

THE COHEN INTERVIEWS

MARGARET SIMEY -- Interview no 17.

Edited by Tim Cook and Harry Marsh

Annotation research by Diana Wray

Transcription by Sarah Houghton for WISEArchive

This is one of 26 interviews with social work pioneers conducted by the late Alan Cohen in 1980 - 81. The period of social work history Alan wished to explore with the interviewees was 1929 - 59. With one exception (No 24, Clare Winnicott) the interviews were unpublished until this edition in 2013. The copyright is held by the not for profit organisation WISEArchive.

Each interview is presented as a free-standing publication with its own set of notes. However, readers interested in the Cohen Interviews as a whole and the period discussed are referred to:

- (a) the other 25 interviews
- (b) the Editors' Introduction,
- (c) the select Bibliography.

All of these can be found at

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/exploreurther/subject_guides/social_work

Margaret Simey (1906–2004) was born in Scotland and had periods of study and work in London and the Caribbean. But her main stamping ground as a social activist, writer and local politician was in the city of Liverpool. In 1928 she became the first woman social science graduate at the University and, under the influence of Eleanor Rathbone, became involved with the city's less conservative voluntary organisations. This commitment was exemplified by her 1951 book *Charitable Effort in Liverpool*.

She married the social scientist Tom Simey in 1935 and they later collaborated on overseas development work, academic studies and the writing of a biography of Charles Booth. She was elected as a Labour councillor in 1963 and remained an active local politician until 1986. Formidably outspoken, she continued to be involved in local organisations and radical causes. Among her later publications were *Democracy Rediscovered* (1988) and *The Disinherited Society* (1996). See Terry Philpot's entries for Margaret and Tom Simey in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

A.C. How did you come into social work, Mrs Simey?

M.S. I think I was born into it, because my father was in the magistrate's courts in the Gorbals and mother was a passionate church worker. And at the age of about fourteen I was running a girl's group in a church, so in that sense, always. But more professionally when I left school. I was in Liverpool and read in the papers that Carr-Saunders [1] had been appointed as Professor at the Department of Social Science. And so then I came to take a degree course. So perhaps that's the sort of formal moment.

A.C. What preoccupied students on the Social Science course at that time?

M.S. They weren't students in our sense. They were middle class ladies and vicars and people of that sort, who did voluntary work. And they realised that they needed to be trained. The only two who were in any way professionals, were two men who came up through the Workers Educational Association (WEA) [2] and had scholarships. They were all taking a two year certificate, and I was taking a degree. It was the first degree course.

A.C. And can you remember what the subjects were? What did they regard as training for that work they were doing?

M.S. Social structure was the great thing, and social statistics. This was a very new subject for ordinary people to take, and we had a very dried up man called Caradog-Jones [3]. It was a terrible subject! Horrible subject! And the great Professor Alexander who gave, only to the degree students, six weeks combined psychology and philosophy, which was quite something. I can't remember what it was, but I can remember the man because he was a real sage with a long white beard, that he combed with his fingers. But I was none the wiser. Hegel. Nothing like that penetrated me and that was a degree course. My special subject was chosen for me (everything was chosen for me) was slavery in which I had no interest whatsoever. So I plodded around all the African subjects, studying slavery. I suppose it was a social institution and that was why. It wasn't relevant. Not to me.

A.C. Did you yourself do this with a view to eventually becoming a social worker? Is that what you had in mind at the time?

M.S. I don't think so. I don't remember having an object in mind. I was absolutely entranced by Liverpool and the whole thing. The housing: the housing of course was terrible: and the education. Children with bare feet, and the sense of this packed city, jam-packed with people. How did it work? What made it tick? What did they all think about? I was so absorbed in that, that I don't think there was an end product in my mind. But I think officially the hope was that they would turn out an academic type who would be way above social workers and we would go into the civil service and research and so on. But I think it very soon became apparent that I wasn't that quality.

- A.C. Was that connected with the ploy I believe the Webbs [4] had in mind? Weren't the Webbs, when they founded LSE [5] weren't they on the lookout for young graduates who would then enter the Civil Service?
- M.S. Yes. You were to be really high flyers intellectually, and you were to give your mind to all these social problems instead of being all emotional about it. And certainly Carr-Saunders was quite remarkable. But he was way ahead of all of us, certainly of his times; that he saw the group as the unit of survival for the human race and we've lost all that. We smash up all these communities and we harp on about individuals and I think the message he'd got needs to be revived. That, I think, would be why I think he set me to study slavery. This was a social institution and so on. I can see the sense in it now, but it made no sense at the time.
- A.C. So what happened when you graduated? What did you do then?
- M.S. Well that was totally dismaying because by then it was getting on for 1930, '31, and the peak of the slump. There just wasn't a hope of a job. And anyway I did so badly, out of pity they gave me a 3.2. They couldn't fail their first student - they had to let me through. No civil service would look at me. I wasn't trained to do social work; I'd been trained a cut above that. So entirely by a stroke of luck I got the job of Youth Leader in a girls' club in Buxton. But I wasn't trained for that either except that I'd run these things at churches and schools and things.
- A.C. Who was your employer?
- M.S. Oh that was a private ladies committee in Buxton.
- A.C. How did they work?
- M.S. They were the good old traditional voluntary society. They were the employers and I was at the kind of upper-parlour maid level. That's how they tried to run their committees, I was sent for when they wished me to be present. I knew enough about things to know that wasn't on. So I never told them anything. Very quickly they realised that they couldn't get on without me, and so I was allowed always to be present at committees. But that was still in the straight Victorian tradition. They raised the money and they decided everything, and I took the orders.
- A.C. Was it a formal organisation or just a group of well intentioned ladies?
- M.S. Well intentioned ladies, but they'd been got together, I don't remember by whom, because the government had a scheme for offering employment to the daughters of miners in the North East, and they offered them jobs in hotels in Buxton. Because they were having such problems with them, (they were wild young women!) they got this group to open up a club as a home from home. And that was my job. I was expected to be there from midday 'til half past ten at night. Every day of the week, including weekends, and through the night, if the police picked any of them up. If they ran away from their hotels, or were on the loose, they were brought to me. I had to take them in and do rescue work. It was a real old-fashioned job description. I mean no one person could do it.

