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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : The Director

DATE: 8/20/47

FROM : D. M. Ladd

SUBJECT: JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

Mr. Tolson	
Mr. E. A. Tamm	
Mr. Clegg	
Mr. Glavin	
Mr. Ladd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Nichols	
Mr. Rosen	
Mr. Tracy	
Mr. Carson	
Mr. Egan	
Mr. Gurnea	
Mr. Harbo	
Mr. Hendon	
Mr. Pennington	
Mr. Quinn Tamm	
Tele. Room	
Mr. Nease	
Miss Holmes	
Miss Gandy	

Pursuant to your request, there is attached hereto a memorandum summarizing the pertinent information contained in the Bureau's files relative to the subject, a leading playwright in Hollywood, California, and for the past several years the leader of all activities of the Communists in the intellectual and cultural fields in the Hollywood area.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
 This is a complete summary & a check of all references on Lawson

EJP:mae

Attachment

EJP

SUMMARY
R.I.G.

7/1/87 sec by Key #259446

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
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II. EVIDENCE OF LAWSON'S COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERSHIP

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A. Direct Evidence of Membership

Testifying before the Joint Fact-Finding Committee, California Legislature, in the fall of 1944, Lawson, under oath, denied that he was a member of the Communist Party. However, a highly reliable and delicate confidential source, whose reliability has been well established, but whose admissibility in Court may be somewhat doubtful, has definitely identified Lawson as a member of the Communist Party for the last twelve years. According to this source, Lawson was first a member of Branch K of the North West Section of the Los Angeles County Communist Party until that branch was reorganized in June, 1943, at which time he was transferred to Branch A-3 (writers' branch) of the North West Section and held 1943 Communist Party Book #30198.

This very reliable source also stated that Lawson enrolled in the Communist Political Association and was assigned 1944 CPA Card 41850, and on December 10, 1944, according to the source, was again registered for the CPA and was issued 1945 CPA Card 47275. In the Communist Political Association, Lawson reportedly was assigned to the special group which was also known as Group #9 and was a member of the commission which was the governing body of the Communist movement in the motion picture industry which replaced the North West Section's Executive Committee. Lawson, according to the source, served on the commission for three years.

It was further stated by this source that when the Communist Party, USA, was reorganized to replace the Communist Political Association, Lawson was assigned to the Davis Club and was issued 1946 Communist Party Book #35392. This source made available Lawson's 1946 registration card which reflects that he was 50 years of age, a writer in the motion picture industry, of American-Jewish descent, and that he had been in the Communist Party for twelve years. This source has also identified Lawson's wife, Sue Lawson, as a member of the Communist Party and is in a position to document the branches to which she has belonged.

William Hynes (IA-3), a discontinued paid confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, has identified Lawson as a member of the Communist Party in 1941 and has stated that Lawson is a "CP member, a playwright, and the leader of the CP fraction among the artists of all varieties in Hollywood".

In a sworn statement which Rena Vale gave to the Joint Fact-Finding Committee, California Legislature, more commonly known as the Tenney

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Committee, she identified John Howard Lawson as a member of the Communist Party. She stated that he was active in Communist circles in Hollywood when she was in the Communist Party and that in Communist meetings, Lawson had stated that Communist propaganda must be integrated into all screen plays.

On August 8, 1944, Walter Wanger, a Movie Producer, stated that he definitely knew that John Howard Lawson was a Communist. This source stated that a few days before he had contacted Lawson to see if he was available to write a screen play to which Lawson replied he was hesitant to work for Wanger for fear it might cast some reflection on him. This source quoted Lawson as stating, "I am a Communist".

Joseph Nathaniel Earl, Confidential Informant of the Los Angeles Office, advised that he talked to John Howard Lawson on July 25, 1945, at which time Lawson stated that if he were called as a witness before the State Un-American Activities Committee, he believed he would admit to them that he was a member of the Communist Political Association. (X)U

On March 1, 1947, Ben Kadish, a confidential source of the Los Angeles Office, and a former member of the Communist Party, advised that he recalled John Howard Lawson's attending Communist meetings. This source was in the Communist Party from September, 1943, through December, 1945, and for a time was in Branch A-3, which was the same branch to which Lawson belonged.

