women it has all been a waste of time and union dues, and they will now find it much harder to argue that they are underpaid because the job evaluation plan has legitimized the wage gap.

### 3. Excluding Some Classifications

Another way job evaluators have found to avoid the comparison of the male and female job ghettos is simply to exclude some classifications from the job evaluation plan. The jobs usually excluded are the professionals and the male-dominated trades. When the Saskatchewan Health Care Association instituted job evaluation for their employees, maintenance and utility engineers, most of the higher-paid trades, registered nurses and occupational therapists were among the classifications excluded from the plan.

The reason for this is obvious. Most of these classifications receive higher pay on the labour market. If the so-called unskilled workers are allowed to prove that their work is of equal value to that of the trades and professionals (a distinct possibility given management's reaction to the possibility of such a comparison) an employer must pay these formerly low-paid jobs equally to that of the higher-paid jobs in the labour market.

The excuse usually given for the exclusion of certain classifications is that they are too dissimilar to most of the jobs being studied in the plan. In the example just cited of the Saskatchewan Health Care Association, however, maintenance engineers were excluded from the plan, but other lower-paid maintenance jobs were included. Nor were other manuals designed for the excluded classifications. Clearly the only reason for their exclusion was their relatively high pay and the fear that some of the lower-paid jobs would be found to be of equal value.

### 4. Job Evaluation and Salary Assignment

Job evaluation not only determines if one job is worth more than another, it determines by how much. Although job evaluators usually disclaim any involvement in salary assignment, in a weighted, point-rated plan, points ultimately get translated into dollars and cents, again suggesting an objective or technical process.

There are, however, important value judgements made at this stage of the game as there are elsewhere. If there are a total of 300 points, for example, should there be a separate wage level for every 10 point difference between jobs? for every 50 point difference? for every 100 point difference? That is, should one job receiving 200 points be in the same wage level as another job receiving 250 points, or should these two jobs be in separate wage levels? If they are in separate wage levels, should the difference in salary between them be the same as the difference between two jobs receiving 300 and 350 points? In other words, there is no mechanism whereby job evaluation automatically determines the number of wage levels in a bargaining unit.

It takes little imagination to understand how the points determined by job evaluation can be divided in such a way as to ensure that the higher-paid jobs are at least getting their labour market value without at the same time raising the pay of the lower-paid jobs. Women and men in low-paid work have long ago seen the necessity of reducing the number of wage levels in a bargaining unit so that these low-paid jobs would receive the same salary employers are forced to pay more advantaged jobs on the labour market. Job evaluation, however, seems to fix in cement the number of wage levels that should be in a bargaining unit and those who would seek to reduce them, thereby creating greater solidarity within the unit and at the same time helping lower-paid workers, are told that to do so would completely upset the job evaluation system.

Management does not mind upsetting the job evaluation system, however, if it results in an increase in the wage gap between jobs. Every time the union seeks and/or accepts a percentage increase at contract negotiations, the salary gap between the jobs is increased: that is, changes are made in the relative value of the jobs as determined by the job evaluation plan. To take a simplified example, let us say that in an establishment the job with the most points (300) is assigned a salary of \$10 an hour and the job with the least points (20) is assigned \$1 an hour. After five negotiated increases of 10 per cent, the highest-paying job is getting \$16.10 and the lowest-paying job is getting \$1.60. After five negotiated agreements, the relative difference between these two jobs is far greater than even the job evaluation plan said it should be and yet if the person in the lower-paying job complained about the salary gap s/he would be told that it had been determined long ago by a complex - but reliable - job evaluation plan.

#### V. JOINT JOB EVALUATION

There is no doubt that a joint job evaluation program whereby the union and management sit down together to work out a plan is preferable to a unilateral plan by management. Job evaluation plans formulated by management do nothing more than justify existing wage inequalities between the male and female job ghettos.

