

Russell Society News

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Highlights of the 2000 annual meeting



Rapt attention for David White's "Russell on the Web". For the text and more photos visit www.monmouth.edu/brs. (Photo by Alan Schwerin)

Minutes of the meeting

by Peter Stone, Secretary, BRS

The Bertrand Russell Society held its annual meeting at Monmouth University, West Long Beach, New Jersey, on June 2-4, 2000. Alan Schwerin presided. Peter Stone took notes. BRS members present were Stefan Andersson, Mary Martin Bayne, Steve Bayne, Ken Blackwell, Alan Bock, Pat Bock, Edgar Boedeker, Rosalind Carey, Dennis Darland, Peter Friedman, Dave Goldman, Nick Griffin, David Henehan, Steve Maragides, Ed McClenathan, Rachel Murray, Ray Perkins, Steve Reinhardt, Cara Rice, Alan Schwerin, John Shosky, Warren Allen Smith, Peter Stone, Chad Trainer, Thom Weidlich, David White, Gerry Wildenberg, and Ruili Ye. Non-members present were Mark Couch, Jon Dobbs, Burdett Gardner, Bonnie Gold, Rom Harré, Boris Kukso, Nancy McClenathan, Kris Oser, David Payne, Karen Perkins, Samantha Pogorelsky, David Repa, Helen Schwerin, and Ken Stunkel.

Back to the RSN

by Ken Blackwell, Chairman, BRS, and Interim Editor

Oldtimers will recognize the "new" title of *The Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly*. For its first 21½ years, under the editorships of Lee Eisler and Don Jackanicz, it was called the *Russell Society News*. The Board of Directors decided to make it a newsletter again. Send me short contributions of any kind c/o Russell Research Centre, McMaster U., Hamilton, Ont., L8S 4M2.

Last call to renew for 2000

This is the last issue to be sent to members who haven't renewed for 2000. To renew, send your payment (made out to The Bertrand Russell Society) to Dennis Darland, BRS Treasurer, 1406 26 St., Rock Island, Ill. 61201-6837. Renewals will be acknowledged. If you're unsure whether you've renewed this year, check the line with your name the envelope. "/1999" means you're in arrears. Regular membership is \$35, students \$20.

On Friday night, President and conference organizer Alan Schwerin welcomed everyone present. He then chaired a brief business meeting, at which various officers, committee chairs, and members made reports. Schwerin reported on efforts to secure and **expand the BRS's presence at APA meetings**. Peter Stone, Chair of the BRS Awards Committee, announced that **the 2000 Annual Award had been given to Stephen Jay Gould**. Gould is Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology and Professor of Geology at Harvard, Curator of Invertebrate Paleontology in the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, and adjunct member of the History of Science dept. He is best known for his extensive writings on scientific issues for a general audience, in the best Russellian tradition. Ray Perkins, Chair of the Book Awards Committee, announced that **the 2000 Annual Book Award had been given to Charles Pigden for his anthology *Russell on Ethics***. Pigden is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Otago, New Zealand, and the author of numerous articles on ethics and metaethics. Alan Schwerin gave a brief tribute to Trevor Banks, a longtime member of the BRS who passed away shortly after

the 1999 annual meeting. Banks was well known in the Society and in broader humanist and philosophical circles for his excellent "one-man show" as Bertrand Russell. Ken Blackwell urged members present to pay their dues for the year, and non-members to consider joining. He also encouraged members to vote in the elections for the Board of Directors and to attend the Board meeting on Saturday.

Alan Schwerin then led an open discussion on Russell's views on religion. To focus the discussion, Schwerin played an excerpt from the famous debate on religion between Russell and Father Copleston. The lively discussion lasted quite late.

Stefan Andersson again led off the program Saturday morning with the paper "**Russell on Mysticism (Part II)**." Alan Schwerin chaired this session. Rosalind Carey chaired the second session, which featured a paper by Mark Couch on "**Russell's Criticism of Moore's Proof**." Steve Bayne then gave a paper on "**Russell and those 'Other' Mathematicians**," followed by David White's presentation "**Russell on the Web**." Boris Kukso and Chad Trainer chaired these two sessions, respectively.

At this point, the meeting broke for lunch. The Board of Directors held a lunchtime meeting (see the Board minutes).

