

“HIS CLASS SLACK-JAWED
AND WITH EYES AGLAZE”:
BERTRAND RUSSELL AT UCLA, 1939–40

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Bertrand Russell left the “bleak hideousness” of Chicago in March 1939 to accept an appointment at the University of California at Los Angeles. Scholarly analysis of Russell’s sojourn in California has focused on the College of the City of New York controversy that engulfed him in the winter term of 1940 and his subsequent departure from UCLA to take up the William James Lectureship at Harvard University. This paper concentrates on Russell’s appointment to UCLA and his experience teaching in Los Angeles during the 1939–40 academic year in an attempt to reconstruct his activities during this tumultuous period while he resided in America between 1938 and 1944.

After teaching at the University of Chicago for six months to commence his sojourn in America from 1938 to 1944, Bertrand Russell secured a job at the University of California at Los Angeles in the 1939–40 academic year. Russell’s time at UCLA coincided with key occurrences in his private and public life that would seem to attach considerable significance to this appointment. His third wife Patricia, their young son Conrad, and John and Kate Russell, Russell’s children from his second marriage, were together with him in Los Angeles. Furthermore, the outbreak of the Second World War witnessed Russell’s gradual rejection of the pacifist stance that he had forcefully articulated since the publication of *Which Way to Peace?* in 1936. Finally, his return to the front ranks of academic

philosophers seemed assured by his invitation to take up the William James Lectureship at Harvard, and he spent much of his time in California finishing the James lectures that would be published as the influential *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. Yet in his *Autobiography*, Russell is virtually silent about his involvement with UCLA apart from briefly describing his poor relationship with Robert Gordon Sproul, the autocratic, long-time University of California president (1930–58) for whom Russell developed “a profound aversion”. At faculty meetings, Russell recounts, Sproul “used to march in as if he were wearing jack-boots, and rule any motion out of order if he did not happen to like it. Everybody trembled at his frown, and I was reminded of a meeting of the Reichstag under Hitler” (*Auto.* 2: 218).

Russell scholars and biographers have similarly tended to provide few details about Russell’s involvement with UCLA. Ronald Clark briefly explains Russell’s devotion to his children while living in Los Angeles and his renunciation of pacifism in the spring of 1940, but he devotes a scant few sentences to the “almost totalitarian atmosphere”¹ of the university under Sproul’s leadership. Similarly, Ray Monk emphasizes Russell’s “deep dislike”² of Sproul and—predictably for Monk—his dysfunctional family life without any sustained analysis of the reasons behind Russell’s recruitment to UCLA and his teaching activities except for his political views on the darkening situation in Europe he presented to students. And Barry Feinberg and Ronald Kasrils sparingly use Russell’s letters and his *Autobiography* to discuss the experiences of his children in California and the state’s weather. They also quote extensively from a tape recording created in the 1950s in which Russell anecdotally notes that he learned “some rather interesting things about the economic life of California” while he resided there. Russell describes an unnamed Bank of America president—Amadeo Pietro Giannini in actuality—as an “Italian fascist” who “completely governed” the University of California because of his financial clout. “I was credibly informed”, Russell reminisced, “that if one were to say anything against him one would be assassinated.”³ All of these authors (and Russell himself) do provide exhaustive coverage

¹ CLARK, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (1976), p. 469.

² MONK, *Bertrand Russell: the Ghost of Madness, 1921–1970* (2001), p. 230.

³ *BRA* 1: 132. A transcription of this recording was eventually published as “Reading History as It Is Never Written”, *CS*, pp. 290–306.

of Russell’s debacle early in 1940 over the revoked appointment at the College of the City of New York, but this is only related to Russell’s experience at UCLA to the extent that Russell had, to his regret, given up his appointment in Los Angeles to accept the CCNY post.⁴

To overcome the fragmentary academic analysis of Russell’s sojourn in California, this article uses previously unexplored or underutilized archival sources held by the University of California system in Los Angeles and Berkeley and the Russell Archives at McMaster University to examine Russell’s experience at UCLA and provide new insight into an important time in his life in five key areas. First, Russell’s appointment originated with UCLA’s Department of Philosophy, proceeded neither effortlessly nor automatically, and resulted in a short-term contract seemingly unsuited to a philosopher of his international reputation. Second, a technical violation of American immigration law resulting from Russell’s decision to seek work following the expiration of his contract at the University of Chicago instead of returning to England nearly nullified his UCLA appointment and required the intervention of senior officials in Franklin Roosevelt’s administration to resolve. Third, Russell immersed himself in his teaching duties at UCLA and largely abandoned the frenetic schedule of speaking engagements and popular journalism that had marked his quest for financial security after his unceremonious departure from Cambridge University during the First World War. Fourth, although Russell remained silent about social and moral issues during his tenure at UCLA, opponents of his established positions on marriage and sexuality launched concerted protests against his appointment that regularly engaged senior university officials. Finally, Russell’s ill-fated acceptance of the CCNY appointment precipitated his eventual departure from California after his contract with UCLA expired in June 1940 and exemplified his ongoing difficulty securing a stable university position in the United States before he returned to Cambridge in 1944.

The Southern Branch of the University of California received its charter in 1919 and initially used the facilities of the Los Angeles State Normal School that had previously provided teacher education in Southern California since 1882. Renamed the University of California at Los Angeles in 1927, the new 400-acre Westwood campus opened

⁴ The best account of the CCNY affair is WEIDLICH, *Appointment Denied* (2000).

two years later and hosted more than 5,000 undergraduate students.⁵ Despite the impact of the Great Depression, enrolment and academic programming expanded throughout the 1930s. UCLA's Department of Philosophy shared in this growth, although its faculty numbers and enrolments were low in relation to larger programmes in the sciences and professional schools. At the end of the 1937–38 academic year, the department counted 40 majors in Philosophy and instructed more than 1,000 students in its courses. A small, established MA programme was supplemented by the inauguration of courses in 1938 leading to a doctoral degree. Before the commencement of the 1939–40 academic year, the teaching faculty of the department was in a state of flux. Professor Donald Piatt—who in the eyes of senior university officials conducted routine business “passably well” but whose “general judgments are often deplorable”⁶—chaired the department. E. C. Moore, Hugh Miller, Hans Reichenbach, and Donald Williams were the other full-time members of the department, and Isabel Creed had held a contract instructor position since 1936. Two positions needed to be filled before the 1939 school year commenced. Williams had taken a one-year leave of absence to work at Harvard, and John E. Boodin would leave the department in September 1939 after reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70 years.

To replace Boodin, the Department of Philosophy sought to determine Russell's interest in the position by corresponding with Charles Morris, the Chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago, in November 1938.⁷ Morris confirmed that Russell was “decidedly available” and “in fine spirits, very vigorous, and not merely a ‘name’—he is doing excellent work.... I know that he is pinched for money, and I feel he would consider any reasonable offer.”⁸ Armed with this information, Piatt asked Robert Sproul to approve a formal approach to Russell.⁹ But the University of California

⁵ For an overview of the early history of UCLA, see STADTMAN, *The University of California, 1868–1968* (1970), and DUNDJERSKI, *UCLA: the First Century* (2011).

⁶ Earle R. Hedrick to Sproul, 15 May 1939, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs' Correspondence, Box 5, File “Piatt Correspondence, 1939”, UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA (hereafter “UCLA Library”).

⁷ For an overview of Russell's experience at the University of Chicago in 1938–39, see SLEZAK AND JACKANICZ, “‘The Town Is Bestly and the Weather Was Vile’” (1977).

⁸ Morris to Williams, 8 Nov. 1938, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs' Correspondence, Box 5, File “Piatt Correspondence, 1938”, UCLA Library.