B. Attendance at Communist Party Meetings

During the time that Lawson has been in Los Angeles, he has been identified as having attended numerous meetings at which all of those identified as being present were known Communists, according to a highly reliable and delicate confidential source. In those cases where the highly reliable and delicate confidential source was not in a position to identify the particular person as a Communist, the source that can so identify the person is mentioned. There are set forth hereinafter several examples of this character of meetings which Lawson attended.

On February 7, 1943, Agents of the Bureau observed Alexander Trachtenberg, head of International Publishers and a member of the National Committee, Communist Party, USA, met with John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz and Jane Wallace, Educational Director of the Los Angeles County Communist Party, at the Melody Lane Restaurant, Wilshire Boulevard and Detroit Avenue, at 12:45 p.m. Trachtenberg is known to be a member of the Communist Party through official publications of that organization.

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On April 12, 1943, Agents of the Bureau observed John Howard Lawson; Philip M. Connelley, CIO Official and Carl Winter, Chairman of the Los Angeles County Communist Party, enter the home of Max Silver, organizational secretary of the Los Angeles County Communist Party, 5138 Maplewood Avenue, Los Angeles. [Elsie Monjar, a member of the Communist Party and a paid confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, has identified Connelley, Winter and Silver as being members of the Los Angeles County Communist Party.] (u)

On October 4, 1943, Special Agents of the Bureau observed Max Silver, Organizational Secretary of the Los Angeles County Communist Party, pick up John Howard Lawson at Sunset and Cahuenga in Los Angeles, and proceed to the home of David Grant, 827 East 21st Street. Carl Winter, head of the Communist Party in Los Angeles, was observed in attendance at this meeting. As indicated above, Silver and Winter have been identified as Communists [by confidential informant Elsie Monjar] David Grant is a [u] known Communist, by virtue of information furnished by former confidential paid informant Al Katz, a former member of the Communist Party.

On March 14, 1944, Special Agents of the Bureau observed Lawson, accompanied by Max Silver, then Administrative Secretary of the CP, enter the home of David Grant, 827 East 21st Street, Los Angeles, California. These Agents also noted that Carl Winter, Executive Secretary of the Party; Jane Wallace, County Educational Director of the Party; Pettis Perry, County Chairman and Helen Allison, County Membership Director of the Party, were also in attendance. Silver, Grant and Winter have previously been identified as known Communists. Wallace, Perry and Allison have been identified as being members of the Communist Party by former confidential informant Al Katz, a former member of the Communist Party.

Special Agents of the Bureau on May 2, 1944, observed John Howard Lawson, Elizabeth Leach and Marjorie Fiske, Organizer and Executive Secretary respectively, enter the home of Sam Moore, 314 South Murfield Road, to attend a reception given for James Ford, Negro, of the National Committee of the Communist Party, U.S.A. Pettis Perry, Negro, Chairman of the Los Angeles County Communist Party was also observed in attendance at this reception. Leach, Fiske and Perry have been identified as being functionaries of the Communist Party by former confidential informant Al Katz. Literature publicly disseminated by the Communist Party has identified James Ford with that organization.

On September 24, 1944, Agents of the Bureau observed Lawson enter the home of Carl Winter and also observed Elizabeth Leach and Jane Wallace, both of whom are Communist functionaries, in attendance at this surprise birthday party for Carl Winter. Testifying before the California Un-American Activities Committee, Lawson admitted attending this affair given in honor of Carl Winter, who was then the head of the Los Angeles County Communist Party. Winter, Leach and Wallace have previously been identified as functionaries of the Communist Party.

