

# The Debs Foundation Newsletter

P.O. BOX 843, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808

Vol. 3 No. 1



Spring, 1988

## They Passed This Way



**Marguerite Debs Cooper**

Word has been received of the deaths recently of three persons who made significant contributions during their lives to the Debs Foundation. It would be appropriate to ask what the foundation and the Debs Home would be like without their having passed this way.

Marguerite Debs Cooper, only child of Theodore Debs, provided indispensable consultation and advice when the former home of Eugene and Kate Debs was being restored authentically, and she contributed to the museum many items of historic value which belonged to the Debs family. She gave unselfishly of her name, time, and knowledge to the project of preparing the home as a museum for public access, and she demanded in return adherence to rigorous standards of accuracy and authenticity in displays to interpret the Debs legacy. Marguerite was age 94 and living in a Terre Haute nursing home at the time of her death.

Oscar Edelman passed away November 2, 1987. He resided in Dayton, Ohio, and had for several years been in a nursing home there. Mr. Edelman was a staunch and enthusiastic supporter of the Debs Foundation and a benevolent benefactor. Until health prevented his travel, there was not a more regular and appreciative guest at the annual award banquets and at foundation business meetings. He donated the money for remodeling the Home's basement into a nice apartment for a live-in Curator, and he donated his extensive personal library of radical and Socialist books. Mr. Edelman had clearcut priorities concerning programs for social betterment: two of the organizations remembered in his will are the Debs Foundation, and Planned Parenthood of the Wabash Valley.

Raymond Majerus is another of the foundation's officers who passed away recently. Majerus had been Secretary-Treasurer of the United Auto Workers since 1980. As the union's second ranking officer, Majerus headed several UAW depart-



**Oscar Edelman**

ments, including Strike Insurance, Accounting, Auditing, Information Systems, Building Maintenance and Purchasing. Ray Majerus was a life member of the Debs Foundation and one of its Vice Presidents, but perhaps his greatest contribution to our organization was that in his capacity as Secretary-Treasurer of the UAW, he supported the organizational arrangements which make the UAW the administrator of the foundation's Endowment Fund. The expertise thus made available to the foundation at no expense, through the efforts of Ray Majerus and Don Moll, might otherwise have come at considerable expense.

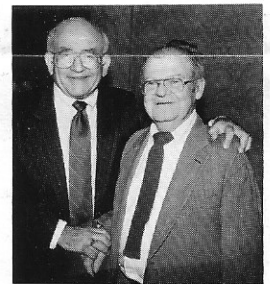
These were the kinds of persons



**Ray Majerus**

## The Silver Anniversary Remembered

1987 was a good year for the foundation, an appropriate one for a 25th Anniversary. We gave it an extra



**Asner & Wolfe**

push, and it seemed to pay off. The founders of this organization would have been pleased and gratified at what was done, by and large. Cesar Chavez gave the Shubert Seabee lecture in April. His message was as always an urgent one: support the United Farm Workers in their fight to protect both agricultural workers and the consuming public from the excessive use of pesticides in the growing and storage of table grapes.

The highlight of the foundation's year no doubt is the annual award banquet, and 1987 was certainly no exception. Naturally, only a few charter members were present a quarter century after the founding of the organization. A number are deceased, others live far away. Those charter members present were recognized publicly, in acknowledgment of our indebtedness to those who put up their money and devoted their efforts to get the foundation go-

(continued on page 5)

who got involved in ways which contributed positively to the foundation's activities and programs the past quarter-century. No posturing, no speech making. Each quietly and unassumingly did what he or she could, and for this we should all be deeply grateful.

## Fighting Time and the Elements: Foundation Dollars At Work

No doubt about it, the house which was the home of Eugene and Kate Debs is the foundation's crown jewel! This house has been developed into a museum which is a fitting memorial to the life and work of Eugene Debs, and to the American labor movement and to American Socialism. Built in 1890, the basically sound physical condition of the house is a credit to the quality construction which went into the building, and a credit also to the care and attention of its successive owners which for 26 years has been the Debs Foundation.



