

## No 17

### MEMBERS' PAY, PENSIONS AND ALLOWANCES

Revised July 1997

#### HISTORY

Payment of Members of Parliament can be traced back as far as the 13th century, when the shires and boroughs allowed their representatives certain wages for attending Parliament; knights received four shillings a day, and citizens and burgesses two shillings a day for the duration of the Parliament. These rates were first prescribed in 1322, and remained in force throughout the Middle Ages, although there were local variations above and below the set rates - for example, in 1296 the two Aldermen representing the city of London were paid ten shillings a day and in 1463, the Borough of Weymouth paid its burgesses with a wage of five hundred mackerel. The Bristol Members' wages were adjusted from time to time for inflation: in 1518 they earned 2s 0d a day, in 1567, 3s 4d, in 1571, 4s 0d and in the 17th century, 6s 8d. They had travelling expenses in addition. Andrew Marvell was reputedly the last person to receive a Parliamentary salary - paid by the Borough of Kingston upon Hull until his death in 1678 - but as late as 1681 Thomas King presented a Petition stating he had not been paid his wages by the Borough of Harwich.

In general, then, payment of Members by their own electors had ceased by the end of the 17th century. Samuel Pepys' diary entry for 30 March 1668 remarks *"At dinner ... all concluded that the bane of the Parliament hath been the leaving off the old custom of the places allowing wages to those that served them in Parliament, by which they chose men that understood their business and would attend it, and they could expect an account from, which now they cannot."*

In the 18th and for much of the early 19th century, a seat in the House of Commons could be a lucrative source of wealth in the form of sinecure offices and pensions. Many were prepared to pay large sums for a seat, or sought the patronage of the magnates who had seats at their disposal. In so far as Members were paid during the period, Lloyd George described the system in 1911, during the debate on the resolution to pay MPs a regular salary, as *"indirect, surreptitious and corrupt"*. Of course, many Members were equally concerned to maintain their independence of such corruption.

The system was brought into question in 1780, when a Committee appointed by the Westminster electors, with Charles James Fox as Chairman, recommended the payment of Members, and their Report was adopted by the influential Society for Constitutional Information. A Reform Bill of 1830, and the People's Charter of 1838, also proposed that Members of Parliament should be paid. In the later 19th century payment of Members was taken up by reforming organisations like the National Democratic League and the Metropolitan Radical Federation, and also, in the first decade of the 20th century, became an aim of the Labour Party; it had been advocated by Keir Hardie as early as 1887.

Motions or Bills supporting such a proposal were brought before the House of Commons in 1870, 1888, 1892, 1893, 1895, and 1903, but MPs remained unpaid until 1911, when, after a vote in the House passed by 265 votes to 173, they became entitled to draw £400 per annum from public funds. In part, it was Labour pressure, exerted in particular after the Osborne Judgement of 1909, which had declared the Trade Union levy to pay for the support of Labour MPs illegal, which induced the Liberal Government to make the change. The then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George, summarised the arguments in favour as follows:

*"When we offer £400 a year as payment of Members of Parliament it is not a recognition of the magnitude of the service, it is not a remuneration, it is not a recompense, it is not even a salary. It is just an allowance, and I think the minimum allowance, to enable men to come here, men who would render incalculable service to the State, and whom it is an incalculable loss to the State not to have here, but who cannot be here because their means do not allow it. It is purely an allowance to enable us to open the door to great and honourable public service to these men, for whom this country will be all the richer, all the greater, and all the stronger for the unknown vicissitudes which it has to face by having there to aid us by their counsel, by their courage, and by their resource".*

[Vol 29, c 1383]

This £400 was increased at irregular intervals (and reduced, in 1931; see Table), but there was no regular machinery for its review. In 1963 the Government appointed an independent Committee (the Lawrence Committee) to review payments to members of both Houses and to Ministers. Its recommendations for MPs' pay were accepted by the Government and agreed by the House in 1964.

### **MEMBERS' PAY SINCE 1970**

In 1970, the Commission for Industry and Manpower Bill provided for a special panel to report on (amongst other groups) Parliamentary pay. In the Second Reading debate on 8 April 1970, Mrs Castle said she proposed to ask the panel for a system of automatic reviews at regular intervals, with full reviews every four years. However, these plans were overturned by the loss of the Bill because of a General Election and subsequent change of Government. On 4 December 1970 the incoming Leader of the House, Mr Whitelaw, announced that MPs' pay would instead be referred to an independent review body, with the final decision resting with the House.

