Negative Brief: Cattle Grazing

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Negative Brief: Cattle Grazing 3

NEGATIVE PHILOSOPHY / OPENING QUOTES 3

They aren’t on welfare: We should all be thanking ranchers for protecting the Western landsape 3

MINOR REPAIRS 3

Small increase in the grazing fee and dedicate it to funding studies on how to better manage the range lands 3

INHERENCY 3

Status Quo ranchers have every incentive to take good care of the land on which they have grazing permits 3

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE 3

1. No subsidy 3

There’s no subsidy: Can’t compare public land to private land grazing fees because public land has extra costs involved 3

There’s no subsidy: The higher price for private grazing land includes extras not provided on public lands 4

No taxpayer subsidy: Ranchers pay less for grass on public land, but they also pay to maintain it. Total cost is the same or even more than private land 4

2. Grazing declining in Status Quo 4

Grazing on BLM land has declined 35% since 1971 4

Grazing on public land declined by 93% since 1900 (3 million today, 45 million then) and public lands are in great shape 4

3. Insignificant issue 5

Public grazing land contains only 0.41% of US livestock 5

4. No environmental damage from grazing 5

US wilderness, without grazing, is degrading just like Africa. Nothing to do with overgrazing 5

Animal grazing protects the environment 5

SOLVENCY 6

1. More Study Needed 6

Status Quo is improving, and more study is needed to find better policies 6

2. Not solving the real problem 6

Can’t solve the real problem. It’s not “over” grazing, it’s improper grazing 6

DISADVANTAGES 6

1. Lost jobs 6

Small and medium sized ranches could go out of business 6

Economic impact on rural communities 6

2. Worsens droughts 7

Link: AFF plan reduces cattle grazing 7

Link: Grazing makes the ground retain water better, helps resist drought conditions 7

Impact: Droughts lead to wildfires, millions of dollars in damage 7

3. Lost firefighting capacity 7

Link: AFF plan reduces cattle ranching on public lands 7

Impact: Cattle ranchers are the first responders to range fires – their efforts save millions of dollars 7

4. Lost natural beauty 8

Supporting public-lands cattle ranching is the best way to prevent range land from turning into commercial developments 8

5. Unjust taking of property 8

Link: AFF refuses automatic renewal of existing grazing permits 8

Link: Status Quo guarantees renewal without competition 8

Link: The 1934 Taylor Grazing Act guaranteed ranchers that their permits would not be taken away 8

Link: The Taylor Grazing Act granted existing ranchers a right to renew and keep their grazing permits. Government can’t come along now and transfer them or sell them 9

Impact: Loss of property rights = loss of liberty and prosperity 9

6. Environmental degradation 9

More cattle grazing would improve the American Southwest environment and prevent desertification. Negative ballot offers the best hope for the planet! 9

Works Cited: Cattle Grazing (NEG) 10

Negative Brief: Cattle Grazing

NEGATIVE PHILOSOPHY / OPENING QUOTES

They aren’t on welfare: We should all be thanking ranchers for protecting the Western landsape

Andy Rieber 2016 (journalist, public lands consultant, master’s degree in philosophy from Univ of St. Andrews; “Andy” is a female) “Opinion: A Defense of Grazing on Public Lands” 8 June 2016 HIGH COUNTRY NEWS <https://adventure-journal.com/2016/06/opinion-a-defense-of-grazing-on-public-lands/>

Grazing systems can and should be fine-tuned. But land, once developed, is lost forever. If American taxpayers value landscapes unbroken and unburned, they should tip their hats to the ranchers. These hard-working men and women aren’t on “welfare.” They are fundamental to the welfare of America’s wide-open West.

MINOR REPAIRS

Small increase in the grazing fee and dedicate it to funding studies on how to better manage the range lands

Jes Burns & Tony Schick 2016 (journalists) Oregon Public Broadcasting, 6 Jan 2016 “Controversial Federal Grazing Fees Not A Great Deal For Anyone” <http://www.opb.org/news/series/burns-oregon-standoff-bundy-militia-news-updates/federal-grazing-fees/>

The Bureau of Land Management recently developed a new standard for evaluating rangeland health that will increase consistency in data collection, which it hopes will help in managing those rangelands. But only a small percentage of acres in the West so far have been evaluated. Rangeland ecologists say if the BLM had more money, it could do better monitoring. Some argue raising grazing fees could be a way to pay for that.

