

## RUSSELL SOCIETY NEWS

No. 59

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- (1) **Highlights.** 1988 Annual Meeting (3). BR Editorial Project imperilled (2). Kurtz on life's meaning without God (4). Ayer on Russell (23). Magee on Popper (24). BRS Award to Kurtz (18). BRS Book Award to Kurtz (20). Brockway dead (30). 1989 Doctoral Grant announced (35). Director-Candidates for election; please vote (47). Humanists at work (26, 28, 29). Membership list (48). The Index is at the end, just before the ballot.

## RUSSELL ARCHIVES PROJECT IN BIG TROUBLE

- (2) **Bad news for future Russell volumes.** The great Bertrand Russell Editorial Project at McMaster University -- which intended to publish everything BR had ever written (except his books), to be known as "The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell", is in serious trouble.

The "Collected Papers" were to be published in 28 volumes, at the rate of one every 9 months, with the final volume appearing in the year 2000 (RSN 39-9). So far, Volumes 1, 7, 8 and 12 have been published; 2, 3, and 6 are near completion. Volume I of the bibliography should be published next year.

The 1980 Canadian Government grant has run out and apparently will not be renewed.

Five of the seven members of Ken Blackwell's research team have left. Only Ken and one assistant are now at the Archives. Ken's other archival duties take up his time, which prevents him from working on the important bibliography volume, now ready for the last stages of preparation. The BRS gave a \$1000 grant to the Editorial Project to assist in the preparation of those last stages.

The Editorial Project, when it was going full blast, had an annual payroll of several hundred thousand dollars. A new source of funding is sorely needed, to make more widely accessible, by means of books, the writings of one of the seminal minds of the last hundred years. Are there any financial angels out there?

## ANNUAL MEETING (1988)

- (3) **The weekend meeting** was held on June 17-19 on the spacious campus of SUNY (Fredonia) -- with its unusual concrete buildings designed by I. M. Pei -- and presided over by BRS President, MARVIN KOHL, Professor of Philosophy at Fredonia. The theme of the meeting was "Happiness and the Important Things in Life." A BRS-chartered van transported people between the Buffalo Airport and Fredonia (about 50 miles).

24 members attended: STEFAN ANDERSSON, KEN BLACKWELL, ROBERT CANTERBURY, JACK COWLES, DENNIS DARLAND, BOB DAVIS, LEE EISLER, SUSAN ENDRESHAK, CLARE HALLORAN, ROBERT HICKS, DON JACKANICZ, ROBERT JAMES, MARVIN KOHL, PAUL KURTZ, STEVE MARAGIDES, ED MCLENATHAN, FRANK PAGE, HELEN PAGE, STEVE REINHARDT, MICHAEL ROCKLER, HARRY RUJA, BETTE VOGT, HERB VOGT, TOM WEIDLICH.

26 guests attended: Ray Belliotti, Evelyn Burton, Robert Cogan, Walter Doehring and wife, Andrea Domst, Thomas Donahue, Beth Estee, Janet Estee, Jill Harvey, Thomas Harvey, Lynn James, Aleksandra Kaczmarek, Kenneth Lucey, Tim Madigan, John Meerse, Arthur Nisbet, Dorothea Nisbet, Lee Nisbet, Lansing Pollock, Elizabeth Roberts, Tyler Roberts, Charles Schmitt, Thomas Shearon, Laselo Takno, Jolanta Wysocka.

The following officers were elected or re-elected for one-year terms, starting immediately: Chairman, Harry Ruja; President, Marvin Kohl; Vice President, Michael Rockler; Treasurer, Dennis Darland; Secretary, Don Jackanicz; VP/Information, Lee Eisler.

The events of the weekend included the following:

- . Presentation of the 1988 Bertrand Russell Society Award to Paul Kurtz. See press release, Item (18).
- . Presentation of the 1988 Bertrand Russell Society Book Award to Paul Grimley Kuntz, for his "Bertrand Russell". The Award was accepted by Michael Rockler for Professor Kuntz, who was out of the country. See press release, Item (20).
- . Presentation of a Service Award to Lee Eisler.
- . Ken Blackwell's talk, "Russell's Theory of Happiness".
- . Panel discussion, chaired by Marvin Kohl, on the topic, "what is Happiness?". Panelists: Raymond Belliotti, Ken Blackwell, Bob Davis, and Randall Dipert.
- . Paul Kurtz's talk -- the major address of the weekend -- "what is the Meaning of Life?" Item (4).
- . Robert James's talk, "Out of the Night -- Russell's Struggle Against the Weight of Rudimentary Grief".
- . Lee Nisbet's talk, "Russell's Theory of Happiness: A Pragmatic Critique."