⁹ Piatt to Sproul, 29 Nov. 1938, *ibid.* Boodin had wanted to name R. F. A. Hoernle as

president—although he had recommended Russell for an appointment several years earlier—expressed his reservations about Piatt’s proposed course of action; the recent appointment of Hans Reichenbach (who would reach his 50th birthday in 1941), Sproul maintained, “makes me incline somewhat toward the appointment of a younger man for the next vacancy.”¹⁰ Undaunted, the Department of Philosophy subsequently voted to recommend Russell as Boodin’s replacement with a sole dissenting vote coming from E. C. Moore. “The members of the Department strongly concur in this recommendation,” Piatt informed Sproul, “believing that the present offers an extraordinary and indeed our only opportunity to replace Professor Boodin with another philosopher of mature powers and world-wide reputation.”¹¹ Again, Sproul did not support Russell’s proposed candidacy for the vacant position, citing Russell’s advanced age—he would be 67 years old in 1939—that would soon require his departure because of the mandatory retirement age of 70 years in the state-controlled university system. “Unless, therefore,” Sproul counselled Piatt, “you and your colleagues in the department feel strongly about the matter, I should prefer not to accept your suggestion of Mr. Russell and to ask you, instead, to make recommendations for an appointee who might be permanent.”¹²

Despite Sproul’s concerns, Piatt went ahead and included Russell in his department’s budget calculations for the 1939–40 academic year¹³ and continued his correspondence with Morris about Russell’s interest in the UCLA position. Morris informed Piatt early in January 1939 that Russell had claimed that the University of Southern California “is pushing him pretty hard for assurances that he would accept a reasonable offer” and, in view of this potential rival suitor, Morris

his replacement, but he did not press the matter and supported the department’s preference for Russell.

¹⁰ Sproul to Piatt, 5 Dec. 1938, *ibid.* In Piatt’s 29 November 1938 letter to Sproul, he noted Sproul had “first invited us to consider Russell” at an undetermined earlier date—perhaps for the post offered to Reichenbach. In Sproul’s 5 December reply, he noted that “my own attitude toward him [Russell] has not changed materially”, although he still preferred hiring a younger individual to replace Boodin.

¹¹ Piatt to Sproul, 20 Dec. 1938, *ibid.*

¹² Sproul to Piatt, 27 Dec. 1938, *ibid.*

¹³ Hedrick to Sproul, 15 May 1939, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs’ Correspondence, Box 5, File “Piatt Correspondence, 1939”, *ibid.*

advised that UCLA should begin to finalize an offer.¹⁴ But Sproul still refused to formally approve Russell's candidacy, telephoning Piatt on 6 February to indicate that he was waiting for the state budget to be passed to ensure the funds for Boodin's replacement position would be available. In the meantime, Piatt continued to emphasize to Morris that Russell could be employed up to his 70th birthday, and he hoped that Russell would be willing to teach three courses on a schedule of only three days per week; "we earnestly hope that Russell's price will not be prohibitive," Piatt declared, "for we are eager to have him."¹⁵ In his role as intermediary, Morris provided a full account of the state of play in mid-February:

I read most of your letter to Russell. It now seems as if he has no quick decision to make regarding USC, but can wait until he is in Los Angeles late in March. I see no reason why he could not talk matters over with you then—this relieves you of much pressure as to time. It would, however, seem wise to begin correspondence with him whenever you are able. R. is anxious to go to England regularly to keep contact with his two children there. Hence he would prefer (though not necessarily demand) a half year arrangement. We did not talk an absolutely definite sum, but I mentioned \$5000 for a half year, and it was clear he would consider this or even somewhat less. I doubt he would want to have less than \$8000 a year (because of the large alimony he pays)—perhaps \$4000 for a half year would not be refused.... He was glad to know that the position would carry on to the age of 70.... Our talk was brief and there was nothing final nor any sort of definite stipulation. So at the best this note gives you some vague idea of what he would prefer.¹⁶

Movement on Russell's hiring continued slowly, particularly since the offer from UCLA's crosstown rival failed to materialize. Earle R. Hedrick, the Vice-President of the University of California system based in Los Angeles, conferred with Sproul on 2 March, and the two administrators agreed that no action needed to be taken until Russell

¹⁴ Morris to Piatt, [?] Jan. 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, University of California Berkeley Archives, Bancroft Library (hereafter "UC Berkeley Library"). Piatt forwarded this letter to Sproul on 20 January 1939, so it was likely written in the third week of that month.

¹⁵ Piatt to Morris, 7 Feb. 1939, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs' Correspondence, Box 5, File "Piatt Correspondence, 1939", UCLA Library.

¹⁶ Morris to Piatt, 11 Feb. 1939, *ibid.*

arrived in California to deliver a lecture on the Berkeley campus before commencing a lecture tour in the state.¹⁷ By 16 March, Russell, Patricia (“Peter”), and Conrad were in Berkeley at the Hotel Claremont before they moved to San Ysidro Ranch in Montecito near Santa Barbara at the end of March—he would leave the state on 31 March for a national speaking tour before returning to Montecito four weeks later.¹⁸ Before he departed California, it appears that some sort of agreement had been reached between Sproul and Russell about the UCLA appointment. Russell’s first letters during his lecture tour indicate he would be teaching at UCLA in September,¹⁹ and Peter also seemingly confirmed the appointment in a private letter: “My husband is away lecturing at present, but he is coming back to California, and none of us are returning to England this year, as he has accepted a job at the U.C.L.A. I wish it were at Berkeley, where we like the country better, but we must not be ungrateful.”²⁰ To the chagrin of university officials, Peter also spoke to the press, and the society pages of the *Los Angeles Times* announced in mid-April a three-year appointment for Russell at UCLA.²¹

Nonetheless, Russell had yet to sign a formal contract of any duration. On 5 April 1939, Sproul set the formal approval of Russell’s appointment in motion by writing to Hedrick: “Will you ask the Budget Committee to nominate on the fitness of Lord Russell for a professorship of philosophy? I hope that the committee will be carefully chosen for, if it fails to approve Russell, we shall have to appoint him as a visiting professor from year to year, and that would be a nuisance.”²² Eventually, Hedrick created a five-person special committee chaired by William M. Whyburn, a professor in the Department of Mathematics, to vet Russell’s credentials.²³ In his instructions to the committee

¹⁷ Record of Conversation, 2 March 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

¹⁸ See STEVENSON, “‘In Solitude I Brood on War’: Bertrand Russell’s 1939 American Lecture Tour” (2013).

¹⁹ Russell informed Gamel Brenan on 1 April that “I have accepted a 3-years’ appointment as Professor at Los Angeles” (Russell to Brenan, 1 April 1939, *SLBR* 2: #435).

²⁰ P. Russell to Paul A. Schilpp, 9 April 1939, RA3 176.

²¹ “Russells Take Summer Home”, *Los Angeles Times*, 13 April 1939, sec. 2, p. 5.

²² Sproul to Hedrick, 5 April 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

²³ Harry M. Showman to Sproul, 17 April 1939, *ibid.* The other committee members were J. E. Boodin (Philosophy), Sigurd B. Hustvedt (English), J. H. Williams (Physics), and Vern Oliver Knudsen (Physics and the Dean of the Graduate Division).

regarding the qualifications for a post “carrying permanent tenure”, Sproul emphasized the necessity to determine Russell’s research productivity, “particularly with respect to quality”, the superior nature of his teaching beyond “acceptable routine performance of instruction”, and his proficiency in discharging administrative duties.²⁴ Predictably, the special committee lauded Russell’s credentials:

The committee is of the opinion that Mr. Russell merits the indicated appointment. This opinion is based on a critical examination of his writings, a study of his probable contributions to the University in the fields of teaching and general service, and an attempted evaluation of the effect that his coming here will have on the community. Mr. Russell has been a prolific writer of books and journal articles.... He has made scholarly contributions to the fields of Philosophy and Mathematics. It is thought that students in both of these fields will profit by his presence on this campus. The committee believes that any unfavorable criticisms that might arise from opinions expressed by Mr. Russell in the past or likely to be expressed by him during his stay on this campus, are of little significance in the face of the recognized eminence of the man.²⁵

The University of California budget committee discussed Russell’s appointment during its deliberations on 4 May 1939 and unanimously supported the recommendations of the special committee.²⁶

Russell’s full professor appointment to carry him to his retirement age, therefore, seemed assured, and his salary of \$7,200 budgeted for the 1939–40 academic year that far exceeded any other member in the Department of Philosophy reflected his academic eminence.²⁷ Yet the contract forwarded to Russell in mid-July carried a term of a single year for reasons that cannot fully be determined.²⁸ Russell immediately signed and returned the contract and did not question the term of the appointment, and it was publicly acknowledged that no three-

²⁴ Sproul to Whyburn, 18 April 1939, *ibid.*

²⁵ Whyburn to Sproul, 27 April 1939, *ibid.* The report appended a list of 50 books Russell had authored on political, social, and philosophical matters beginning with *German Social Democracy* in 1896.