The Top Salaries Review Body (TSRB), appointed in 1971, (chaired by Lord Boyle until 1981 and since by Lord Plowden), produced its first major Report on Members' and Ministers' Pay and Pensions in 1971: since then its successors have issued further Reports at fairly regular intervals - (see Appendix). The Reports were not always implemented in full: the most obvious example of this came in 1975, when the TSRB recommended an increase in MPs' basic pay from £4,500 to £8,000 a year, and the Government was able to agree to no more than £5,750. The 1979 increase, though granted in full, was staged over three years.

It had often been suggested that Members' pay should be linked to a salary in the Civil Service. For example, in 1975 the then Leader of the House, Mr Edward Short, moved a motion *That in the opinion of this House it is desirable in principle that the salaries of Members should be regulated to correspond with the amounts of the salary paid to a specified grade in the public service*". This motion was amended by the House (128 votes to 127) to read *"That in the opinion of this House, it is desirable in principle that the salaries of Members should be regulated to correspond with a point on the scale paid to an Assistant Secretary in the public service, not later than three months after the next General Election, and annually until that date, the salaries of Members should be increased by not less than the same amount of increase as these Assistant Secretaries"*, (Vol 896, c 508). In this amended form, it was agreed to by 169 votes to 70, but the Government did not at that time put the Resolution, which was only an expression of opinion, into effect.

The 1975 Top Salaries Review Body Report recommended that MPs' pay be reviewed at two yearly intervals, but the Government did not agree. In February 1982 the report of an all-party Select Committee on Members' Salaries (HC 208) suggested that between four-yearly reviews, MPs' pay be adjusted annually, in line with increases shown for outside earnings in the survey published by the Department of Employment each November. The Leader of the House, Mr John Biffen, rejecting this, accepted a proposal that MPs' pay should be examined by the Top Salaries Review Body in the fourth year of each Parliament, and that the MPs' annual rises would be based on such groups as non-industrial civil servants, teachers, doctors and dentists. This would not be automatic, however, and Mr Biffen stressed that *"in short the Government reserve the right to respond flexibly to exceptional circumstances"*.

The 20th Report of the Top Salaries Review Body recommended in 1983, *inter alia*, that Members' pay should be £19,000 per annum, an increase of about 31%; it further recommended that the research and secretarial allowance be increased to £13,000 per annum. However, the Government did not accept these recommendations, and instead proposed an increase of 4% - that is, £15,090 from 13 June 1983. The then Leader of the House said:

*"The proposed increase represents a value judgement of what is an appropriate salary for a Member. We are all constrained to make a value judgement of what that figure should be. The Top Salaries Review Body Report suggests that it should pay regard to a Member being full time with no other source of income. It must also take account of the unique nature of a Member's occupation. Those factors alone, however, do not indicate a self-evident salary. We have still to make our own political judgement about an issue sensitive in its economic and social consequences."*

[HC Deb, Vol 46, c 273]

However, after a debate which continued late into the night of 19 July, the House rejected the Government proposals and instead accepted a compromise of a 5.5% increase immediately (to £15,308), with increases every 12 months over a 5-year period, bringing the Members' salary up to £18,500 in 1987. In addition, by 226 to 218 votes, MPs decided to link their pay with a senior civil servant: from 1 January 1988 their salaries were to be at a yearly rate equal to 89% of the national maximum point (excluding range points as later agreed) of the Grade 6 (old Senior Principal) pay scale in the non-industrial Civil Service. This linkage was confirmed by the House on 21 July 1987, when its operation gave rise to an increase of 21.9%. The House temporarily suspended this linkage on 25 November 1992 by voting to maintain Members' pay for 1993 at the same level as for 1992, then re-instated it by voting on 3 November 1993 for an increase of 2.7% for the 1994 full Parliamentary salary and 2.68% for the corresponding 1995 salary. (The reform of civil service pay had made the restitution of the exact link impossible).