INHERENCY

Status Quo ranchers have every incentive to take good care of the land on which they have grazing permits

Tony Schick and Jes Burns 2016 (journalists with Oregon Public Broadcasting) 29 Feb 2016 “Backlog Grows For Rangelands Awaiting Environmental Health Checkup” <http://earthfix.info/news/article/backlog-grows-for-rangelands/>

In Oregon and Washington, BLM field staff complete inspections each year for about 30 percent of the land they oversee. Formal enforcement action for noncompliance is even more rare. The agency says it makes informal visits to ranchers more frequently than its numbers indicate. The Ketschers follow their permit’s rules regardless, “because in the end, we’re the ones that are going to suffer,” she said. If they misuse the ground, the resulting lack of vegetation or water could cost them. “We do the very best we can to preserve every acre of ground,” she said.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. No subsidy

There’s no subsidy: Can’t compare public land to private land grazing fees because public land has extra costs involved

Jes Burns & Tony Schick 2016 (journalists) Oregon Public Broadcasting, 6 Jan 2016 “Controversial Federal Grazing Fees Not A Great Deal For Anyone” <http://www.opb.org/news/series/burns-oregon-standoff-bundy-militia-news-updates/federal-grazing-fees/>

“If you just look at the grazing fee itself, and you see the small amount on public land and then a 10-fold increase on private land grazing fees, it looks like — people call it a subsidy,” said John Tanaka, a rangeland economist at the University of Wyoming. “But when you consider all the costs involved in grazing, they’re roughly equal. Or in some cases, public land grazing can cost the rancher more.”

There’s no subsidy: The higher price for private grazing land includes extras not provided on public lands

Jes Burns & Tony Schick 2016 (journalists) Oregon Public Broadcasting, 6 Jan 2016 “Controversial Federal Grazing Fees Not A Great Deal For Anyone” <http://www.opb.org/news/series/burns-oregon-standoff-bundy-militia-news-updates/federal-grazing-fees/>

Joe Villagrana, a ranch manager from Lake County, in Southeast Oregon, says permits on public land carry their own costs. “What people don’t realize is, by holding the permit, you are responsible for maintaining the fences, maintaining water, for example like water troughs,” Villagrana said. “And that costs money.  So you add up time, labor, fuel, material and all that, it actually gets to be very expensive.  So yeah, that sounds pretty cheap, but with everything that’s put on us to keep that permit, it costs us a lot of money.” On private lands, a lot of this infrastructure is already included in that up-front price.

No taxpayer subsidy: Ranchers pay less for grass on public land, but they also pay to maintain it. Total cost is the same or even more than private land

Andy Rieber 2016 (journalist, public lands consultant, master’s degree in philosophy from Univ of St. Andrews; “Andy” is a female) “Opinion: A Defense of Grazing on Public Lands” 8 June 2016 HIGH COUNTRY NEWS <https://adventure-journal.com/2016/06/opinion-a-defense-of-grazing-on-public-lands/>

Does the American taxpayer dole out dollars so ranchers can graze public lands on the cheap? It is a fact that ranchers pay less for grass on public land. Currently, they pay $2.11 per AUM, compared to about $18.40 per AUM for private leases, where one “animal unit month” equals the forage necessary to graze a cow and calf or five sheep for one month. Yet the complaint that public-lands ranchers get a sweetheart deal ignores the hidden costs of grazing on public lands. Economic studies concur that when other expenses are factored in – maintaining fencing, water development and invasive weed treatment, for example – the cost of grazing on public land is the same or possibly greater than grazing on private land. Though federal grass itself may be cheaper, the expenses of running cattle on public lands make it anything but a bargain.