²⁶ A. W. Bellamy to Sproul, 5 May 1939, *ibid.*

²⁷ R. M. Underhill to Piatt, 14 July 1939, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs’ Correspondence, Box 5, File “Piatt Correspondence, 1939”, UCLA Library. Hans Reichenbach’s salary of \$4,500 ranked second in the Department of Philosophy.

²⁸ Underhill to Russell, 14 July 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

year contract existed. In reporting about Russell’s legal difficulties in the spring of 1940, for example, the *Oakland Tribune* noted that “Russell’s one-year contract with the University expires June 30.”²⁹ Probably, therefore, a verbal agreement between Russell and university administrators allowed for the renewal of the appointment on a year-to-year basis, despite Sproul’s earlier claim that the full professor position would negate the need for renewing the position annually. His short-to-medium term employment status secured, Russell spent much of the summer at Leandro Cottage in Montecito—Patricia Russell had moved the family there after leaving San Ysidro Ranch—recovering from a serious back injury, but he did undertake a family vacation in Yosemite National Park with his entire immediate family after John and Kate came to the United States in August. Russell arrived in Los Angeles on 7 or 8 September and settled with his family in a comfortable home at 212 Loring Avenue close by the UCLA campus before he commenced teaching in the third week of September.³⁰

While the details of Russell’s UCLA contract came together, his immigration status threatened to void his appointment. Russell, Peter, and Conrad (and Conrad’s nurse, Pamela Campbell) had entered the United States on 25 September 1938 as temporary visitors, with Russell listed as an author destined for the University of Chicago. While he was in New York at the end of his national lecture tour in April 1939, Russell experienced difficulty extending his visa, and he telegraphed Sproul from the office of William Feakins, his tour agent, seeking assistance: “WILL PRESIDENT PLEASE SEND TODAY AIR MAIL LETTER CONFIRMING APPOINTMENT URGENT FOR IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES.”³¹ Sproul subsequently complied, providing a brief signed statement in care of Feakins indicating that Russell—despite the uncertainty of his employment status—had “been offered a professorship of philosophy on the Los Angeles campus of the University of California effective July 1, 1939, and has accepted the same. He will begin his

²⁹ “UC Regents Will Consider Attack on Noted Briton”, *Oakland Tribune*, 1 May 1940, p. 3.

³⁰ For a description of Russell’s home on Loring Avenue and other homes at which he and his family stayed while in California, see TURCON, “Russell’s Homes: In America” (2017).

³¹ Feakins to Sproul, 21 April 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

teaching duties on or about September 16.”³² Feakins thanked Sproul for his timely assistance, indicating that “the matter has been fixed up here.” The visa extension “has not been definitely granted”, he noted, “but they accepted his application, which I understand is not unusually put in until a few weeks before the expiration of the visa.”³³ Having returned following his tour to Leandro Cottage for the summer before assuming his teaching duties, a relieved Russell apologized to Sproul for the hassle but noted that he could only apply to stay in America in New York, his point of entry into the country.³⁴

Russell’s optimism that his immigration problems were addressed proved unfounded. On 6 July, the us Department of Labor denied Russell’s request for a year’s extension to his visa on the grounds that he had accepted employment with the University of California and aliens admitted under a temporary visitor’s permit could not change the purpose for which they were originally admitted.³⁵ The archival trail related to this setback goes cold for the month of July 1939 and, strangely, Russell’s correspondence makes no mention of the matter. On 4 August, though, Russell received an order signed by Byron Uhl, the director of the New York district of the Department of Labor, that he and his family must leave the United States within eleven days. Patricia Russell immediately telephoned Sproul’s office,³⁶ and senior officials sprang into action. Earle Hedrick sent a telegram to Frances Perkins, the us Secretary of Labor in Franklin Roosevelt’s administration, protesting the order. “We are deeply concerned”, Hedrick wrote, because Russell’s appointment had been announced and his deportation would be “exceedingly embarrassing to us as well as disruptive of proposed courses.”³⁷ Hedrick also advocated immediate action to rescind the order, since Russell would be required to leave California two days later to reach New York in the allotted time to leave the country. Similarly, Monroe Deutsch, the Provost of the University of California at Berkeley, implored Perkins to personally intervene. “There must have been some error” in issuing the order, Deutsch claimed, since Russell had provided immigration officials with

³² Sproul to Russell, 21 April 1939, *ibid.*

³³ Feakins to Sproul, 29 April 1939, *ibid.*

³⁴ Russell to Sproul, 1 May 1939, *ibid.*

³⁵ Shaughnessy to Monroe Deutsch, 10 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

³⁶ N. Sanborn to unidentified recipient [presumably Sproul], 4 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

³⁷ Hedrick to Perkins, 4 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

Sproul’s letter confirming his employment at UCLA beginning 1 July, and no other inquiry had been made by the immigration authorities about the matter. “I deeply regret the necessity of troubling you”, Deutsch noted, “but the matter is, as I am sure you will realize, a very desperate one for those concerned.”³⁸

These representations proved effective, and Hedrick received a telegram from Marshall Dimock, the second assistant secretary in the Department of Labor, on 5 August that a thirty-day stay of the deportation order would be issued to allow further consideration of the matter.³⁹ Perkins responded to Deutsch as well, explaining that the extension would provide Russell with the opportunity to travel to Mexico and apply for a visa before the American Consul in Ensenada. “This would be the best solution to the problem,” Perkins noted, “since a person who is here on a visitor’s permit is not permitted to engage in gainful occupation.”⁴⁰ A senior immigration official subsequently provided Deutsch with a third, most detailed account of the steps Russell needed to take to resolve his immigration conundrum:

Generally speaking, aliens who have been admitted under a temporary visitor’s status are not permitted to change the purpose for which they were originally admitted. In order that Lord Russell may be in a position to accept a three year contract with your University, he should depart, secure appropriate immigration visas from an American Consul and be readmitted in the regular manner with his family. It is understood that the English quota is current and no doubt they could proceed to some neighboring country, appear before an American Consul, obtain immigration visas and apply for readmission as immigrants.... In view of Lord Russell’s income of \$7,200 per year, it is evident that he and his family would be able to establish without any doubt that they will not become public charges in the United States and they should encounter no difficulty on that score. Should it be decided that Lord Russell, his wife, son and nurse will depart for the purpose of securing appropriate visas for permanent residents and that the 30 days’ stay authorized on August 5, 1939, is not sufficient to prepare their documents, the Department will be disposed to grant a further stay of sufficient duration to allow them to adjust their status.⁴¹

³⁸ Deutsch to Perkins, 5 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

³⁹ Dimock to Hedrick, 5 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Perkins to Deutsch, 9 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Shaughnessy to Deutsch, 10 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