Debs Home: Missing Vinyl

This winter the house has required a lot of attention and a great deal of expense. Many items were small, handy-man chores which were performed by the "local executive officers" in order to save money on labor, truck time and service calls. There were faucets to replace, light fixtures to re-attach, locks to replace, iron fence to repair, and so on. Other jobs required skill levels, tools and labor hours which had to be paid for. The furnace had to be replaced, which was not all on the minus side of the ledger, because we now are seeing a definite reduction in monthly gas bills. The storm windows all had to be replaced--32 of them. They were very old, predating the Debs Foundation era, cheap by today's standards, and some literally were falling out. In some cases the wood in the lower part of the frame had experienced moisture damage and had to be replaced.

Also on the expense list was the loss due to heavy winds of several sections of vinyl siding, from as far above the ground as possible, of course. There also was the section of guttering which had leaked more and more, threatening to send water down the wall and into the basement apartment. The approximate costs of these large items were \$2,000 for the furnace, and \$3,000 for the storm windows, the siding and the guttering repairs.

An earlier **Newsletter** carried an article on our wish list and our more immediate shopping list. Items continually pop up on the shopping list which were not budgeted for, just as happened this winter. But such emergency situations require immediate action. They must be taken care of as expeditiously and as inexpen-

## DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER Vol. 3 No. 1

Spring, 1988

Published By  
The Eugene V. Debs Foundation  
Box 843  
Terre Haute, IN 47808

### Foundation Officers:

Jack Sheinkman, *President*

Noel Beasley, *Executive Vice President*

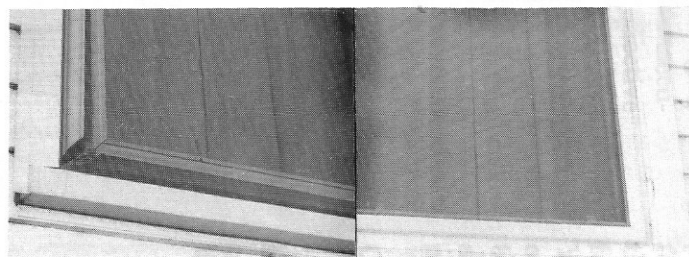
Charles King, *Secretary*

Woodrow Creason, *Treasurer*

The *Debs Foundation Newsletter* will be published twice yearly for distribution to members and friends of the Foundation. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a non-profit, private organization which maintains the home of Eugene and Kate Debs as a museum and shrine to labor, and carries on educational and informational programs which aim to honor and promote the goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice, and peace. For those wishing to become members, an application form is provided elsewhere in this issue

sively as possible.

What about that wish list? It still has all the important items, including a new hedge for the front and sides of the property, and most importantly, an endowment fund large enough to generate sufficient annual income to pay the base salary of a professional, fulltime Museum Director-Curator. The Debs Home deserves and really needs that fulltime staff person. Unfortunately, at the rate we presently are building up the endowment fund, this top priority item cannot be shifted from the wish list to the shopping list for many years to come.



Before

After

## Spring Business Meeting

April 23 is the date of the foundation's annual spring business meeting. As usual, this on a Saturday, at 1:00 p.m., held at the Debs Home. All officers and foundation members are encouraged to attend.

## A Savings To Pass On

The Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company has donated to the Debs Foundation a quantity of Bernard Brommel's book, **Eugene V. Debs: Spokesman for Labor and Socialism**. We are happy to pass on to our members and friends the benefits of this gift, so we are making this book available at **one-half price**: (\$3.00 pb and \$6.00 hb). Mailed orders should include \$1.00 additional for handling and postage. The book is available at these prices for a limited time only, as supplies last.



## Debs in 1888: Politics and Policies

J. Robert Constantine

From time to time Debs recalled that he had "once been a Democrat" and that he had been elected as a Democrat as Terre Haute City Clerk and as a member of the Indiana General Assembly. Of the latter experience, he usually added that he was "more ashamed of having served as a Democrat in the Indiana legislature than of having served two terms in jail." This assessment was made, of course, long after Debs had become the nation's leading Socialist Party presidential candidate, and one assumes that, in 1888, the young, age 33, Debs was "still a Democrat" (perhaps, very still) since he supported Bryan as late as the 1986 election.