After lunch, Boris Kukso presented a paper entitled "**Russell's Logical Atomism and Armstrong's Philosophy of States of Affairs**." Thom Weidlich chaired Kukso's presentation. Rosalind Carey spoke on "**Russell's Working Notes on Propositions Appended to *Theory of Knowledge***" in a session chaired by Alan Schwerin. Nick Griffin chaired Edgar Boedeker's paper presentation, on "**The Hidden Influence of Russell's Theory of Substitution on Wittgenstein's N-operator**." And Chad Trainer capped off the afternoon with his paper "**Language: A Leading or Lagging Indicator of Truth for Russell?**" Peter Stone chaired this session. After some free time, the BRS held its Red Hackle Hour (with *real* Red Hackle, courtesy of Don Jackanicz) and banquet.

Rom Harré began the Sunday morning session with a talk on "**Reference Revisited**," chaired by Alan Schwerin. John Shosky then spoke on "**Russell and Quine**" in a session chaired by David White. Rosalind Carey then chaired Ken Stunkel's talk "**Russell on History**." Thom Weidlich followed with "**On Russell's Sexual Revolution**," followed by Nick Griffin's "**Russell's Logicism If Not If-Thenism**," which concluded the Sunday morning session. Mark Couch and Stefan Andersson, respectively, chaired the last two sessions.

The meeting ended with a short Society business meeting presided over by Alan Schwerin and then Ken Blackwell. At this meeting, Treasurer Dennis Darland presented **annual treasury and membership reports**. The entire gathering also offered a strong show of thanks to Alan and Helen Schwerin for their excellent work organizing the meeting; for the **BRS banner** they made to hang at the meeting (and which will travel to the 2001 meeting next year); for the extremely useful **bell** used to ensure sessions started on time; and last but not least for the excellent **barbecue** which was to (and did) follow the conclusion of the Sunday morning session.

Board minutes

by Peter Stone, Secretary, BRS

The BRS Board of Directors held its annual meeting on Saturday June 3, 2000, in conjunction with the BRS Annual Meeting at Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey. Ken Blackwell chaired. Peter Stone took notes. Directors present were Stefan Andersson, Ken Blackwell, Dennis Darland, Ray Perkins, Steve Reinhardt, Alan Schwerin, Warren Allen Smith, Thom Weidlich, and Ruili Ye. Also present were candidates for the Board Steve Bayne, Nick Griffin, Peter Stone, and David White. Due to a delay in the balloting for Board positions, the status of these 4 candidates had not yet been determined. The officers of the Society therefore agreed to count these 4 candidates as interim Board members, and allow them to vote at the Board meeting. Steve Bayne participated in the discussions but did not wish to take part in any votes. This left 12 voting directors, seated and acting. The meeting was also attended by a number of other BRS members, including Peter Friedman, Steve Maragides, and Rachel Murray.

Thom Weidlich moved to waive a reading of the minutes from the last Board meeting and to approve them. He pointed out that the minutes had appeared in the last issue of the *Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly* for anyone wishing to see them, and commended Peter Stone for his work. Ray Perkins seconded, and the Board approved the motion unanimously.

The Board then held elections for Board and Society Officers. The following officers were elected:

President—Alan Schwerin (nominated by Perkins, seconded by Smith, unanimous vote)

Secretary of the Society and Board—Peter Stone (nominated by Schwerin, seconded by Andersson, unanimous vote)

Treasurer—Dennis Darland (nominated by Stone, seconded by Andersson, unanimous vote)

Vice-President—Tim Madigan (nominated by Smith, seconded by Schwerin. Also nominated was Jan Loeb Eisler, nominated by Perkins, seconded by Weidlich. Madigan received 7 votes to Eisler's 2, with 3 abstentions).

Chairman of the Board—Ken Blackwell (nominated by Weidlich, seconded by Andersson, unanimous vote)

In addition, Alan Schwerin moved that the Board create the position **Vice-President for Humanist Outreach**, and appoint Jan Loeb Eisler to this position. Dennis Darland seconded, and the motion carried 10-0, with 2 abstentions.

The Board then took up the question of the **location for the 2001 Annual Meeting** of the BRS. Nick Griffin proposed McMaster University. He explained that the university was in the process of setting up a Bertrand Russell Research Centre, which would incorporate the *Collected Papers* editorial project, the journal *Russell*, and other neat stuff. Holding a BRS meeting there—on what would be approximately the

first anniversary of the new center—would help cement relations between the various Russell-related groups and projects.

Alan Schwerin seconded Griffin's proposal. Steve Reinhardt pointed out that the location would allow both East and West Coast members the chance to attend, without the logistical difficulties involved in setting up a West Coast meeting.