Provided with this information by telephone, Russell initially proved unwilling to comply with the Department of Labor's suggested process to secure the visa documentation because he now had John and Kate with him. Russell informed Deutsch that his two oldest children, being wards in chancery, had permission to visit the United States, but not any other country. "I have not seen them for nearly a year", Russell noted, "& cannot bear to send them straight home again." Furthermore, he doubted that all of the required birth and marriage certificates could be sent from England before the thirty-day extension period concluded. Russell, hoped, therefore, that the Department of Labor would grant a further extension to allow his children to return to England in mid-September as planned; he could then secure his visa at the beginning of the school term at UCLA and he hoped that the university "will not object to this enforced journey."⁴² Once again, University of California officials proved accommodating. Deutsch encouraged Russell to fill out an application to extend his temporary stay and to contact the Mexican Consul in Los Angeles, and he indicated he would immediately inform Hedrick of Russell's plan to miss the first few days of on-campus teaching.⁴³ "I am most grateful for your kindness & very sorry to be causing inconvenience to the University", Russell informed Deutsch, and he hoped his stay in Ensenada would be brief. "The authorities in New York are to blame for the muddle", Russell claimed. "I was prepared, on the advice of the British Consul in Los Angeles, to leave the country & re-enter, but at New York the immigration authorities assured me this was unnecessary."⁴⁴

Progress towards legalizing Russell's stay in America proved slow. He informed UCLA officials at the end of August of his ongoing interaction with officials representing various countries:

I have been doing everything in my power to accelerate the preparations for obtaining an immigrant's visa, but I find that they must inevitably take some time. I have to go to Mexico, & the Mexican Consul at Los Angeles, when he learned the purpose of my proposed visit to his country, said that I must get a permit from the Mexican government, which would take about a month. I made application for a permit then & there; but obviously I shall not be able to go to Mexico until well after the

⁴² Russell to Deutsch, 11 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

⁴³ Deutsch to Russell, 18 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Russell to Deutsch, 21 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

beginning of term. I will, of course, do whatever you consider least inconvenient to the University, but it seems to me that I had better start my lectures at the usual time, & then absent myself (I hope for only 3 or 4 days) when everything is in order. If there is war, it may delay the obtaining of the necessary documents from England. I am in touch with the American Consul at Ensenada. I am sorry there is all this bother, but there seems no way of accelerating matters.⁴⁵

The added layer of dealing with the Mexican government and the outbreak of war in Europe certainly complicated the matter, and the Department of Labor informed Russell in the first week of October that his case continued to receive “further consideration” and that no action should be taken by the British philosopher until a final decision on extending his stay had been reached.⁴⁶ Finally, on 16 October, immigration officials announced that Russell would be allowed to acquire his visa before 31 December.⁴⁷ Writing privately to a colleague, Donald Piatt noted Russell’s exasperation with the entire process:

Russell is still bedeviled by the Labor Department, has been given another dead line for his departure, has found that papers in Mexico City will not be forthcoming for six weeks, long after the dead line, had to go to jail with his wife for fingerprinting taken on a form whose caption was “Criminal Record”, and this and the bad odor of the place made their blood boil.⁴⁸

Russell ultimately secured the necessary visas during the Christmas holiday after completing his first-term teaching duties at UCLA. He informed Lucy Silcox in December that his wife spent “hours a day on our permits to stay in this country, to get which we have to go to Mexico. The red tape has driven us both to the verge of insanity” (*SLBR* 2: #442). The bureaucratic paperwork included another well publicized visit to the Los Angeles police station, Patricia Russell explained to the *Los Angeles Times* in an interview at their home, to secure “good behaviour” certificates—required from police in every community in which the Russells resided during the past five years—to be

⁴⁵ Russell to Hedrick, 27 Aug. 1939, RA3 930.

⁴⁶ Shaughnessy to Deutsch, 7 Oct. 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

⁴⁷ Hazard to Deutsch, 16 Oct. 1939, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Piatt to Williams, 16 Oct. 1939, RA3 1809.

assessed by American consular officials in Mexico.⁴⁹ Russell and his family left the United States on 26 December to travel to Ensenada. After securing the required paperwork that allowed him to re-enter the country under the Mexican quota of British subjects, the Russells crossed the border on 30 December at Tijuana and proceeded to Los Angeles. Russell was now entitled to remain in the United States indefinitely as a permanent resident, and he even qualified to apply for citizenship at a later date.

While Russell's protracted immigration difficulties transpired, he commenced his teaching duties at UCLA. Assigned office 360 in Royce Hall that was "pleasant, quiet, and conducive to work"⁵⁰ and shared with Hugh Miller and Hans Reichenbach, Russell's teaching assignment in the fall term proved rigorous. He instructed Philosophy 2A (Introduction to Philosophy)—described in the general catalogue as an "Elementary survey of the general problems of philosophy and of the fundamental types of philosophy"—on Mondays and Wednesdays at 10:00 in room 145 of the Education building. There were 360 students initially registered in this course, and Russell also supervised one of the seven tutorial or quiz sections on Friday mornings at 10:00 with 76 registrants. Russell's second course was Philosophy 120A (Philosophical Ideals in Practice) under a catalogue description of "Philosophies which have influenced history; romanticism and liberalism in society, politics, and culture." This course was delivered on Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays at noon in room 223 of the Physics-Biology building, with 111 students registered. Russell's third assignment in the fall term was Philosophy 267A, a graduate seminar on Theory of Meaning offered on Wednesday afternoons at 2:00 in room 152 of Royce Hall with 10 registrants. Russell's office hours were Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between his 2A and 120A classes.⁵¹ In the winter term, Russell taught Philosophy 2B (Introduction

⁴⁹ "U.C.L.A. Professor's Jail Visit Explained by Friends", *Los Angeles Times*, 13 Dec. 1939, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Piatt to Sproul, 21 June 1938, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs' Correspondence, Box 5, File "Piatt Correspondence, 1938", UCLA Library. The second office assigned to the Department of Philosophy was Royce Hall 355, described in this same document by Donald Piatt as "far more congested, doing duty for the chairman, for Mr. Williams, for Miss Creed, for our general assistant and two teaching assistants as well as our readers and students who take make-up examinations.... The noise and conversation from the adjacent Faculty Women's Rest Room adds to the din!"

⁵¹ For course descriptions, see "University of California General Catalogue, 1939-40",

to Philosophy) on Mondays and Wednesdays in room 100 of the Education building to 267 students, Philosophy 120B (Philosophical Ideals in Practice) on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at noon in room 223 of the Physics-Biology building to 80 students, and Philosophy 267B (Theory of Meaning) on Monday mornings at 8:00 to seven students in his Royce Hall 260 office.⁵²

Russell proved immensely popular with faculty and students. Piatt wrote privately to Donald Williams at Harvard about Russell’s immediate impact in the classroom:

His 2A room, seating 375, was packed the first day, some being auditors and some shoppers. The Teaching Assistants say that the course has been a stiff “upper division” course in epistemology, and hence our estimate that there are still around 300 registered is pretty good proof of R’s drawing power. The graduate students are raving about his seminar, think he is marvellous, and so do Isabel [Creed] and Robson who have been sitting in. Reichenbach and I wanted to join but abstained lest we put a damper on the students.⁵³

Russell himself needed time to adjust to the differences between the American and British systems of instruction. A feature interview with Russell that appeared in the student newspaper, the *Daily Bruin*, noted his observation that the “exceptionally small” classes in England allowed students close personal contact with faculty members, which was only possible with graduate students at American universities because undergraduate classes were “much too large and impersonal”. Russell was “quite surprised”, his interlocutor noted, “to find students taking full notes in his classes here. In English schools, students listen very attentively, segregate, and accept only the material they are

Record Series 225, Class Schedules, General Catalogues, and Bulletins, 1919–1988, Box 5, UCLA Library. Class schedules and enrolments—inserted by Evelyn Plunkett, an unidentified administrator—are found in “Schedule, First Semester, 1939–1940”, *ibid.* Plunkett’s handwriting can be difficult to read, but Russell’s three teaching assistants in the fall term appear to have been Hans Meyerhoff, A. Hunter, and J. Sorrenson.

⁵² “Schedule, Second Semester, 1939–40”, Record Series 225, Class Schedules, General Catalogues, and Bulletins, 1919–1988, Box 14, UCLA Library. According to Evelyn Plunkett’s emendations on the schedule, it does not appear that Russell led a tutorial or quiz section for Philosophy 2B. His teaching assistants in this course were A. Hunter, D. Newhall, J. Sorrenson, and P. Wienpahl.