Debs announced no choice in the Cleveland-Harrison presidential campaign in 1888 and noted in **Locomotive Fireman's Magazine** (May, 1888) that the **Magazine** "is not engaged in championing any one for President of the United States. It has no candidate but, this it may say, because it is true, that if the gods should so order things as to place in the Presidential office, Chauncey M. Depew, now President of the Vanderbilt system of railroads, they will demonstrate their qualifications to manage human affairs in a way calculated to secure immense approval." Chauncey Depew (!) was one of the leading Republican orators of the age, a leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1888, and, after withdrawing his own candidacy, the man who nominated Benjamin Harrison at the Republican convention that year. From 1889 until 1911 Depew served as United States Senator from New York, a pillar of conservatism who was able to find no conflict of interest between his Senate role and continuing to serve as chairman of the board of the New York Central railroad. One wonders about this: was Debs serious in suggesting Depew or was he being facetious or was this simply evidence of Debs' continuing "filiopietism" toward successful businessmen?

Debs' neutral stand in the **Magazine** on the 1888 presidential election did not prevent him from continuing his strong advocacy of labor activism in politics as a general policy.

In an editorial, "For Political Action," which appeared in the September, 1888 issue of the **Magazine**, Debs urged his readers to register, to vote, and "question closely" candidates' positions on conspiracy laws, "the Pinkerton thugs," and other labor-related issues, and if the candidates were not "explicit" in their answers, "let them find support outside the ranks of labor." "Such politics," Debs added, "this **Magazine** advocates with all the ability it can command."

Outside the realm of politics in 1888, Debs' transition to a stance of greater labor militancy continued and was readily apparent in his editorials. In an editorial, "Fatal Fallacies" (**Magazine**, December, 1888), he sharply attacked the commodity theory of labor, which encouraged employers to treat labor as they would any other "commodity" cost, and looked forward to a time when "we shall hear no more about the 'market' where labor 'sells,' where it is bought and sold as a commodity." When that day arrives, Debs predicted, "labor, the fashioning, building, preserving and enriching force of the world,...will have its equitable share of the wealth it creates, and hovels will give place to beautiful homes, men will cease to be overworked and underpaid, society will be secure and the nation prosperous." Earlier in the year (June, 1888) Debs had declared that "the wealth of nations is created by labor; without labor there is no wealth."

It was noted earlier in these pieces that Debs denounced strikes as a legitimate weapon of labor, arguing

that strikes hurt labor more than management and that they compounded the already strong anti-labor sentiment of the American public. In 1888, however, with the brutal and disastrous Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad strike fresh in mind, Debs (December, 1888) compared strikes with "righteous wars." If workers submitted to "the degradation and enslavement" of employers, they would properly be accused of "cowardice, pusillanimity, and poltroonery" if they refused to strike. "The men who denounce strikes," Debs added, were like men who "in times of pestilence denounce a sanitary committee."

The suggestion that Chauncey Depew would make a great president in 1888 lends some substance to the description (by David Shannon) of Debs as the "conservative editor" of the **Firemen's Magazine**, but it is clear, also, that his mind was changing in regard to the capitalist system in general and labor tactics in particular. Socialism was several years down the road.

## Don't Pitch your newsletter Pass it on!

### Membership Dues: The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

NAME _____			
STREET _____			
CITY _____	STATE _____	ZIP _____	
_____ Student Member	\$ 5.00	_____ Sustaining Member	\$100.00
_____ Regular Member	\$10.00	_____ Life Members	\$250.00
_____ Supporting Member	\$25.00	_____ Other _____	Amount _____

Enclose remittance. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.

The Debs Foundation  
P.O. Box 843  
Terre Haute, IN 47808

Your dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Debs Home and offers several educational and cultural programs. We are a voluntary organization with no paid staff.

## From the Mailbox: Member Comments

A short newsletter, published twice annually, cannot carry a "letters to the editor" section, but two communications which have been received are being printed here for your interest. The usual **caveat** is appropriate: "The views expressed are those of the writer and..."