For more details, see Minutes of the Annual Meeting ( ) and Minutes of the the Board of Director's Meeting ( ). Some of the meeting's papers will be published in the next issue of Free Inquiry, of which, as you know, Paul Kurtz is Editor.

There was a Red Hackle Hour, as is customary, enjoyable as always, followed by a superb Chinese banquet against which all future banquets will be measured. One could not have anticipated this kind of excellence coming out of a college kitchen.

A historic architecture walking tour of Fredonia, conducted by Daniel Reiff (Chairman, Fredonia Art Department), and a screening of Russell interviewed by Woodrow Wyatt (BBC 1959) were optional events Saturday afternoon.

It was an excellent meeting, one of the best.

- (4) Without God. This is a somewhat condensed version of Professor Kurtz's 22-page paper, which he read at our June Meeting. Some sentences or parts of sentences, or words, have been dropped, in the interest of condensation. When words have been added, which is seldom, they are inside of brackets [like this.] We have usually retained the paragraphing of the original, but not always, because the original was written to be spoken, whereas this condensation is written to be read. A few other small liberties have been taken. The original — which Professor Kurtz has kindly made available to us — may be borrowed from the Russell Society Library.

#### Is Life Meaningful in a Universe Without God?

##### I

I am pleased that the Bertrand Russell Society exists to keep alive an appreciation for Russell's inquiring mind, the values that he espoused, and the social causes that he defended.

Although men are allegedly capable of rationality, we are corrupted by a powerful transcendental temptation which often overwhelms the open mind and seeks to anchor belief in a hidden and indescribable "ultimate reality".

Russell has observed: "Man is a rational animal — so at least I have been told. Throughout a long life, I have looked diligently for evidence in favor of this statement, but so far I have not had the good fortune to come across it..."

Russell's life was that of a heretic. He constantly questioned the sacred idols of the day: the engines of war, the structures of sexual morality, belief in God. His philosophical career was based on the use of rational analysis to examine the foundations of knowledge. He was concerned with achieving some degree of clarity and certainty about knowledge that could be supported by the evidence. He said, "I wish to propose...a doctrine which may, I fear, appear wildly paradoxical and subversive. The doctrine in question is this: that it is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatsoever for supposing it true."

Russell was honest about his own beliefs, which he would modify in the light of criticism. Indeed, he was his own best critic, as his philosophical writings demonstrate. Alas, I fear that large sections of humanity consider Russell's doctrine dangerous and irrelevant to their passionate desires for Absolute Truth and Absolute Virtue. I am constantly dismayed by human perversity: belief systems that have no basis in fact and are logically incoherent continue to dominate human imagination — from A to Z, astrology to Zen Buddhism. Perhaps that is why philosophers from Socrates to Russell have been considered dangerous, for they have pursued free inquiry and have expressed some skepticism in their quest, while all too many people hunger for Absolute Convictions. Yet free thought and free inquiry are considered dangerous.

Russell remarked: "Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth — more than ruin, more even than death."

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I want to focus on one question: Does life have meaning in a universe without God? — a question that Russell had himself addressed many times. Perhaps it is redundant to address this question again today, but it needs to be dealt with in every age, for it is a perennial question.

Theists maintain that without a divine order or purpose in the universe, life would be devoid of meaning. In his celebrated essay, "A Free Man's Worship," Russell describes the world that science presents, one that is purposeless and without God:

## MINUTES OF THE JUNE 1988 MEETINGS

(34)

## MINUTES OF THE 1988 ANNUAL MEETING

The 1988 Annual Meeting of The Bertrand Russell Society, Inc. was held from June 17 to June 19 in the Campus Center, State University of New York College at Fredonia, Fredonia, New York. Unless otherwise noted, all events took place in Room G106 of the Campus Center.

Friday, June 17, 1988

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 p.m. by President Marvin Kohl, who welcomed those gathered and requested each attendee to introduce himself or herself. President Kohl presented the 1988 Bertrand Russell Society Book Award to Paul Grimley Kuntz for his study, *Bertrand Russell*. Michael J. Rockler accepted the Award on behalf of Mr. Kuntz, who was unable to be present but whose letter of acceptance was read by President Kohl. A Service Award was then presented to Lee Eisler by Robert K. Davis, who spoke of Mr. Eisler's contributions to Russell studies and the Bertrand Russell Society. After the viewing of a videotape of *Bertrand Russell, Close-Up*, the 1959 CBC television interview program, the meeting was recessed at 8:45 p.m. Refreshments were informally served in the lounge area adjoining Room G106. The Board of Directors met at 9:20 p.m. for the first session of its Annual Meeting.