⁵³ Piatt to Williams, 16 Oct. 1939, RA3 1,809.

interested in.”⁵⁴ A positive contemporaneous account of Russell’s teaching at UCLA also appeared in *Life* magazine at the height of the CCNY imbroglio in 1940:

To his classes in mathematics and philosophy at UCLA, Bertrand Russell has had little to say about specific personal moral problems and nothing about the question of adultery. Pursuing more abstract issues, he found himself at first talking over the heads of his California students. Under their sympathetic tutelage, however, he has simplified his delivery and become one of the most popular lecturers on the campus. His wide-ranging lectures, exploring the ideas of poets, statesmen, and novelists as well as orthodox philosophers, are enough to hold any student’s attention. His incisive logic, his brisk manner and his loud clothes keep them fascinated.... With his youthful, red-haired wife, their child and the son and daughter of his second marriage, he has settled down to a cheerful and model domestic existence. In the year-long summertime of Southern California, he hopes finally to make his home.⁵⁵

Students reflected on Russell’s popularity, influence, and activities long after he had left UCLA. Hans Meyerhoff, one of his teaching assistants in the introductory course, informed Russell in 1952 that his “brief sojourn on the UCLA campus has been the most important and stimulating professional and personal experience to all of us who knew you then.”⁵⁶ In a 1974 letter, Norman Holter described Russell as “a great teacher” who “particularly appealed to those with a sense of humour and who didn’t take themselves too seriously.”⁵⁷ Maria Moll, who had a doctorate from a German university but enrolled at UCLA in 1939–40 to acquire teaching credentials, depicted Russell’s interactions with Hans Reichenbach in the Department of Philosophy:

They became good friends and Hans took excellent photographs of Russell. He also tried to use photography for the purpose of convincing Russell to give up his two-dimensional, phenomenalist description of the world and of converting him to a realist and physicalist description. Hans took stereo-photographs of various things and then let Russell look at

⁵⁴ WOLFF, “Campus Personalities: Bertrand Russell Seeks No Comfort in Delusion”, *California Daily Bruin*, 10 Oct. 1939, p. 2.

⁵⁵ “Bertrand Russell Rides Out Collegiate Cyclone”, *Life*, 1 April 1940, p. 24.

⁵⁶ Meyerhoff to Russell, 12 Nov. 1952, RAI 710.052921.

⁵⁷ Holter to K. Blackwell, 25 April 1974, RA3 1,291.

them through a viewer, waiting expectantly for the “aha moment”, when the two pictures would merge into a three-dimensional one and Russell’s facial expression would indicate this fact. In spite of these attempts, I think Hans was not very successful in changing Russell’s mind.⁵⁸

The two most detailed reminiscences about Russell’s interactions with students have been provided by Paul Wienpahl and Fenwicke Holmes. Wienpahl, then a graduate student at UCLA who would spend most of his career as a professor at the University of California—Santa Barbara, recalled in 1979 his personal appraisal of Russell’s character, pedagogy, and social interactions:

... I took a graduate seminar from him in *Principia* for the whole year. I audited his Introduction course for the whole year because I was one of his Teaching Assistants. And I was one of a small group ... who met at Russell’s every Thursday night for play-readings with him and Peter. There were also occasions when several of us would “go out on the town”, for example, to see Amie Semple MacPerson’s show.

Naturally, then, I often talked philosophy with Russell.... Mainly we talked about what became *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* which Russell used for an upper-division course in the Spring that I took.... I still have a closely hand-written commentary by him on a paper I did for that course—a couple of yellow foolscap sheets (from which you may gather that he was a superb teacher. Not only did Russell take these pains with students’ papers. He took infinite pains with their questions. This is one of the things I have always remembered about him, indeed at first I thought he went too far in this. No matter how silly a question sounded, Russell would worry with it till he got to what he thought the student had in mind—and then carefully answer that.) ...

One or two other things about Russell, impressions. I’ve thot [*sic*] since 1940 that he was probably a snob. On the other hand, those evenings with the plays were a delight. Russell in that situation particularly was full of fun, very simple and easily enjoyable.... On one of these evenings the maid announced that Mr. Aldous Huxley was at the door. “Oh, do get rid of him, Peter”, said Russell. Which she did. And Russell told us what a frightful bore Aldous was. Imagine. He made a practice of reading the *Encyclopaedia Brit.* before going to a social gathering, say

⁵⁸ REICHENBACH AND COHEN, eds., *Hans Reichenbach: Selected Writings, 1909–1953* (1978), I: 79. Moll had become acquainted with Reichenbach in 1934 at Istanbul University; they would marry in 1946.

on the “p’s”, and then amazing the people with his knowledge of anything the name of which began with “p”.

Crossing the campus one day, Russell and I were late to his class. I was amazed that day with his physical vigor. I seemed to be more out of breath than he when we arrived and I was, what, 24 then. I also frequently had the impression that Russell had forgotten more philosophy than I would ever know.⁵⁹

Holmes provided in 1992 the second detailed student reminiscence about Russell’s classroom performance. Russell’s introductory class gained a reputation as a formidable experience for students who—like Holmes—did not register in it:

Either because of lack of detailed preparation or, perhaps, because it was just his style, Russell would appear at the lectern and “wing it”. Logic it was, but freshman logic it was not. At any moment in his dissertation he might take chalk in hand and cover the board with equations of Boolean algebra, leaving his class slack-jawed and with eyes aglaze. The fame of this philosophical tour de force spread across the UCLA campus and to other campuses. It was not uncommon to see a row of philosophy professors from universities as far away as Seattle, sitting in the back of the classroom just to audit the course.⁶⁰

Holmes did take Russell’s 120A Philosophical Ideas in Practice course featuring an eclectic reading list ranging from Dante’s *Inferno* to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* to Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*:

This was an amazing series of lectures. Without a single note before him, he would trace a philosophical concept from its earliest Greek beginnings and show the impact of that idea through history on subsequent philosophers and on art, literature, and human events. The cumulative effect

⁵⁹ Wienpahl to Blackwell, 5 Jan. 1979, letter privately held by Blackwell. Wienpahl’s reference to “Amie Semple MacFerson” is to Aimee Semple McPherson, a controversial Pentecostal evangelist who founded the Foursquare Church. A photocopy of Russell’s “closely hand-written commentary” on one of Wienpahl’s course papers is located in RA3 423.

⁶⁰ HOLMES, “Bertrand Russell at U.C.L.A.: a Reminiscence” (1992), p. 28. Russell admitted—as Holmes cites in this passage—that “I was behind with the preparations for my lectures” after suffering a serious back injury in the summer of 1939, “and that throughout the coming academic year I was always overworked and always conscious that my lectures were inadequate” (*Auto.* 2: 218).

of these lectures was an in-depth look, not at philosophy alone, but at the panorama of Western civilization itself. (Holmes, pp. 28–9)

Holmes also documented Russell’s in-class statements about the international situation—which were sometimes distorted in local newspaper accounts about his views on pacifism and the threat of Nazism⁶¹—and the support he continued to receive from students during the national debate about his revoked appointment at CCNY.

While in California, Russell did not undertake his usual frenetic schedule of public speaking engagements. Certainly, his high salary lessened the financial pressures that had plagued him for much of the 1930s and contributed to his refusal to do freelance lecturing. Furthermore, Patricia Russell emphasized at the start of the school year at UCLA that his three-month convalescence from his back injury rendered him “unable to take on anything beyond his university work during the whole academic year.”⁶² Nevertheless, Russell did make several public appearances according to reports in Los Angeles newspapers. Russell and Rudolf Rocker, the noted German anarchist, addressed the Parliament of Man and the Kropotkin Literary Society following a banquet in their honour on 10 December 1939.⁶³ Russell was scheduled to speak to the Harvard Club of Southern California on 12 December, an engagement cancelled by his visit to the Los Angeles police department that day to obtain the good conduct certificate related to his visa application. In the winter 1940 term, Russell lectured to the Jonathan Breakfast Club on 5 March addressing the topic of academic freedom.⁶⁴ Russell’s also spoke to a crowd of 400 at the eighth annual Stanford Alumni conference on 10 March on the

⁶¹ In May 1940, Russell faced criticism for allegedly informing his students that he had given up hope for an Allied victory. “I wish emphatically to deny the statement about the European war which I was supposed to have made”, Russell countered. “I have never predicted a German victory or said that the Allied cause was lost. It is as yet impossible to predict the outcome. While I think the war will leave great misery whoever wins, I believe that a German victory would be a calamity greater than any in history.” See “Russell Denies He Said Allies Beaten”, *San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 26 May 1940, p. 4. For Russell’s movement away from pacifism to support the Allied cause during his extended stay in America, see *Papers* 21: lxiv–lxvi.

