
National Movement in Danger: The Neglect of State Committees in Sending National Dues Must Be Rectified by the Comrades

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“Financial condition of national organization very critical, barely enough money for salaries of office help. Eleven State Committees failed to send national dues in January [1902]. Twenty State Committees have sent no national dues for February up to this writing.”

The above statement, which has been issued by the National Secretary [Leon Greenbaum] to every member of the National Committee, reveals a very considerable weakness in the Socialist movement at the present time and every comrade throughout the country should feel the responsibility which such a statement entails upon him. While the plan of State Autonomy, adopted at Indianapolis [July 29-Aug. 1, 1901], contains some very excellent principles, and it is trusted will eventually prove the basis of a splendidly organized movement, still those who have been its sponsors must admit that the present⁴ situation is largely due to an exaggerated opinion of the extent of their autonomy and they above all others should do all in their power to dispel the apparent opinion that State Autonomy grants absolution from the payment of national obligations. Ever since the Indianapolis convention there has been a woeful lack of unanimity among the comrades in the various states regarding the national movement.

The National Office has been compelled to shift for itself, the various State Secretaries forgetting entirely the duty which rested upon them as official heads of their states, and forgetting also that the national organization was wholly dependent upon them for the financial means of propaganda. Never since that date have the full state dues for all states been forwarded to the National Secretary. According to the National Secretary's report, dues were paid in September [1901] for only 2,984 members, out of a total membership of 6,867;

in October for 3,781 members out of 7,309; in November, for 7,032 members out of 7,774; and in December this number dropped back to 5,239, out of 8,567. And now the National Secretary issues a statement to the effect that 11 states failed to pay dues in January and 20 have failed so far in February.

If this sort of thing continues it will not be long before the national organization and propaganda will come to an end.

These are the cold facts, comrades, confronting our movement today, and it rests upon the rank and file to correct it. Something must be done and done at once. If your state officers have been careless or negligent in the performance of their duties it is your place to correct the evil already accomplished and take every action necessary to prevent its recurrence. Remember that our movement today rests upon the comrades in the various states and if they do not see that the obligations of their state are being lived up to then other plans and other methods of organization will have to be adopted. The national organization can not be allowed to lapse, for with its failure will go the failure of the whole Socialist movement. If the various State Secretaries are not competent to fill their positions, either through failure to forward dues collected, or general inability, it is the duty of the comrades in the state to see that he either performs his obligations or gives way to those who will.

The successful carrying out of the plan of State Autonomy rests upon the promptness with which the various State Secretaries carry out their work. If it is impossible to get efficient State Secretaries then State Autonomy is impossible. If on the other hand State Autonomy is to continue as an active force in the American Socialist movement rests upon the comrades in the various states to see that efficient secretaries are placed in charge of the state work.

If this is not done then it will become absolutely necessary to take some steps looking toward the payment of national dues, direct to the National Office, in order to prevent a complete collapse.

It is to be hoped that this method will not be necessary and that efficient and competent state organizations will be accomplished, through which the dues could be collected and forwarded to the National Secretary. But the comrades must remember that it rests upon them to accomplish this. If they fail in their duty, the future of the movement, in its dire necessity, will demand the substitution of other means.

Those who support State Autonomy — and we must class the whole Socialist Party under that head, because of its official declaration at Indianapolis — are the last ones to favor repudiation of national obligations. And they cannot fail to recognize the danger of the present situation. In order to insure State Autonomy, it must become efficient, it must be able to carry out its obligations. If this cannot be accomplished for it then its strongest supporters must admit its failure. This failure is not necessary, however, if the comrades will do their duty. The danger now confronting our movement should rally every comrade to its support. We must not allow those things already accomplished to be ruined through out inaction and indifference. But under the stress of the situation we must rise to the necessities before us and determine to bring out of it a better, more complete, and more efficient organization, through the medium of which the revolution of the working class will assume the proportions necessary for their complete emancipation.

This is true of the Socialist press as well as the individual comrades.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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