

BRS Board and Society Meeting Minutes – 2016

BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY

2016 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Friday-Sunday, June 24-26, 2016

St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY

BRS ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES, Friday, June 24, 2016

Present/Registered: Tim Madigan, Michael Berumen, Ray Perkins Jr., Ken Blackwell, David Blitz, William Bruneau, Landon Elkind, Michael Stevenson, Russell Wahl, Michael Potter, John Ongley, Thomas Riggins, Rosalind Carey, Alan Schwerin, Thom Weidlich

Called to order at 7:44 PM by Ray Perkins, at St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY

Agenda circulated and approved.

1 - STANDARD BUSINESS

a) Treasurer's Report

Berumen circulated copies of the 2015 Financial Report, indicating that nothing had changed since it was distributed online. Between 31 May 2016 and 24 June 2016, the BRS received \$2,000 income due to annual meeting and membership fees.

Berumen explained that the BRS will not be put at financial risk in the near future, as he is donating \$1,000 to the BRS earmarked for investment in conservative index funds such as S&P 500, and he will continue to supplement that donation over time. He had planned to wait until November, but the recent Brexit decision has created buying opportunities. He suggests leaving the investment alone for a considerable duration, ensuring it is monitored and supervised.

MOTION: To approve the Treasurer's report.

CARRIED: Blitz/Weidlich

b) Approval of 2015 BRS Board of Directors Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the 2015 BRS Board of Directors Meeting

CARRIED: Wahl/Berumen

c) Election of Officers

President – Tim Madigan was nominated by Schwerin, seconded by Stevenson. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

Vice President – Peter Stone was nominated by Madigan, seconded by Weidlich. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

Vice President/Website Technology – Kris Notaro was nominated by Blitz, seconded by Bruneau. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

Vice President/Electronic Projects – Dennis Darland was nominated by Blackwell, seconded by Riggins. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

Treasurer – Michael Berumen was nominated by Bruneau, seconded by Elkind. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

Secretary – Michael Potter was nominated by Wahl, seconded by Madigan. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

Chair of the Board – Chad Trainer was nominated by Schwerin, seconded by Madigan. Ray Perkins nominated by Riggins, but Perkins declined. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

Vice Chair of the Board – Ray Perkins was nominated by Wahl, seconded by Riggins. No other nominations. Acclaimed.

d) Choice of Next Year's Annual Meeting Location

Blitz offered to host the Annual Meeting at Central Connecticut State University. Both the Philosophy department and the Peace Studies Department have indicated a willingness to sponsor the meeting. Blitz noted he would be teaching two courses on Bertrand Russell next year, one with 25 students, the other with 10 students. He believes he could induce the students to attend the Annual Meeting, which might encourage them to join the BRS.

To that end, Blitz indicated that he would like to hold the meeting at the end of the second week of May, when both US and Canadian students will have finished classes, but not so far from the end of classes that most students will be occupied elsewhere. After some discussion, in which possible scheduling conflicts were raised and the last week of May deemed undesirable due to Memorial Day, May 19th was chosen as the tentative date for the first day of the 2017 BRS Annual Meeting.

MOTION: To hold the 2017 BRS Annual Meeting at Central Connecticut State University, hosted by David Blitz.

CARRIED: Blitz/Ongley

MOTION: To hold the 2018 BRS Annual Meeting at McMaster University, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Bertrand Russell Archives.

CARRIED: Blitz/Weidlich

e) Reports

Book Award Committee –Perkins submitted the committee's report to the President, indicating that he wished to wait until tomorrow to divulge this year's winner.

Chapter Report – Elkind submitted his report on the University of Iowa chapter to the President. At present, his chapter has six undergraduates and several graduate student reading Russell.

John Ongley suggested publishing Elkind's report in the Society Bulletin, just as the Indian chapters had once published theirs in the BRS Quarterly and Newsletter.

2 – SPECIFIC ISSUES

a) Treasurer’s Proposed Succession Plan

Berumen has been working on succession planning for the BRS Treasurer for quite some time and has previously raised the matter with the Executive Committee.

Berumen suggested Elkind as someone who has the requisite arithmetical knowledge, attention to detail, interest in marketing, and technical skills to succeed him as Treasurer – as well as a helpful attitude and a desire to contribute more to the BRS. He has worked closely with Elkind on the BRS Bulletin for the last couple of years. Berumen would like to phase Elkind into the role gradually over the next year to teach him what to do, which would include giving Elkind gradual access to the BRS’ accounts as he learns. The goal is to ensure Elkind would be ready to step into the Treasurer role when Berumen retires as Treasurer in the summer of 2017.