- A.C. Although you describe yourself as a group worker, in that particular instance you were also having to work with individuals.
- M.S. Yes as a rescue worker.
- A.C. Can you remember any incidents or anecdotes of that time?
- M.S. One particularly. I don't know if you know the North East, but I admire them immensely; they've got such vitality. There was a strapping great lass, and she was bored to tears with these hotels filled with old women, all refugees from the war, and old ladies. She filled in her time picking men up on the market place, which is where the club was. And she taught me everything about sex! I was just 21 or 22. She taught me everything! And when I got to court as a magistrate in the end, I realised that I owed all my knowledge to her. They shrieked with laughter at my inexperience, the things I didn't know. I was equally shaken by the things they didn't know. They'd never been to a theatre, you can imagine coming from some Durham mining village. All that my public school had taught me and all the appreciation of poetry and all this, was as stunning to them as their experience was to me. So I used to take them to the theatre, and the Russian Ballet came to Buxton in those days. I found it very hard going. Quite shattering. Far more shattering than anything they taught me at the university. But I think if out of that I acquired the principle of mutual self respect as the basis of all social work, it wasn't without profit.
- A.C. I don't want to press you too hard on things that were a long, long time ago and probably you haven't thought about for ages, but I just wondered whether you could remember any more anecdotes of those days? You said you were on call during the night and the police would call you out. Can you remember the sort of things the police would call you out about? And what you were expected to do about them?
- M.S. Well they would knock me up. It was an enormous Victorian house, with four or five floors, and I had the top flat. And in the middle of the night you'd have to go down and take in some totally strange girl. What strikes me now is my extraordinary innocence. I would open the door and take in some bedraggled creature, without a pang. Conduct her upstairs; she could have belted me and robbed me, but it never entered my head. I think maybe it protected me because I wasn't frightened, I would make them tea and we'd sit and talk a bit, and I would put them to bed. The next day probably they'd beat it before the police could catch up with them. But the university course hadn't prepared me at all. That's why the girls who were on the street so shattered me. I never imagined anything like that happened. But then in the end friends from Liverpool, professional social workers who came over to see me, (they all loved to come, used to come for holidays, free holidays in Buxton), made it very clear that I had to grasp that VD might come my way, or theft, or all manner of unpleasant things. The girls might let men in or something and they, my friends, interviewed the committee and told them that this must stop. So that whole branch was stopped, totally.
- A.C. Your social work friends from Liverpool intervened on your behalf?

M.S. Yes and interviewed the committee. I don't think the committee had thought about it either. We were a bunch of innocent middle class women.

A.C. What sort of things were your friends doing in Liverpool? Were these people you knew from the course, or you'd met socially?

M.S. One would be Dorothy Keeling [6] who ran the Personal Service Society. [7]

A.C. Gosh you knew her did you?

M.S. Oh yes. And Janet McCrindell [8] who was one of the first ever who had taken the Sanitary Workers Certificate because there was no social work certificate. And she'd trained me a lot in youth work. I did a great deal as a student. And people of that generation.

A.C. You were with her as a student?

M.S. Voluntarily. It wasn't part of my course. The course had no practical work whatsoever. It was strictly theoretical. But she got me roped in to one of the leading girls' clubs, which was a real education, down by the docks. It was on the strength of that kind of reference that I suppose I got the job. She was a very competent youth leader indeed.

And Josephine Duckworth [9] was another of the great pioneers. These were all involved with the women's movement. They appeared on the scene immediately after the 1918 peace, and they took over as the women's leader in what was a woman's world. Therefore the clubs were all girls' clubs. It was entirely a woman's world.

A.C. Did you come across Letty Harford (Interviewee no 11) as well?

M.S. Yes. Because she was the national, or coming up to being a national, figure in the whole youth field. And so I'm sure her interview will interlock with that one. She would know Josephine Duckworth because she used to come up and visit.

A.C. When I saw her she also mentioned Elizabeth Macadam [10]

M.S. Oh yes. It was all very interlocked. We all knew each other locally and you knew each other nationally.

A.C. Did you ever get locked into any kind of discussion with these celebrities?

M.S. We argued immensely but in those days about the beginning of the state takeover, and that developed in the 30's.

A.C. Is that what all the argument about "Stateism" is all about, that I've read in the old COS Reviews [11]?

M.S. I don't recollect the word.

A.C. Articles which used the word "Stateism" in the title and it seemed to be talking about collectivist legislation versus volunteers, and what the state would do if it took over.

M.S. But at that stage the State was only a cloud on the horizon; you know, a 'palm of man's hand'. What we were debating was, do you oppose it, or do you accept that it's got to come, it's got to grow and if so what would the partnership be. I don't think we ever guessed that the day would come when the State would take completely over, and voluntaries would be a way outside the state.

A.C. What was your view of that at the time?

M.S. Oh totally of the school that insignificant individuals were top priority. And I would suspect that stems from having grown up in a man's world and seeing women suffrage come. We were acutely conscious of being substandard citizens, and we were the first generation to be out, and though we grieved secretly, though we pined for the husbands we would never get, nevertheless we were madly excited to be out and free! Therefore we weren't going to have the State put its foot on us. Our freedom, insignificant women though we were, that was the thing that mattered! And it was all involved with our own personal escape, which I think gave it that intensity, that passion, which you don't know unless you've met it. I think you might meet it now among the British born black people around in my ward; a kind of self awareness. Not anything in the world is allowed to trample on you. There was a great fear of the State, and yet looking at all the unemployed round us, there was no other answer. You couldn't deal with unemployment, housing, education, on a voluntary basis. It had to be done by the planned society. So it was: "Where did we fit in as voluntaries?" We wouldn't go and work for the State. Nothing would induce me to work for the State! That was too demeaning!

A.C. So what were your thoughts then about the Webbs and that little group?

M.S. I don't think they made much impact on us. We were practitioners. Most of my friends had gone into casework, and they were totally swamped by bad housing and poverty. Just imagine the present (1980) slump with no dole! Therefore they were swamped with casework. People like me, whose mind ran on social structure, were struggling with this whole business of trying to get the new estate; get clearance schemes through. The whole practical pressure was such that I don't think we ever gave a thought to the Webbs; or anybody very much.

A.C. You were saying before that there was some peculiar argument about whether one could still be a volunteer yet receive a salary.

M.S. Yes. That one really baffled us! Quite right too!

A.C. Can you explain what it was all about and who was saying what?