2. Grazing declining in Status Quo

Grazing on BLM land has declined 35% since 1971

US Dept of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management 2016. “Myths and Facts“ last updated 19 May 2016 <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/history_and_facts/myths_and_facts.html>

The removal of wild horses and burros from public rangelands is carried out to ensure rangeland health, in accordance with land-use plans that are developed in an open, public process.  These land-use plans are the means by which the BLM carries out its core mission, which is to manage the land for multiple uses while protecting the land’s resources. **Livestock grazing on BLM-managed land has declined by 35 percent since 1971**(when Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act) **--** from 12.8 million Animal Unit Months (AUMs or forage units) to 8.3 million AUMs in 2014.

Grazing on public land declined by 93% since 1900 (3 million today, 45 million then) and public lands are in great shape

Associated Press 2009. (journalist Martin Griffith) Oct 2009 “Wild Horse Plan Rekindles Cattle Grazing Debate” <http://www.all-creatures.org/articles/ar-wildhorse.html>

Dan Gralian, president of the Nevada Cattlemen's Association, said livestock overgrazing no longer is the problem it once was and cattle don't cause more damage to the range than horses. He said 2.5 million to 3 million head of livestock graze on public lands, down from 20 million cows and 25 million sheep in 1900. "My reaction is they (horse advocates) are totally wrong," Gralian said. "Our public lands today are in better shape than they've been in 100 years or so."

3. Insignificant issue

Public grazing land contains only 0.41% of US livestock

Ken Cole 2013 ([Western Watershed Project](http://www.westernwatersheds.org/)’s Idaho Director; serves as a member of the board of directors for [Buffalo Field Campaign](http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/)) 15 Aug 2013 “BLM Public Lands Grazing Accounts for Only 0.41% of Nation’s Livestock Receipts” <http://www.thewildlifenews.com/2013/08/15/blm-public-lands-grazing-accounts-for-only-0-41-of-nations-livestock-receipts/>

The recently released Department of Interior [Fiscal Year 2012 Economic Report](http://www.doi.gov/ppa/economic_analysis/economic-report.cfm) shows that Grazing on BLM Public Lands Accounts for only 0.41% of the nation’s [livestock receipts](http://www.ers.usda.gov/dataFiles/Farm_Income/US_Farm_Income_and_Wealth_Statistics_includes_the_US_Farm_Income_Forecast_2013/Inv_change.xls) and only 17,000 jobs.  In contrast, recreation accounts for 372,000 jobs and contributes $45 billion to the economy.

4. No environmental damage from grazing

US wilderness, without grazing, is degrading just like Africa. Nothing to do with overgrazing

Allan Savory 2012. ([Zimbabwean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe) ecologist, farmer, international consultant, and president and co-founder of The Savory Institute, studying desertification for 50 years; quoted by KayDee Gilkey) “Too Many Animal Numbers Causes Overgrazing is a Myth” <http://www.aginfo.net/index.cfm/event/report/id/Open-Range-23368>

“In actual fact, if you look at some of the wilderness areas in the United States they are deteriorating as badly as anything in Africa. And they have had no livestock on them or large animals for probably close to 100 years now. So it is over resting the land that is the big problem and overgrazing was discovered more than 60 years ago to have nothing to do with numbers of animals but everything to do with the movement of animals and the time of exposure and re-exposure of plants. So the world, government policies, our educational system and everything 60 years later is still operating on deeply held beliefs or myths but the science is solid that overgrazing is not due to animal numbers and nothing shows this better than the degradation of land under seasonal rainfall where there are no animals -- it is as bad as Africa.”

Animal grazing protects the environment

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN 2013. (journalist Colin Sullivan)“Can Livestock Grazing Stop Desertification?” 5 Mar 2013 (Savory is Allan Savory, [Zimbabwean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe) ecologist, farmer, international consultant, and president and co-founder of The Savory Institute, he’s been studying desertification for 50 years) <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/can-livestock-grazing-stop-desertification/>

That notion, Savory said, was dead wrong. He cited an experiment he conducted in the 1950s in the country then known as Rhodesia, when he helped exterminate more than 40,000 grazing elephants to protect land thought to be stressed and dying from their annual trampling rituals. He called that project "the saddest and greatest blunder" of his life. "We were once just as certain that the world was flat," Savory said on the Ted Talks appearance. "We were wrong then, and we're wrong again." Savory said the annual rite of movement through a region by large herds actually protects the environment. A wildebeest migration in central Africa, for instance, eats up grasses as it moves along and leaves behind a protective layer of trampled dung, dust and soil.