Alan Schwerin and Steve Maragides suggested the BRS consider Pugwash, Nova Scotia, site of the famous first few Pugwash meetings organized by Russell. Maragides realized this location might constitute a hard sell to the BRS. The town is in a remote rural area; the nearest airport is in Halifax, and travel from there to the town involves extensive driving over rural roads. However, the town does pride itself on its intellectual life; it is known as the "home of the thinkers," and its mascot is Rodin's famous statue of that name. Maragides believes the town might be very accommodating and helpful if the BRS inquired about setting up a meeting there.

Ken Blackwell thought a Pugwash meeting might be worth exploring, one that might be the start of a pattern of meetings at Russell-related sites. Such sites might include Phoenixville, PA (where Russell lived from 1941 to 1943 and near Merion, home of the Barnes Foundation, where Russell taught in 1941-2) and possibly Pembroke Lodge (where Russell spent his childhood), although the latter could pose even more formidable difficulties than Pugwash. Steve Bayne concurred that establishing such connections with sites associated with Russell was important for the Society. But Blackwell was also concerned about the BRS's continuing neglect of the West Coast. Thom Weidlich agreed, although he has favored the idea of Pembroke Lodge for some time.

Peter Stone proposed amending the motion to meet at McMaster University in 2001. The amendment would direct the President to **write to each of the BRS members currently residing in California**, and attempt to solicit some of these members to organize the 2002 meeting on the West Coast. Nick Griffin accepted this amendment, and the motion carried unanimously.

Next meeting to be at McMaster

Home of the Bertrand Russell Archives, McMaster University will be the site of the next annual meeting. Our host will be the newly formed Bertrand Russell Research Centre, directed by Board member Nick Griffin. The dates are May 25-27, 2001.



The next item on the Board agenda concerned the Society's continued registration as a nonprofit corporation. Dennis Darland proposed taking over the registration from Don

Jackanicz, who has asked the BRS to find someone else to handle the responsibilities. Darland lives in Illinois, where Jackanicz also lives and the BRS is registered. By taking over the registration, Darland can save the BRS the hassle of either reincorporating in another state or of finding a paid agent to maintain registration in Illinois. He already has the necessary paperwork for the job. Nick Griffin moved that **Darland be made the registered agent for the BRS**, Peter Stone seconded, and the motion carried 11-0, with 1 abstention. In addition, Stone will write to Jackanicz, requesting that he send Darland all relevant records and thanking him for maintaining the registration for so long (as well as for the Red Hackle that he provided for the meeting).

The Board then began a long discussion of the status of the *BRS Quarterly* (hereafter *Q.*). Ken Blackwell explained that the *Q.*'s haphazard publication has caused difficulties for Society business; the most recent Board elections have not yet been completed due to the tardiness of the issue containing the ballots. Blackwell suggested that the BRS needed either more reliable production of the *Q.* or else a different method for distributing ballots.

Alan Schwerin proposed dropping the *Q.* completely. He observed that no one seemed willing or able to do the work necessary to produce it on a timely basis. Ken Blackwell, however, pointed out that the Society's Bylaws specifically required that the BRS publish a regular newsletter. On a more practical note, Thom Weidlich pointed out that, for most BRS members, the *Q.* is the primary benefit of membership. Without it, there is little reason for most people to consider joining. He added, however, that the BRS employed a newsletter for many years before switching over to the *Q.*

Peter Friedman suggested the BRS consider a purely Web-based *Q.* Alan Schwerin, however, pointed out that many current members are not on the Web. Peter Stone added that regardless of format, there was still a need for an editor to publish the *Q.* on a regular basis.

Ken Blackwell suggested that the size and scale of the project may be what prevents regular publication; the most recent *Q.*, for example, ran 42 pages, not counting inserts for the Board elections. Steve Bayne concurred. Two possible solutions might include making the *Q.* biannual, and focusing the *Q.* on discussions by the various members. Thom Weidlich urged the Board to keep in mind that content, not cost, was the primary obstacle. Peter Stone objected, however, arguing that the content only lacked an editor willing to do the *Q.* on a regular basis.

David White proposed abandoning the *Q.*, and replacing it with a brief (1-2 page) newsletter. Substantial articles written by BRS members could then appear elsewhere—possibly (as Peter Friedman suggested) on the Web. Several Board members concurred with the general idea that this newsletter be made a less ambitious project than the current *Q.*, although some saw no need to carry this reduction to quite the extreme White proposed. Friedman suggested this newsletter could focus on news relating to Russell, news relating to the BRS, and miscellaneous "Russell lite" stuff.