M.S. This is where I think we went wrong. The great, I suppose nowadays we'd say dichotomy, was between the State and the voluntary. Nowadays we try to say "non-state". To us the magic, "democracy", all those kinds of things, lay in the word "voluntary" and yet we were faced with the fact that most of us had taken some kind of professional training. We thought of ourselves as professionals and we were paid. That didn't fit the old Victorian label of voluntary. And so we had to struggle with ourselves. If you worked for a

youth club and were hopelessly underpaid in some way you were morally superior, to the youth club worker paid a nice teacher's salary by the education committee. If you gave up and accepted the nice salary, somehow you had betrayed yourself. I remember my husband in the very early days saying, "But some of these civil servants in the public assistance department are good practising Christians. How can you say that they are morally inferior?" Dear, oh dear! How we anguished! Bit difficult to see the point now, but it still crops up over things like partnership and urban aid to this day. There is an indefinable distinction between the citizens advice bureaux, all that lot, who are big organisations paying proper salaries, and the people we call grass roots nowadays, who are to us the genuine article and somehow have a magic. We haven't sorted that one out yet.

A.C. So how long did you stay at Buxton with the girls' club then?

M.S. I was there about a year. Then an ambitious woman from Manchester eyed me up and decided I was what she needed for Manchester and Salford and District Union of Girls Clubs. I was offered the job of full-time secretary at £120 a year, non-resident, and off I went because the Buxton club really was too heavy a load, and it was very isolated, very Victorian and so I fell for temptation very easily. Off I went to live in Manchester. There I did what any Youth Organisation Club Secretary would do nowadays. You organise competitions, you run conferences and you try to promote reading and you deal with the local authority. I covered from Buxton to Rochdale, including the whole of Manchester and whole of Salford, and it was the heyday of girls' clubs, clubs on every street. That was lunacy too to try and do that one single-handed. There was a slightly better committee. They were of the tradition of Manchester women, they were on the city council, the Pilkington daughters were on the committee plus Lady Crossley of Crossley Motors [12]. They were a much better educated bunch than the Buxton ones, and therefore much easier to work for. That was a very interesting job. I loved it but on that money it wasn't possible to live. I lived at the Roundhouse [13] with [L. S.] Lowry and Mary Stocks [14] and people like that, but the fee was £2 a week and I got less than £3, and so (looking back on it I think foolishly) I went and lived in lodgings. We were terribly poor in those days as social workers.

A.C. Did you have links with other social workers as Secretary?

M.S. Hardly at all because I spent all my mornings in the office. I had to do all the typing and all the duplicating things, and of course we'd none of the photo copiers and things we have nowadays. I did all of my own minutes, everything all myself. I raised all the money, and that took the day, and then from say four o'clock onwards I was speeding off to the likes of Rochdale or so on.

Then I went out at nights and by the time you'd gone on the bus because nobody had cars, to Rochdale and found the place, and stayed there 'til ten at night and then got yourself home, there wasn't any opportunity to do anything else. Again, just like Buxton, it turned out to be awfully lonely except that I had this good committee.

- A.C. Did you keep contact with these friends you mentioned: Janet McCrindell, Dorothy Keeling, Josephine Duckworth?
- M.S. Oh yes, but they were in Liverpool and I didn't meet their opposite numbers in Manchester. To this day I'm in touch with the ones who are alive still.
- A.C. What happened after?
- M.S. In the end I had to give it up because I just starved myself to death. You just couldn't live on that kind of money. I came home and had a long rest cure and then went and was a dietician for a little while, a dietician's apprentice in a big hospital which was a good experience, and got myself latched on to the first psychologist who practiced in Liverpool. A man called Alan Fitch. I was his receptionist, which was quite interesting. When I was recovered again, I went back into the main stream. It was a job which I got because I knew people like McCrindell and so on. They were the key figures. Meanwhile the big survey of Merseyside which Booth [15] had always meant to do but didn't, was going on and all those young men were around.
- A.C. That was carried on by Caradog-Jones?
- M.S. That was why he came; to run the statistical side of it. There were all of them, and I knew all of them and therefore between them they got me this research project, which was a grand name. Not to go and work for unemployed young women, but to go and discover what they needed. What help could we offer and this came through the girls' club movement. It was a six month project and we started off the only way you knew.

That was to lay on a programme of lectures and classes and things, and I went, (I think I was very brave: very middle class), and handed out leaflets to all the women waiting at the door, waiting at the labour exchange, saying, "Wouldn't you like to come and join my club?" They must have laughed I think! Nobody came. That was the end of that. Instead we focussed on the two or three areas that looked like going, which were latched on to the existing community work. One was a Catholic Community Centre round in the Bullring here, and two were out on Dovecote and Norris Green housing estates where there were residents' groups. I could do PT because I'd been to a public school, and I could cook because my mother was a Scot. I did demonstrations, like five ways of cooking a herring, and all we had was a primus and a biscuit tin lid. We didn't even have a frying pan. Just like Buxton, I think taught me this immense respect for the people that I encountered. It was beyond me to imagine, I could only do it because they taught me, that you could ever live where you cooked on a primus with a biscuit tin lid, and that was your kitchen equipment, and yet be upstanding and cheerful, and hilariously good company.

At the end of that six months, I had to try to write my report. Then I realised university had taught me nothing! I couldn't write. But in the end I produced a little report and it was because the *Manchester Guardian* reviewed it as a leader, that my husband read it and said, "That's the girl for me!" The conclusion we came to was that this project had proved we didn't need it. That was not what was wanted. We didn't need special provision for

unemployed young women. They sink back into the community when they are unemployed, back into their families and they don't regard themselves as unemployed. They regard themselves as the community. As ordinary people. What we must supply was women's clubs. There was a desperate need for that. All manner of activities that would bring women out of the house. That was desperately needed. But nothing at all for the unemployed, as the unemployed. That's a lesson we've still not learnt. We are not doing that even now in 1980. It's a great thing if you know the right people for by that time McCrindell was no longer warden of the David Lewis girls' club, she'd become organiser of the new movement, Townswomen's Guilds [16], which was to match Women's Institutes in the country, and be a town version. I became her secretary part-time, and the other part of my time I helped her to run her house. She'd inherited the family house round the corner from here, and took in lodgers. In those days you provided bed and board, and it was full of first generation professional women. One was Octavia Hill [17] trained, and another was a solicitor struggling to make her way as a woman solicitor. About six or seven of them. So I ran the house and I acted as her secretary. And that really was immense fun.