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On January 8, 1945, a Special Agent of the Bureau observed Elizabeth Leach, Communist functionary, accompanied by Carl Winter who was then head of the Communist Party in Los Angeles, enter a meeting at the home of John Howard Lawson, 4245 Coldwater Canyon, Los Angeles.

On April 11, 1945, Special Agents of the Bureau observed Carl Winter; William Schneiderman, California State Communist Political Association President; John Howard Lawson; Mirian Brooks, Communist Party functionary; Jane Wallace, Communist Party functionary; Pettis Perry, Communist Party functionary; and Wyndham Mortimer in attendance at a County Board meeting of the Communist Party which was held at the home of County Labor Chairman, F. Kadish, 938 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles. Brooks, Mortimer and Kadish have been identified as Communist Party functionaries by former confidential informant Al Katz. On May 30, 1945, Special Agents of the Bureau conducted a surveillance at the home of John Howard Lawson, 4245 Coldwater Canyon, and observed Elizabeth Leach, Communist Party functionary, Ned Sparks, head of the Communist Party in Los Angeles and Max Silver, formerly the Administrative Secretary of the Party in Los Angeles, enter Lawson's home. [Elsie Monjar, a confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, has identified Ned Sparks as a Communist functionary.] (u)

On March 30, 1946, Samuel Davenport Russell, an active paid confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, advised that a meeting of the financial directors of the various clubs in the Hollywood Section of the Los Angeles County Communist Party was to be held at the home of Hannah Schwartz, 2076 Paramount Avenue in Los Angeles on the evening of the same date. Special Agents of the Bureau conducted a surveillance at this address and observed John Howard Lawson in attendance at this meeting.

On September 9, 1946, Special Agents of the Bureau identified John Howard Lawson, Max Weiss, National Educational Director of the Communist Party, Frank Carlson, State Educational Director of the Communist Party, John Stapp, Communist Party functionary and Charles Glenn, Communist Party functionary as having entered the home of Abe Polonsky at 8071 Selma, Los Angeles, on this date.

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III. OTHER EVIDENCE OF LAWSON'S COMMUNIST AFFILIATION

In July, 1941, a memorandum was furnished to the Chicago Field Office by Colonel Walter L. Furbershaw, a representative of the Carnegie Illinois Steel Company, which cited meetings of the National Committee Plenary Sessions of the Communist Party on June 28 and 29, 1941, in New York City. It was stated in the memorandum that those definitely known to have been present were William Z. Foster; James W. Ford; Alexander Bittelman and numerous other high ranking Communist leaders. The memo further related that John Howard Lawson attended these national meetings as a delegate from California and there is a notation to the effect that Lawson had been in New York for the previous few months in connection with theater work.

In October, 1941, Howard Emmett Rogers, c/o Metro Goldwyn Mayer Studios, Culver City, California, a temporary confidential national defense informant of the Los Angeles Office, advised that John Howard Lawson was one of the leading Communists in the United States. He stated that on an occasion approximately four years previous, when he was at the Clover Club in Hollywood, he met Lawson and drank with him during the evening. He said on this occasion Lawson talked of the purge that took place in Russia and the mass slaughter of the Kulacks. The source advised that Lawson stated to him that he hoped the revolution would come here without bloodshed, but that it would come "even with bloodshed if necessary". The same source stated that two years following this incident, he attended a debate at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood where Lawson stated publicly that everything should be done to avoid bloodshed and that under no circumstances should this country get into war. Rogers related that he got on his feet at this meeting and recalled to Lawson his conversation concerning the revolution referred to heretofore and asked Lawson how he could justify such an inconsistency. Lawson, according to the informant, turned to the audience and stated that this was a typical example of Hollywood red-baiting and refused to answer the question put to him.