The formula for increasing Members' pay was debated and agreed on 3 November 1993; it confirmed that the 1995 salary level should be increased by a "relevant percentage" and that subsequent annual salary levels should be at the rate of the preceding years' salary increased by a "relevant percentage". The "relevant percentage" for any year is the percentage by which the average annual salary of Grades 5 to 7 in the Civil Service increased when compared with the previous year.

In July 1996 the Review Body on Senior Salaries (SSRB, successor to the TSRB) recommended that Member's pay should be £43,000 per annum, an increase of about 26%. The Government proposed an increase of 3%. Following a debate on 10 July 1996, the House rejected the Government proposal and agreed to accept the SSRB recommendation. For the period 1 July 1996 to 31 March 1997 the yearly rate of £43,000 applied. In the same debate the House also agreed to the SSRB's recommended mechanism for the annual uprating of Members' salaries without the need for Parliamentary decision, namely

*"For each year starting with 1st April, from 1997 onwards, the yearly rate shall be increased by the average percentage by which the mid-points of the Senior Civil Service pay bands having effect from 1st April of that year have increased compared with the previous 1st April."*

[HC Deb, vol 281 c533]

The April 1997 rate of **£43,860** represents a 2% increase over the previous figure in accordance with the agreed formula.

#### TABLE OF SALARY LEVELS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Members' Salaries (£)</u>
August 1911	400
October 1931	360
July 1934	380
July 1935	400
June 1937	600
April 1946	1,000
May 1954 (incl. Sessional Allowance)	1,250
July 1957	1,750
October 1964	3,250
January 1972	4,500
June 1975	5,750
June 1976	6,062
June 1977	6,270
June 1978	6,897
June 1979	9,450
June 1980	11,750
June 1981	13,950
June 1982	14,510
June 1983	15,308

<u>Year</u>				<u>Members' Salaries (£)</u>	
Yearly rate from	1 Jan	1984		16,106	
"	"	"	"	1985	16,904
"	"	"	"	1986	17,702
"	"	"	"	1987	18,500
"	"	"	"	1988	22,548
"	"	"	"	1989	24,107
"	"	"	"	1990	26,701
"	"	"	"	1991	28,970
"	"	"	"	1992	30,854
"	"	"	"	1993	30,854
"	"	"	"	1994	31,687
"	"	"	"	1995	33,189
"	"	"	"	1996	34,085
"	"	"	1 July	1996	43,000
"	"	"	1 April	1997	<b>43,860</b>

NB: Not every increase date is listed in this table.

## **PENSION ARRANGEMENTS**

Following the recommendations of the Committee on the Remuneration of Ministers and Members of Parliament (the Lawrence Committee, Cmnd 2516), a pension scheme for MPs was first introduced under the terms of the Ministerial Salaries and Members' Pensions Act 1965. The scheme was unusual in that both benefits and contributions were fixed in money terms.

In December 1970 the Government announced that the recently established Review Body on Top Salaries (TSRB) would be charged with subsequent reviews of the arrangements for salaries, allowances etc of Ministers and MPs.

The First Report of the TSRB (Cmnd 4836) recommended, *inter alia*, a restructured pension scheme with pension related to "final salary", accruing at 1/60th for each year of service, *pro rata* for a part year. The scheme was to be extended to include those Ministers and certain other office holders who wished to participate. The new scheme was established under the terms of the Parliamentary and other Pensions Act 1972. Subsequent reviews resulted in amending Acts in 1976, 1978 and 1981.

The next major change resulted from the 20th Report of the TSRB (Cmnd 8881) which recommended, *inter alia*, an accrual rate of 1/50th, with effect from 20 July 1983. The contribution payable by Members was increased to 9% of salary. These changes and other minor matters were given legal force by the Parliamentary Pensions etc. Act 1984. The 31st Report of the TSRB, (Cm 1576), approved by Parliament on 18 July 1991, then recommended that the contribution payable by Members be reduced to 6% of salary; this took effect from 1 April 1992.

Pressure for a single consolidation document had grown throughout this period, and resulted in the Parliamentary and Other Pensions Act 1987, an enabling measure under which the detailed arrangements may be set out in regulations. This led to the Parliamentary Pensions (Consolidation and Amendment) Regulations 1993 - SI 1993 No. 3253 - and the Parliamentary Pensions (Additional Voluntary Contributions Scheme) Regulations - SI 1993 No. 3252, which came into force on 21 January 1994. The AVC Scheme enables Members to purchase additional pension benefits within the limits determined by Inland Revenue.