We had all this Merseyside survey team hanging about the house, because they were all young men in flats and I was quite a good cook, so they came around the house a great deal. There were endless debates and arguments. We were all very pro Russia. Various young men subsequently became MPs. The one who's now the father of the House of Commons, George Darling [18], was one of them. Though we grieved that we didn't get married because that was such a shame and a disgrace, not to be married. But apart from knowing that we ought to be disgraced, how we enjoyed it! And you'd got your own money. Maybe only £2 or £3 a week, but it was yours. You'd no family, no responsibilities and you went to lectures and concerts. We were very, very avant-garde. We did Yeats' plays in our spare time and played the harp, and all that kind of thing. That happiness and that total commitment to our jobs, I think we've lost nowadays. Of course it meant to us, as there wasn't marriage as a prospect, the job was the thing, and you never, never questioned that you were badly paid and badly treated and hopelessly overworked. The job mattered so much, and therefore we just took over social work and we made it our thing. It wasn't a man's territory at all. We must have influenced the whole development of social work I think. Up 'til 1918 people like Carr-Saunders were the outstanding figures, but after 1918 it was Macadam and Younghusband (interviewee no. 26), all that lot who just commandeered the place. Just pushed the men right over the horizon.

A.C. More forceful do you think?

M.S. Not more forceful, but more driven! To have grown up through the war, and had brothers killed and fathers killed, you had to justify your survival, and if you met people, if you met men who were handicapped who'd been broken by the war, you had to look them in the face and say, "I was saved because I'm serving humanity". That kind of drive. I think we were all slightly crazy!

A.C. All very reminiscent of Vera Brittain [19] and *Testament of Youth*.

M.S. Yes it was all that generation, you see, and we read Vera Brittain and Holtby [20]. All that generation of people.

A.C. About what year are we talking about when you were living there?

M.S. It would be up to about '37 or '38. And then one of this team of young men came my way. I would be 29.

I was so thrilled, so excited at the age of 29, to have caught a husband and a nice one. He wasn't a make do. He really was a winner. So when his mother said firmly, "You will live in the suburbs", I wasn't going to argue. Off I went; vanished over the horizon. That's why in writing my own book [21] I'm in a difficulty, because it was all a bit second hand. He was writing his book which, interestingly, was on the principles of social administration, because social administration was totally new, and the local government servants who'd gone into it knew about education administration and highways and emptying the bins and that, but social administration raised all manner of problems. Such as, where do voluntaries come in? There's a whole chapter in it on the voluntary sector, and particularly the relationship between local provision, statutory and non-statutory, and national. By then we'd accepted that a national, planned society had arrived, was no longer coming; it was with us. But where did you draw the line between total national takeover and the defence of local democracy? That really is what that whole book was about. Therefore I was in on all that. All his discussions with his colleagues, and I corrected all the proofs. But I wasn't actually in the front line anymore. Well then came the war, off he went to do sundry jobs, and anyhow in the end I got offered the job in the West Indies, which would be about 1940. We were well into the Blitz by then. The Liverpool Blitz was nearly over.

A.C. Were you here during the Liverpool Blitz?

M.S. Yes, but not in this house. I was out in the suburbs. He was here.

A.C. Were you in contact with the work that the Public Assistance Committee (PAC) [22] did?

M.S. What I did come across at first hand were the evacuees, and West Kirkby in those days was extremely conventional. Not like some suburbs where they are fairly relaxed, it really was extraordinarily conventional! And when all these evacuees arrived they were full of noble thoughts, but within ten minutes they were all being bundled back to town, and we offered to take a mother and child because we hadn't any spare bedroom, but we said we could give them the dining room. We didn't need a dining room and a drawing room. It was an ordinary detached suburban house, and so we volunteered to take a mother and baby. But nobody would take it. They came from Scotland Road our lot, and at the very sight of them they began to be rejected locally, and so we finished up with a mother and three children and father who arrived out at the weekends, and they all lived in the dining room together and we shared a kitchenette. I don't know how we managed. And they were a family who'd just been involved in a court case. The man's brother was up for trial on a murder, and that really was quite an experience and all our neighbours, of course, were in fearful trouble with their evacuees. It was clear that we

didn't know each other, and that did hit home locally. That was why Beveridge [23] got such a good reception.

It really brought home to people the gulf in standards, and though they couldn't cope with other people in their own houses, quite forgivably, they accepted Beveridge: determined that this sort of thing couldn't go on. I think the evacuee scheme really prepared the way for Beveridge. But by that time we'd gone to the West Indies.

What was frightening about this experience was that we went out in good faith. We only went because they said there was such trouble in the West Indies and the Americans were prepared to pack their bags and go home if these "niggers" weren't kept in their place. There was desperate need for welfare reforms and so on, and would my husband go out, and I was to go because of all my group work experience. We could take our child, and so on those terms, as part of a whole team, off we went. When we got there we discovered all this apartheid and all the rest of it, and found ourselves, in the end, in danger of being put in a concentration camp because we would talk to black people! My husband became the advisor to the independence movement on all the islands. Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, all of them. That was where I think both of us felt our real education had come from, and I came out of that five years, as I ought to have come out of the university, with a grip on basic principles. A real, not a theoretical clue, but a real grip of what I was in this world for, and where I was headed. Very little idea of how you got there, but I just knew that was where my face was going. I think maybe you don't come out of the university with that. But it was a totally different feeling, and we came and looked at Liverpool University life, going home nine 'til four, three months off in the summer. It wasn't on any more. That wasn't what life was about. So we moved to this house, which became an annexe to the university and an annexe to my ward. And the two met in this house deliberately.

A.C. By this time you'd decided that the social work was not the answer, and that political activity was.

M.S. Yes, I think so. And I think it was the West Indies that taught us that. Though, what the Buxton lasses taught me, that basic respect for the individual, is the main plank, the machinery, but the strategy has to be political. And that of course was fed into my life by Eleanor Rathbone [24] when I had come up to Liverpool straight from school. Her whole concept was that you were a citizen, and that was your reason for living. How you were a citizen, whether you were a doctor or scrubbed floors, didn't really matter as long as you were a full-time, full-stretch citizen. Therefore in the West Indies you had respect for the most illiterate, roughest black man, but your strategy was citizenship, and how did you enable him to be a contributing citizen? When we came back and looked at Liverpool that was the recipe, that was what was lacking. So we moved in here so that my husband could bring, I suppose it's the old Webb/Fabian stuff, he brought in all the intelligentsia, the academics, the wide knowledge, people like Margaret Mead [25], and Titmuss [26] and all that, and I brought in the rough black man from round the corner.

