

"I think I have a question, but I think I have to ramble for a minute to get to it."

-Thom Weidlich

"Given three minutes for a potty break, you know what Russell would do?"

-Dave Henehan

Minutes of the 2003 BRS Annual Meeting Chad Trainer, BRS Secretary

The Bertrand Russell Society returned to Lake Forest College in Illinois for its 30th annual meeting. The meeting was from Friday, May 30 2003 to Sunday, June 1. In attendance were Anthony Anderson, Alan Bock, Pat Bock, Rosalind Carey, Dennis Darland, Peter Friedman, Phil Ebersole, David Goldman, David Henehan, Alvin Hofer, Kevin Klement, Gregory Landini, Tim Madigan, Steve Maragides, John Ongley, Stephen Reinhardt, Cara Rice, Warren Allen Smith, Peter Stone, David Taylor, Chad Trainer, Thom Weidlich, David White, and Linda White.

On Friday there was registration and a book table from 4 pm to 6 pm. From 6 pm to 8 pm there was a buffet. This was followed by the BRS board meeting from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm (See "Minutes of the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society Board of Directors.") and then members enjoyed the Greater Rochester Russell Set's hospitality suite/salon.

The Saturday morning program began with Gregory Landini presenting his paper on "Tractarian Logicism," followed by Anthony Anderson's "The Axiom of Infinity in Russellian Intensional Logic," and Kevin Klement's "Russell and Wittgenstein on Type-Theory and Russell's Paradox" was the last paper of the morning.

After lunch, the BRS held its 2003 annual Business Meeting from 1pm to 2pm. David White began the meeting by explaining that he had been elected to serve as president *pro tem* as a result of President Alan Schwerin's absence. The Treasurer's report was mentioned, as well as its having already been reported in the *Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly*. The current balance was said to be \$8,804.18. Warren Allen Smith asked for a clarification of membership loss. Dennis Darland explained that, while more people are renewing their memberships, there is a lower

amount of new members joining. Presently, the Society has approximately a hundred members (discounting about fifty people who are probably renewing); whereas there was once a high of three-hundred members.

Peter Stone mentioned membership forms available in collections of the May *BRS Quarterly (BRSQ)*. On the subject of the *BRSQ*, he asked the presenters to consider submitting to the *BRSQ* versions of the papers being presented that weekend.

David White brought up Ken Blackwell's interest in developing guidelines for the "chapterization" of BRS locals, specifically, the advantages of coming up with a five-step approach that could be of use for those interested in trying to form local chapters of the Society. There was discussion of the base of experienced people in attendance from Rochester and New York City, the fate of the one-time Philippine chapter of the BRS, and the like.

The five-step program then, as outlined and recommended by David White was:

- 1) Stage events with a built-in audience, as part of a program with organizations that already have a following.
- 2) Make joining as easy as possible, and supply new members with a membership kit. (This was done in the past.)
- 3) Keep a record of all activities of the BRS and its chapters in a form that is easy to distribute.
- 4) Make clear to members what your main aims are, e.g., humanitarianism, anti-war movement, philosophical clarity, fellowship, letter-writing, Russell studies, teaching Russell, social drinking. Each chapter should be built about the interests of its members and not try to take on everything at once. Likewise, all members should be clear on what resources are available to them, e.g., Bertrand Russell Archives, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, BRS Library, other chapters, and other organizations.
- 5) Make as much use as possible of free publicity. Certainly keep sending material to *BRSQ*, but also to bookstores, UU churches, and newspapers.

While no vote was taken, the consensus was that BRS members are free to form "autonomous" chapters and that, except in cases of express permission from the BRS, local chapters are to refrain from speaking on behalf of the Society or in any way entangling the BRS in obligations. David Goldman proposed having meetings of the Greater Rochester Russell Set audio- or videotaped for general distribution.

Next mentioned was the subject of recruiting members for the BRS via the Internet. Thom Weidlich explained that, with different people wanting different things, there would be advantages to a dedicated e-mail list for providing a weekly e-mail with a Russell quote and membership encouragement. Tim Madigan and David White spoke of the need for a website URL simpler than John Lenz's, especially considering that the related costs of such reforms are well within what the President could authorize without further action. Peter Friedman said that, in addition to making the BRS site more "user-friendly," provisions should be considered for both an automated "sign-up" procedure for would-be BRS members and a regular inclusion of BRS related news. The consensus of those present was that John Lenz would probably not be averse to enabling others to manage the site.

The meeting then concluded at 2 pm.

