

**political  
stance  
of  
the  
S·C·M·**



This Political Stance was accepted as a policy statement of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland by its General Council of September 1969.

A commentary and bibliography on its contents is available from Annandale, North End Road, London N.W.11, price 1s 6d.



*Political statement of the SCM of Great Britain and Ireland*

This statement of the political stance of the SCM of Great Britain and Ireland is not intended to be a basis for membership. We hope that it will come under constant criticism and review from the movement itself. Nevertheless it is an indication of where we stand now, a guide for strategy, and a jumping-off point for further reflection.

1. (i) Men live in relationship with one another in the complex and changing patterns of their history. These relationships invite a moral judgement; they may degrade men, or they may help them to be more fully human. Society, which is the sum of human relationships, may oppress and limit men through injustice and exploitation, or it may help to develop them as persons. Its moral quality is changed, for better or worse, by the personal decisions and actions of those who make it up.

(ii) The basis of our movement is Jesus Christ the Lord. We believe that the control of history is in the hands of the man whom God made its Lord, overcoming in him the dehumanising forces (including sin and death) that restrict men's freedom. Hence to affirm that Jesus is Lord of human history is to affirm that in him men are themselves responsible for it. But Jesus in his risen life possesses that full humanity which no society on earth has attained. He is Lord over all men, not only over the christian church which acknowledges him. But to acknowledge him as Lord is to acknowledge his demand to decide and act in such a way that these decisions and actions can be his too. When men do this they bring history under his direction, opening themselves to his presence, and move towards the goal in which they 'attain the measure of the stature of his fullness', when, through him, God will be 'all in all'.

(iii) If we believe this we must work out a programme of action in accord with this belief and commit ourselves to fulfil it.

2. This will be a political stance, since to engage in the struggle to understand and change the quality of human relationships is to engage in politics. Politics on this view is the grammar of human relationships. This entails rejection of the narrow sense the word has taken on in our divided world, with the implication that locally, nationally, and internationally political activity can be handed over to professionals, so that it ceases to be the concern of the people. This absence of concern is itself a political stance, for it implies

approval of human relationships as they now are. By contrast we assert that the christian church, and any movement within it, must be engaged in politics if it is to be obedient to its Lord.

3. (i) The immediate task is to understand the kinds of relationship now existing between men. We affirm that the analysis must be in both economic and cultural terms, which are inseparable in the total social structure.

(ii) On any analysis there is economic inequality and cultural impoverishment underlying the polarisation between two groups. The first are mainly northern nations: western Europe, the States, the Soviet Union, including its satellites; the white British commonwealth and Japan. The second are mainly southern nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. They make up some two-thirds of the world's population. On average the northern countries are almost ten times as rich as the southern, many of which are on the verge of starvation. Accentuated by the population explosion the gap grows wider.

(iii) Within most countries, whether northern or southern, there are glaring economic divisions between classes of people. In Britain for instance 40% of the total net private capital is owned by 1% of the adult population. These economic differences are reflected in cultural terms. The decisions that vitally affect men's lives are made not by them but by a minority who control them, whether we think of the northern countries over against the southern, or of the great industrial corporations, banks, and controllers of communication media over against the majority of people in Britain. This reduces the greater part of mankind to passivity except in what has been separated off as a 'private' sector of their lives. Consequently there are injustices in every sector of life; divisiveness in education, in housing, in town planning, in public services, in what is read and what is written, in what is seen and what is spoken--or, for the greater part of mankind, the lack of all these things.

4. (i) Therefore we must share the political struggle of the people to take control from the minorities; to achieve democratic rule in a genuine rather than a fictitious sense. A genuine democracy will be one in which all men can and do control their lives to the fullest extent. This implies change in the struc-



tures of society, and in the consciousness they produce, a change so great as to be revolutionary. Piecemeal reform is not adequate, but must lead to continuing, constantly self-critical, change in every sector of society--in a word, to revolution.

(ii) Revolution in this definition does not necessarily imply physical violence. The established structures in fact continually do violence to those who live under them, though this does not always take physical form. Because of the nature of international society, we recognise that all are caught up in this violence. Nevertheless, as has been the case throughout christian history, we recognise that there are those who by conviction cannot condone methods of violence leading to bloodshed, and those who by a similarly genuine conviction can. This stance does not pass judgement on either position, but there is common concern that all forms of violence with which our world is bedevilled need to be completely eliminated.