A.C. He brought them into this house?

M.S. He brought his lot here, and I brought my lot here, and inevitably they met.

A.C. At the same time?

M.S. Not ever deliberately, but because they were my friends, and those others were his friends and my husband had a great gift for being unselfconscious. I like to think maybe I have it a bit too. As a Scot, I think we are not so class conscious. My husband would introduce the likes of Tony Forder [27] to my great friend Mr Ozoo, who was a Nigerian who'd married a white woman, and was going through all the horrors of rearing mixed race children. They were both anthropologists. One in a practising sense and one in a theoretical sense, and it grieves me so much that the Department now is staffed by anthropologists who see no connection. But it makes me realise what a great man my husband was. That this house became a power house for research which was rooted in what was in those days, the police told me, the worst ward in the country. I think that's what gave that whole Grove Street Series/Crown Street Series its real flavour.

A.C. Can you remember any more stories of these two worlds suddenly finding themselves face to face?

M.S. It happened a lot down in Wales because my father had bought us a little valley and put up wooden huts, during the first war, so we could get away for holidays and that. We lent one of these huts to the university settlement, (the men's settlement), and my husband because of being a professor, was made chairman of the settlement, and looking round for somebody imaginative, he found a schoolmaster who was in dire disgrace because he was a failure, called John Mays [28]. He appointed John Mays against everybody's advice and encouraged him to examine the neighbourhood, which is Ship Street. We offered him the hut. We went down to this hut, and the Nile Street Boys were brought down by John Mays. I don't know if you've read *Growing Up in the city*, a classic about delinquency. John was evolving the theory of the sub-culture in those days. The club at that point was only for delinquents. At night John would take his jeep and tour the streets and the bargain with the parents was, "I will take your boy if you will give me authority to scoop him up". He would chase them round the streets and say, "You've got to come to the club as you promised you would".

He'd scoop them up in the car and brought them to the club, nearly all of them on probation or just out of Borstal. He would hand pick them, five or six at a time, and bring them to Wales. They would be sitting in one hut, and we and our local Welsh village friends would sit in the other hut. These were Welsh miners who lived out in the Mold area, and the Welsh miners would talk to the Liverpool delinquents, and the Welsh miners without realising it taught them morality which they'd never encountered. There was astonishment on each side again, the surprise, and I realised talking to you that that emerges as my theme. My surprise at what I saw. And John Mays was able to write it down. The opening of *Growing Up in the City* they wrote in this room. My husband said, "You begin by conjuring up the scene. The smoke from the ships on the river and so on". So they drafted out the opening in this very room. These

Welsh miners were very highly super-sensitive people. They would say to my husband, "You want to watch that lad. He's not straight. He's not got his feet on the ground." And to some other lad who was in deep trouble they'd say, "That's a very splendid young man". They of course didn't know the delinquent backgrounds. The Welsh farmers to this day will say to us, "Whatever happened to that big lad you used to bring?" You hate to say, "He's now in prison for life, or something. But they remember them as such fine young people, and how delightful they were, and how they loved to meet them. I think that was a calculated technique of my husband's. That you put Welsh sensibility together with the amorality, I think it's the word, of the delinquents.

- A.C. How did you explain your choice to your social work friends when you came back from the West Indies? Presumably you were still in touch with Janet McCrindell, Dorothy Keeling, Josephine Duckworth.
- M.S. Oh that generation were alright, because they'd been reared as suffragettes and they knew, that was why we wanted to vote, that you could get political action. But by that time I was very disillusioned with things like the Settlement. That was why my husband got John Mays in to get rid of the paternalism on which the thing was run. Being me I'm quite sure I said to them all, "You're all damned patronising whatnots, and politics is the answer". My recollection is they were, taken aback. But it was a calculated decision again. By that time you see we were much more mature. We didn't just go for things blindly. A woman in court, a white woman, had begged for a chance for her lads because her husband had gone back to Ghana to try and set up a home for them, so that they could leave Liverpool because she said, "There is no life for boys like mine in Liverpool". And I was so ashamed. I came home and said to my husband I really had to go into politics. I couldn't sit around running boys' clubs. It wasn't the answer. He volunteered that he had decided against making any bid to be a vice chancellor, for which he was then ripe. He knew if I stood as a Labour politician that would put paid to it. We agreed that was the line we would put forward, and therefore he then developed this whole series of research reports which studied all the group work and the movement of the population from Crown Street out to Kirkby and Skelmersdale. That was his way forward, instead of going off into administration to be a vice chancellor. That would bring us up to the point where I said farewell to voluntary work, but then you see the story changes. And as I work my way through politics I come back to the original respect for the individual citizen which is the point I am now at. So I'm really back where I started.
- A.C. How did you get your connection with FSU [29]?
- M.S. That was my husband's connection because the man Eric McKie [30] was the assistant Registrar at the University. My husband had an eye for hidden talent. That's how he found John Mays. They must have known somehow that McKie was doing this work. I think students probably were parked out with FSU and he became real blood brothers with Eric, who was a remarkably fine man, a lovely man and totally under-used by the University because he wasn't a "gentleman". So he was kept as deputy, he was never invited to

dinner parties. It was because of my husband, he wrote the book that he did write, and because of my husband he published it. Otherwise they would never have published it. They tried hard to suppress it. It's not a very great work, but an honest endeavour to tell a story. And McKie was a Quaker, a man of very great principle and so I'm quite sure that he revived in me, that respect for the individual.

A.C. You've mentioned all these famous people, and I wondered whether I can provoke any more memories of them from you. You've mentioned Eleanor Rathbone and Dorothy Keeling.

M.S. These academics like Titmuss and all that, most of them were very cordial towards me. Maybe my husband never asked the ones who weren't. If they weren't value-based we didn't want to know them very much. But I remember people like Forder and Titmuss as being very interested in the effort the pair of us were making to link academic research as a basis to political policies. But we were each defeated.