⁶² Russell to Schilpp, 21 Sept. 1939, RA3 176.

⁶³ See “Philosopher to Speak”, *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Dec. 1939, p. 19, and “An Invitation”, Collection 113, Miscellaneous Ephemera, File Russell, Bertrand Russell, 3d Earl, 1872–1970, UCLA Library.

⁶⁴ “Academic Freedom Topic”, *Los Angeles Times*, 4 March 1940, p. 6.

topic of “Can the Present Wars End in an Enduring Peace?”:

I don't think there could be a lasting peace were Hitler to win, because the only way a lasting peace could result from German victory would be by German domination of the world. To that America would be an obstacle. If the war should end in a draw, that would mean that it had been a long war, leading to such exhaustion that there would be social upheavals throughout Europe. In these circumstances, the United States would inevitably be the nucleus for reconstruction and the settlement would be much the same as after an Allied victory.... The only ultimate preventive of war is international law backed by international force.⁶⁵

Russell generated considerable controversy over his social and political views during his lecture tours of the United States in the inter-war period, and his appointment to UCLA engendered similar widespread criticism. Joseph Scott proved the most consistent and vocal critic of Russell's ties to the university. Scott was a prominent lawyer and Catholic layman who earned the moniker of “Mr. Los Angeles” for his civic boosterism and prominence in public debates; he represented American actress Joan Barry in her paternity suit against Charlie Chaplin in the 1940s.⁶⁶ Following Scott's death, a large statue would be unveiled in 1967 in a prominent location on Grand Avenue on the grounds of the Los Angeles County Superior Court building.⁶⁷ Following the official announcement of Russell's appointment on 31 July 1939, Scott immediately wrote to Hedrick and quoted lengthy passages from *Marriage and Morals* to label Russell “a particularly obnoxious and dangerous person” to be hired by a state university. Russell's views, Scott proclaimed, were “destructive of every decent religious and moral standard, without the preservation of which we are doomed to go the way of Babylon and Nineveh and the other races who hungered like the Israelites for the ‘Fleshpots’ of Egypt.”⁶⁸

Hedrick tersely responded to Scott's missive, noting that Russell

⁶⁵ “Menace Seen If Nazis Win”, *Los Angeles Times*, 11 March 1940, sec. 1, p. 9.

⁶⁶ The 1992 film *Chaplin* sees James Woods playing the role of Scott in Barry's legal proceeding against Chaplin.

⁶⁷ For a biographical overview of Scott's life, see “Atty. Joseph Scott, Civic Leader, Dies”, *Los Angeles Times*, 25 March 1958, p. 1. Scott's monument was moved to a less conspicuous location in the property's garden in 2008.

⁶⁸ Scott to Hedrick, 2 Aug. 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

would be instructing senior students with no "undesirable influence" upon UCLA's youngest registrants. "There can be no doubt", he emphasized, "that Russell is a man of very outstanding ability, and it seems desirable to have him for the purposes of graduate and advanced instruction."⁶⁹ After Hedrick forwarded Scott's message to Sproul, the president of the California system refused to take responsibility for Russell's selection. "I recommended the appointment of Mr. Russell", Sproul informed Scott, "on the advice of the best scholars in his fields of mathematics and philosophy, in this University and elsewhere, and upon the urging of my representatives on the Los Angeles campus. I am so sorry to say that I was not acquainted with the 'modern views' to which your letter refers and by which I am, quite frankly, profoundly disturbed." In response to Scott's continued complaints, Sproul promised a "heart-to-heart" talk about Russell's position the next time he visited the Los Angeles campus,⁷⁰ and the two men subsequently met in late September 1939. A full account of this meeting is not extant, but Sproul subsequently pointed to remarks he made in a speech to incoming UCLA students on 27 September, warning them not to "revel in social life" but to "accept seriously the challenge of learning"⁷¹ as evidence of his commitment to the moral respectability of the UCLA's campus atmosphere. He also noted that he was "proceeding with the prophylactic measures" the two men discussed, although the nature of these initiatives remains obscure.⁷²

Throughout the fall 1939 term, complaints about Russell's appointment continued to reach Sproul. Roy Smith, the Minister of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, for example, wrote that he had "a very grave suspicion" of UCLA seemingly endorsing Russell's "distinctly anti-religious and materialistic" philosophy.⁷³ In reply, Sproul again emphasized his original self-proclaimed ignorance of Russell's social and moral views, but he countered Smith's accusation that UCLA was fostering an anti-religious environment. "I have been keeping in touch with Mr. Russell's activities as a professor", Sproul noted, "and am glad to be able to inform you that I have found nothing

⁶⁹ Hedrick to Scott, 8 Aug. 1939, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Sproul to Scott, 14 Aug., 13 Sept. 1939, respectively for the quotations, *ibid.*

⁷¹ "Regents Speak to Student Gathering", *California Daily Bruin*, 28 Sept. 1939, p. 1.

⁷² Sproul to Scott, 2 Oct. 1939, CU-5, Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

⁷³ Smith to Sproul, 7 Dec. 1939, *ibid.*

of which one might properly complain. His teaching of philosophy has been quite conventional.”⁷⁴ Sproul also seemed to be losing at least some patience with Scott’s repeated grievances surrounding Russell’s appointment. Scott forwarded another lengthy missive to Sproul in December 1939 and enclosed an interview with Russell in the *Los Angeles Examiner* in which the distinguished philosopher indicated that he wanted to accept a permanent chair of philosophy at UCLA.⁷⁵ “It would be a shock if such a movement were contemplated,” Scott warned, “from which I would not be able to forecast the repercussions.... [H]e ought not be tolerated one minute after his present contract on the campus expires.”⁷⁶ Sproul did not engage at length with Scott’s complaint, instead simply providing him with a copy of Russell’s one-year contract with the caveat that Russell’s acceptance of that employment term did not “foreclose the appointment of Mr. Russell for another period of service.”⁷⁷

Scott’s opposition to Russell’s presence on the UCLA campus carried over into the winter 1940 term, but other, possibly more serious, criticisms were also levelled against the appointment. In January, Beatrice Ward Challis, the influential chairperson of the Alumnae Committee of the University of California, demanded to know why Sproul would authorize the hiring of Russell, a “flagrant libertine” whose “loose, unscientific, amoral philosophy” diminished the reputation of the California system. Russell’s appointment also ignored the request of the Alumnae Committee that Sproul consider candidates who “would couple sound scholarship with a challenge to honest, courageous living” such as Mortimer Adler, Fulton Sheen, and Etienne Gilson. “For the first time in our correspondence”, Challis inveighed, “I do unequivocally protest against a serious and unhealthy trend, and respectfully ask that you make clear to us the purpose of inducing Mr. Russell to teach in Southern California, the acknowledged home of ephemeral philosophies, a spot where every ‘ism’ already flourishes.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Sproul to Smith, 22 Dec. 1939, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ “Bertrand Russell Must Leave U.S.”, *Los Angeles Examiner*, 14 Dec. 1939, sec. 1, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Scott to Sproul, 14 Dec. 1939, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Sproul to Scott, 22 Dec. 1939, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Challis to Sproul, 5 Jan. 1940, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs’ Correspondence, Box 5, File “Piatt Correspondence 1939”, UCLA Library. The original letter is misdated 5 January 1939.

