

## THE COHEN INTERVIEWS

### CLARE WINNICOTT (nee BRITTON) – Interview no 24

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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 With the exception of this interview with Clare Winnicott, the interview transcripts were unpublished until this edition in 2013. And this interview is the only one for which we have a precise date. In *Face to Face with Children: the life and work of Clare Winnicott*, edited by Joel Kanter, this is given as 27th June 1980. The relevant chapter (5) is entitled 'Child care in Oxfordshire; an interview with Alan Cohen.'

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 and
- (c) the select bibliography.

All of these can be found at

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject\\_guides/social\\_work](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/subject_guides/social_work)

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**Clare Winnicott** (née Britton) (1906–1984), social worker and psychoanalyst, was one of the first psychiatric social workers to be trained in England, completing the London School of Economics (LSE) Social Science course in 1937 and the Mental Health course in 1940. She created the first Child Care Course in the UK, which she ran at the LSE from 1947-1958. This was an intensive programme of integrated theory and practice that prepared staff for local authority departments set up under the Children Act of 1948. The Curtis Committee (see note 4 below) had recommended refresher courses and training for senior staff as well as basic training for heads of homes, but her framework extended training to all staff and provided a graduated scheme of training. The course covered child development, paediatrics, legal issues in child welfare, and sociology. She speaks touchingly of the impact on her of the LSE's decision to amalgamate the course with another.

From 1964-1971 she was Director of Child Care Studies at the Home Office and then assumed a new position as Head of the Social Work Department at the LSE, responsible for training the new profession of social workers. With her husband Donald Winnicott, [A] she founded the Association of Child Care Officers which was the main professional body for social workers involved in the welfare of

children in the United Kingdom from 1949 to 1970. They were appointed as the only life members.

Clare Winnicott's positive influence was profound and diffuse. Several eminent social work practitioners and academics -- for example Professors Olive Stevenson and June Thoburn – have recorded their indebtedness to her and Bob Holman's book *Champions for Children* and the Joel Kanter edited collection *Face to Face with Children* place her centre stage. And we should not overlook Janie Thomas's description in the Oxford DNB of "a pretty, feminine stylish woman...who loved and understood people, music, literature and poetry and her home (especially, but not only during her happy marriage) was a place of warmth and enrichment for friends, family, and students".

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

C.W. How did I come into it? I suppose through a friend of the family. And in a way my family had always been interested in social work. My father had run a club for unemployed people, my grandfather had taken quite a big part in the social situation where he lived. I think it was in the family.

A.C. When was it you first came into social work? Was it during the war or before the war?

C.W. Before the war. Before the war I went and worked in YWCA clubs simply because a friend of my mother's was in charge of a YWCA centre and she invited me to go and work in the centre. And I did. Then I went to the LSE [1] afterwards to take social science.

A.C. That was pre-war.

C.W. Yes, pre-war. Then I went back into working in the club in South Wales for unemployed miners, unemployed young people in Merthyr Tydfil, and I was working there when the war broke out. But I left in order to go and do the Mental Health Course [2] at LSE, so I was there about a year. Then I did the Mental Health Course. Then I went to the regional office of the National Association for Mental Health (NAMH) [3] Reading region. That was part of the war time evacuation scheme and I was appointed as an assistant to the NAMH representative in the Midlands region. We were connected to the regional health authority, working under them, and they paid my salary.

A.C. That was your first job as a PSW?

C.W. Yes, the first job after finishing the training.

I think I always intended to go back and do the Mental Health Course after I'd done social science, but I had a year in between.

A.C. Was it unusual at that time for a PSW student to go into what we would call, nowadays, community care, as opposed to child guidance?