The Saturday afternoon presentations began with Chad Trainer's paper: "Bertrand Russell's Assessments of René Descartes' Philosophy." This was followed by this year's Prize Paper, David Taylor's "Causal Processes: A Realist Approach." The next presenter was Rosalind Carey with "Logic and Psychology in Russell's Doctrine of Belief: An Overview and a Special Case" and then John Ongley's "Russell's Slow Progress to Realism."

After some free time, there was the Red Hackle hour with the eponymous beverage provided courtesy of Don Jackanicz. There was then the banquet where the Bertrand Russell Society's 2003 Award was given in absentia to Katha Pollitt. The Book Award was given to Ray Perkins for the book he edited of Russell's letters to the editor, *Yours Faithfully, Bertrand Russell*, and a statement from Ray Perkins acknowledging the award was read by Rosalind Carey. Warren Allen Smith and Tim Madigan provided some very entertaining "piano comedy" next with Warren Allen Smith acting as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Tim Madigan acting as Bertrand Russell. The evening was then topped off again with the Greater Rochester Russell Set's hospitality suite/salon.

The Sunday morning papers began with Cara E. Rice's "The Beacon Light of Beacon Hill Shines On," followed by Tim Madigan's "Warrant Report: The Philosophical Analysis of 'The Warren Report' by Bertrand Russell, Josiah Thompson, and Richard Popkin." Finally, we concluded with a joint presentation by Peter Stone and David White: "Is This Game Played? A Conversation on *Wittgenstein's Poker*."

Minutes of the 2002 Annual Meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society Board of Directors

Chad Trainer
Secretary, BRS Board of Directors

The annual meeting of the Society's Board of Directors was held on Friday, May 30 at 8 pm. Directors present were Rosalind Carey, Dennis Darland, Peter Friedman, David Goldman, Tim Madigan, Steve Reinhardt, Cara Rice, Warren Allen Smith, Peter Stone, Chad Trainer, Thom Weidlich, and David White. David White called the meeting to order and reviewed the meeting's agenda. Members present who are not Directors were Anthony Anderson, Alan Bock, Pat Bock, Phil Ebersole, David Henehan, Alvin Hofer, Kevin Klement, Gregory Landini, Steve Maragides, and David Taylor.

Election of Officers was taken up first. All incumbents were elected by acclamation:

President: Alan Schwerin (nominated by Chad Trainer and seconded by Peter Stone);

Vice President: Ray Perkins (nominated by Thom Weidlich and seconded by Peter Friedman);

Vice President for Outreach: Peter Friedman (nominated by Warren Allen Smith and seconded by Cara Rice);

Secretary of the Society and Secretary of the Board: Chad Trainer (nominated by Cara Rice and seconded by Thom Weidlich);

Treasurer: Dennis Darland (seconded by Thom Weidlich);

Chairman of the Board: David White (nominated by Warren Allen Smith and seconded by Cara Rice).

The absence of Alan Schwerin from the meeting was noted along with the consequent need to nominate a temporary president for Saturday's "Business" meeting. Thom Weidlich nominated David White who won by acclamation.

After the election of officers, the American Philosophical Association Committee was brought up. The nature and procedures of the APA sessions was explained. A report was given on the BRS's sessions at the APA Eastern meetings (which have been occurring every year), as well as its sessions at the APA's Central, and Pacific meetings (which have not occurred quite as regularly). Attendance at the sessions was described as "sailing pretty closely to the wind" but "sufficient." Success in people

signing up for the BRS at a Central Division meeting was also mentioned. The position of APA Committee Chairman was then brought up for consideration. Thom Weidlich nominated David White for the position and Peter Stone seconded it.

The subject of the Book Award Committee was addressed next. Specifically, the issue raised was whether there should be a third category for books written in languages other than English (in addition to the first category for authors of books written in English and the second category for edited editions of Russell's writings). Furthermore the question was posed whether it is necessary for the Committee to be empowered to apply standards to such books different from those it applies to ones written in English. Steve Maragides said that, while he saw no problem with the Committee being empowered to consider books according to several categories, it would be presumptuous to assume members of the Committee would be in a position to judge books written in foreign languages. Phil Ebersole explained that, as a member of this Committee, he has no way of judging such books that get passed over. While Ebersole said that he was not "wedded" to the idea of a change here, he said it would be "rude" to expressly reserve the terms of the award to books written in English even if that is the nature of the situation by default. There was discussion of whether the only way to be fair to books written in languages other than English is to have a separate category for the Book Award Committee's prize and whether this would simplify the Committee's work. Ed Boedeker remarked that French, German, and English should be the implicit languages of books under consideration and that this implicit criterion, along with the Committee's competence in the award process, should be made as explicit as possible. Thom Weidlich indicated his support for a Foreign Language Award, and Gregory Landini said it was bad public relations for the awarding criteria to be unabashedly confined to books written in English. David White mentioned merits to having ad hoc members and consultants here and made a motion to empower the committee to have this third, "foreign languages" category, should it deem itself competent to judge here. But then Thom Weidlich moved to "shelve" the issue and Peter Stone seconded this motion.