On 10 July 1996 the House agreed that in the case of Members whose service in the House ceases after 1 July 1996, they shall be treated for pension purposes as having a yearly salary rate of £43,000.

## **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

At the time of the Lawrence Committee Report in 1964, there were only a limited number of allowances available to MPs. These consisted of various facilities in kind, such as free telephone calls from the House within the London area; the use of a limited number of rooms where Members and Members' private secretaries might do their secretarial and typing work; free postage for correspondence with Government Departments, nationalised industries and officials of the House, and free copies of Parliamentary and certain other official publications. There were also certain travel allowances including a car mileage allowance covering the cost of motor fuel, and a railway season ticket for Members travelling from their homes to the House.

Since then, the number and variety of allowances available to Members has been increased. The main ones are detailed below.

### **Members' Office Costs Allowance (OCA)**

Members may claim reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of their Parliamentary duties on secretarial assistance, general office expenses and on the employment of research assistants. From 1984, limited free travel for MPs' staff between Westminster and the constituency - up to nine return journeys a year for such staff in respect of each Member - was allowed. This allowance was formerly known as Secretarial, Research and Office Costs Allowance.

The table below shows the level of allowance since its introduction in October 1969:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Allowance (£)</u>
	£
October 1969	Up to 500
January 1972	" 1,000
August 1974	" 1,750
June 1975	" 3,200
June 1976	" 3,512
June 1977	" 3,687
June 1978	" 4,200
June 1979	" 4,600
February 1980	" 6,750
August 1980	" 8,000
June 1981	" 8,480
June 1982	" 8,820
July 1983	" 11,364
* April 1984	" 12,437
April 1985	" 13,211
April 1986	" 20,140
+ April 1987	" 21,302
April 1988	" 22,588
April 1989	" 24,903
April 1990	" 27,166
April 1991	" 28,986
April 1992	" 39,960
April 1993	" 40,380
April 1994	" 41,308
April 1995	" 42,754
April 1996 (paid at first)	" 43,908
April 1996 (by resolution of House from 7.96)	" 46,364
April 1997	" <b>47,568</b>

\* On 20 July 1984 the House decided by resolution that the allowance be uprated from 1 April each year by the increase in the maximum point of the pay scale (excluding allowances and overtime) for a senior personal secretary in the Civil Service in receipt of Inner London weighting. However, on 16 July 1986 the House decided to reject the Government recommendation of a 6% increase in Secretarial/Research Allowances, and instead voted for an amendment which raised the base figure for allowances in 1986-87 by over 40%. On 21 July 1987 the allowance became known as the Office Costs Allowance. The allowance is revised from 1 April each year, though the actual amount cannot generally be calculated until the late summer. On 25 July 1991, the Leader of the House, Rt Hon John MacGregor, asked the Top Salaries Review Body to undertake a review of the whole subject of the Office Costs Allowances. The TSRB reported in July 1992, following which the Government recommended an increase in the OCA of just over £4,000, to be assessed on a quarterly basis in the future. On 14 July 1992, however, the House rejected this and voted instead in favour of an increase of 38%, also to be assessed quarterly. On 13 July 1994, the House voted for a 2.3% increase in the allowance limit effective from 1 April 1994.

On 10 July 1996 the House decided by resolution that the limit for any quarter in the year should be £11,591. Increases in subsequent years are linked to the Retail Prices Index for March and will apply from 1 April.

+ On 16 December 1987 the House decided to increase the allowance given to Mr David Blunkett MP by 50% of the basic allowance, to take into account the increased difficulties he faces in being a blind Member. This was increased to 2.57 times the basic amount on 14 July 1988, a figure which was subsequently renewed on 14 July 1992, on 13 July 1994, and again on 10 July 1996.

On 10 July 1996 the House decided to increase the allowance given to Mr Bernie Grant MP, who has a disability, to 1.33 times the basic amount.

### **Pension provision for Members' staff**

From 1 April 1980 provision was made for each Member in receipt of the Office, Secretarial and Research Allowance (later known as the Office Costs Allowance) to contribute sums to an approved pension scheme for the provision of pension in respect of persons whose salaries were incurred by the Member.