- C.W. Yes, I think it was, although quite a few did. Most people went into child guidance clinics or mental hospitals, but the work didn't interest me in the least. I never intended to work in a clinic. I wanted to be in the thick of social work; not stuck away in a clinic.
- A.C. You certainly achieved that, if you got involved in evacuation schemes.
- C.W. I was sent to work in the Oxfordshire evacuation scheme, one day a week, by the person who was running my office. It was only a one day a week assignment, to work with Dr. Winnicott who was coming down once a week to be a consultant to the hostels which were set up for difficult children. The children who couldn't be kept in an ordinary billet were put into hostels, and in Oxfordshire there were five hostels with difficult kids in. And I was told to go and work there once a week and sort things out.
- A.C. What did that involve?
- C.W. I think the person who was my boss then actually briefed me by saying "There's a difficult doctor working in that area. He comes down once a week. He doesn't believe in social work because he likes to do it all himself. But it's really in quite a mess as he is only there once a week. The staff are confused and you must go and see what is needed." That's what I was told. So I did. I turned up one Friday to the hostel where he was visiting, and listened, wondering where I could come in and what I could do in this situation. And I think one of the things that I did achieve, fairly soon, was to help the staff in the hostels to make use of his expertise, his knowledge, in a way that they were not able to do. They used to say "He comes down and talks to the children. He plays his pipe to them and we like him very much, but he doesn't ever tell us what to do." So I said "Well let's never ask him what to do. Let's do the best we can in the present situation and then when he comes again tell him what we did and see if he's got any comment to make on it, and if we can therefore learn something from what we did." And that's how it really evolved. He always said "You gave me a role and turned the job into a professional job." One thing I did was to stop him eating all the children's rations in one meal! The staff were inclined to save all the best food for him, and I just slipped in one day, "I suppose you know you're eating the children's butter ration for a week?" He was absolutely horrified! So that's how I started in the hostel scheme. I did stick with that until the end of the war.
- A.C. So you had accumulated quite a lot of experience of working with children who'd been separated from their families.
- C.W. One thing I had learned was that the children who were in touch with their parents, whose parents wrote and visited, were in a much better state than the children who never heard anything from anybody. So one of the things I did there was to ask permission to go up to London and to try and find the parents whose addresses we'd got; of the children who'd never heard from them. I was taken on, gradually, full-time into this Oxfordshire scheme, so I had more time to do that kind of thing. And I did do that. I spent several days, whenever I could get the day, up in London, and I was allocated a Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) [3a] driver and we went round to the addresses we'd got, and we did find a lot of parents. Often we found a

completely bombed-down finished road, and sometimes we could locate the parent in the rest centre, but not always. Some were killed.

A.C. And their children didn't know that?

C.W. No. So what I did there was try and make a link between the children and their parents and actually I got such a name for it that every time I appeared in a hostel they would rush up and say "Miss, have you seen my mum? When did you see my mum last?" And it was quite hard for them when I had to say "I can't see your mum every week. Only every now and again." But it did awaken some parents to their own responsibilities in regard to the children. Because I could say "Look he's missing you terribly. What about a note? Give me something to take to him." Or something like that. So I did work very hard to make links between child and home. That was very much encouraged by Dr. Winnicott and the benefit of it was also seen by the staff. The staff realised it. I think this influenced me and my way of working from then on, and I brought this kind of thinking with me into the child care service when I became a tutor.

A.C. Before we get into that, you were telling me last time about your having given evidence to the Curtis enquiry [4] on three separate occasions.

C.W. Gradually in my office in Oxfordshire other jobs were given to me by the local authority. I was fortunate in working direct to the Deputy Clerk to the Council, so that I didn't have a lot of people to consult about everything I did. It was he who said to me when I first went to the job "Now I shan't mind what you do so long as I know about it." So that really taught me a lesson for ever, a very valuable one: to keep people informed and I simply showered him with memos about everything I did. I felt covered and he was informed.

One day I had to go to him to get sanction for a lot of the things we wanted in the hostel group, and we wanted something for one of the children in one of the hostels. On the way over to his office from mine, I found myself getting extremely worked-up, to wring his withers and try to get out of him the concessions that I wanted. And I suddenly stopped dead in the passageway and said "This won't do. I must carry the emotional strain of this job. It's not his job and I must simply put the facts before him, as well as I can, and take his decision whatever it happens to be. Even if I don't like it. Because otherwise he's not going to see me. He's going to start not seeing me." So I think for me and my personal growth as a social worker, that was an important moment.

A.C. Did that relate back to the teaching you had from the Mental Health course? Or things that you've done subsequently? Where do you place the course in all that?

C.W. I don't really know where it relates back to. I can't think we were taught that on the Mental Health course. I can't think we were just taught that sort of thing.

A.C. About tuning-in perhaps?