SOLVENCY

1. More Study Needed

Status Quo is improving, and more study is needed to find better policies

JES BURNS AND TONY SCHICK 2016 (journalists with Oregon Public Broadcasting)  *January 7, 2016 “*Before Oregon’s armed takeover, a long-brewing dispute over rangeland health**“** <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/what-is-environmental-health-and-why-did-it-trigger-oregons-armed-takeover/>

Overgrazed and eroded rangelands prompted the creation of the bureaucracy many ranchers now loathe. Federal laws and policies have since tightened over the years to restore the health of public land long used for livestock grazing in the West. As a result, much of the land and water quality in the range has improved. But consistent data on the health of those rangelands is hard to find. Calls for more and better monitoring come from all sides. Those who study the economics, ecology and politics of the West suggest a better understanding of current rangeland health would be a step toward restoring trust between federal agencies and the ranchers who lease public land.

2. Not solving the real problem

Can’t solve the real problem. It’s not “over” grazing, it’s improper grazing

Nicolette Hahn Niman 2014 (an environmental attorney-turned California rancher) “In defense of the cattle industry”29 Oct 2014 <https://www.hcn.org/articles/cattle-industry-beef-agriculture>

 I do not deny that cattle can have an impact on the land that is negative. I dispute the characterization of this damage as “overgrazing.” What people are seeing in the American West is not over-grazing; it’s improper grazing. It mostly has to do with allowing the cattle to be too dispersed and not tightly managing them, or moving them frequently enough. In 1800, there were 70 million bison on the land. Our whole global ecosystem evolved with these enormous herds.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Lost jobs

Small and medium sized ranches could go out of business

LOS ANGELES TIMES 2016 (journalist Alexandra Zavis) 6 Jan 2016 “Oregon standoff: Who's really getting hurt by federal grazing laws?” <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-oregon-standoff-federal-grazing-laws-20160106-story.html>

Any increase in federal grazing fees can be expected to face stiff opposition from those who fear it would put many small and medium-sized ranches out of business. They argue that federal fees are not comparable to those charged for leasing private rangelands because public lands are often less productive, must be shared with other users and may lack water tanks, fencing and other amenities.

Economic impact on rural communities

Journalist Eric Pianin quoting Bureau of Land Management spokesman Tom Gorey in 2014 8 May 2014 “Why Grazing Fees Are the Third Rail of Western Politics” <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2014/05/08/Why-Grazing-Fees-Are-Third-Rail-Western-Politics> (brackets in original)

Gorey of the BLM dismisses environmentalists’ complaints about the puny size of the grazing fees as a “subterfuge.” “Many of these groups plainly don’t want cattle ranching,” Gorey said. “They don’t view grazing as a legitimate use of the public lands. Well, Congress begs to differ. . . . There is kind of an indifference [on the part of environmentalists] to the economic impact to rural communities.”

2. Worsens droughts

Link: AFF plan reduces cattle grazing

Link: Grazing makes the ground retain water better, helps resist drought conditions

Nicolette Hahn Niman 2014 (an environmental attorney-turned California rancher) “In defense of the cattle industry”29 Oct 2014 <https://www.hcn.org/articles/cattle-industry-beef-agriculture> (ellipses in original)

The total number of inches of rain you get annually is a far less important figure than how much is held in the ground. That’s what actually needs to be the focus. Well-managed cattle raising that keeps a dense vegetative cover on the ground might be the optimal way…to create ground that holds onto water. It just kind of flips this whole issue on its head. Cattle grazing, when it’s done right, has an incredibly beneficial effect as far as how water works in our ecosystem. It could actually be a really good counter-drought strategy. And I don’t think that anyone really knows how exactly to do that. It’s an idea that people are beginning to realize…you do this correctly, you’re actually going to be using water a great deal more effectively and therefore, maybe we should actually be doing this in drought-stricken areas.