I remember Margaret Mead coming. She said what the matter with me was that I was minority-minded. That I was so marred, just as people in America if you're southern state. I suppose she meant a chip on the shoulder, and that I as a Scot was agin English and agin men and everything. And it was very discerning of her. She was quite right. The pair of us had never realised there was a real culture clash in an English, a rather upper class Englishman marrying a Glaswegian. There was a real culture clash. I'm always grateful to her for it, but I never liked her. It was important to me how you ever fed academic ideas into the political system, and I've been completely defeated on that one. I think the gulf is wider than it was then. In those days the City Council would ask the University, "Would you examine Speke and tell us what we've done that was wrong?" Whereas now if you say "University" they burst out with guffaws of laughter. If I go to the University and ask for help as I've done with these anthropologists, they say they can't see any connection. There was far more hope placed on the relationship in those days than there is now. We've lost out on that terribly.

I think the trend through it, looking back, was that we worked through the stage of how you set up Beveridge and the different stages of the labour exchanges, the dole, public assistance and all the changes of name and what they meant. We worked all through all that mechanical stuff, and it took a great deal of talk. Whether you had advisory committees for public assistance or whether they were no good; the public had nothing to contribute and so on. But then slowly the other theme began to come out and I think took over to our great detriment, which was that you needed to defend the individual against this vast machinery, what ended up in this great Rights movement, all that began to emerge. But the state was too big and you couldn't cope as an individual. How were you to get your rights? If a blind man had rights, then a man with one leg had rights, and if he had rights – and so on. At the end of the day the bill would be such you wouldn't be able to pay it. I remember Gertrude Williams coming out with a book, or article or something, which said that if we filled all the existing vacant posts, there would be nobody left on the streets to do any other work at all. We'd so overdone the state service line.

- A.C. Would you agree though, that nevertheless it all starts with the State, because it's the State that confers these rights in the first place, that one has to assert its role?
- M.S. No, I think what we lost sight of was Beveridge's third volume about which I'm slightly crackers. It's a rotten book, but the theme is a sound one, in which he said you may implement volume one and two to whatever extent to like, but unless you implement volume three it will be as nought and we are a doomed civilisation. Volume three was the input of the citizen. That it mustn't be one way. It's not doles from the State to the individual, but also the individual has the right to serve the State. We totally lost that one. That's the political lesson that I've learnt which brings me full circle back to the importance of 'voluntary', but it's a totally different concept from the Victorian one. It is the citizen's right to give to the State, and that's where I've now got to with things like the pre-school organisations committee, which is the only one of its kind in the country, where pre-school playgroup leaders, mums, have a right to be part of the state machinery. I think this is a completely new concept, and so I like to think of it as a spiral. Maybe I'm back at the same point but further on.
- A.C. Those criticisms I mentioned before we started recording, that Barbara Wootton [31] and others made of social workers during this period. I wonder what your view of all that was. That they were overly concerned with individual motivation to the exclusion of social circumstances.
- M.S. I'm totally with her. But this was where my husband valued my political input that you had to think about the community and that was what Carr-Saunders had come to Liverpool to teach. That the unit of survival is the community, and all the work that the group had done, my husband's group had done on Speke and Kirkby, that was the message all the time. It's not the individual. It's the individual in society. That was the time when casework had gone all value-free, and all this non-involvement in everything, and many, many of my husband's young people, (staff and research students), left because they couldn't go along with him. He insisted that if you had anything to do with the social sciences, you were inevitably involved. You could not do pure research. He and Titmuss of course were close allies. Very hard times those were, because many, many people had gone overboard for value-free sociology. My husband was very much scorned and laughed at along with Titmuss and the rest.
- A.C. I think it all came full circle again though.
- M.S. Yes. But I like to think not just full circle. This spiral, I hope it's an upward spiral; certainly I'm much further on than I was. But I've got this for you, that of Eleanor Rathbone's that was what I think you'd call the seminal period and it was in Liverpool it all happened round about 1902. This discovery of perpetual motion that kept her going all her life. She was working at the minute when her final stroke happened. She was still at it, because I think she'd discovered the basic principles of social work.
- A.C. Well what about the question you don't want to answer. About the things you look back on with greatest pride.

M.S. You put it that way, that's easier! Undoubtedly the fact that I look back at myself as a girl of eighteen who arrived in Liverpool, and I am not the same woman. I have travelled. Whether I have travelled as far as I ought to have or anything, is quite irrelevant. I know I have moved and I know I am still learning. And I think that's my achievement.

Still humble I hope, still aware of how much more to learn, and therefore for that reason I think, not backward looking. Able to be the age I am and still be moving forward, because there is still so much to learn. And I think to have arrived at a principle. I don't offer it as a remedy for the whole world, but for me it's the principle that makes life worth living, makes me get up every day, is the value of the individual, and as long as I'm not shut up by myself, (I think I would die in prison), but as long as there is one other person for me to value, then my life's got meaning. That's very embedded now, and I like to think that will take me through, and when I'm semi-senile in an old home, I shall look at all the other semi-seniles and it will still be worth living because they are there. I don't know whether that's Christianity or what it is, but it's me, and I've arrived at that one. And I think that people like Barbara Wootton are unhappy because they haven't found a principle that takes them through their sad days and their difficult days. I don't say I live up to mine, but it's there and I can come back to it.

A.C. Thank you very much.

EDITORS' NOTES TO THE SIMEY INTERVIEW

1 Professor Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders (1886–1966). Sociologist, demographer and academic administrator. Secretary of the research committee of the Eugenics Education Society and served as sub-warden of Toynbee Hall. He was elected to Stepney borough council, and in 1914 was called to the bar. *The Population Problem* (1922) did much to establish his reputation and much later it was claimed as having anticipated major developments in ethology. He became first holder of the Charles Booth Chair of social science at Liverpool University in 1923. Succeeded Sir William Beveridge as Director of the London School of Economics (LSE). In the next nineteen years he held the school together through its exile during the war and presided over its expansion.

2 Workers Educational Association (WEA) was started by Albert Mansbridge, a civil servant, and his wife in 1903 as an Association to promote the 'Higher Education of Working Men'. He was elected by his wife Honorary Secretary *pro tem*. It was renamed WEA in 1905 and today (2013) provides 14,000 courses a year in 500 local branches.

3 David Caradog-Jones was in the School of Social Sciences and Administration, Liverpool University. His autobiography is *Power: a Gift to*

Ordinary People 1973. Edited a 3 volume *Social Survey of Merseyside* (1934), which is referred to later in the interview.

