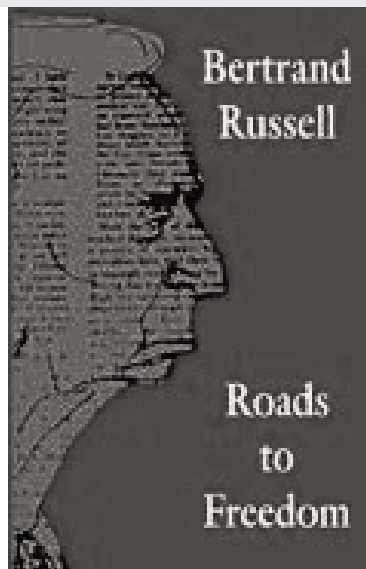


OUR HISTORY - 61

Bertrand Russell - Roads to Freedom (1918)

The philosopher, Bertrand Russell, was politically active throughout his long life- from the No Conscription Fellowship during the First World War to CND and the Committee of 100 in the 1960's. His first political work in 1896 was a study of German Social Democracy. In 1916 he published the Principles of Social Reconstruction, in 1917 his Political Ideals, and in 1920 he published a critique of the Theory and Practice of Bolshevism. This extract is taken from his 1918 work Roads to Freedom which reviewed the principles of socialism and anarchism, advocating a form of guild socialism. Russell was pluralist in his politics but can best be described as a libertarian socialist and pacifist, a conviction he retained throughout his life. 'The attempt to conceive imaginatively a better order of human society than the destructive and cruel chaos in which mankind has hitherto existed is by no means modern: it is at least as old as Plato, whose Republic set the model for the Utopias of subsequent philosophers. Whoever contemplates the world in the light of an ideal – whether what he seeks be intellect, or art, or love, or simple happiness, or all together – must feel a great sorrow in the evils that men needlessly allow to continue, and –



if he be a man of force and vital energy – an urgent desire to lead men to the realisation of the good which inspires his creative vision. It is this desire which has been the primary force moving the pioneers of Socialism and Anarchism, as it moved the inventors of ideal commonwealths in the past. In this there is nothing new. What is new in Socialism and Anarchism is that close relation of the ideal to the present sufferings of men, which has enabled powerful political movements to grow out of the hopes of solitary thinkers. It is this that makes Socialism and Anarchism important, and it is this that makes them dangerous to those who batten, consciously or unconsciously, upon the evils of our present order of society.' 'The world that we must seek is a world in which the creative spirit is alive, in which life is an adventure full of joy and hope, based rather upon the impulse to construct than upon the desire to retain what we possess or to seize what is possessed by others. It must be a world in which affection has free play. In which love is purged of the instinct for domination, in which cruelty and envy has been dispelled by happiness and the unfettered development of all the instincts that build up life and fill it with mental delights. Such a world is possible; it waits only for men to wish to create it.'

LETTERS

Ireland says yes to an equal society

On May 23rd, 2015 Ireland finally threw off the shackles of a conservative catholic past and voted in favour for social equality. The Irish electorate were asked to vote in a referendum to include gay marriage in our constitution and we agreed in great numbers to this proposal. Many young people who had to leave Ireland in recent years due to austerity, managed to make the journey back home to vote yes. They sailed home and flew home under the hash tag 'home to vote' which lit up Twitter. While the youth turnout at polling stations generated a buzz, there were many older voters who also voted yes. These people are of a

generation who grew up in a catholic conservative state, a generation suffocated by stringent church laws that prohibited an equal society. This was their chance to reject something that had blighted most of their lives. The margin of victory for the yes side in the gay marriage referendum showed modern Irish people's rejection of church morals. 62.1% of the electorate compared to 37.9% voted in favour of marriage equality. All political parties in the country supported the introduction of gay marriage which left the no side backed up by conservative Christian groups and the catholic church who ran a campaign based on fear. The

referendum had nothing to do with children, it was a marriage referendum, yet the no side ran their campaign on the fear of what may happen to children. Where were these people when so many children were abused by the likes of the Christian brothers in schools and churches across the country? Those times thankfully and hopefully are gone. Ireland has voted in favour of equality. Ireland has rejected hate.

LILY MURPHY, DUBLIN