

Joey Smallwood talks with Russell

Newfoundland's premier from 1949 to 1972 was a journalist in his youth. His autobiography, I Chose Canada, led us to this interview. It first appeared as "Russell Views America" in the socialist New York Leader on June 7th, 1924. No one, we are sure, will deny that the biographical information it presents about Russell is unique.

Interviewing a great and world-renowned philosopher, mathematician, economist and Socialist while he is getting out of bed, removing his pajamas and hauling on his socks and underclothing, is an entertaining piece of business.

Asking and getting answers to questions on prodigious and momentous topics while the philosopher, his coarse gray hair still unkempt, fastened his garters, hauled on his trousers and then laced his shoes, the while he carried on his end of the interview by twisting his head sideways and upwards in a polite endeavour to face you, was a rare bit of fun.

Bertrand Russell, himself a man of the lightest humour and fine good nature, might have been enjoying the situation as well, to judge by the twinkle in his eye and the wit with which all of his replies and comments were flashed back. One could not help conjecturing how scintillatingly brilliant the man must be by the end of a day of intellectual friction if at the moment of being dragged out of bed by another interviewer he were so keenly alive and alert and witty.

But - in the interest of historical accuracy and for the benefit of future students of human personality - this article ought not to proceed another sentence without publishing to the world a fact which the fascinating eyes of the interviewer were not slow to note: it has to do with Mr. Russell's under attire.

The Hon. Bertrand Russell, M.A., F.R.S., grandson of Lord John Russell, twice Prime Minister of Great Britain, brother of an earl and heir to an earldom, wears no undershirt. His outside shirt, the one to which his stiff linen collar is attached, is his only shirt, and is worn next to his body! And, furthermore, when Mr. Russell removed this shirt the evening before, he left the collar still attached by a collar-button to the back of the collar band, just as a fireman would do if a fireman were in the habit of wearing linen collars.

However, it never has been our intention to compete with any of those persons who felt it a duty to give to the world the purple descriptions of the royal ladies and gentlemen of the courts of the monarchs of merry France in the days of Du Barry and Pompadour, et al. Besides, Party loyalty would suggest a limit to these "disclosures" of a good fellow-Socialist. We Socialists love and honour Bertrand Russell - even if he does wear but one shirt and keeps his trousers up with suspenders, or braces. There may even be some merit in the idea.

"Mr. Gompers' old age," was Mr. Russell's quick response to the question: "What is the most encouraging sign you have seen of the imminency of American Labour turning to independent Labour politics?"

Then he added: "And the efforts of your courts and attorney generals." He had not stopped to ponder; the answer was prompt, Mr. Russell obviously had been thinking about the matter.

"You are just now, politically, where we in Britain were thirty years ago," said Mr. Russell. "Labour at that time was waking up to the realization that in independent political action lay its best hope of

emancipation. That realization was given great impetus by the energy of our own courts, particularly the Taff Vale decision. Your courts here are your best Labour propagandists."

The famous philosopher, who is a keen observer of all things about him, declared that in addressing college students and hearing their questions he detected most encouraging signs of a revolt against the hypocrisy and cant of current political conceptions in this country. He had spoken at many colleges during his 60-day tour of the country. The topic which aroused the widest interest wherever he went, he said, was "How to get world peace."

Dined and entertained by many of the nation's greatest scholars, as he was, and listened to with rapt attention by many thousands who heard his seventy addresses, Mr. Russell mentioned as at least one incident that varied his remarkable reception, the fact that while addressing Harvard students in Boston a General - at a meeting of the American Legion going on at the same moment - tried to incite his hearers to go and smash up Mr. Russell's meeting. Thus was the distinguished lecturer fortunate while here in getting at least one partial taste of that muchbespoken commodity, 100 per centism.

Mr. Russell, who was to sail for England on Saturday, was asked whether he intended upon his return to write a book about America.

"No," he said; "how odd!"