Sproul’s detailed reply contained no equivocation or deflection that frequently marked his correspondence with Scott, and his defence of the appointment is noteworthy given the subsequent antipathy that Russell expressed towards Sproul:

I hope to persuade you, and to enlist your support in persuading others, that the fears regarding Mr. Russell and the “trend” he represents are based on misunderstandings rather than on errors of judgment.... I took particular pains in securing an objective judgment of Mr. Russell’s qualifications. That there would be outside criticism was of course anticipated. The decisive considerations seemed to me, as they seemed to the Department of Philosophy, to be the particular needs of the department (in this case, upper division and graduate courses leading to the doctorate and attracting the most promising students), Mr. Russell’s standing in his profession, and, last but not least, his effect on his students.... While Mr. Russell’s views on certain “moral” questions have been censured by some philosophers, he enjoys deservedly the distinction of being one of the most eminent philosophers today—many philosophers give him first place. *Principia Mathematica* is one of the greatest works of genius of all time. Harvard University has honored Russell with an appointment for the first semester next year to give the William James lectures and one regular graduate course besides.... That some of Mr. Russell’s views on delicate questions are unconventional and quite possibly wrong is beyond argument. But unconventionality is not necessarily immorality, nor is a deliberate and sincere judgment even if it is wrong.... I feel certain that, could you meet Mr. Russell and come to know him as his students have, you would share their enthusiasm and inspiration. You would recognize his earnest devotion to the *pursuit* of truth, his sobriety of judgment, his reticence to discuss difficult questions of a controversially moral nature because reasoned opinion might be mistaken for knowledge, his brilliance and general competence, his evident sincerity and high purpose.... Personal acquaintance would give you a different light on Mr. Russell’s attitude towards marriage and family responsibilities. Incidentally, as was reported in the press, Mr. Russell is not offering any courses concerned with ethics or religion, and hence is not discussing questions related to these topics.⁷⁹

After Russell’s appointment to CCNY was struck down by the New York court, his opponents attempted to adopt the same strategy to

⁷⁹ Sproul to Challis, 17 Jan. 1940, *ibid.* The original letter is misdated 17 January 1939.

oust him from UCLA. On 30 April 1940, I. R. Wall, a former pastor of Fresno's Calvary Baptist Church, filed suit in the California District Court of Appeal to obtain a writ of prohibition preventing UCLA from paying any further salary to Russell and voiding the terms of his contract. Also named in the suit were the Board of Regents of the California system and Sproul. "This is distinctly not an attack upon UCLA nor upon its officials", Wall claimed in his petition, "but is distinctly an attack upon the works and teaching of Professor Russell."⁸⁰ Interviewed at his 212 Loring Avenue home, Russell countered the accusations levelled by Wall by noting that "all my proposals in regard to the relationship between men and women were intended to bolster up the institution of marriage—not abolish it."⁸¹ Ultimately, Wall's lawsuit did not proceed. Justice Minor Moore issued the opinion of the appellate court that the Board of Regents was a constituted corporation, and that the legal system could not intervene absent charges of oppression or fraud. Furthermore, a private citizen would be required to seek redress directly from the Board of Regents. "Nothing in the petition", Moore wrote, "indicates that the grievances of the petitioner have ever been made known to any member of the Board of Regents or that a demand on the Board of Regents would have been futile."⁸²

Despite this opposition to Russell's appointment, it should be emphasized that he enjoyed the staunch support of many UCLA colleagues and administrators. Hedrick proved consistent in his public statements and private correspondence defending the British philosopher. In a radio address following Russell's ouster from CCNY, Hedrick noted that from "the standpoint of his scholarly work, aside from his popular writings, there can be no doubt that Russell is a man who is absolutely a genius."⁸³ Similarly, Donald Piatt unflinchingly supported Russell. Joseph Scott, who described Piatt as "a pronounced

⁸⁰ "Bertrand Russell Ouster Sought by Ex Fresnan", *Fresno Bee*, 30 April 1940, p. 3.

⁸¹ "Russell Refuses to Comment on Suit for U.C.L.A. Ouster", *Oakland Tribune*, 1 May 1940, p. 3.

⁸² "Local Case against Russell Squelched", *California Daily Bruin*, 3 May 1940, p. 1.

⁸³ BASKY, "Nation's Students Support Russell", *California Daily Bruin*, 4 April 1940, p. 1. Russell immediately wrote Hedrick in the wake of this radio address: "May I express my very sincere gratitude to you for the extremely kind things that you have been saying about me? I am sure they will be most useful at this time, & it is generous of you to have said them at a moment when I am being so much attacked.... I find that everybody that I naturally respect is friendly, & this is a great comfort." See Russell to Hedrick, 4 April 1940, RA3 930.

Agnostic ... who brings his brand of so-called philosophy into the classroom and makes no pretense of concealing his contempt for religion and religious principles”,⁸⁴ frequently lumped the Philosophy Department chair and Russell together in his volleys. Piatt defended Russell in the pages of the *Los Angeles Examiner* following the passage of a resolution denouncing Russell by the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association that was then meeting in Los Angeles,⁸⁵ and Scott wrote to Piatt criticizing this support of his colleague. “Russell expects every girl to develop the instincts of a harlot”, Scott warned. “I tremble to think of these youngsters sitting at the feet of a man like Russell,” he continued, “advocating that they can have adventures wherever they will, changing bedfellows until they become pregnant and then marry the rascal who has helped to debauch them.”⁸⁶ Piatt subsequently claimed privately that “I am not worried about this crackpot group but about the sleeping dogs who may awake and make real trouble”, perhaps in reference to Sproul, with whom Piatt knew Scott maintained close contact.⁸⁷ Despite Piatt’s ongoing suspicions of Sproul, Hugh Miller personally thanked Sproul in the biennium report for the Department of Philosophy for sanctioning Russell’s hire:

We are grateful especially, in these days of confused thinking and widespread intolerance, for the courage and singlemindedness which extended the mantle of academic freedom over such a thinker as Bertrand Russell, whose lasting fame in the field of pure logic is equalled only by his temporary notoriety as the proponent of somewhat unusual moral ideas. A not too remote posterity will remember with gratitude and encouragement this example of large intellectual tolerance by a great University.⁸⁸

In the end, it was opposition to an academic appointment outside of California that ended Russell’s tenure at UCLA. Harvard University

⁸⁴ Scott to Sproul, 4 Oct. 1939, CU-5 Series 2, 1939, File 50—Philosophy, UC Berkeley Library.

⁸⁵ “Fundamentalist Group Assails A.C., U.C.L.A.”, *Los Angeles Examiner*, 4 Jan. 1940.

⁸⁶ Scott to Piatt, 4 Jan. 1940, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs’ Correspondence, Box 5, File “Piatt Correspondence 1940”, UCLA Library.

⁸⁷ Piatt to Williams, 4 Jan. 1940, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Miller to Sproul, 12 June 1940, *ibid.* Miller had replaced Piatt as the departmental chairperson in the winter 1940 term while Piatt went on sabbatical.

had extended an offer in early December 1939 to take up the one-term William James Lectureship,⁸⁹ and Russell consulted with administrators in Los Angeles before accepting this invitation to be fulfilled in the fall 1940 term before returning to California—again indicating that some sort of verbal agreement had been secured to guarantee Russell’s employment at UCLA to his retirement age beyond the one-year contract he had signed. The situation became more complicated later that month, however, when Russell received a job offer from Daniel Bronstein, the secretary of the Committee on Appointments in the Department of Philosophy at the College of the City of New York, for the 1940–41 academic year.⁹⁰ This proposal intrigued Russell, and he laid out his situation to Bronstein:

I could not combine this with a post in New York, as I am expected to do other work for Harvard in addition to the public lectures. As at present arranged, I am to return here at the New Year 1941, & retain my post here till June 1942. I am not quite clear from your letter whether the offer you make is only for the coming academic year, or might be for longer. My situation is this: I should not wish to surrender my position here unless I had in view another position lasting as long, or nearly as long; & I do not feel that, if I wish to retain my post here, I can ask for longer leave of absence.... But if your offer were for more than a semester, I should be inclined to consider seriously resigning my post here in order to accept it.... I would then, in case your offer were for more than a year or more, give you a definite answer within a day or two, as soon as I had had time to discover exactly the extent of my obligations here, which I believe to be not binding.⁹¹

CCNY officials subsequently promised Russell that he could assume a position there “for at least one year” beginning in February 1941 at a salary of \$7,500.⁹² He quickly declined this offer. Russell informed Bronstein that UCLA would not oppose his departure, but that there was no “appreciable financial advantage” in leaving California. He did

⁸⁹ Hocking to Russell, 2 Dec. 1939, Harvard U. Archives, UA1 5.168, Box 167, File “Academic Freedom 1939–40”, Harvard U. For a full account of Russell’s time at Harvard, see STEVENSON, “‘My Personal Ruin Passes Unnoticed’: Russell, Harvard, and the 1940 William James Lectureship” (2016).