There are, however, many problems with joint job evaluation. The process is an extremely lengthy one - sometimes 3 years or more - and during that time the membership has no access to the material used by the job evaluation committee. This often results in distrust between the membership and the brothers locked behind closed doors with management. The process also takes away some rank and file control over contract demands. It is extremely difficult for the workers in a certain classification to argue for adjustments in their relative wages when their own executive has just spent the last three years putting them where they are. The union has been party to the decisions that were made and, although most plans do provide for appeals and changes, opposition to those who want changes (women, for example) is just as likely to come from the union as from management. Finally, job evaluation runs the danger of turning union members against one another as they niggle over nickles and dimes and passionately argue that one classification should get a few more cents than another. This preoccupation weakens the union's solidarity before management and smothers a far more useful demand - a substantial general increase for all.

From the point of view of equal pay for the male and female job ghettos there is an even more serious problem. Women have been subsidizing the economy for many years now and the removal of that subsidy is going to cost employers a lot of money. It seems naive to believe that this money is going to be handed over as a result of friendly discussions between labour and management. It is going to take strike action. Joint job evaluation means, however, that decisions over the relative value of the male and female job ghettos are not made at the bargaining table and it is therefore impossible to organize a strike around the issue.

Job evaluation - whether joint or unilateral by management - can also have the effect of controlling the militancy of a group of women who might otherwise be willing to fight to have the relative pay of their job increased. Women are told to "wait until the results of the job evaluation plan" and are made to appear unreasonable before other members of the union if they refuse. A good example is the case of the public health nurses of the city of Toronto. In 1976 the City Council voted, after pressure from the community and the nurses, to raise the pay of a public health nurse to be equal to that of a public health inspector. At this time, however, the union was entering into a joint job evaluation with the city and the nurses were repeatedly asked to keep quiet until the job evaluation plan resolved whether or not they had a case. Fortunately, the job evaluation plan which emerged three years later did pay the two classifications the same, but if it had not, where would that have left the nurses?

## VI. HOW JOB EVALUATION CAN BE USED TO COMPARE THE RELATIVE VALUES OF MALE AND FEMALE JOB GHETTOS

### 1. Comparing the Relative Value of a Few Classifications

It is possible to compare apples and oranges just as it is possible to compare the relative value of dissimilar jobs. The problems mentioned earlier (in comparing office workers and mine workers) can be avoided. Instead of comparing all the jobs by factors which apply only to some, each and every factor is listed which is present in any classification. The total of these factors is then applied to each classification. For example, both the mining jobs and the office jobs would be evaluated according to both physical effort and mental effort. Some jobs would get 0 points under some factors but make it up in others. Mining classifications would obviously get 0 points for typing skills just as clerical jobs would get 0 points for those factors under "Working Conditions" which describe conditions in the mine. The total points for each classification are then compared and a job hierarchy of mining and office classifications results. Decisions as to which factors should be weighted - if any - depend on the kinds of jobs being compared.



Once the relative value of these jobs is determined, a salary scale is assigned by finding the labour market value of some male-dominated jobs and assigning a wage to the others depending on their relative value to these male-dominated benchmark jobs. Again, male-dominated jobs are chosen as benchmark positions because the labour market values of these are not the result of sex discrimination. The salary scale might then look something like this:

	Wage Level
MINER #6	9
MINER* #5	8
MINER #4	7
CLERK #3	6
MINER* #3	5
MINER #2	4
CLERK #2	3
CLERK #1	2
MINER* #1	1

\* Benchmark jobs which are given a specific wage, the others getting more or less depending on their relation to these jobs on the scale.

When, as in this case, female-dominated jobs are being compared to male-dominated jobs, it is extremely important that knowledgeable women be represented on the job evaluation committee and that the committee equip itself with information recently coming out about the industrial health hazards of female-dominated work.