C.W. Perhaps, yes. I don't really know because if you're working in a hospital or a child guidance setting you've always got the doctor, the psychiatrist, to turn to. In a local authority you haven't. You've got an administrative officer. I think I don't know where that came from, and why I should make that decision suddenly. I think it was partly because I found myself so worked-up and I just thought "This mustn't spill onto him like this, otherwise he's going to keep at a distance." I think we had talked a great deal in the PSW course about a professional role. What it means to be a professional. And that you have to carry a great deal, that you can't share with other people.

This suddenly extended it into this decision that an administrative officer with authority can't just be twisted round my little finger, or he's going to get sick of me. And I'm not going to get anything done. I must take the backwash of this. It did make me very much more careful in what I did pass on to him and to the committee, really.

A.C. You were making creative use of ideas which had been discussed in the context of relationship with the hospital doctor or clinic doctor. You then related it to yourself working in a local authority.

C.W. I think I was much more concerned with how to fit into the local authority. I don't really think it came just from teaching. Certainly we thought about what it means to be a professional person, but I don't think it came from that. I think it simply came from practicalities that if I do this kind of thing – passing on the emotional impact of the work to people who are not in a position to take it – I'm not going to be acceptable in this situation. I'm going to be either avoided or chucked out! One or the other. People aren't going to stand this. They've got their own responsibilities. They've got to be responsible for raising the money, for persuading the treasurer to spend the money etc., etc., and that's their job. Mine is to put facts before them on which they can make a judgement. It also helped me to sort out facts quite a lot. And to be selective. Facts about children, or their situation, or what I wanted. How to present facts to the committees, or to people in authority or people I needed to be in touch with about the work itself. Not to pass on the emotional burden of it but to pass on the result, or the facts about the case, and accept the judgement even if it's one I didn't agree with. But I'd got to face up to having to do that at some point.

I had to make my way in Oxfordshire, I was one of the first of the few qualified social workers ever to be in a local authority. It took them a long time to get the idea about the nature of social work. The Clerk would send over to my office, and I wasn't there, and where was I? I had to answer questions like "Why were you not in your office? I sent over for you." I said "Well, there are things to be done. My job isn't to be in the office all the time. My job is to be out visiting people and seeing what's going on in the world. I can't be expected to do this kind of work in the office." I would often go straight out from home in the morning and not go into the office. If I'm going out in the direction where I live I'd go straight out, and then come into the office later. It took them a long time to get used to the idea that they might find the blackout up in my office, in the morning, when they sent over. So that there was lot to learn both ways. I had to fit myself into a local authority situation, make myself as acceptable to them and as useful to them as I could. It was tough at first. I remember saying to myself "If the

situation isn't any different in three years, I'm off. But if it is different, if they are more accepting or understand the work better, then I'll stay and get on with it." You see to begin with I was never allowed to sign a letter, not even to a client, a mother of a child in the hostel. It had to be signed by a representative of the Clerk's Department. Well, I found this very difficult indeed, I had to dictate the letters, and they were phrased in my kind of phraseology, but never signed by me. I found this terribly irksome, and very confusing for the client, or the hostel member. Whoever it was. But that altered fairly soon. They saw that I could write letters. It was perhaps a way of keeping check on me and what I did, but when they saw that I could write a fairly sensible letter, or that what I was saying to the client was appropriate, they let me sign my own letters: in time. So there were things like that: that were very difficult to put up with.

Gradually two things happened. Some of the Local Government staff saw that I could be useful to them, so I got landed with a lot of difficult cases. Mostly from the mental welfare officer who was dealing with what were called sub-normal children. I got some very difficult cases from her to go and investigate, and report on. Then I was asked for help by the Public Assistance staff [5] who were responsible for placing children from residential establishments. I was amazed to find that Oxfordshire boarded out children from all over the country. They were used as a boarding out reception area. Partly because there were a great many big houses and wealthy people who would eventually take these children as maids or servants of some kind. I remember going down to the public assistance office to discuss a particular case they wanted me to see, where a woman was complaining about her maid who was a girl brought up in an Oxfordshire children's home, one of the large children's homes. This girl was so noisy and rowdy that her mistress couldn't stand her.