On November 15, 1941, former confidential informant Harry J. Pfalsgraff of the Chicago Office, advised the Communist Party was in the process of realigning its Districts throughout the country as well as reorganizing its structural set-up. He said that District #13 was to include all of the States of California and of Nevada. According to the source it was to have centralized offices at 121 Haight Street, San Francisco, and another at Los Angeles. The San Francisco Office was to be headed by Steve Nelson. Further, Betty Gannett is the Organizational Secretary of District #13 and John Howard Lawson and Herbert Biberman will control the organizational work in the Hollywood Area, according to the informant.

In December, 1941, Mr. Verne Tompkins, 71 Eggert Avenue, Metuchen, New Jersey, publisher of the Daily Farmers' Digest, stated that Kathryn Burke, Chief Director of Courier operations, was the contact for the Communist Party in Mexico City and that she reported directly to Gale Sondergaard,

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"July 22, 1943

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"Northwest Section
Communist Party
Los Angeles, California

Att: Jack (John Howard Lawson)

"Dear Comrade:

"On behalf of our County Committee, and I am sure of our whole membership, I wish to express enthusiastic appreciation of the contribution to the success of the July 18th Foster meeting by the cultural workers who made possible the dramatic presentation that evening.

"We wish, through the Section Committee, to convey these sentiments to all who participated, especially to the authors. Comrades Maurice (Clark) and Adrian (Scott), and to Comrades Herbert (Biberman) and Elliot (Sullivan, also known as Eli Solomon) whose creative effort and tireless work helped so much to put across the message of the entire rally - to hold the home front and strengthen national unity for victory.

"Comradely yours,

Carl Winter, Secretary
Los Angeles County Committee
Communist Party"

In a report of the Military Intelligence Division dated February 24, 1944, a list of delegates to the enlarged National Committee sessions of the Communist Party held at the Stuyvesant Casino, 9th Street and 2nd Avenue, New York City, appeared, as shown in the official minutes, the name of John Howard Lawson, playwright appeared in this list.

In 1944, a highly confidential source* advised that Lawson continued to pay the salary of Marjorie J. Potts, a full-time paid functionary of the Northwest Section of the Los Angeles County Communist Party, being Organizational Secretary and Membership Director thereof. Lawson paid her, according to the source, \$32.50 per week. It is noted that Marjorie Potts admitted to Al Katz, a former confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, that Lawson paid her salary as if she were his secretary although she did nothing but Communist Party work. (X)u

On July 25, 1945, Joseph Nathaniel Earl, former confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, advised that John Howard Lawson told him (X)u

[*Technical Surveillance on the residence of John Howard Lawson. (X)u

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On March 26, 1946, Harvey Gilbert Wolf, a confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office pointed out that the Rankin Committee had announced it would discontinue its investigation of Communism in the motion picture industry and that he had learned that as a result of this, Lawson was again planning to assume active leadership of the Communist movement in the motion picture industry. This informant stated that he felt Lawson had been "laying low" during the time Rankin's investigators had been in Hollywood, but that in discussing Lawson with members of the Communist Party, he had ascertained that Lawson was scheduled to reappear as leader of the Communist movement in the industry.

On July 24, 1946, W. R. Wilkerson, Editor of the Hollywood Reporter, bitterly criticized Lawson as a member of the Communist Party and stated that John Leech, former Secretary of the Communist Party for Los Angeles County, testified before the Los Angeles County Grand Jury that Lawson was sent to Hollywood to organize and lead the Communist movement in the motion picture industry by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of New York.

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IV. GENERAL COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES

Hugo Speier, a confidential informant of the Denver Field Office, advised that John Howard Lawson in 1941 was appointed co-leader with Herbert Biberman of the Communists in the intellectual and motion picture industry in the Hollywood area.

The November 9, 1943, issue of "New Masses" contained a full page article announcing that John Howard Lawson had been made a member of the Board of Contributing Editors of New Masses. This article quotes Lawson as saying the following with regard to this publication:

"I read New Masses for two reasons: first, because it is a valuable source of information; second, because it is equally valuable for its editorial comment and analysis. Almost every issue offers vital factual material which cannot be found elsewhere. Today, as never before, the American people want facts-- because they realize that the knowledge of facts is indispensable for winning the war. They are heartily sick of the corruption and distortion in much of the commercial press. New Masses gives us facts, and it interprets facts in terms of a consistent philosophy of democratic action and purpose. I hope the magazine can reach a much wider circle of readers because I am convinced that a bigger circulation for this periodical will help us win the war."