5. This general commitment to revolutionary change must show itself in the research which as students we are able to undertake, and in the action that follows from it. We realise that research and action may well have started outside the christian community; we realise too that we shall have suspicions to break down because of the equivocal role of the church in society.
6. Among matters requiring urgent attention are the following:
  - a) In Britain and Ireland there is very little workers' control over the activities of our industrial concerns, and wages and work conditions are often unjust.
  - b) There is also considerable discrimination against many groups, particularly against black people, the old, the chronically sick, the homeless, women, gipsies, etc.
  - c) Our educational system is still highly divisive, particularly at secondary and higher levels, being weighted heavily against children of working-class background. There is a necessity to work for a system of education which is comprehensive for all ages, for methods and content of education to meet human needs rather than the needs of market society, for the end of manipulation of education by government, military, business, and religious interests for sectarian and partisan ends, for greater control by educational communities and greater participation in educational



decision-making by the community as a whole rather than by a minority.

d) There is increasing control of media of communication by commercial, above all by advertising, interests. This leads to distortion of fact and perversion of values.

e) Revolutionary movements, throughout the world, which represent the struggles of oppressed people to determine their own future themselves, are justified. We refuse to accept the view that these national liberation movements are all part of an attempt at communist world-domination directed from Moscow or Peking.

f) Aid to 'developing' countries, whether voluntary or government sponsored, is ludicrously small by comparison with what is being spent on defence or consumer goods. It is essential to increase this aid, above all from our own government, and to ensure that it is given without political or economic strings, and is in an appropriate form.

g) Such aid as is given is frequently negated by the economic exploitation and political manipulation of those countries by corporations such as Anglo-American Corporation or the US United Fruit Company. Unjust prices must be eliminated for these countries, particularly where this involves firms that are primarily British based.

h) Our capital investment and trading interests are often responsible for supporting unjust and oppressive regimes in the world, notoriously in South Africa and thus too in Rhodesia.

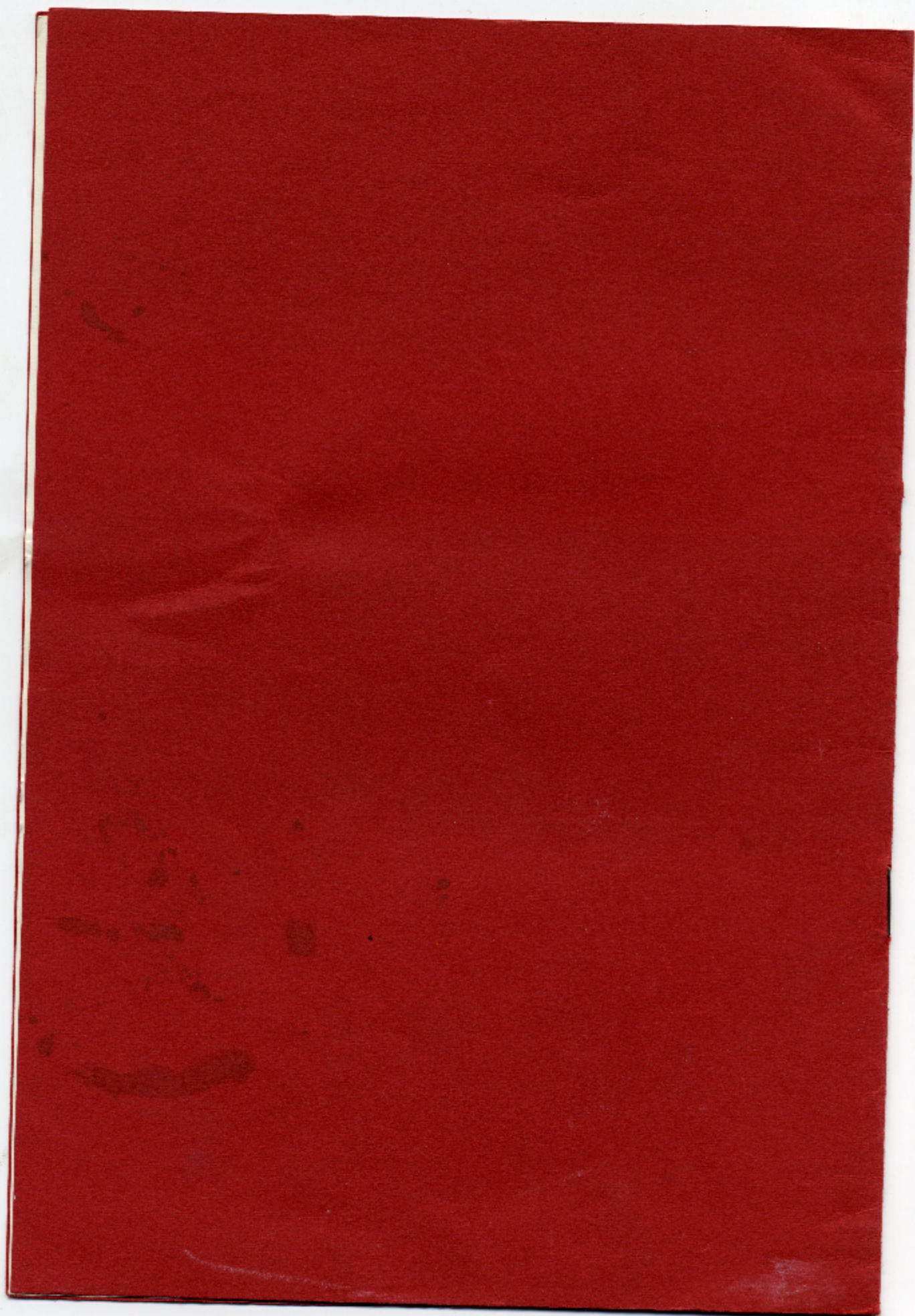
i) Wars such as the US is de facto waging against the people of Vietnam, or less open oppression as in Latin America, are unjust, and we are involved in this injustice by our support.