Impact: Droughts lead to wildfires, millions of dollars in damage

Gigi Owen 2008 (Assistant Staff Scientist, Climate Assessment for the Southwest, University of Arizona ) “Drought and the Environment” 14 Sept 2008 <http://www.southwestclimatechange.org/impacts/land/drought>

Drought impacts the frequency and the severity of [forest fires](http://www.southwestclimatechange.org/impacts/land/fire) by setting up ideal fire conditions. Warmer average temperatures during spring and summer also correlate to higher frequency wildfires and intensify the effects of drought.  Large-scale forest die-offs create prime conditions for high intensity wildfires. The recent drought and related beetle outbreaks mostly affected tall, overstory trees, but as these trees died-off, other changes to the ecosystem occurred. Shorter trees, shrubs, grasses, and other vegetation beneath the overstory dried out too. Historical tree-ring records show that the largest fires before the 1900s all correspond to years of severe drought, preceded by wet years.  This cycle of wet and dry years appears to promote wildfires. Wet years encourage plant growth, while dry years cause plant mortality, thereby creating the fine fuels wildfires need to burn. During 2002, drought conditions facilitated the burning of over 500,000 acres in northern Arizona, a wildfire known as the Rodeo-Chediski fire. These fires are extremely costly—the combined cost of wildfires that occurred between 2002 and 2004 was estimated at $196.8 million.

3. Lost firefighting capacity

Link: AFF plan reduces cattle ranching on public lands

Impact: Cattle ranchers are the first responders to range fires – their efforts save millions of dollars

Andy Rieber 2016 (journalist, public lands consultant, master’s degree in philosophy from Univ of St. Andrews; “Andy” is a female) “Opinion: A Defense of Grazing on Public Lands” 8 June 2016 HIGH COUNTRY NEWS <https://adventure-journal.com/2016/06/opinion-a-defense-of-grazing-on-public-lands/>

Yet the federal grazing program in 2014 operated at a $125 million shortfall. If taxpayers are annually sinking that kind of cash into it, what are they getting for their dollars? The answer is far more than they realize. Consider, for example, that ranchers provide invaluable services like volunteer firefighting on public lands. Fire is the single most destructive force on America’s public rangelands: In 2015, range fires ravaged over 700,000 acres in the West and cost the Bureau of Land Management $131 million for fire suppression and land restoration. The total price tag for Idaho’s 280,000 acre Soda Fire alone will top $73.5 million over five years. Yet few people are aware that across the Great Basin, rancher-run Rangeland Fire Protection Associations mobilize as first responders to range fires, often extinguishing blazes hours before federal fire crews can arrive on site. In Idaho alone, 146 rangeland protection firefighters fought 56 fires last year. Just by preventing one major fire, these ranchers provide taxpayers untold savings.

4. Lost natural beauty

Supporting public-lands cattle ranching is the best way to prevent range land from turning into commercial developments

Andy Rieber 2016 (journalist, public lands consultant, master’s degree in philosophy from Univ of St. Andrews; “Andy” is a female) “Opinion: A Defense of Grazing on Public Lands” 8 June 2016 HIGH COUNTRY NEWS <https://adventure-journal.com/2016/06/opinion-a-defense-of-grazing-on-public-lands/>

If the study has a moral, it’s this: To preserve the natural splendors of the West, we must find ways to keep undeveloped private land from residential, commercial and industrial development. How? One way is to support public-lands ranching. The 250 million acres of federal grazing lands are integrally tied to the economic livelihood of individual ranches, which apart from their federal grazing allotments comprise 100 million acres of mostly natural, undeveloped private lands. If these ranches are able to stay in business, that’s 100 million acres of open space, habitat and ecosystems spared from the developer’s bulldozers. Put a price tag on that, if you can.