On January 13, 1944, an article appeared in the "Daily Worker" beneath the photograph of John Howard Lawson in which he is quoted as stating:

"Greetings to the Daily Worker on your 20th Anniversary. As I look back over the years, it seems to me that the Daily Worker has been consistently invaluable as a source of accurate news and a journal of progressive informed opinion. There is no other American newspaper which has done such a fine job in effective news coverage and editorial service to the American people and the American nation.

"I hope the Daily Worker's circulation and influence will increase tremendously. If it increases in proportion to its merit, it will reach millions of people".

A highly confidential source (technical surveillance on Carl Winter, Executive Secretary of the Communist Political Association, Los Angeles County) advised that on July 22, 1944, Robert W. Kenny, former Attorney General of the State of California and then Chairman of the California delegation to the National Democratic Convention in Chicago, communicated with Ellenore Abowitz, Assistant State CIO Legislative Director and a known Communist Party member in the Los Angeles area, Kenny, who

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was in Chicago at this time, advised Abowitz that he would arrive in Los Angeles by plane the following day and requested that she arrange a conference for him with about five of the "right people". Abowitz, according to the source, immediately conferred with Carl Winter, Executive Secretary of the Communist Political Association of Los Angeles County, concerning this matter. Subsequently a surveillance by Agents of the Los Angeles Office reflected that this meeting was actually held on Sunday, July 23, 1944, at the home of Ellenore Abowitz with six people in attendance. These persons included, in addition to R. W. Kenny, Carl Winter, previously identified; Paul Cline, ex-Secretary of the Communist Party in Los Angeles County; Joseph Aidlin, member of the State Central Committee of the Democratic Party in Los Angeles, and John Howard Lawson. (S)(u)

It was also reported by this highly reliable source* that in June, 1945, Doretta Tarmon, field representative of the New Masses, known Communist publication, and Joe Foster, film critic for the New Masses, came to Los Angeles from New York City to organize New Masses Benefit Rallies. It was stated that both of these individuals held conferences with John Howard Lawson. According to the source, an invitational benefit for the New Masses was held at the home of Frank Tuttle, Movie Director, 6217 Rock Cliff Drive, Hollywood, on June 9, 1945, it being pointed out by Manuel Seff, a confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, that the meeting was by invitation only, that over \$3,000 was raised at the meeting and that John Howard Lawson was one of those he recognized in attendance. (S)(u)

In August, 1945, a highly reliable confidential source* reported that Lawson has been working on a book of American history for the past couple of years. The source stated that the book was in its final stages and had been typed into script and had been criticized by various people including leaders of the Communist Political Association in Los Angeles, among them, Carl Winter, head of the Los Angeles CPA. The source also said that inquiries concerning it had also been made by Alex Trachtenberg, former National Educational Director of the Communist Party, and currently a member of the National Committee of the Communist Party. The source indicated that since the change in the CP Line as a result of the Duclos article, Lawson has indicated that he was going to take six months off from his studio to revise the book. He also told the informant that the change in the Communist Party Line necessitated practically a complete revision of the book's viewpoint. (S)(u)

[*Technical Surveillance on the residence of John Howard Lawson.] (S)(u)

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future expulsion at this time on controversial issues; this is factional, rather than my response to published and broadcast material. However I am also convinced that this was merely a loose way of talking to impress me with your seriousness, of which I was already impressed.

"Adding my personal regards, and the hope that not long from now we shall all be members of a functioning, militant, Marxist-Leninist vanguard party devoted to the interests of our nation, the peace of the world, and the liberation of mankind.

"Yours sincerely."