Berumen would also like to investigate using a cloud version of Quickbooks, designed specifically for non-profits. It would cost \$400. The cloud version would enable the President to access the BRS’ finances if necessary – for instance, if something were to happen to the Treasurer.

Berumen has written ~40 pages of instructions for the incoming Treasurer. He has provided it to some members of the Executive Committee and is open to providing it to others.

Carey noted that the irregularity of identifying someone who will be set up to become Treasurer without having already been elected or appointed Treasurer. Mike Berumen responded that the Treasurer role is demanding, increasingly complex, and requires not only the sorts of knowledge one would typically expect of a treasurer, but also skill at marketing and welcoming new members. He added that he will not be present at the 2017 Annual Meeting, as he will be out of the country. Blackwell cautioned that there needs to be a paper trail; everything must be accurately recorded in case the BRS is audited.

Weidlich asked whether this is a matter that actually requires Board approval. Berumen responded that it may not. Blackwell added that the privacy issues involved may make this a proper matter for the Board. Riggins added that the Board’s approval is a vote of confidence in Berumen’s judgment.

MOTION: That Landon Elkind taken into Mike Berumen’s confidence and thus enabled to learn from and assist Mike Berumen over the next year to learn what he would need if voted in as Treasurer in 2017.

AMENDED: That the BRS empower the Treasurer to choose an assistant, who would be provided with access to the BRS’ financial systems, information, processes and practices at the Treasurer’s discretion.

CARRIED: Berumen/Weidlich (one opposed)

b) BRS *Bulletin* Editor’s Report and Suggestions for the Future

Berumen will complete two more *Bulletins* (Fall 2016 and Spring 2017) to fulfill his duties as editor. As of Fall 2017, Bruneau is willing to serve a four-issue (two-year) term as editor of the *Bulletin*. Berumen noted Bruneau's expertise in Russell's philosophy of education as well as his broad knowledge of Russell generally and his social skills, all of which he believes are beneficial to the position of *Bulletin* editor. Berumen said he hopes people will be as helpful to Bruneau as they have been to him, and that Bruneau hopes to find a young professor to take over when his term expires.

c) Special Request from the Treasurer

Berumen proposed an honorary membership in the BRS for Ken Blackwell, asking the board to "make it so" rather than ask Blackwell to accept it, as Blackwell is unlikely to accept. Blackwell worked closely with Bertrand Russell toward the end of Russell's life, has made many contributions to Russell scholarship and the BRS, was a founder of the BRS, promoted awareness of Russell's work in many areas and in many ways, and has exhibited moral courage. Extending him an honorary membership would recognize all Blackwell has done on behalf of Bertrand Russell and the BRS.

Berumen circulated copies of the honorary membership criteria.

MOTION: To bestow Honorary Membership in the BRS to Ken Blackwell
CARRIED: Berumen/Schwerin

d) The Role of PhilPapers in Promoting Russell Research

Phil Papers is the major index for philosophy papers in the world today, with 1.8 million entries and close to 1,000 journals in its database. Berumen found it striking that some journals get tremendous interest from the philosophical community while others do not. Downloads from the *Russell* journal are quite low compared to other journals in PhilPapers (the BRS *Bulletin* was added to PhilPapers only recently). It is an increasingly important outlet – especially for graduate students and early career faculty. PhilPapers could help us advertise our Annual Meetings and get more submissions from students, which could bring more students as well as faculty members into the BRS.

How, he asked, can we increase interest in the *Russell* journal? Berumen advised the following as potentially helpful ways to increase interest and, consequently, downloads:

- 1) Write powerful abstracts;
- 2) Ensure PhilPapers has access to our abstracts;
- 3) Ensure our papers can be downloaded when they are published in Russell (after the embargo, which covers the last four issues);
- 4) Notify PhilPapers about our published research

Additionally, we should be sure to inform PhilPapers when we run Russell conferences and events, as they'll promote it.

Blackwell mentioned that Dennis Darland has recently completed cataloguing all of the papers given at BRS Annual Meetings. We could submit them to PhilPapers as well.

e) Student Recruitment and Outreach

Maragides said the BRS is getting older, and suggested that we provide some form of membership to students who are currently taking philosophy courses on Russell. Their names could be submitted by their professors. Some such students may end up staying in the BRS, which would invigorate our membership. Bruneau asked why we would restrict this to philosophy students. What about historians? We shouldn't ignore the impact of Russell studies outside of philosophy. Many historians teach courses that are about, or include, Russell. But perhaps this could be a bottomless pit – we may get too many students.