## Lucille Bush Remembered:

Spring will be coming to Terre Haute soon. The sun will begin to warm the Virgil Morris memorial gardens a little earlier every morning. Crocuses and daffodils will push their tiny, dainty, beautiful heads through the ground. In the backyard of the Eugene V. Debs home, the robins and cardinals' songs will fill the air. Gene Debs would be delighted with the natural peace spring brings to his garden and to his beloved city.

In my mind's eye, I can still see my friend, Lucille Bush, emerging from the backdoor of the Debs home to greet the day, garden tools in hand, joy in her heart. She took great pride in her contribution of time and expertise, as well as flowers, some of which came from their home on Oakland. How many of would be willing to leave our homes to live partly underground and dedicate our lives to a Socialist, long dead, obscure and hardly noticed in history books?

Lucille was a special woman. Like Theodore Debs, her work went almost unnoticed. Yet, the work she did day in and day out was vital to the Foundation; showing unexpected visitors through the home when Ned was otherwise occupied, answering constant phone calls, being hostess to those Ned invited to their private quarters, answering the doorbell at all hours, continual attention to the Debs Award Dinner - current or future - in addition to the daily requirements to maintain their own lives.

In the early days, a few of Gene's friends were still alive and they would come from across the nation to honor their comrade. Ned and Lucille personally made reservations and/or arrangements for motels and transportation.

There were services at Deb's grave in the afternoon for which transportation had to be arranged. Lucille's contribution was, as you can see, greater than met the eye of most people.

Being at Ned's side as he and the other founders struggled to establish the home of the great Hoosier Labor Leader and Socialist as an historic site may be her greatest single contribution to our Foundation. The uninvolved cannot imagine the

effect of late-night threatening phone calls, the insults of the Terre Haute press or ridicule by “prestigious gentlemen” of the Chamber of Commerce which took place before Stewart L. Udall dedicated the home as a National Historic site, on Sept. 23, 1967.

Sept. 28, 1987.

Lucille Bush, good friend, brave and uncompaining lady, one of the first women in the struggle to honor Eugene and Theodore Debs, a caring wife and loving mother and grandmother died August 13, 1987. Some of the joy of visiting Terre Haute is gone forever for me. I consider myself fortunate and blessed to have been counted among those who knew and love Lucille.

Sincerely and Fraternally,  
Kathleen and Pete Culver  
Western Springs, IL.

## On Debs' Priorities:

Dear Charles,

Thanks very much for continuing to send me the Debs Foundation Newsletter.

I found it passing strange that your articles on Ed Asner, Jack Sheinkman and Bill Winpisinger neglected to mention that all are democratic socialists--members of Democratic Socialists of America. In fact,

**Financial Report**  
**The Eugene V. Debs Foundation**  
**1987**

## Disbursements

Public Service Indiana	\$1916.15	David Erickson (Plaque)	100.00
General Telephone	788.38	Pat Compton (Cleaning)	49.50
Terre Haute Gas	1113.09	Indian Acres (Dinner)	3582.00
Terre Haute Water	187.12	Macmillan (books)	149.43
U.S. Sprint	474.64	Conservatory of Music (Piano Rental)	75.00
U.S. Post Office	609.88	Holiday Inn (Asner suite)	140.67
City Press	3194.60	City Plumbing	88.50
Terre Haute Sewage	102.42	Eugene V. Debs Endowment Fund	2440.00
Merchants Nat'l Bank (Safe		Eugene V. Debs Endowment Fund	4600.00
Deposit Box)	14.00	Mike Lanke (Photos of Debs dinner)	131.00
Kasameyer Glass	184.50	Chicago Joint Board (Letterheads)	240.00
Indiana Department of Revenue	28.81		
Cesar Chavez	500.00		\$27365.98
I.S.U. Television Service Dept.	56.00		
I.S.U. Audio Visual Center	34.50		
Tim King	36.00		
Hanna Scholarships	1200.00		
Harper & Row (Books)	155.19		
Bunch Gardenland (tree & lawn			
supplies)	166.43		
I.S.U. Printing Division	130.50		
Tom McConnell (Furnace & Repair)	2094.32		
Bunch Gardenland (flowers)	16.00		
American Fire & Safety (inspection)	13.75		
Markle Insurance Agency (House)	1051.00		
City Wide Maintenance Service			
(cleaning)	86.40		
Max All (roof repair)	700.00		
Gorham Textron (Plaque)	35.00		
Smiddy's Carpet	512.47		
Heinl's Flower	90.00		
Illiana Pest Control	70.00		
Indianapolis Star-News	102.98		
Linda A. Rabbins (Spann Award)	750.00		
Deli on the Green	50.25		
Terre Haute Trophy Center	5.50		

Winpisinger is a national Vice-chair, Asner a spokesperson for the organization and Sheinkman will headline our upcoming convention.