The maximum sum is limited to 10% of the annual rate of salary or fees payable by the Member to each employee, subject to an overriding limit of 10% of the O.C.A; the current limit as from 1 April 1997 is therefore **£4,757**.

### **Temporary Assistance**

If a Member's secretary or research assistant is absent from work for a continuous period of 4 weeks or more through illness and continues to receive a salary from the Member out of the Member's allowance and the Member is unable to meet the cost of obtaining temporary assistance from within the OCA, then the Member concerned may claim reimbursement of the additional costs incurred in obtaining such temporary help: the maximum period is 26 weeks in any period of 12 months, and may not exceed a total of 52 weeks in any period of 4 years. The maximum sum available for reimbursement is calculated pro-rata, and is determined by reference to the annual rate of the Office Costs Allowance in force.

### **Supplementary London Allowance and Additional Costs Allowance**

Those Members whose constituencies are within Inner London are entitled to claim a London Supplement payment; the value of the Supplement was increased to **£1,358** from 1 April 1997. The House resolved on 27 June 1997 that with effect from 2nd May 1997, the following constituencies are specified as "Inner London constituencies":

Battersea; Bethnal Green and Bow; Camberwell and Peckham; Cities of London and Westminster; Dulwich and West Norwood; Eltham; Greenwich and Woolwich; Hackney North and Stoke Newington; Hackney South and Shoreditch; Hammersmith and Fulham; Hampstead and Highgate; Holborn and St. Pancras; Islington North; Islington South and Finsbury; Kensington and Chelsea; Lewisham, Deptford; Lewisham East; Lewisham West; North Southwark and Bermondsey; Poplar and Canning Town; Putney; Regent's Park and Kensington North; Streatham; Tooting; Vauxhall

[HC Deb, Vol 296 c1130]



The Additional Costs Allowance is for Members with constituencies outside Inner London who are entitled to claim additional expenses incurred in staying overnight away from home whilst performing Parliamentary duties, within an annual maximum of **£12,287** for 1997/98. Whilst it is recognised that MPs really have two places of work - Westminster and their constituency, additional costs can be only admitted in respect of one of these places, and a Member is required to notify the Fees Office at the Commons of the location of his or her main residence - the additional expenses are claimable when the Member stays overnight away from this main residence. Thus, for example, a provincial Member with a home registered in his constituency would be entitled to additional expenses incurred in staying away from home overnight for the purpose of carrying out Parliamentary duties either in London, or within the constituency, if he or she would otherwise be involved in an "unreasonably" lengthy journey home.

Increases in subsequent years for both allowances are linked to the Retail Prices Index for March and will apply from 1 April.

### **Travel Concessions for journeys made on Parliamentary business**

In 1984 an independent inquiry was set up under Lord Peyton of Yeovil to look at the means by which MPs were reimbursed the cost of their motor mileage: this recommended that MPs be reimbursed by way of a payment per mile, appropriate to the engine size of the car, based on the RAC schedule of motoring costs, and subject to an upper limit. A higher rate should be payable for the first 20,000 miles per annum, a lower rate for mileage beyond that.

The report also recommended that when a Member claimed for mileage in excess of 25,000, he or she should be required to furnish detailed particulars of all journeys covered by the claims. The Government accepted the report's findings and they were approved by Resolution of the House on 20 July 1984. On 3 November 1993 the House amended the earlier Resolution to allow for a 2.3% increase from 1 April 1994 in each of the allowance rates.

On 10 July 1996 the House decided by resolution that with effect from 1 April 1997, car mileage allowance should be payable to Members at the higher rate of 47.2 pence per mile and the lower rate of 21.7 pence irrespective of engine capacity increased by the percentage (if any) by which the Retail Prices Index (RPI) has increased over the March 1996 index. Increases in subsequent years were to be linked to the retail prices index (RPI) for March. The higher rate is for the first 20,000 miles. The March 1997 RPI % increase on 47.2 pence and 21.7 pence brings the current rates (effective from April 1997) to **48.4p** per mile up to 20,000 miles and **22.3p** per mile thereafter.