4 **Beatrice Webb**, née Potter.(1858–1943) sociologist, economist, socialist, diarist and social reformer and **Sidney James Webb**, (1859–1947), social reformer and Labour Party politician, were among the most prominent and productive pioneers of social science in Britain. They attracted both admiration and ridicule in their time but one outstanding achievement was their Minority Report that emerged from Beatrice's membership of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress that sat from 1905 to 1909. The Webbs advocated the scrapping of the Poor Laws, the creation of employment bureaux and expenditure on essential services such as education and health. Though the Asquith Government ignored these Minority recommendations at the time, the Webbs' recommendations re-appeared in the Beveridge Report of 1942 and the post-war reforming agenda of the Attlee Government.

5 **The London School of Economics and Political Science** (informally, the London School of Economics or **LSE**) was founded in 1895, the moving Fabian spirits being Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas and George Bernard Shaw. The initial finance came from a bequest of £20,000 from the estate of Henry Hunt Hutchinson, a lawyer and member of the Fabian Society. He left the money in trust to be put "towards advancing its [The Fabian Society's] objects in any way they [the trustees] deem advisable". The aim of the School was the betterment of society through the study of social science subjects such as poverty and inequality.

The important role of the LSE in the development of social work education is referred to in several of the Cohen Interviews. The Charity Organisation Society (COS) sociology department - that had provided some theoretical training for social workers - was absorbed in 1912 into the LSE's new Department of Social Science and Administration . The range of courses later provided by the Department was described by David Donnison in 1975: "The Department was teaching about 300 students at this time (1956): about sixty were taking the Social Administration options in the second and third years of a course leading to an honours degree in sociology, ninety were taking a course leading to a Certificate in Social Science (later renamed the Diploma in Social Administration) and twenty five graduate students were taking the same course in one year. The Department also provided four one-year professional training courses designed in the main for graduates in social sciences: the Personnel Management course for about twenty five students, the Mental Health Course [established in 1929] for about thirty five students training for psychiatric social work, the Child Care Course for about twenty students training to work in local authorities' children's departments and involuntary child care organisations, and the Applied Social Studies Course for about twenty five students entering various branches of social work. A number of graduate students were reading for higher degrees, and various others were temporarily attached to the Department." The School ceased to offer professional social work qualifications in 1998.

6 **Dorothy Keeling** (1881-1967). Social worker and author of *The Crowded Stairs*. She was educated at home and at a girls' grammar school, but physical weakness in childhood barred her from serious academic work. After some experience with workhouse visiting, in 1907 she joined the staff of the Bradford Guild of Help. After her father's death in 1916 Keeling became self-supporting, accepting first a salary for her work in Bradford and then the secretaryship of the National Association of Guilds of Help. She was hired in 1918 as the first secretary of the newly established personal services committee of the Liverpool Council of Voluntary Aid, a position she held until the Second World War. The Personal Services Society (PSS), as the committee was renamed in 1922, was set up by those Liverpool municipal reformers and social workers—among them Eleanor Rathbone (1872–1946), Elizabeth Macadam (1871–1948), and Frederic D'Aeth (1875–1940). Keeling skilfully guided the Society's affairs for a generation before moving to the NCSS in London to expand the Citizens Advice Bureaux network

7 **Liverpool Personal Social Services Society (PSSS)** was founded as a voluntary organisation in 1919 to address the social needs of the city in the aftermath of the first World War. From the outset it was a pioneering organisation and it initiated several movements that became established nationally and were highly valued: for example Citizens Advice Bureau, legal aid, and home helps.

8 **Janet McCrindell** was appointed an area organiser in 1931 for the Townswomen Guilds. She later moved to be warden of a girls club (probably the David Lewis Club) associated with the Men's University Settlement. She has left a vivid account of the first 'social work' course at Liverpool University 1908-9 in Margaret Simey's *From Rhetoric to Reality: Life and Work of Frederick D'Aeth*, pp.56-8.

9 **Josephine Duckworth** became secretary of the budding Union of Girls Clubs. One had started in Liverpool in 1890. She is mentioned in Margaret Simey's book *Disinherited Society: A Personal View of Social Responsibility in Liverpool*, Liverpool University Press 1996, pp.74-79.

10 **Elizabeth Macadam** (1871–1948), Social worker and close colleague of Eleanor Rathbone. She lived for a time at the Women's Settlement in Canning Town, she was awarded a scholarship to train in social work at the Women's University Settlement in South London and then was hired to become Warden of the Victoria Women's Settlement in Liverpool, a position she held for eight years. Assisted by Emily Oliver Jones and Eleanor Rathbone, she improved the settlement's organization and finances and also altered its philosophy and direction. In 1904 the Settlement launched a training programme for social workers that combined lectures on poverty, child welfare, and civic administration with a course of practical work undertaken in collaboration with municipal and voluntary associations. She also wrote several significant works on the development of this new field, publishing in 1925 *The Equipment of the Social Worker*, a study of the evolution of training for social work; and in 1934 *The New Philanthropy*, a survey of the complex and evolving relations between state and voluntary efforts.

11 **COS Review.** Journal of the Charity Organisation Society. The issue of State provision of welfare payments and services was contested in the COS for many years.

12 **Pilkington and Crossley** both families show the type of representation on the Council. Pilkington was founded in 1826 as a glass manufacturer. Crossley motors was founded in 1906 and was in business until 1958.

13 **Roundhouse** was the original home in Ancoats of the Manchester University Settlement founded in 1895. A new Roundhouse opened in 2009.

14 **L. S. Lowry** (1887--1976) and **Mary Stocks** (1891-1975) were connected by the Roundhouse but it is unclear whether they lived there. Lowry's first solo exhibition was held at the Roundhouse in 1930 with much encouragement from Mary Stocks and her husband. The former had helped establish the first provincial birth control clinic in Manchester in 1926. She had graduated from the LSE in 1913 and later taught at the LSE and Oxford. She was deeply involved in social work, women's suffrage and the welfare state.

15 **Charles Booth** (1840 – 1916) was an English philanthropist and social researcher. He is most famed for his innovative work on documenting working class life in London at the end of the 19th century, work that along with that of Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree influenced government intervention against poverty in the early 20th century and led to the introduction of old age pensions and free school meals for the poorest children.

16 **Townswomen's Guilds** The first four were formed in 1929 and there were 26 by the end of the year. In 1932 13 area federations were formed to enable them to help and support each other.