2. Comparing the Relative Value of a Large Number of Classifications

The procedure just described is extremely unwieldy when applied to a large number of classifications because it entails the application of a huge number of factors to dozens of classifications. In large establishments it is much simpler to compare only similar jobs and then "link up" the job hierarchies which result by (1) assigning a salary scale to the male-dominated group according to labour market values and negotiated rates; (2) finding one job in the female-dominated group which is of equal value to one job in the male dominated group (3) assigning the female-dominated job the same wage as the male-dominated job which is of equal value (4) assigning higher or lower rates to the other jobs in the female-dominated group depending on their relative value to the chosen female-dominated job. This may sound complicated, but it's much easier to compare 2 or 4 dissimilar jobs than 50 or 60.

The following two salary scale were the result of two job evaluation manuals which were designed for two kinds of jobs - clerical and technical - in one establishment. The salary gap between them occurs because the two scales are then not linked in any way to each other:

TWO SALARY SCALES IN ONE ESTABLISHMENT WHICH WERE THE RESULT OF TWO JOB EVALUATION PLANS WHICH WERE THEN NOT "LINKED UP."\*\*

Technical (Male)			Clerical (Mostly Female)	
Building Inspector	\$5.28		Supervisor	\$4.36
Safety Inspector	\$4.81		Paymaster	\$3.98
Instrumentman	\$4.39	← EQUAL VALUE? →	Tax Collector	\$3.59
Stockkeeper #3	\$4.12		Bookkeeper	\$3.41
Draftsman #3	\$3.96		Secretary	\$3.30
Levelman	\$3.82		Senior Cashier	\$3.13
Field Office Clerk	\$3.67		Switchboard Operator	\$2.97
Field Inspector	\$3.53		Clerk Typist	\$2.70
Rodman	\$3.42	← EQUAL VALUE? →	_____	\$2.46
Mail and Duplicating Op.	\$3.29		Keypaper Operator	\$2.26
Stockkeeper #1	\$3.11		Typist	\$2.15

\*Hourly Rates (1970) for City Workers, taken from the pamphlet Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value by the Equal Pay Coalition

## VII. A UNILATERAL UNION JOB EVALUATION PLAN

If joint job evaluation is better than a unilateral plan by management, a unilateral plan by the union is better still. Some unions have developed their own job evaluation plan, or job assessment, discussed the relative wage levels which have resulted with the membership, and then used that classification hierarchy as a basis for negotiations.

There are some disadvantages to this approach. One is the lack of access by the union to information which is kept in the company personnel office. Nevertheless, if the membership fully support the idea, there is no reason they can't provide the information themselves to the union job evaluation committee. It may take a little longer but the job descriptions which result will probably more accurately reflect what is actually done anyway.

Also taking longer will be the acceptance of a unilateral union plan by management. In effect, however, management does not have to accept the plan. It is no business of management what means the union uses to formulate its contract demands. Management will simply negotiate against the results of the plan. Because of the large amount of money involved in finally paying women for the work they do, negotiations will be difficult and, in most cases, will have to be backed up by strike action. Even if only two or three meaningful adjustments can be made at one set of negotiations, however, it is better than a joint job evaluation plan which solidifies a whole series of meaningless adjustments from the point of view of the female job ghettos.

A more serious problem with a unilateral union job evaluation plan is the degree to which such a process might weaken the union's solidarity before management. The results of the plan would have to be discussed at a general membership meetings and the bitterness which resulted might discourage some members from fully supporting the bargaining committee once decisions had been made. This is a problem, nowever, which can occur whether there is a job evaluation process at work or not. In the past, adjustments have often been sought by the union because of the lobbying and pressure of one group of workers to the bargaining committee. Some kind of structured appraisal of the relative value of the jobs in the bargaining unit by the union itself has the advantage of opening up the discussion to the membership at large and basing contract demands on something other than who is yelling the loudest.