Since the *Russell* journal is the biggest cost of membership, Blitz asked whether we could just give students special access to electronic copies of the journal, as students would prefer it anyway, and there would be no cost to us.

Carey added that we should be striving specifically for the graduate student demographic. Graduate students, she believes, don't want a journal; they want to be active participants. We should encourage BRS members who are professors to work on Russell projects with their students and either co-present at the BRS Annual Meeting with their students, or encourage the students to present. They could make this part of their course expectations. A panel may be preferable to presentations, as it may seem less threatening. Participation gives people an investment in the BRS. If we decided on a panel topic a year in advance, we would have time to get students working on relevant projects.

Berumen noted that gift memberships for students haven't worked well in the past, as they tend not to renew.

Since it may appeal especially to students, Berumen suggested that this may be a good time to start emphasizing the social activist side of Russell in the journal, the Bulletin and elsewhere.

Carey suggested making a student panel a permanent part of the BRS Annual Meetings.

All agreed that it would be wise to raise these ideas with everyone else at lunch tomorrow.

MOTION: To adjourn the 2016 BRS Board of Directors meeting.

CARRIED: Wahl/Riggins

3 – ONLINE MOTIONS

The following motions were passed by the Board via online meetings after the 2016 Annual Meeting.

17 July 2016

MOTION: To increased the cost of lifetime memberships in the Bertrand Russell Society

CARRIED: Madigan

24 July 2016

MOTION: To make Johan Galtung an Honorary Member of the Bertrand Russell Society

CARRIED: Madigan

Michael Potter

BRS Secretary

June 2, 2017

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1 – Quorum

Ken Blackwell circulated a notice of motion prior to the meeting: **MOVED** that in the Society bylaws, article 9, section 1, the concluding sentence “Six members constitute a quorum.” be revised to read “Twelve members constitute a quorum.”

Members were generally supportive, with no substantive concerns.

MOTION: In the Society bylaws, article 9, section 1, the concluding sentence “Six members constitute a quorum.” shall be revised to read “Twelve members constitute a quorum.”

CARRIED: Perkins/Potter

2 – Nuclear Abolition

Perkins circulated a statement that he would like the Society to send as a press release, asking President Obama to remain committed to an anti-proliferation promise made in 2009.

Discussion regarding how the motion will be promoted and released, and to whom. Riggins noted that the motion doesn’t address the greater problem of tactical nuclear weapons, which may inspire a new nuclear arms race, which are already part of a 30-year, trillion-dollar “modernization” program that gives the lie to commitments to nuclear abolition. The distinction between “first use” (reserving the right to use nuclear weapons) and “first strike” (a commitment to use nuclear weapons pre-emptively) was also discussed. Blair noted that Obama’s “no first use” statement was endorsed by his Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Concern was raised about the possible vagueness of the “2009 commitment”. It may be preferable to pinpoint a specific speech, date, and location. Some members believe the speech was given in Prague.

Members thanked Perkins for the directness, brevity, and simplicity of the motion.

MOTION: We, members of the Bertrand Russell Society,

Cognizant of the unparalleled catastrophe that the use of thermonuclear weapons would cause,
Concerned about the danger of accidental nuclear use engendered by renewed Cold War-like hostilities between the US and Russia, and
Mindful of President Obama's much welcomed 2009 avowal to advance the cause of a nuclear free world,
Urge that:
President Obama publicly reaffirm his 2009 commitment to nuclear abolition and make it a central focus of the remainder of his term in office; and, as much needed steps to avert a nuclear catastrophe, that he forthwith: (1) declare a ³no-first-use² policy for US nuclear weapons and (2) take all US ICBMs off hair-trigger alert and invite Russia to do the same.

CARRIED: Perkins/Rolfe

3 – Bylaw Updates

Berumen brought it to the Society's attention that the BRS bylaws are out of date, and he would like permission to work on updating them. At present, we are in routine violation of some bylaws.

Berumen noted that no motion is necessary. Proposed updates need only be brought to the Board for approval.

Riggins would also like to be involved in this project.

4 – 2017 BRS Annual Meeting

Blitz informed the Society that the 2017 Annual Meeting will be held at Central Connecticut University, and will feature a poster session for advanced students studying Russell and a panel on Principles of Social Reconstruction. He hopes to hold the meeting around 20 May 2017.

5 – Other Business

Elkind informed the Society that the University of Iowa is giving him and Landini money to teach a summer seminar on the Philosophy of Logical Atomism, 12-16 June 2017. He would like to invite BRS members to attend. Details will be posted on the listserv.

Michael Potter
BRS Secretary
June 1, 2017