⁹⁰ Bronstein to Russell, 25 Dec. 1939, RAI 811.

⁹¹ Russell to Bronstein, 11 Jan. 1940, RA3 1,317.

⁹² Mead to Russell, 26 Jan. 1940, RAI 811.

indicate shortly thereafter, though, that he would reconsider his position if his proposed salary could be increased to \$8,000.⁹³ Bronstein immediately telegraphed Russell and offered a salary of \$8,000, and Russell responded the same day accepting the offer.⁹⁴ He also appears to have telephoned Sproul at Berkeley to inform the California system President of his decision to resign from UCLA. But informed by CCNY officials that the appointment would not formally be approved by New York City’s Board of Higher Education until 13 February (a meeting date subsequently postponed to 26 February), Russell had second thoughts and contacted Sproul on 8 February to ask if his resignation notification could be ignored pending the official approval of his appointment.⁹⁵ But Sproul informed Russell that, unfortunately, he had no leeway in the matter:

Your letter of February 8 disturbs me somewhat, although a few days ago I should have been delighted to receive it. I understood from our telephone conversation that you had received a formal offer and that you felt that you must accept it. This information I have transmitted to the Regents, who met on the Los Angeles campus last Friday, because it seemed to me that they must, with me, contemplate the necessity of seeking a successor for you at an early date. This I did most regretfully, of course, but nonetheless definitely, and the die has, therefore, in a certain sense been cast. I assume, however, that the formal offer will come along in a few days, and that the fact will then conform to the record.⁹⁶

In the event, Russell’s concern about resigning before his CCNY appointment was confirmed proved unfounded, and the Board of Higher Education formally approved the selection at its 26 February meeting. “I know that your acceptance of this appointment will add lustre to the name and achievements of the Department and the College”, the CCNY President informed Russell, “and that it will deepen and extend

⁹³ Russell to Bronstein, 31 Jan., 2 Feb. 1940, respectively for the quotations, RA3 1,317.

⁹⁴ Bronstein to Russell, 2 Feb. 1940, RA1 811; Russell to Bronstein, 2 Feb. 1940, RA3 1,317. A record of Russell’s telephone conversation is not extant. On Bronstein’s 2 February telegram, there are notes in Russell’s hand: “Sproul Berkeley Ashbury 6000 Montrose 3600.” Both numbers were in the University of California system.

⁹⁵ Some confusion exists in the archival record. On 8 February, the same day he contacted Sproul about his second thoughts on resigning, Russell also informed Bronstein that “the [UCLA] authorities here are anxious to know my decision.” See Russell to Bronstein, 8 Feb. 1940, *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Sproul to Russell, 12 Feb. 1940, RA1 811.

the interest of the College in the philosophic bases of human living.”⁹⁷

But the hoped-for stability of the CCNY position failed to materialize. The 30 March 1940 decision of Justice John E. McGeehan to revoke Russell’s appointment to a “chair of indecency” in response to a suit filed by a private citizen and the removal, by Fiorello La Guardia, New York City’s mayor, of the line item in the city budget for the position in the Department of Philosophy at CCNY, placed Russell’s financial and academic future in jeopardy. Donald Piatt proclaimed that “I did my best short of impertinence to keep Russell with us”,⁹⁸ but no extension of his UCLA contract could be arranged. Russell continued to enjoy the support of his students. Cheered by them during his first return to the classroom following McGeehan’s verdict, Russell remarked that his CCNY experience “reminded him of the troubles of an earlier philosopher, Socrates.” Seventy-seven students out of the upper division class of 80 signed a statement of support for Russell. “Far from in any way corrupting the morals of his students,” the document noted, “he had, on the contrary, done much to encourage a higher and finer ethical standard by his own personal uprightness, his tolerance, kindness, and complete intellectual honesty.”⁹⁹

After Russell’s teaching commitments ended, he required two weeks of rest to overcome exhaustion before returning to academic work, completing his lectures for the upcoming term at Harvard that would be published as *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* and preparing an essay on George Santayana’s philosophy to appear in Paul Arthur Schilpp’s Library of Living Philosophers series.¹⁰⁰ Russell spent most of his summer with his family in Northern California:

The summer of 1940 offered for me an extraordinary contrast between public horror and private delight. We spent the summer in the Sierras, at Fallen Leaf Lake near Lake Tahoe, one of the loveliest places that it has even been my good fortune to know.... We had a log cabin in the middle of pine trees, close to the lake. Conrad and his nursery governess slept indoors, but there was no room for the rest of us in the house, and we all

⁹⁷ Ordway Tead to Russell, 29 Feb. 1940, *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Piatt to Miller, 22 April 1940, Record Series 411, Philosophy Chairs’ Correspondence, Box 4, File “Miller Correspondence 1937, 1939–1940”, UCLA Library.

⁹⁹ “UCLA Students Cheer Russell and Sign Statement of Confidence in Him”, *San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 2 April 1940, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Russell to Schilpp, 8 Aug. 1940, RA3 176. The essay is 62 in *Papers* 10.

slept on various porches. There were endless walks through deserted country to waterfalls, lakes and mountain tops, and one could dive off snow into deep water that was not unduly cold. I had a tiny study which was hardly more than a shed, and there I finished my *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. Often it was so hot that I did my writing stark naked. But heat suits me, and I never found it too hot for work.... I found in the Sierras the only classless society that I have ever known. (*Auto.* 2: 220)

Russell commenced his eastward journey from California on 8 September 1940, eventually arriving in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 1 October 1940. He would never return to the Golden State.

An examination of Russell’s involvement with UCLA reveals his continued difficulties to secure university employment following his departure from Cambridge University during the First World War. His six-month position at the University of Chicago was never meant to be anything but a stop-gap measure, and Russell’s appointment to UCLA initially seemed to provide an established academic position. But long-term stability proved elusive. Russell’s immigration status, his concern about the onset of war in Europe in 1939, the ever-present opposition to Russell’s published views on morality, and—in hindsight—his ill-advised decision to accept the CUNY appointment all proved harmful to an uneventful stay in California, despite his superb performance in the classroom at UCLA. And these pressures were only exacerbated by the continued deterioration of his personal relationship with Patricia Russell and the difficulties of helping his older children acclimate to a new life in America. “We were all unhappy in Los Angeles”,¹⁰¹ Kate Russell recalled, and Russell and Patricia’s marriage was placed under severe strain while in California. In the aftermath of his departure from UCLA, his fortunes did not permanently improve. Indeed, following the single term at Harvard, Russell’s financial and personal difficulties only mounted following the termination of his contract at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia in late 1942. Ultimately, only his return to Cambridge in 1944 facilitated his rapid ascent into the upper echelons of the British establishment. From these heights, a survey of Russell’s time at UCLA fully demonstrates the uncertainty that marked his time in America from 1938 to 1944.

¹⁰¹ TAIT, *My Father Bertrand Russell* (1976), p. 143.

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