Saturday, June 18, 1988

At 9:05 a.m. the meeting was reconvened by President Kohl, who made introductory remarks about the meeting's program theme, "Happiness and the Important Things in Life." Kenneth Blackwell then delivered his paper, "Russell's Theory of Greatest Happiness," which had been renamed from the previously announced title, "Russell's Theory of Happiness." Following a short break, the Annual Society Business Meeting was conducted. Secretary Donald W. Jackanicz read the Minutes of the 1987 Annual Meeting, which were approved as read. In the absence of Treasurer Dennis J. Darland, President Kohl reported that the Treasury held approximately \$4,000. President Kohl also reviewed the events of the preceding night's Board of Directors session. No old business was raised. With the call for new business, Kenneth Blackwell was asked to speak on the funding problems of the Russell Editorial Project. (See the Minutes of the Board of Directors Annual Meeting for details.) In the other point of new business, Paul Kurtz informed

those assembled of the Tenth World Humanist Congress to be held in Buffalo, New York and which will include two sessions related to Russell on August 1 and 3, 1988. The meeting was recessed at 11:23 a.m. at which time the second session of the Board of Directors Annual Meeting was held.

The meeting was reconvened by President Kohl at 1:12 p.m. Chaired by President Kohl, a panel examined the question, "What Is Happiness?" Panelists included Raymond Belliotti, Kenneth Blackwell, Robert K. Davis, and Randall Dipert. Group discussion followed. The meeting was recessed at 2:50 p.m. For the balance of the afternoon, attendees were able to choose between viewing videotapes of the *Bertrand Russell Discourses...* interviews, participating in an architectural tour of central Fredonia, or pursuing individual activities.

The Red Hackle Hour began at 6:00 p.m. in the Topiary Tree dining room. In the same facility at 7:00 p.m. a Chinese Banquet was held, after which President Kohl introduced State University of New York College at Fredonia President Donald A. MacPhee, who gave a short welcoming address. President Kohl then thanked Board of Directors Chairman Harry Ruja for his recent undertakings and again recognized Lee Eisler for his years of service to the Bertrand Russell Society. President Kohl next introduced Paul Kurtz to whom he presented the 1988 Bertrand Russell Society Award. Mr. Kurtz briefly spoke about Russell and then delivered a paper entitled "The Meaning of Life." The meeting was recessed at 9:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 19, 1988

The meeting was reconvened by President Kohl at 9:32 a.m. Press releases on the awards to Paul Grimley Kuntz and Paul Kurtz were distributed. Robert James then delivered his paper, "Out of the Night--Russell's Struggle Against Height of Rudimentary Grief," which was followed by Lee Nisbet's presentation of his paper, "Russell's Theory of Happiness: A Pragmatic Critique." President Kohl offered concluding remarks on the topic of Russell and happiness and announced that Paul Kurtz had invited him to edit an issue of *Free Inquiry* to include selections from the 1988 Bertrand Russell Society Annual Meeting papers and presentations. Chairman Ruja rose to thank President Kohl for his Annual Meeting work. Kenneth Blackwell then expressed appreciation for the \$1,000 Bertrand Russell Society contribution to the Russell Editorial Project. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL MEETING

The 1988 Annual Meeting of The Bertrand Russell Society, Inc. Board of Directors was held in two sessions on June 17 and 18 in Room G106 of the Campus Center, State University of New York College at Fredonia, Fredonia, New York.

Friday, June 17, 1988

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Harry Ruja at 9:20 p.m. In addition to Chairman Ruja, the following Board members were present: Kenneth Blackwell, Jack R. Cowles, Robert K. Davis, Lee Eisler, Donald W. Jackanicz, Marvin Kohl, Steve Maragides, Frank V. Page, Stephen J. Reinhardt, and Michael J. Rockler.

The first point of business was to consider the financial problems of the Russell Editorial Project. Kenneth Blackwell reported that the 1980 Canadian government grant had expired and apparently will not be renewed, that McMaster University monetary support will continue only in a limited uncertain amount, and that positions previously occupied by a number of skilled and productive staff members have been eliminated due to a lack of funding. As a result, the editing and publication of most future volumes of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* is in jeopardy. Discussion began on ways in which the Bertrand Russell Society might aid the Russell Editorial Project, including the following possibilities: appealing to the British and Swedish governments, Cambridge University and Trinity College, Corliss Lamont, and the Estate of Cyrus Eaton; enlisting the help of Paul Kurtz; contributing \$1,000 as an unrestricted gift or as a matching grant; hiring a grant specialist. No formal motions or decisions were made during this session in connection with these proposals.

