

From the RVC:

At the meeting of the American Mensa Committee this summer at the Dearborn AG, a motion came up to instruct the Finance Committee to place a motion on the agenda for our November meeting to increase dues next year by a sufficient amount to avoid the necessity for another increase for at least two years. The motion was strictly “pro forma” – in order to increase dues the matter has to appear on the agenda at two consecutive AMC meetings. No dollar amount was specified. It was explained that the motion does not have to pass both times, it just has to appear on the agenda. That being the case, we had no hesitation about postponing the matter to the November AMC meeting, at which time we will know more about our financial condition for the 2010-2011 membership year. Now the November meeting approaches, and an actual dues increase looms. Expenses have been cut, but that’s not enough.

Now, let me say first that there is really no question about the need for a dues increase. Our membership numbers do continue to grow, but not at a sufficient rate to offset even the negligible amount of inflation we are experiencing. Dues have not been increased since 2008, and if we want to keep up with inflation until 2013, an increase of just over 6% will be necessary. Rounded to the nearest whole dollar, that translates to a dues amount of \$63, starting in April of next year. Logic and foresight dictate approval of a reasonable increase at this time.

However, logic and foresight sometimes have to take a backseat to reality, and the reality is that many of our members are having a great deal of difficulty in justifying a payment of even \$59 under the current economic conditions. We are losing, not just inactive members, but local group officers in some places, who say they just can’t afford to keep up their memberships any more. What a slap in the face it would be to those who are struggling with un- or under-employment, if we demand that they dig into their pockets for even more money next year!

Consequently, I will not be voting for a \$4 dues increase at this time. I realize that every dollar we don’t increase the dues means \$60,000 we will have to cut out of the budget, but think of it this way: every \$60,000 we need takes only 1,000 new members if we increase the dues by a nominal one dollar to \$60 instead of the current \$59.

But here’s the rub: if we plan to rely on membership growth to balance our budget, we’re going to need some help from you, the members. So, here’s a chance to put your money where your mouth is – would you rather pay another \$4 a year for your Mensa membership, or would you rather get serious about recruiting new members? If I ask the AMC to reduce the increase to \$1 and give it a year to see if we can grow our way into prosperity, will you demand that your local group increase your testing program and publicity efforts? Will you actually go out and invite your family and friends to join? Or, like the minister who reminded his congregation that the Bible prohibits adultery, have I ‘done quit preaching and gone to meddling’?

Roger Durham

