
The New Dues System

by I. Amter

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The Central Committee, faced with many problems, some of the not least important of which are financial problems, has decided on a change in the dues system of the Party.

According to this system the members of the Party will not pay a flat rate — which was not supposed to be the case in the past, at least theoretically, but in practice was true, but will pay according to income. Certainly on this basis there could be nothing more equitable. “According to your income you will be asked to support the Party financially.”

The CC has worked out the plan that comrades earning \$15 a week or less and housewives shall pay 10 cents weekly as dues. From \$15 to \$25, 25 cents weekly; \$25 to \$30, 50 cents; \$31 to \$40, 75 cents weekly; \$41 to \$50, \$1 weekly; above \$50, \$1 plus special tax.

On the basis of a proportionate dues system, nothing could be more fair. According to his or her income, each member shall enable the Party to carry on its work. (This is now the financial aspect of the question.)

Now to take up a few special features of the decision. First of all the weekly basis of the payments. It is well known that when a comrade falls into arrears for a few months, he finds it difficult to meet his obligations. This has so often been the case that we find comrades willing to drop out of the Party because of their inability to meet their arrears. If payments are made on a weekly basis — with all provisions being made for the stamps, etc. — the members of the Party will be able to meet their obligations without any trouble.

As the amount of dues — beginning with the lowest income category. No one will declare that those having an income of only \$15 a week — and all housewives — should contribute less than 10 cents weekly. On the basis of monthly dues, 45 cents seems more, for the member has to pay it in one sum, and frequently has not the money. On the basis of weekly payments, he will be able to meet it without

difficulty. (Many a comrade with an income of this size does not hesitate to buy cigarettes, go to movies, etc., so that this difficulty is met.) As to housewives, today they pay 25 cents monthly, and yet these same housewives do not hesitate also to go to the movies, to buy knickknacks — and although henceforth their dues though paid weekly will amount to more per month, they will be able to pay them in such small sums that they will not be noticed.

As to the rising categories, it is again true that the amount paid per month will be more, but owing to the fact that the payments are weekly, they will not be noticed so much.

Is the progressive dues system correct? No comrade will question it. Is the rate of rise in the dues too great? Considered monetarily some comrades will declare emphatically in the affirmative. And yet not only in New York but in other districts, the comrades forget that even those who paid nominally 50 cents dues actually paid more in the form of a tax for the upkeep of a hall, for renting a room, etc. This is the practice throughout the Party — an unavoidable practice owing to the lack of meeting places. Thus the new system does not tax the membership to the extent that one supposes.

It will be noticed that all comrades earning more than \$51 will pay not only \$1 a week in dues, but will be subject to special taxes. No comrade earning that sum of money has the right to object, for the basis of financial support must be “each according to his means.”

Does the new dues system represent too great a tax upon the membership? If one regards some of the European parties, one will find that the system of 2% or 3% of one’s earnings in dues has been in vogue for some years. It is a correct system, and has a justified basis. But taken at its face value, will it be too much strain on the membership? It will not. First of all, the weekly payment spreads it over a shorter period, and makes it less of a strain on the earnings of the comrades. Secondly, the members of the Party will be *relieved of many other taxes and assessments* that the Party must place upon them if the work is to continue.

Some Party members declare that they are willing to make contributions to the Party from time to time, when an emergency occurs, but they do not wish their obligation to the Party to be placed at such a high figure. This is a wrong attitude and must be corrected at once. We are in the Party as a dedication to the revolutionary movement. this means that in consecrating ourselves to the Party we recognize that the Party has taken control of us, and that all the work we do is

subject to the discipline of the Party. Must then the Party, which must direct and be responsible for all revolutionary work, be dependent on the voluntary, self-given response of the membership, or must it be able to carry on its work, knowing that the members of the Party belong to the Party?

Surely a Party which depends on the momentary responses of its members not only will not be able to carry on financially, but also will not be able to cope with the emergencies as they occur. Therefore, greater contribution to the Party [should be made] not as a voluntary gift, but as an obligation to the revolutionary movement.