Your masthead mentions promoting the "goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice and peace". Fine. I can't help believing, however, that Debs would have put socialism first. You wouldn't know that from reading the newsletter-not even in Bob Constantine's piece.

Hell, I know that one has to soft-pedal socialism (even the democratic variety) now and again. Still, it seems odd at best not to find word one in the newsletter. What do you think?

All the best,

In solidarity,  
Patrick Lacefield  
Organizational Director  
Democratic Socialists  
of America



## How A Debs Award Recipient Is Selected

Some newer foundation members may not know how honorees are selected each year for the Eugene V. Debs Award. The present selection procedures were adopted four years ago, prompted by several ever present concerns. One problem is the time factor. It is absolutely essential that a recipient be decided on well in advance of the banquet date. One reason for this is that the kinds of persons whom we wish to recognize have extremely busy schedules, and may be virtually booked full more than a year in advance. Also mandating an early decision is the fact that adequate banquet facilities normally must be booked months in advance. So we need a year's lead time in order to make contacts and work out arrangements. Another limiting factor is that we wish to hold the banquet on a Saturday evening between mid-October and mid-November (around Debs' November 5 birthday), which gives us no more than five or possibly six dates to work with. Working within these constraints, the possibility exists that a date cannot be worked out with the preferred honoree in a given year. Or it has happened that a given designate has declined the honor, or has been in no physical condition to travel to Terre Haute to receive the award as is required. These possibilities make it also necessary to have a ranking of acceptable nominees in case the number one choice is not available. Obviously, all these eventualities enhance chances for a prolonged selection procedure.

It was also considered necessary that the selection procedure provide opportunity for some in-depth scrutiny and studied deliberation on the merits of a given nomination for a given year, and this in an atmosphere of confidentiality. It was recognized that these conditions cannot be met if nominations simply are made from the floor and voted on at a regular business meeting.

The present procedures seem to be working well. The first step is for a nomination to be made in writing, addressed to the foundation secretary, and telling in some detail why it is felt this individual is worthy of the award. Nominations must be received by the end of August, any given year. The executive officers then study, deliberate and make a recommended ranking of all nominations. This ranking is then presented for approval to the membership at the fall business meeting. The next step is to communicate immediately with our first choice for the award. Hopefully, and it has proven to be the case so far, the result will be the fairly early arrival at complete arrangements, including award recipient, keynote speaker, and reservation of banquet facilities on an acceptable date.

You may be wondering how it went this year and who will receive the award. It is going well and some details can be given out now. The award banquet will be held November 12, and the honored guest will be Joyce Miller, one of the outstanding trade union leaders in America today. She is Vice President of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, President Elect of the Industrial Relations Research Association, National President, Coalition of Labor Union Women, and much more. Joyce Miller has been a definite progressive force in her union, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, and in the trade union movement in general and in political

life. We are hoping to make this year's banquet one which matches last year's in enthusiasm and impressiveness.

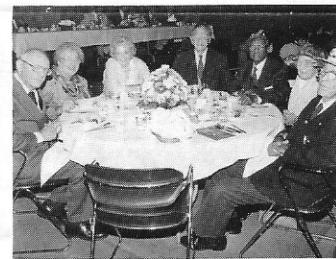
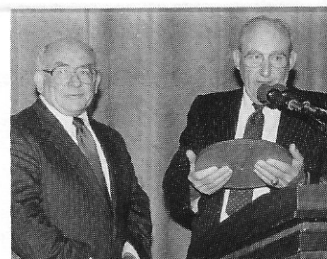
(Silver Anniversary continued from page 1)