5. Unjust taking of property

Link: AFF refuses automatic renewal of existing grazing permits

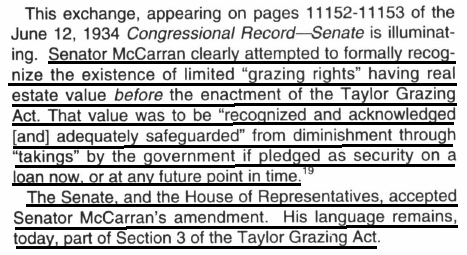
Link: Status Quo guarantees renewal without competition

Shawn Regan 2016 (Director of Publications and a Research Fellow at Property & Environment Research Center; M.S. in Applied Economics from Montana State Univ and degrees in economics and environmental science from Berry College) “MANAGING CONFLICTS OVER US FEDERAL RANGELANDS” 8 Jan 2016 <http://www.perc.org/articles/managing-conflicts-over-rangelands_fraser_ranching-realities>

Grazing permits cannot be held by or transferred to individuals that do not hold qualifying base properties. When these base ranches are sold, the permits are transferred along to the new property owners (Nelson, 1997: 663). Permits are issued for a period of up to ten years, and permit holders have priority over others to renew the permit for additional ten-year periods without competition.

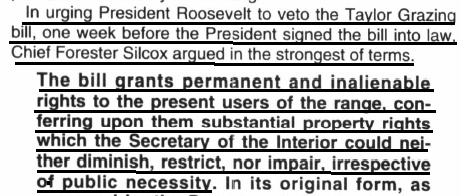
Link: The 1934 Taylor Grazing Act guaranteed ranchers that their permits would not be taken away

Prof. Frederick W. Obermiller 1996 (professor of Agricultural & Resource Economics, Oregon State Univ.) Did congress intend to recognize grazing rights? An alternative perspective on the Taylor Grazing Act, RANGELANDS Oct 1996 <https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/rangelands/article/view/11306/10579>



Link: The Taylor Grazing Act granted existing ranchers a right to renew and keep their grazing permits. Government can’t come along now and transfer them or sell them

Prof. Frederick W. Obermiller 1996 (professor of Agricultural & Resource Economics, Oregon State Univ.) Did congress intend to recognize grazing rights? An alternative perspective on the Taylor Grazing Act, RANGELANDS Oct 1996 <https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/rangelands/article/view/11306/10579>



Impact: Loss of property rights = loss of liberty and prosperity

Nicole Gelinas 2005 (Searle Freedom Trust Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a contributing editor of *City Journal*, and a columnist at the *New York Post*) “They’re Taking Away Your Property forWhat?” <http://www.city-journal.org/html/they%E2%80%99re-taking-away-your-property-what-12893.html>

Americans are serious about the sanctity of private property because they understand that it is not only inseparable from liberty but also the foundation of prosperity. If Soviet-style central planning actually worked, America’s vast urban renewal projects that used eminent domain to bulldoze slums would have produced flourishing communities rather than high-rise housing projects awash in social pathology.

6. Environmental degradation

More cattle grazing would improve the American Southwest environment and prevent desertification. Negative ballot offers the best hope for the planet!

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN 2013. (journalist Colin Sullivan)“Can Livestock Grazing Stop Desertification?” 5 Mar 2013 (Savory is Allan Savory, [Zimbabwean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe) ecologist, farmer, international consultant, and president and co-founder of The Savory Institute, he’s been studying desertification for 50 years) <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/can-livestock-grazing-stop-desertification/>

So Savory decided to mimic the great herds of old, which have died out in many regions or persist in far reduced numbers, with managed "strategic" herds of grazing vegetarians. The sheep and cattle picked for the project, if managed properly, would theoretically bring nature back to its normal cycle in semiarid regions where rains for part of the year are followed by long dry spells. Savory said his experiments have worked, and he showed a number of before-and-after pictures as evidence during his talk. He thinks the same approach can be taken in the two-thirds of the planet that is rapidly desertifying, including parts of the American Southwest. Fire has long been used as a means to kill woody vegetation in semiarid regions and restore soils, but Savory said that solution has never quite panned out because fire can strip land of its base layers, not to mention release carbon. So he turned to cattle and sheep. "There was only one option left to climatologists and scientists, and that is to do the unthinkable: Use livestock bunched and moving as a proxy for former moving herds and predators," he said. Savory's experiments with livestock have reversed degraded dry lands in Zimbabwe, Mexico, the Horn of Africa and Argentina, he said. He added that putting the same idea into motion in just half the world's troubled grasslands would result in bringing the planet back to preindustrial levels of greenhouse gas emissions. "I can think of nothing that offers more hope for your planet," he said.

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