Many feel that job evaluation is simply not worth the trouble it causes. This is probably true in many cases. To have job evaluation serve the purpose of comparing the relative value of male and female job ghettos the women in the local must be extremely strong and militant. There are those who argue that if the women become powerful enough to force the direction of job evaluation, they are powerful enough to get what they want without job evaluation.

This assumes, however, that the women are generally in agreement as to the relative value of their own work, which is not always the case. In large bargaining units - particularly where everyone works in different buildings - it is extremely difficult for one worker to appreciate the complexities confronted by another without some kind of structured analysis. A unilateral union job evaluation plan can provide a useful framework for discussing salary adjustments for specific classifications. It can also serve to open up discussions among the membership as to the value of work traditionally done by women.

#### VIII. CONTROLLING THE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF JOB EVALUATION

When management announces its desire to institute job evaluation, there are two responses the union can make, depending on how the membership feels about job evaluation. One approach is to fight to ensure that the union is involved in the design of the plan, to fight for joint job evaluation. The other is to refuse to have anything to do with the plan, to urge the membership not to cooperate with it, and to bargain against the job hierarchy which management develops unilaterally at the next contract negotiations.

If the union becomes involved in job evaluation, or some kind of less formal job assessment, members of the job evaluation committee must accept the political nature of the project before them and ask the membership to provide them with some kind of direction. It is not necessary for a member to know anything about job evaluation in order to take part in this debate. At this stage the membership discusses only the principles they want the plan to serve and leaves it to the committee to worry about how the plan is designed in order that it might serve these ends. Some principles and procedures the committee could be asked to commit themselves to are the following:

1. The principle purpose of the plan will be to determine the relative value of the male and female job ghettos, regardless of their labour market values.
2. A classification will be considered to be "female dominated" when it is made up of at least 66% women.
3. Female-dominated jobs will not be used as benchmark jobs when assigning salary scales
4. No classifications in the bargaining unit will be excluded from the plan.
5. The number of wage levels in the bargaining unit will be reduced by one third.
6. The union will not negotiate a percentage increase, increments, merit pay, superannuation, or any kind of increase which might render the effect of the plan meaningless.
7. Knowledgeable women will be present on the committee at least in numbers proportionate to their numbers in the bargaining unit. (Some units may wish to state that some of these women be chosen by a women's caucus or women's committee)

8. Members will have access to the information used by the job evaluation committee at all times.
9. Regular meetings will be held by the job evaluation committee with the general membership to report on progress and to answer questions as to decisions which may have been made.
10. A special committee will be set up with the sole purpose of investigating the industrial health hazards of work traditionally done by women (depending on the work done by the women in the bargaining unit.) This committee will advise the job evaluation committee and assist it in defining the factors which will be applied to female-dominated work.
11. The job hierarchy which results from the union's job evaluation or job assessment, when ratified by the membership, will serve as the basis for any adjustments the union might demand at the next contract negotiations. Members agree that they will not refer to labour market values as a reason for opposing the results of the plan.

#### IX. CONCLUSION

The approach to job evaluation by those who look for an end to the wage gap between the male and female job ghettos will be determined by the specific situation of the bargaining unit concerned. The problems with the system thus far have been largely caused by a mystification of the job evaluation process. Members have been left in the dark on the grounds that the system is too complex to be discussed by anyone other than job evaluation "experts" or committee members.

This argument, however, (whether true or not) suggests that all decisions made during the process are technical ones. By refusing to accept the political nature of job evaluation, committee members relinquish the opportunity to define what the political direction of the plan should be: that is, what principles should direct it. In joint job evaluation, management has been all too happy to fill this void.

By refusing to admit the political nature of job evaluation, union representatives have blocked the membership - including women - from any meaningful participation in the design of the plan. Job evaluation experts are needed; but they are needed only as long as they are willing to serve as a tool of the membership who, after much investigation and discussion, are clear on the principles they want the plan to serve.

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FOR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS ON THIS PAPER, WRITE

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