Discussion turned to the election of officers. In formal motions, Lee Eisler nominated Harry Ruja for Chairman of the Board of Directors, Steve Maragides nominated Marvin Kohl for President, Lee Eisler nominated Michael J. Rockler for Vice President, Steve Maragides nominated Lee Eisler for Vice President/Information and Donald W. Jackanicz for Society Secretary and Board of Directors Secretary, and Lee Eisler nominated Dennis J. Darland for Treasurer. Nominees Marvin Kohl and Michael J. Rockler informally agreed that, if elected, President Kohl would be responsible for the 1989 Annual Meeting program but not for matters related to transportation, accommodations, funding, etc., which would be the responsibilities of Vice President Rockler. Each nomination motion was unanimously accepted.

A site for the 1989 Annual Meeting was the next issue discussed. Chairman Ruja suggested the possibility of a meeting in Atlanta or another southern United States city. Donald W. Jackanicz remarked that considerable money could be saved if the Fredonia meeting model were followed, i.e. meeting at an institution with which a member is either affiliated or in a position to obtain preferential terms. Marvin Kohl explained the planning value of deciding meeting cities, though not necessarily exact sites, two years in advance and reported on his preliminary inquiries with the New School for Social Research and Columbia University. He continued that Columbia University's meeting and housing facilities are adequate and that one Columbia University faculty member, Professor Dennis Dalton, has expressed some interest in working with the Bertrand Russell Society on a meeting devoted to topics of war, pacifism, and nuclear disarmament. Donald W. Jackanicz briefly reviewed his 1986 inquiry regarding the possibility of hold-

ing that year's Annual Meeting at Columbia University. The merits of a New York City sited Annual Meeting were generally considered. It was finally moved by Robert K. Davis that President Kohl is to pursue the possibility of holding the 1989 Annual Meeting at Columbia University and is to report to the Board of Directors within two months from June 17, 1988. This motion was unanimously accepted. Informally agreed upon was that Kenneth Blackwell would investigate and report to President Kohl on the possibility of holding the 1990 Annual Meeting at McMaster University.

In the absence of Treasurer Dennis J. Darland, the Board was informally informed that the Treasury contained approximately \$4,000. Discussion of financial matters led to consideration of the doctoral awards program. Lee Eisler reported that Committee Chairman Hugh S. Moorhead had received no 1988 applications. Robert K. Davis suggested that money budgeted for the 1988 doctoral award might best be redirected to aiding the Russell Editorial Project. However, Marvin Kohl explained that one partially completed application had recently been submitted to him by Stephan Andersson, who was present at the meeting and who was invited to speak briefly about his academic work. Pending submission of a fully completed application by Mr. Andersson and any other applicants, it was informally decided to allow the doctoral awards program to continue in its present form.

Three other points of business were considered. Steve Reinhardt moved that a complimentary membership be provided to Roy Torcaso. Robert K. Davis moved that Librarian Tom Stanley be authorized to spend \$27 in Society funds to obtain an autotype of the January 15, 1939 University of Chicago Roundtable radio program, "Is Security Increasing?," in which Russell participated. Both motions were unanimously carried.

The meeting was recessed at 10:48 p.m.

Saturday, June 18, 1988

The meeting was reconvened by Chairman Ruja at 11:23 a.m. The same Board members were present as those who had been in attendance the preceding day.

Discussion exclusively concerned methods of aiding the Russell Editorial Project. Chairman Ruja moved that the Society should approach the British and Swedish governments to appeal for Russell Editorial Project financial support. Steve Maragides moved that Stefan Andersson (a citizen of Sweden, who was in attendance at this session and who is knowledgeable of the Russell Editorial Project) be authorized to represent the Society in correspondence with the Swedish government. Both motions were unanimously accepted. Marvin Kohl then moved that a \$1,000 grant, to be matched in an equal amount by McMaster University, be presented to the Russell Editorial Project for any use seen fit by the Russell Editorial Project. Donald W. Jackanicz moved that the McMaster University matching provision be removed from Marvin Kohl's wording, and Kenneth Blackwell moved that Marvin Kohl's wording be changed so that "for any use seen fit by the Russell Editorial Project" is replaced by "to assist in the preparation of the Russell bibliography." The Kohl motion, as altered by the Jackanicz and Blackwell amendments, was unanimously accepted. It was also informally agreed that Kenneth Blackwell is to confer with Paul Kurtz on publicity to increase awareness of the Russell Editorial Project's financial needs.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.