Subsequently, a highly confidential source (technical surveillance on residence of Bruce Minton) advised that Minton was very bitter against Lawson and had made it known that he was "out to get Lawson". This source indicated that Minton was of the opinion that the CPA in Hollywood was a closed corporation and that he had referred to Lawson as the "rabbi" of this group who ran it as a "tin god and in a dictatorial fashion". Similar repercussions regarding Lawson were reported by Harvey Gilbert Wolf, a confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office. Wolf advised that on August 1, 1945, he had occasion to talk with a friend who was a member of one of the cultural groups over which Lawson presided. He said that this person stated that the rank and file of the cultural groups were not satisfied with the revisionistic policies which Lawson and Elizabeth Glenn had followed during the previous year under the CPA set-up, and were desirous of getting rid of Lawson and Glenn as leaders. Wolf further revealed that his informant definitely stated that Lawson was the leader of the Communists in the cultural field and that he obtained the impression that Elizabeth Glenn was Lawson's underling in an organizational capacity. Wolf, a former member of the CPA, stated his informant was very bitter against Lawson and Glenn, not from a personal standpoint but from a Marxist standpoint inasmuch as Wolf's informant thought that Lawson and Glenn had misled the rank and file CPA members by their leadership and adherence to the theory of revisionism. [A practical example of what might have indicated a tendency toward change of Communist leadership in the motion picture industry was reported by a highly confidential source* who reported on July 19, 1945, that Lawson had just returned from San Francisco and admittedly had not been included in any inter-Party discussions of the motion picture strike, it being noted that the Communists, prior to the strike, had adhered to a position of not aiding the strike and had urged its workers to keep the no-strike policy of their unions. It is to be observed that in 1946 Richard Bransten and his wife, Ruth McKenny, were expelled from the Communist Party.] (S)(u)

[*Technical Surveillance on the residence of John Howard Lawson] (S)(u)

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VIII. ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- A. HOLLYWOOD DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE, later known as the HOLLYWOOD INDEPENDENT CITIZENS COMMITTEE OF THE ARTS, SCIENCES AND PROFESSIONS (HICCASP), succeeded by the PROGRESSIVE CITIZENS OF AMERICA

Harvey Gilbert Wolf, a confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, advised that the Hollywood Democratic Committee was launched in January, 1943, by persons engaged in the motion picture industry, to obtain national, state and local legislation essential to victory; to clarify political issues and support candidates best fitted to serve the nation in wartime and to cooperate with other organizations "whose aims are similar to our own"; housing for defense workers, protection of labor's rights, child care, humane treatment of juvenile delinquents and the end of negro discrimination. The same source stated on February 15, 1944, that the aims and purposes and program of the Hollywood Democratic Committee had changed very materially. He indicated that its purposes had formerly been exclusively political, but that now through speeches, public advertisements and sham Americanism, it was attempting to enlist the support of non-suspecting citizens, under the guidance of the Committee, to exploit names of important individuals in the furtherance of the Communist Party line. This informant further stated that the program of the Hollywood Democratic Committee was not only parallel with that of the Communist Party Line but that the organization was dominated and inspired by persons of a Communist character.

It is observed that in June, 1945, the Hollywood Democratic Committee became a section of the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions and that in 1946, it became known as the Progressive Citizens of America. It should also be noted that this organization was not connected with the Democratic Party.

The following information with respect to the activities of John Howard Lawson relative to the Hollywood Democratic Committee is set forth to illustrate the direction and control exerted over this organization by Lawson. The most pertinent information in this regard was reported to the Bureau by a highly confidential and reliable source*. (S)(u)

On March 4, 1943, it was ascertained by a confidential informant of the Los Angeles Office, Harvey Gilbert Wolf, that the Hollywood Democratic Committee was in its formative stages and a meeting of the group was scheduled at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel for that evening. This informant attended (S)(u)

[Technical Surveillance on residence of John Howard Lawson.] (S)(u)

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