

## **Just Pay the Man** **by Rose Jonas, Ph.D.**

One of the most odious career gauntlets we go through is paying our dues. We're fresh on the job, maybe fresh out of college, and full of energy, ideas, confidence. To our surprise, people don't listen to our suggestions or make us feel like we're part of the club. They patronize us and put us through stupid hoops, and they don't even give us credit for our ideas when they work.

We gradually work our way out of this career hell as we gain credibility in our organization or profession. We heave a sigh of relief as we look back over our shoulder at the experience and try to put as much distance between *it* and *us* as we can.

Guess what? You'll pay dues a number of times in your career, anytime you become the new kid on the block: if you leave your job to get a degree, when you take your skills to a new industry, when you change careers, when the company is sold or you get a brand new boss.

There you are, holding your impressive but ignored credentials, and someone's blocking you with one hand, holding out the other for you to pay dues again! It only gets harder to go through this, never easier. After a few years in the harness, you know that you know stuff, and you'll resent being treated as if you don't. You'll hate the "NIH" ("not invented here") attitude you'll come up against, the inability to push forward your ideas.

You can bulldog through this, but this only works if you're the top dog and moving fast. For everyone else, peers won't tolerate a puppy's barks and bites. A more successful strategy is to let people show you what you already know, explain a process that's familiar to you, tell you the latest research findings you've already read.

It isn't that they think you're stupid. They want to feel important in your eyes, as well as figure you out. Most of us do that by trying to show people how smart we are. Let them. Be interested and agreeable. You'll learn about them rather than what they're purporting to teach you, and they'll more quickly acknowledge you as a knowledgeable human.

When you start something new and the dues man comes around, just pay the man.