It is also clear that with a larger financial income, the Party first of all will be able to perform its work more effectively (for despite the cynical remarks of some comrades, much of the work of the Party remains undone because of lack of funds as, for instance, the sending out of organizers, publication of literature, leaflets, etc.). Secondly, the large income of the Party will relieve the membership of the [continual] assessments that are made nationally, in the districts and locals and even units, in order to keep up halls, get out leaflets, shop bulletins, etc. Thirdly, and this is most important, *it will create a more wholesome attitude toward the Party*, which will no longer be the recipient of contributions, but is the general staff, which both in activity and in the matter of funds has the right to call upon the membership to support to a higher degree than hitherto.

As regards the comrades with high incomes, they will be especially assessed, for these comrades, though willing revolutionists, are not connected with the masses in the shops, they have no mass influence, they are not doing basic work, they are not exposed to periods of unemployment and to discharge for Communist work, which is the situation among the masses of unskilled and semi-skilled workers today. If these latter categories of workers are not yet in the Party — our Party has a large proportion of skilled workers in its ranks — it is clear that in the present and coming struggles, it will be particularly the unskilled and semi-skilled workers who will be drawn into the Party.

Therefore there can be no objection on the scores raised above. Other objections, however, are raised, as a warning to the Party. One of them takes the line that we will not be able to win the exploited workers for the Party, and this will be particularly harmful for the coming recruiting drive. This is not true.

Workers who wish to join the Party do not ask what the dues are. Workers coming to our ranks want to know what the Party stands for, what its activities are.

Many of these workers come to us through the struggle itself, recognizing that every militant worker belongs in our ranks. The question of dues is the last one these workers raise — the last one, if at all, that they mention.

Let those comrades who belong to unions and who pay \$3, \$4 a month dues, and those who belong to sick and death benefit societies, etc., in which they must pay high dues and assessments, answer whether the Party should come first or last. Their answer to this question is the answer to the objections that they raise.

There must be developed in our Party somewhat of the spirit of the Wobblies. It is true that these workers have wrong policy, do not believe in leadership — [...] do not know tactics, are unstable, cannot hold a job not because of activity but because of a wrong attitude on how to fight the capitalist system. On the other hand, the Wobblies have one quality that the Party could emulate. A Wobbly is completely devoted to the IWW; what he has belongs to the organization (I speak of the better sort of Wobblies, most of whom have disappeared or have joined our Party, recognizing the wrong position of the IWW and the correct position, policies, and tactics of our Party). This quality has still to be recognized and brought into our Party.

The new dues system will help instill this attitude, this discipline into our Party. It will help to put a different spirit into our Party — a spirit not of voluntary self-sacrifice *according to one's discretion* — but an understanding that the Party has the right to claim one's whole being, just as the professional revolutionist knows that he must accept anything that the Party imposes on him. This means that the professional revolutionist is completely at the disposal of the Party, to be sent where the Party decides, to accept positions that may mean hunger (and many of them mean that today). This puts discipline of the Party, acceptance of Party decisions, on a higher plane than hitherto.

Does this mean that a member of the Party will be judged according to his dues payments? Nothing of the kind; it means that just as in the past — only more intensified, owing to the sharpened class struggle, the danger of war, and of the increasing attacks on our Party — a member will be judged by his carrying on of Party work. Each according to his ability and willingness to do work for the Party. But it will also mean that this willingness will be linked up with a firm

recognition of the necessity of greater financial support of the Party, so that it will avoid crises, and be able to carry on its work more effectively.

The best elements of the working class join our Party because they see that our Party is the leader in the class struggle. They will join our Party just the same, on the basis of the new dues system. In assuming the financial obligations, they will recognize that ours is a Party *not playing round* with revolution, but seriously in all phases of the work is *organizing* and *mobilizing* for the daily struggle and for the Proletarian Revolution.

Will we lose some members? Undoubtedly — some of the members who have not really accepted the reorganization of the Party, who still dream of a reorganization backward to the language system, who do not see nor wish to participate in the sharpening class struggle, will use the new dues system as an excuse for leaving the Party. The Party wishes to keep in its ranks all earnest, sincere revolutionists, but if sincerity is based only on low dues, then it is [of] flimsy character. No good revolutionist, who is doing work in the Party, will leave us. On the contrary, he will recognize that the Party *at last* has adopted the proper form of organization for its revolutionary work; that it is plunging into the struggle as never before; that in order to carry on its work, financial means are necessary and that these means must be provided, not by appeals, assessments, etc., but by Party members assuming more *obligations* that will enable the Party as a whole to do its work — and do it effectively.

The new dues system is a revolutionary act of the Central Executive Committee of serious consequence.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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