Then of course I enquired into what happens with these children. You know, do you go and visit them automatically, and how often? They said no we don't visit, but we should soon hear if there was trouble. And then how do you do your boarding out? Well it was all on cards. You took out the name of the child wanting a foster home, and you took out the name of somebody wanting a child and you put the two things together and hoped for the best. There was almost no follow-up. But I did take it on and I did visit this child for them and found a 16-year old girl from a very large children's home, suddenly placed in the kitchen of a very large house, in the basement part of the kitchen, very lonely indeed, very much missing all the other children, and she used to sing loudly to fill up the space round herself. She was even accused by her mistress of being so silly as to take her shoes off and go and dance in the garden when the snow was on the ground. Well, I found that very enlightening just dealing with that one case. I made arrangements with this girl to come up to my office and see me on her day off, and we helped her. The whole office helped her, actually. So that was one. I got an insight into the way the Public Assistance people worked.

I also got an invitation from the Deputy Medical Officer of Health, to go and visit this particular children's home, and I can't quite think what that was for, but I know it was the first time I'd been in one of these large children's homes. I found an extremely noisy situation going on in one room where all

the kids had been locked into one room for the afternoon, a bare room, because they'd been naughty and there was nobody to play with them anyway. And just to keep them under control they were simply locked in a room. There was no grown up in there with them. I was asked to meet the staff there I think, I can't remember the details of it, but I know it gave me the first opening I'd ever had into this kind of situation. I also visited children in the Poor Law Institutions [6] where they'd been placed from a children's home if no job could be found for them, and this usually meant the dull ones; the ones who were handicapped in some way or other were put into the grown up institutions, I don't know what act it would be, but they were in the Poor Law Institutions with the old people.

A.C. In an ordinary work house?

C.W. Yes, they were in the old work houses. I visited two of them and actually saw this was happening.

A.C. Did they wear a work house uniform at all?

C.W. I can't remember that. I just remember the very vivid picture I have of one. I don't know about the uniform. Then I was asked to do something else for the local authority. Go and investigate a case, that's right. The Chief School Medical Officer asked me if I would go and visit a school where there'd been some sex play reported by the headmaster, and he got very cold feet about asking me to go in and do it, and as the time got nearer for my visit, he got more and more agitated about it, and he actually rang me up and said now you're to go to that school and find out if this sex play went on inside the school playground, or if it was outside. If it was outside come away without saying anything. If it was inside, well please do what you can. So that was how he felt about it. Sounds incredible but it did happen.

Another time I came into my office one morning and found a pile of files on my desk, 18 files, and I looked at them, and they were all the children boarded out under the 1933 Education Act [7] Fit person cases. They were in the care of the local authority and they had to be boarded out in the 1933 Act. The Act stipulated these kids were not to be put in children's homes, they were to be boarded out. These were children who'd been before courts. Well nobody had said anything to me about them so I rang the Clerk to the Council and said I'd found these files on my desk, what about it? And he said "Oh yes, the Education Committee last night decided that you could take these on." Well I was very interested to do so and I did take them on. But when I got in touch with the Chief School Attendance Officer, whose job they'd been before mine, and said to him "Look, there are no addresses, names or addresses of the children or their parents, on the files. Where do I get those from: the children's parents?" He said "Oh you don't want them. You won't be working with the parents. They're finished. They'll never go back to their parents again. These children have been brought away. They're wicked parents, and that's it." So I felt, this isn't the way I work, I'm not used to working this way. So I spent the morning in the public library, got out the '33 Act and combed it right through, and there's nothing in it that said that a child must be kept away from parents or that they may not meet. Nothing in it to this effect. So I

went back to the office and explained this first of all to the Deputy Clerk, and to the Chief Attendance Officer saying "There's no reason whatever under the Act, why these children and parents should not meet and if I take this job I must work this way, with the parents of the children." They just said "Well, if you want to give yourself a lot of trouble, carry on." So I did take on that load; so in a way I had collected not only an evacuation job, I'd collected the fit person cases, I'd done quite a bit with the fit person cases. I'd done quite a bit with the public assistance and likely to be asked to do more.