In addition, Members are currently provided with **travel warrants** which may be exchanged for an appropriate ticket, for journeys by rail, sea or air on Parliamentary business. These cover journeys within the same triangle of home, constituency and Westminster as the car mileage allowance. Costs of journeys outside this triangle, on Parliamentary business, may also be reimbursed if the Member notifies the Fees Office at least three days in advance - the three day rule may be waived in exceptional circumstances. Members may also use parking spaces, for which no charge is made, in the Parliamentary car park.

## **Travel Facilities for Members' Spouses and Children**

Special travel warrants are available for use by the spouse, and children under the age of 18, of a Member between London and the constituency and/or London and home by rail, air or sea - this concession was extended to include Members' children on 10 June 1982, where previously it applied to Members' spouses only. Each child may make up to fifteen return journeys per calendar year and the same limit applies to spouses.

## **Travel to European Community Institutions**

Under the terms of the Resolution of the House of 6 December 1991, provision has been made to reimburse Members their travelling costs incurred on Parliamentary duties between the United Kingdom and European Community Institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg. A Member is allowed one visit per calendar year. The scheme is limited to the cost of a business class return air fare from a London airport to one of the designated destinations and a maximum of two days subsistence at the Civil Service Class A rate.

## **Postage and Telephone Calls made on Parliamentary Business**

Members are currently entitled to free stationery, free inland telephone and postal services from Parliament.

## **Winding Up Allowance**

An allowance of up to 1/3rd of the annual Office Costs Allowance currently in force may be paid for the reimbursement of the cost of any work on Parliamentary business undertaken on behalf of a deceased, defeated or retiring Member after the date of cessation of Membership.

The House voted on 13 July 1994 to raise the limit of this allowance from 1/6th of the annual Office Costs Allowance to 4/3rds of the quarterly limit. The limit from 1 April 1997 is **£15,856**.

## **Resettlement Grant**

A Resettlement Grant to assist with the costs of adjusting to "non-parliamentary life", is payable to any person who ceases to be an MP at a General Election. The amount is based on age and length of service, and varies between 50% and 100% of the annual salary payable to a Member of Parliament at the time of the Dissolution.

## FURTHER READING

Taylor, Peter Alfred, MP: Payment of Members (1870)

Buxton, Sydney, MP: Political Questions of the Day (1892)  
(contains a resume of then current arguments for and  
against payment of MPs)

Report of the Committee on the Remuneration of Ministers and  
Members of Parliament  
(Chairman: Sir G Lawrence) (1964) Cmnd 2516

Select Committee Report on Members' Salaries (1982) HC 208

Top Salaries Review Body Reports dealing with Parliamentary  
remuneration -

1971	1st Report	Cmnd 4836
1972	2nd Report	Cmnd 5001
1974	5th Report	Cmnd 5701
1975	7th Report	Cmnd 6136
1976	8th Report	Cmnd 6574
1977	9th Report	Cmnd 6749
1979	12th Report	Cmnd 7598
1980	13th Report	Cmnd 7825
1980	15th Report	Cmnd 7953
1981	17th Report	Cmnd 8244
1983	20th Report	Cmnd 8881
1985	22nd Report	Cmnd 9525
1987	24th Report	Cm 131
1988	26th Report	Cm 362
1991	31st Report	Cm 1576
1992	32nd Report	Cm 1943

Review Body on Senior Salaries -

1996	38th Report	Cm 3330
1997	39th Report	Cm 3540

**SUMMARY OF CURRENT RATES  
(1997-98)**

Members' Parliamentary Salary	£ 43,860	
Members' Office Costs Allowance	£ 47,568	(max)
Pension provision for Members' staff	£ 4,757	(max)
Supplementary London Allowance	£ 1,358	
Additional Costs Allowance	£ 12,287	(max)
Winding up Allowance	£ 15,856	(max)
Car Mileage	48.4p per mile	(higher)
	22.3p per mile	(lower)

For *Ministers'* pay, see *Factsheet* No 31.

This Factsheet was originally written by Gill Howarth of the Public Information Office with much help from Mr A R Marskell of the Fees Office, and Rosamund Coates and John Palmer of the House of Commons Library. This revision has been prepared by Aileen Walker, with the help of work done by a Library colleague, Barry Winetrobe. The assistance of Alan Marskell and his colleagues in the Fees Office is gratefully acknowledged.

Aileen Walker  
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