17 **Octavia Hill** (1838–1912). Housing and social reformer. With financial support from John Ruskin, Hill was able to realise her ambition to establish improved housing for 'my friends among the poor'. She also became involved in the Charity Organisation Society (COS). In 1884 she was asked by the ecclesiastical commissioners, embarrassed to find that the church had become a slum landlord, to take on the management of certain properties, initially in Deptford and Southwark. In 1889 she became actively involved with the Women's University Settlement in Nelson Square, Southwark.

18 **George Darling** was elected MP for Hillsborough in 1950, was Minister of State at the Board of Trade in 1964 and retired in 1974. He would not have been Father of the House at the time of this interview (1980)

19 **Vera Brittain** (1893-1970). Writer and author of *Testament of Youth: An autobiographical study of the years 1900-1925.*(Gollancz, 1933.) The book was a best-seller on publication and earned Vera Brittain instant international fame. Based on her First World War diary and research notes, it quoted poems and letters by Roland Leighton and others, to represent both personal and collective experience. The book argued for peace, in the face of the

coming Second World War, while respecting the bravery of those who had sacrificed their lives in the First.

20 **Winifred Holtby** (1898--1935) met Vera Brittain at Oxford in 1919 and remained a lifelong friend. Strong feminist, socialist and pacifist. As a novelist and journalist she is probably best known today for her novel *South Riding* published in 1936.

21 The book referred to is probably *Disinherited Society* mentioned in note 9.

22 **Public Assistance Committees (PAC) and Departments** were created after the abolition of the Boards of Guardians in 1930, when workhouses were also abolished. They inherited responsibility for the administration, at local authority level, of poor relief in the U.K.

23 **Beveridge Report 1942.** The war-time Government appointed William Beveridge to chair the Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services in 1941. The Report was a best seller on publication and is remembered as a foundation document of the post-war "Welfare State". It identified 'Five Giants' that had to be overcome by society: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease. The solution offered by the Report was a contributory social insurance scheme combined with: financial support for families with children; full employment and a national health service free of charge at delivery. Cecil French is correct in saying that the Beveridge themes were very much "in the air" in the 1930's in addition to keenly felt problems such as housing and education. See *The Five Giants: a Biography of the Welfare State* by Nicholas Timmins. 1995.

24 **Eleanor Florence Rathbone** (1872-1946). Social reformer, researcher and campaigner:, she worked alongside her father, until his death in 1902, to investigate social and industrial conditions in Liverpool. She was elected as an independent member of Liverpool City Council in 1909 and served until 1934. In 1903 Rathbone began working with the Victoria Women's Settlement, which had opened in 1898 and was now expanding. In 1902 the settlement had appointed a dynamic new warden, Elizabeth Macadam (1871–1948), a Scottish social worker who had trained at London's Women's University Settlement in South London. In 1929 Rathbone entered Parliament as an independent MP and campaigned for cheap milk and better benefits for the children of the unemployed. In 1945, the year before her death, she saw the Family Allowances Act pass into law.

25 **Margaret Mead** (1901--1978) was an American cultural anthropologist who made her name with *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928).

26 **Richard Titmuss** (1907--1973). One of his generation's most original and influential academics who was appointed to a professorship in social administration at the LSE in 1950 despite having no formal academic qualifications. In his 23 years at LSE he raised the profile of social administration and strongly influenced the development of social work and other public services such as the NHS. Among his many publications are: *Essays on the Welfare State* (1958), *Commitment to Welfare* (1968) and *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy* (1970).

27 **Anthony Forder** was by 1976 Head of the Department of Social Work at Liverpool Polytechnic, as it then was. Co-edited with John Mays and Olive Kierdan the 9th edition of Penelope Hall's *Social Services of England and Wales*. (1975)

28 **John Barron Mays** (1914--1987) Graduated from Liverpool University and was a teacher and youth worker. Wrote extensively on youth in the city including *Growing Up in the City*, Liverpool University Press 1964. Was Professor of Sociology at Liverpool University.

29 **Family Service Units (FSU)**. An independent charitable social work agency, founded in 1948 in succession to the Pacifist Service Units created during World War 2. Alan Cohen worked for FSU for a period in the 1960's and published in 1998 *The Revolution in post-war family casework: the story of Pacifist Service Units and Family Service Units 1940-1959*. (University of Lancaster). In common with the 26 Cohen interviews, this book was based on interviews with pioneers. The charity merged with **Family Action** in 2006.

An FSU archive can be found at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick. www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc.

30 **Eric McKie** (d. 2003) was on the Liverpool University staff from 1924 until 1967. His book mentioned by Margaret Simey is *Venture in Faith: the story of the establishment of Liverpool Family Service Unit*, 1963. The reference to the attempt to suppress it reflects the tension that existed between the Liverpool Unit and the national organisation. More detail on this is given in Pat Starkey (2000) *Families and Social Workers: The work of Family Service Units 1940-85*, Liverpool University Press.

31 **Barbara Wootton**, Baroness Wootton of Abinger (1897–1988). Eminent economist, criminologist and social scientist. After leaving Cambridge, Wootton took up a research studentship at the LSE and later worked for the research department of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress. She was Principal of Morley College from 1926, and Director of studies for tutorial classes at London University from 1927 until she became Reader at Bedford College in 1944 and Professor in 1948.

She published widely and her *Social Science and Social Pathology* (with Vera G. Seal and Rosalind Chambers. Allen & Unwin, 1959) remains a classic in the application of utilitarian philosophy and empirical sociology to the enlightened management of society. It is a wide ranging 400 page book and Alan Cohen, in his interview questions, concentrates on a chapter ("Contemporary attitudes in social work") that was very critical of some approaches to social work and the claims made about what social work could achieve. It would be difficult to find more trenchant and sustained criticism of the attitudes, language and assumptions of the selected social work writers and academics quoted – in particular of the claims made for the more high-flown psychoanalytical approaches to solving human problems. These she ridicules and claims that they do a great disservice to social workers in their daily tasks. It is clear from the edited transcripts that Alan Cohen was keen to gather the views of his interviewees about the impact of the Wootton bombshell and most of them gave a response.

From 1952 to 1957 she was Nuffield research fellow at Bedford College. She was created a life peer in 1958 and was the first woman to sit on the woolsack in the House of Lords; and later held several senior public appointments. Her reputation as a fiercely independent thinker was sustained during the following years of public service.

Accounts of her life and work are available from her autobiography, *In a World I Never Made* (1967) and Ann Oakley's biography *A Critical Woman* (2011). (Sources: Personal Papers of Barbara Wootton, Girton College Archive, Cambridge; and the books cited above).
