

## BERTRAND RUSSELL AND THE TRIBUNAL<sup>1</sup>

The first issue of The Tribunal appeared on Wednesday, March 8, 1916 and the 182nd (and last) came out on Thursday, January 8, 1920. Russell's association with it spans nearly the whole of its existence. His name appears for the first time in No.12 on June 8, 1916 when the Tribunal's readers were informed he had been sentenced to a fine of £100 and £10 costs or 61 days imprisonment for having authored the Everett leaflet. Two earlier issues, Nos. 8 and 9, recorded prosecutions of others for the crime of distributing the leaflet. The concluding paragraph of Russell's defence, which the judge stopped in the middle on the ground of irrelevancy, is printed in No.16, and both it and No.17 carry an advertisement on their mast-heads for Rex v. Bertrand Russell. This pamphlet, a verbatim transcript of the trial, and nothing more, was speedily suppressed by the authorities on the rather surprising ground that, since the prosecutor had read all of the Everett leaflet at the trial, the transcript couldn't be made public without giving this mischievous leaflet publicity.

Russell's first article, "Clifford Allen and Lloyd George", leads off No.22. Lloyd George, then Secretary of State for War, had promised to make the path of the conscientious objector who would not accept alternative service "a very hard one". Clifford Allen, chairman of the No-Conscription Fellowship, refused to grow cabbages, so he was handed over to the military men for punishment. Russell gets to the heart of the matter directly:

Mr. Lloyd George seems to think that conscience can only forbid things: the kind that enjoins things is apparently unknown to him. . . Does he think that Joan of Arc would have accepted civil alternative service? Would he himself have been willing to spend all his time during the Boer War in growing cabbages? With his customary incisiveness Russell demolishes all of the arguments Lloyd George advances by showing that none of them fit Clifford Allen. Since Allen is typical of the members of the N.-C.F., Russell concludes that the "Government cannot break the movement which has been led by Mr. Clifford Allen" and it never did.

Early in 1917 Russell was elected "substitute chairman" of the N.-C.F., and since Allen, who was chairman, was still in prison, Russell acted as chairman throughout 1917. He also edited the Tribunal that year, signing 42 of its editorials and five of its feature articles. In "Russia Leads the Way" Russell enthusiastically welcomed the revolution in Russia which overthrew the Tsar; but the Bolshevik revolution some months later passed without mention. Many of the other writings are immediately accessible to today's reader, though some, like "Who Is the British Bolo?", "The Kaiser's Reply to the Pope" and "Six Months for Spreading Truth", require, to be completely understood, detailed knowledge of the state of the world during the first World War.

Russell's "The German Peace Offer", the feature article of the first issue of 1918, landed him in prison. One likely consequence of the refusal of the peace offer, he argued, would be that

The American garrison, which will by that time be occupying England and France, whether or not they will prove efficient against the Germans, will no doubt be capable of intimidating

strikers, an occupation to which the American Army is accustomed when at home.

These words, his prosecutor stated, would, if uncontradicted, have a "diabolical effect" on British and Allied soldiers, so Russell had to be punished. The judge agreed and gave him six months.

His imprisonment ruled out signed contributions to the Tribunal and shortly after his release the war was over. His connections with the N.-C.F. and the Tribunal weakened after that, though they were never severed. In December 1918 Christmas cards "bearing a message from Bertrand Russell" are advertised, and for the issue of April 24, 1919 he wrote an editorial, "What the Conscientious Objector Has Achieved". Those whose conscience forbade even alternative service, he argued, "won an important right: the right to take no direct part in warfare". Though they have failed to make their views widely understood, these same men "have proved that their beliefs were too strong to be broken by the whole might of the State; they have demonstrated afresh the dignity of the individual, which militarism is concerned to destroy." Thus in his next to last contribution to the Tribunal Russell is able to report that the prediction he made in his first article has come true.

Russell's final appearance in the Tribunal is in the last issue, which is entirely devoted to the concluding convention of the N.-C.F. He was one of the speakers and returned to an old theme, "What the C.O. Stands For". Basically what they stood for is that "each human soul, each individual growing and living, has within him something sacred, something that must not be warped and destroyed by the imposition of outside forces". Readers of Russell will instantly recognize this theme as a dominant one with him. Between "The Free Man's Worship" in 1903 and the Autobiography of 1967-9 it recurs many times, reminding us of his Whig and Protestant upbringing which had made such a deep impression on him.

During the Tribunal's existence Russell signed 10 feature articles and 45 editorials. We are tantalized by Alan Wood with the prospect that he also wrote unsigned copy for it. Wood writes in The Passionate Sceptic that "Russell was always ready to write anything for the N.-C.F., signed or unsigned" (Allen & Unwin, 1957, p.111). It may be that all of Russell's unsigned writings for the N.-C.F. were for publications other than the Tribunal. We do not know. If any reader of Russell has information bearing on the question, it will be gratefully received. Readers will, of course, be kept informed of any attributions of unsigned Tribunal articles to Bertrand Russell.

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<sup>1</sup>The Tribunal, Published by The No-Conscription Fellowship; Nos. 1-182, London, March 8th, 1916 - January 8th, 1920. Introduction by John G. Slater. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1970. c.456 pages. \$75