Next on the agenda was the editorship of the *BRS Quarterly* (*BRSQ*). This was a matter to be addressed as a result of Peter Stone's desire to be relieved of this position as a result of his now being on a tenure-track position at Stanford University. It was announced that Rosalind Carey and John Ongley have come forward as willing candidates to co-chair the *BRSQ* Committee. The Board proceeded to appoint Rosalind and John to these positions. Peter Stone was thanked for his excellent work as Editor of

the *BRSQ* and getting the whole cycle of the newsletter's release back on track. The Chair also made reference to a forthcoming three-day celebration of Peter Stone's work along these lines.

The Chair then brought up Ray Perkins' suggestion of a "Promotional Items Committee" of sorts charged with handling the sale and distribution of BRS t-shirts and aided by the creation of a related URL, but attention was also drawn to potential copyright complications in Russell attire. Steve Maragides encouraged the Society to look into Bertrand Russell calendars as well. Peter Friedman moved to create such a committee. Thom Weidlich seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The locus of the 2004 Annual Meeting was the following topic on the docket. Mention was made of Ray Perkins' willingness to host the meeting at Plymouth State College in New Hampshire. California was also cited as a future possibility, especially in light of Peter Stone's upcoming move to the state. However, Stone hastened to stress the busy personal schedule he foresaw for at least the next couple of years. Stephen Reinhardt then made a motion to have New Hampshire as the site of next year's meeting. Peter Stone seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The advisability of seriously considering future sites at least a couple of years ahead was mentioned. Gregory Landini offered the University of Iowa as a candidate where the BRS meeting could be arranged so as to dovetail with the university's annual Wittgenstein/Russell Conference. Chad Trainer countered that previous suggestions of the BRS meetings being held during the academic year had typically eventuated in the specter of less affordable rooming rates for the participants. Rosalind Carey encouraged people to bear in mind the possible perks that can accompany the hosting of conferences and instanced a \$5,000 donation from an alumnus to Lake Forest's Philosophy Department as a consequence of last year's meeting.

A proposal to translate Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy* into Armenian was then addressed. The would-be translator in this case is a man who has already translated into Armenian *Why I Am Not a Christian* and who has a publisher satisfied with and on board for this translation of Russell's *History* but who acknowledges budgetary complications in such an undertaking. David White explained that, while the BRS is hardly in a position to provide financial assistance for this endeavor, genuine possibilities to be considered by the BRS are a letter of support for the translations, a commitment from the Society to purchase a given number of copies, and a donation of space in the Society's quarterly newsletter to advertising the translation. After explanations by Steve Maragides and Dennis Darland of a grant previously made to McMaster University for

Russell-related work, Peter Friedman suggested the utility of corresponding with whatever local chapters of the BRS are to be found in Armenia. Friedman made a motion to have a letter of commendation drafted for the Armenian translation project. Peter Stone then proposed as an amendment to this motion that the Executive Committee be empowered to promote the Armenian translation project provided it does not result in any financial cost to the Society. This amended motion passed unanimously.

Concern with impressing upon the Directors the crisis of declining membership, its causes, and remedies were next on the agenda. David White suggested as a partial solution to membership decline prolonging the membership of those who have not paid in a timely fashion. Dennis Darland argued, instead, for such an approach quite possibly compounding the problem. Peter Stone inquired about the repercussions for membership volume of including membership forms in the quarterly newsletter and Darland indicated that such results were negligible. The possible merits of free memberships were discussed. Friedman stressed the propriety of distinguishing between a financial crisis and a membership crisis. Chad Trainer encouraged the Society to consider membership information that could be provided on something the size of a business card and so presentable to potential members in a fashion less awkward than that involved in trying to give them standard membership forms. Possible new designs for membership forms were considered and then, in response to an inquiry from Thom Weidlich, Darland furnished the Society with a report on membership trends. Friedman pondered the possibilities of book inserts for BRS membership in Routledge's publications. He pointed to Routledge's obviously vested interests in the promotion of Bertrand Russell, as well as the distinct possibility of their interest in Russell-related events. Peter Stone cited the hitherto negative reaction from Routledge on these fronts. There was, however, general discussion of Routledge's catalog possibly including as filler ads for the BRS. Cara Rice and Chad Trainer asked about the possibilities of BRS members volunteering to insert promotional material for the Society at their local corporate bookstores in the stores' relevant books. David White and Peter Stone countered that it was basically unheard of for stores to permit such a thing and White said that opportunities for postings on such stores' bulletin boards are a more realistic area to explore. Peter Stone explained that, generally speaking, *slight* changes to present practices in promoting membership tend to be more realistic and practical than the grandiose, visionary approaches that, while abounding in ideas lack "people attached to the ideas." David Henehan explained what he saw as the shortcomings of the Society's newsletter regularly including renewal forms vis-à-vis