j) There is also grave injustice and oppression in Eastern Europe, as was shown by the intervention of the Soviet Union and her satellites in Czechoslovakia.

k) Despite its limitations the ideals and aims of the United Nations Organisation and its agencies are worthy of support. There must be full government support for these agencies, in particular for the international control and ultimate elimination of nuclear and chemical and biological weapons.

7. We shall act on these basic issues wherever we can, locally and nationally.

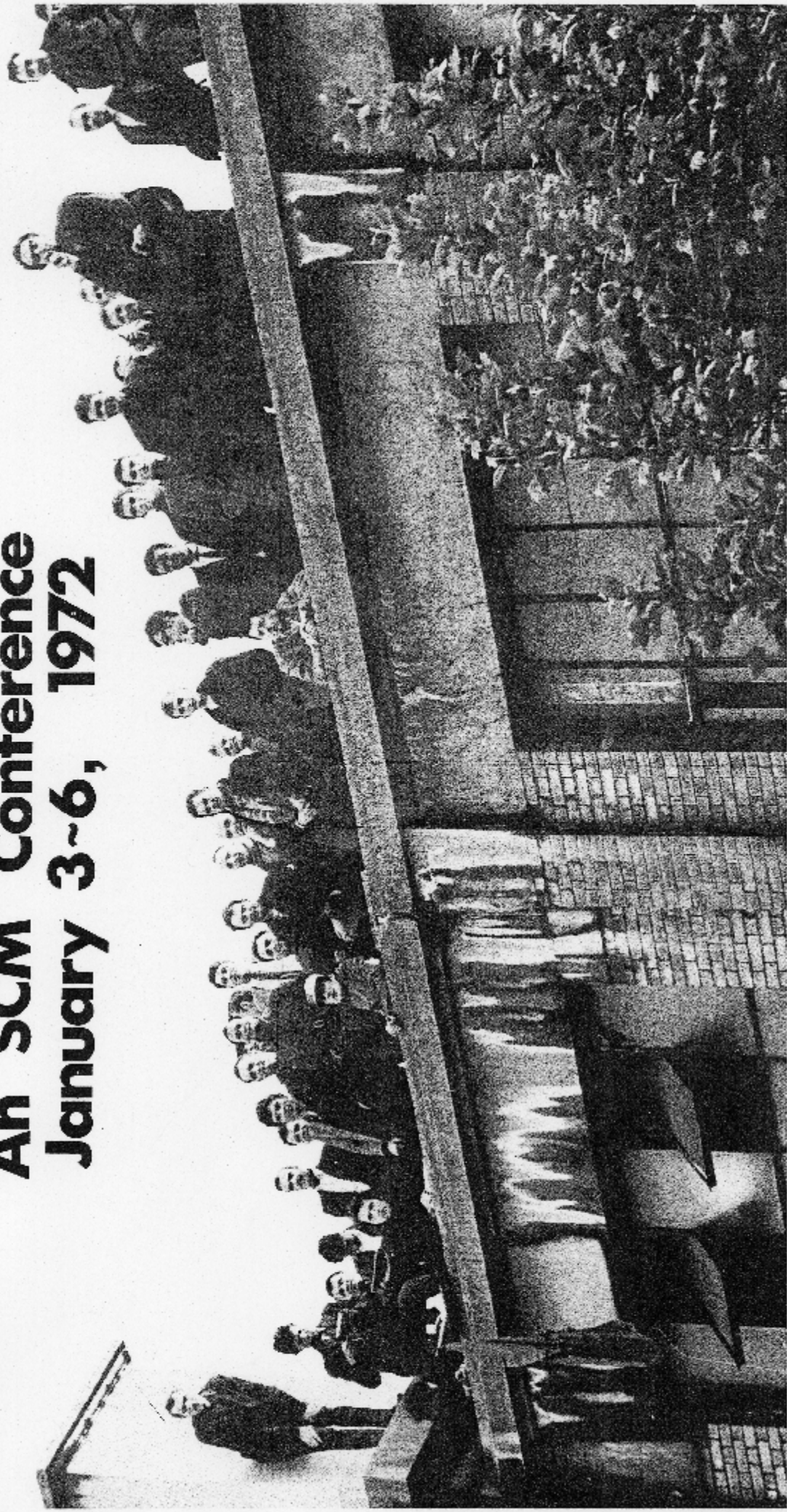






# TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM

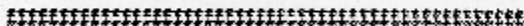
**An SCM Conference  
January 3-6, 1972**





## TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM

A conference organised by the SCM for students and others who want to learn about the basic ideas and teaching of Karl Marx and his followers, and to see whether or not they have any relevance to our situation today in Britain and Ireland.



### THE ECONOMICS OF CAPITALISM

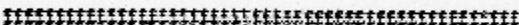
How did the capitalist system grow up? What did Marx say about it that was new? How has capitalism changed since the nineteenth century? Is it breaking down today, or is it adapting and strengthening its position?

### IMPERIALISM

Lenin called imperialism 'the highest stage of capitalism' — what did he mean? Is imperialism the same as colonialism? What is 'the new imperialism'?

### THE TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM

Must all revolutions be violent? What makes a revolution socialist? Why did Marx say the workers were the only people who could make a socialist revolution? Was he right? Is he still right?



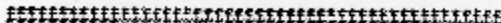
SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS will be discussed in preparatory documents which explain briefly what the Marxists have said — as far as possible using their own words. The rest of the answers are for the conference to decide, working with the help of people who know some of the history and some of the economics, but deciding itself what use it will make of them.

### SEMINARS

Most of the time at the conference will be spent in seminars (about 30 people in each) which will be free to work out their own programmes, with the help of resource people, and to divide into smaller groups when they wish.

### DOWN TO EARTH

To make sure that the discussion doesn't go off into an orbit of its own theories, each evening there will be a presentation of the raw material for making a judgement on Marxism today — unemployment and inflation in Britain, the effects of British imperialism in one of our ex-colonies, the history and prospects of revolutionary movements in Europe since 1917.



### HOW : WHEN : WHERE : HOW MUCH?

The conference will be at WORTLEY HALL, near Sheffield, and it will last for three days, beginning before tea on Monday January 3rd, 1972, and ending with lunch on Thursday January 6th. The cost will be £6.00, of which £1.00 is a non-refundable deposit.

THERE ARE ONLY A MAXIMUM OF 100 PLACES,  
SO BOOK YOURS NOW....

The photograph on the other side is the French workers on the roof of the Renault works during the strike of 1968, and is by Leon Herschtzill (copyright: Camera Press Ltd., London.)

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO 'TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM', SCM, ANNANDALE, NORTH END ROAD, GOLDERS GREEN, LONDON NW11 7GX.

I wish to register for the conference on "Teach Yourself Marxism", and I enclose a cheque/postal order for £1.00.

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