ing. Attendance at the banquet was good--350 paying guests, and more importantly, there was a friendly atmosphere and sense of solidarity, expressed not just in the enthusiastic singing of labor songs. The keynote address by Bill Winpisinger touched with the appropriate urgency those kinds of issues and social concerns for which Eugene Debs struggled: world peace, the need for a sane nuclear policy, for a humane, enlightened Central American policy, and the cause of social justice through progressive trade union action. Ed Asner was equally effective in articulating these themes in his rousing acceptance speech. Mr. Asner was genuinely grateful and deeply moved at being the honored guest for the evening. He demonstrated in many ways that he was among his kind of people. Then, after the banquet, he signed autographs for 45 minutes, giving each one a personal touch as though the honor were his to be asked for an autograph.

Jim Wolfe was gracious and entertaining as well in his acceptance of the Theodore Debs Distinguished Service Award. This clearly was a case of credit appropriately given, graciously received.

Among the "little" behind the scene things which added tremendously to the overall impact of the day were the large number of visitors to the Debs Home. 70 guests went through the day of the banquet alone, including such noteables as Asner, Winpisinger, Zeidler, and Willa Kennoyer, the Socialist Party presidential candidate. A few people exerted considerable extra effort and attention to details which helped to keep things under control at the Home and in the banquet hall. There were a number of college student volunteers. Deserving of extra credit for their superior efforts were Gena and Tracie, the tour guides and hosts at the Debs Home.

Truly, the 1987 banquet was the highlight event of a successful Silver Anniversary year of celebration. Too bad if you missed any of it! On the other hand, with your help, who is to say that 1988 will not be just as great!



Above: The Presentation  
Below: Autograph Time

Honored Guests  
Dinner is Served

# Important Policy Issues

Reagan Urged to Restore Funding  
(excerpted from "Popline",  
Sept., 1987)

Werner Fornos, President of the Population Institute in Washington has called upon President Reagan "to restore without delay" the U.S. Government's fiscal support of the two leading agencies providing family planning services to Third World Countries. These providers are the U N Fund for Population Activities, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. More than \$90 million in U.S. contributions have been stopped.

Fornos said he has been "surprised and increasingly alarmed" by the Administration's failure in recent years to fund UNFPA or IPPF, recalling that when Reagan was Governor of California he characterized overpopulation as "the greatest threat to global security." In a letter to the President, Fornos noted that Reagan at that time said "unless the issue of overpopulation is fully addressed, all other work on world problems would be in vain." At the very time when

greater efforts are needed to control population growth," Fornos wrote, "your Administration has reversed course, broken a 20-year bipartisan commitment of our government, and gravely jeopardized voluntary world population assistance measures." "The facts are unmistakable," Fornos asserted. "Family planning saves public money, reduces abortion in the Third World, reduces the number of maternal deaths and stabilizes foreign governments' ability to serve their people--thus promoting world peace and international security."

Mr. Fornos spoke last fall in Terre Haute under joint auspices of the United Ministries Center and the Debs Foundation.

Star Wars Reality: The Emperor Has No Clothes  
(taken from "The Defense Monitor",  
Vol. XVII, Number 1, 1988)

The U.S. has spent \$14 Billion since 1984 trying to invent and develop new

weapons that could destroy Soviet nuclear-armed ballistic missiles in flight. No one knows precisely how much a system to shoot down ballistic missiles would cost, but according to experts it could exceed \$1,000,000,000,000. One system being explored could cost over \$250 Billion just to lift into space. Any conceivable "Star Wars" system to intercept ballistic missiles would be vulnerable to simple and relatively cheap countermeasures and could not protect people and cities from nuclear attack. The testing and deployment of Star Wars weapons in space is prohibited by the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. As authorized by the ABM Treaty the Soviet Union operates a small ground-based system to intercept ballistic missiles around Moscow. The U.S. closed down a similar system in 1976 on grounds that its limited capabilities did not justify its costs. The Billions of dollars appropriated by Congress for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) have created a vested interest among defense contractors, universities, and other groups in favor of building a system to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles.

## REMINDER: Are Your 1988 Dues Paid?

## WE NEED YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

**EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION**

P.O. BOX 843

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808

**Address Correction Requested**

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