individually mailed dues notices. David White responded that a modification here entails a whole additional realm of activity and so an individual willing to do it. The possibility of having people volunteer to contact those whose membership has lapsed was next discussed and then the advantages of readily reproducible membership forms in the Society's mailings. It was then discussed how extensions of membership for those who are behind on their dues is most appropriately left for an "executive" decision. Dennis Darland mentioned the possibility of advertising the BRS in the *Nation* magazine and around college campuses. Peter Stone explained that it was precisely by means of campus advertisements that he himself got involved in the Society. Peter Friedman mentioned the possibly cheap rate of advertising in the "far-right column" of Google but the possibly minimal rate in the area of \$500 was considered as well. Peter Stone drew attention to the operative role of John Lenz and while not foreseeing a need to put money forth on website developments indicated his willingness to make the relevant inquiries along these lines. Thom Weidlich mentioned the value generally to increased Internet activity for the BRS in making membership more attractive.

Peter Stone then moved to adjourn the meeting. Cara Rice seconded.

The 2003 BRS Award

This year, the BRS Awards Committee decided to give the BRS Award to Katha Pollitt. Kevin Brodie, BRS Awards Committee Chair, offered the following remarks in support of this decision:

Katha Pollitt is an award-winning journalist, who is a regular columnist for the *Nation*. She is the author of several books, including *Reasonable Creatures: Essays on Women and Feminism* (Vintage, 1995) and *Subject to Debate: Sense and Dissents on Women, Politics, and Culture* (Random House, 2001). Throughout her career, she has been an articulate and vociferous champion of those who are disenfranchised and oppressed throughout the world. She has also been one of the foremost spokespersons for feminism and reproductive rights. She has also expressed skepticism regarding religious dogma, and has frequently criticized religious leaders for using their influence to repress freedom, particularly as it relates to women.

Upon learning that she had received the award, Ms. Pollitt proclaimed she was "thrilled to be associated with Bertrand Russell, whom she admired, and was a hero to her parents."

The text of the award reads as follows:

**The 2003 Bertrand Russell Society Award presented to
Ms. Katha Pollitt
for intellectual courage and indubitable wit in the spirit of Bertrand
Russell.**

The 2003 BRS Book Award

The BRS Book Award Committee decided to give the 2003 BRS Book Award to Ray Perkins for his edited collection Yours Faithfully, Bertrand Russell: Lifelong Fight for Peace, Justice, and Truth in Letters to the Editor (Open Court, 2001). (As Awards Committee Chair, Ray abstained completely from the decision-making process this year because his book was a candidate for the award.) Ray Perkins was unable to attend the 2003 Annual Meeting to accept the award in person; however, he did send the following remarks that were read at the meeting:

My collection of Russell's letters to the editor has been a long labor, but truly one of love. As some of you may know, my editorial interest in Russell's letters began back in the early 70s soon after I became aware that Ken Blackwell and Harry Ruja were collecting them for the Archives. But in fact my interest in Russell's letters really goes back to my encounter with his 1967 book *War Crimes in Vietnam* which reprinted his passionate exchange with the editor of the *New York Times* regarding US chemical weapons in South East Asia. What these letters show, and what I think his public letters generally reveal, is the practical wisdom of a great intellect come down from the ivory tower of academia to do battle with the forces of ignorance and cruelty and to infuse public policy with reason and compassion. As we witness the unfolding of the new Pax Americana and the resurgence of the threat of weapons of mass destruction, Russell's public letters, especially those since World War II, take on a renewed relevance, and his example as practical philosopher and public gadfly continues today to teach and inspire us all.

I'd like to thank the Society for honoring me with this prestigious award. It's one of which I am very proud and one which I shall long cherish. And I want to add a special "thank you" to the Bertrand Russell Archives and especially to Ken Blackwell without whose assiduous work over nearly three decades these letters would not have been obtainable. Again, thank you all very much.