

# **PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION**

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Principles of social reconstruction by Bertrand Russell

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**BERTRAND RUSSELL**

**PRINCIPLES OF  
SOCIAL  
RECONSTRUCTION**



PRINCIPLES *of* SOCIAL  
RECONSTRUCTION

## EXTRACTS FROM EARLY REVIEWS

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"At length the war has given us a much bigger and deeper book of prophecy, and the man who has written it is the ablest and most unpopular figure in contemporary England. It will outlive the war by many a year and decade. Mr. Russell has written a big and living book. We question whether a more brilliant statement of the Liberal philosophy has been written since the last world war created Liberalism."—*The Nation*.

"Mr. Bertrand Russell has written a thoroughly mischievous book, and it is all the more mischievous because, being a cultivated man, he has at his service a felicitous literary style which may possess some attractions for the unwary minds of prejudiced partisans and loose thinkers."—LORD CROMER in the *Spectator*.

"Essentially a discussion rather of principles than of any definite programme, being an examination and comparison of the possessive and the creative impulses."—*Times*.

"Mr. Russell's principles are, with few exceptions, of the very best."—*Westminster Gazette*.

"Mr. Russell . . . brings no comfort to the enemy, whom he severely trounces for their crime against civilization."—*Land and Water*.

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# PRINCIPLES *of* SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

BY

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## PREFACE

THE following lectures were written in 1915, and delivered in the beginning of 1916. I had hoped to re-write them considerably, and make them somewhat less inadequate to their theme; but other work, which seemed more pressing, intervened, and the prospect of opportunity for leisurely revision remains remote.

My aim is to suggest a philosophy of politics based upon the belief that impulse has more effect than conscious purpose in moulding men's lives. Most impulses may be divided into two groups, the possessive and the creative, according as they aim at acquiring or retaining something that cannot be shared, or at bringing into the world some valuable thing, such as knowledge or art or goodwill, in which there is no private property. I consider the best life that which is most built on creative impulses, and the worst that which is most inspired by love of possession. Political institutions have a very great influence upon the dispositions of men and women, and should be such as to

## Preface

promote creativeness at the expense of possessiveness. The State, war, and property are the chief political embodiments of the possessive impulses; education, marriage, and religion ought to embody the creative impulses, though at present they do so very inadequately. Liberation of creativeness ought to be the principle of reform both in politics and in economics. It is this conviction which has led to the writing of these lectures.

*September 1916.*

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