Alan Schwerin formally moved that the Board retire the *Q* and replace it with a newsletter, effective immediately. Warren Allen Smith seconded. Peter Stone suggested that such a motion left uncertain the exact nature of the newsletter and, more importantly, who would edit it. Ray Perkins proposed maintaining the current *Q* until some of these points could be worked out. Ken Blackwell, however, pointed out that the *Q*'s current irregular publication caused the BRS to incur much extra worry and effort through the periodic mailings the late *Q* often made necessary. In the end, the Board voted 9-2, with 1 abstention, in favor of Schwerin's motion. Nick Griffin then proposed thanking John Shosky for his efforts in editing the *Q*. Alan Schwerin seconded; the motion carried unanimously.

Peter Stone requested an update on the status of the revised introductory trifold on the BRS. Thom Weidlich informed him that Tom Stanley, BRS librarian and director, is revising it.

The Board then took up the topic of the BRS's policy towards its annual award. Alan Schwerin expressed concern that no award recipient had attended the annual meeting to accept his or her award in person in many years (the last anyone could remember was Zero Population Growth, which sent a member to accept its award in 1995). He urged the BRS Awards Committee, when making award decisions, to take into account the likelihood that the recipient will accept the award in person. Steve Bayne added the additional concern that the award may not mean much to many of its recipients.

Nick Griffin, however, pointed out that the award traditionally goes to very eminent people, and higher eminence implies a lower probability of meeting attendance. Peter Stone added that age is also frequently a factor; a number of recipients, such as Karl Popper, W.V. Quine, and Irving Copi, have expressed great pleasure at receiving the award, but age precluded their acceptance in person. In the end, the Awards Committee—currently composed of Stone (chair), Blackwell, and Schwerin—agreed to try to balance eminence with probability of attendance. Steve Reinhardt added that, regardless of attendance, every award recipient should be strongly encouraged to provide the BRS with a brief statement, to be read at the meeting should the recipient be unable to attend.

The Board briefly considered the idea that the BRS advertise in philosophical journals. Such advertisements can apparently be very expensive; a full-page ad in *Philosophy Now* would cost 950 pounds. Peter Friedman and David White agreed to look into free advertising options that would reach segments of the philosophical community.

Peter Stone mentioned that the Greater Rochester Russell Set (an informal local chapter of the BRS based in Rochester, NY) had discussed a possible means of generating publicity for the Society. The group suggested that the BRS ask the Episcopal Diocese of New York City for an apology for its critical role in ousting Russell from his CUNY (formerly CCNY) teaching appointment. Thom Weidlich, author of a recent book on the CUNY case, wholeheartedly endorsed the idea. He agreed to ask an Episcopal priest living in New York City he knew about the idea. He will also look into a press release on the matter, as well as the possibility of a "Court of Public

Opinion" show on the CUNY case. Steve Reinhardt suggested that rather than an apology, the BRS more diplomatically ask the Diocese for a "clarification of its position" on the matter.

At the end of the meeting, Warren Allen Smith proposed that the BRS confer honorary membership on Ibn Warraq, pseudonymous author of *Why I Am Not a Muslim*. Ken Blackwell suggested postponing consideration of this proposal until Smith could present the Board with a brief statement in support of his nomination. Peter Stone added that this postponement could give the Board time to conclude its current elections and seat its newly elected members. Smith agreed to this suggestion.

Directors elected

The results of the election for the eight vacancies on the Board of Directors, held belatedly in June, were as follows. Steve Bayne, Jan Eisler, Keith Green, Nick Griffin, Justin Leiber, Chandrakala Padia, Harry Ruja, and Peter Stone were all elected. David White's name was inadvertently omitted from the ballot, for which the Society apologizes not only to David but to all the membership. Thanks also to Jim Alouf and Bob Barnard for running.

What the minutes don't say: quotable quotes

by Peter Stone, Secretary, BRS

The following verbatim quotes arose in the course of the annual meeting. Warning: If you find yourself saying any of these lines, you've probably spent too much time doing philosophy. Do not attempt to return to the real world on your own; seek immediate medical attention.

"Presumably the same argument would apply to feet."

"I want to reserve the right to agree with you."

"Eat with Wittgenstein at your peril."

"That's my chapstick, not my laser pointer."

"My promise is indexed with my loose moral character."

"I might comment on the dog's breakfast."

"This is the radical contingency of sex."

This last quote was the last sentence uttered during the last paper session of the conference. Seems appropriate, eh?

BRS t-shirts for sale

Some snappy green or orange t-shirts remain from the A.M. The front has the Society's name, motto and a photo of Russell. The back has the famous quote: "Remember your humanity and forget the rest." To purchase a shirt, send \$13 (which includes \$3 shipping, but include \$2 more outside the U.S.) to Alan Schwerin, Philosophy & Political Science, Monmouth U., West Long Branch, NJ 07764. Payment should be made out to the BRS.