I was also asked to go and visit a nursery. I had a lucky turn in the nursery that really established my credibility in the sight of the authority more than anything else. The Deputy Medical Officer, a woman, said she would take me to the nursery. All the children in the nursery were bedwetting and they were very concerned about it. So I remember being driven there and I was absolutely panic stricken! When her car stopped at the traffic lights I wanted to get out, and run, but we got there. I just had to think to myself "Look, you don't have to know the answer to this lot. All you have to do is to sit and find out what's going on and relax." So in fact this is what I did. I took out my notebook and really wrote down the daily timetable -. I said to the matron "Tell me what happens in the nursery from the time you wake the kids up in the morning. Who does it, and what happens all through the day?" I wrote it down hour by hour by hour. Even she at the end of this performance said "Well they don't get much time to themselves do they?" I said "It does look like it." I didn't make any specific suggestions except to say "When do they play? When can they get messy? Do they have a time when they can get messy?" In fact they didn't, they were always permanently cleaned up. And if they got messy they were cleaned up and sat down and not allowed to move again. But she really saw that herself by the end of the afternoon. I didn't press it home. I came away from the nursery and of course never heard another word about it for a long time. So I rang up the Deputy Medical Officer and said "Look, what did happen? Is that nursery still in trouble? Do you want any more help?" "Oh no, no. It's all cleared up. The bedwetting cleared up and none of us can think how you did it. And I can't believe you've only had a year's training", she added.

But this isn't in the space of a year, this is a two or three years period of time. But actually what happened I'm quite sure is that the staff had lost their anxiety about bedwetting. I don't believe the bedwetting had stopped. It might have done in one or two cases, but I think it may have done because the atmosphere relaxed. It may have had an effect on it that way. But I don't believe there was no more bedwetting. However, I didn't just have carte blanche to go into their side of the work unless I was invited. But it was developing that way and I remember saying to the Deputy Clerk and also to Dr. Winnicott, as he still was then to me, "Look, it's very interesting. I'm collecting not only the evacuee children, but I'm collecting everything to do with children. There really could be an office devoted to children, and social workers devoted to work for children." I got into schools automatically because the evacuee children were attending schools. So I had a right to go in and enquire at the school, how the children were getting on and in fact I used to place children in foster homes in villages where I knew the school would be cooperative, and really avoid some



areas because the schools hadn't a clue about how to deal with difficult children. And I knew there would be trouble. In fact there was big trouble at one point, with 11 kids who completely couldn't be held in school. A boy's hostel where 11 kids ran away one night and raided all the orchards round the whole area, and I had the job of collecting them all up from all over the county, far and wide. The school authority said "We are not having them back in school; that's it." We had the good fortune to find a retired teacher from London, who had actually evacuated himself to Oxfordshire, and say "Look will you come and take school for our kids in this one hostel." Well that had a very interesting result, because he did do this work for a year or two with this group. We put up a hut in the grounds. Or we got a hut somewhere. They weren't in the place where they slept. There wasn't enough room anyway. So we had a special little school hut, but they got to know him very well, and he always had tea with the staff before he went home. And he was the right sort of person. After a couple of years or so, they so made up in their school work, that they really were ready to go back into the school. A lot of luck came in at that moment because the school itself lost one of their chief teachers and they were short of staff, and we were able to say "Look, supposing we bring our teacher with us could you admit us back into school?" So as a matter of fact that did happen. He went back into the school with our 11, who proceeded to show up very well with the rest. They wouldn't let him down! Not only that, they became prefects and unbelievable things happened to them. But we obviously had to exclude them for those years; we had to! So that was an interesting bit of light on the school problem I thought. If you can really give them a lot of attention, they can make up on school, if you get the right atmosphere you can. They were thrilled. Very proud of the school, very proud of him, and it was really a very happy incident. Didn't look that way when it started.

Well I suppose, because I'd collected all these bits of jobs together and I'd had contact with every department in the local authority, I could see that other jobs would come my way if I had any time. At this point I said "We've got really the nucleus of the department here for children. Wouldn't it be exciting if we could have one? Not just as an evacuation thing, but as a permanent feature?" Not long afterwards the Curtis Committee was set up, towards the end of the war, and I was invited to give evidence to it myself; and then with my husband, though he wasn't my husband then. But I was also asked to write something about it, to give written evidence. I think he and I together, post-1945, had written an article on the way the hostels worked. How we used various people; what the pattern was. How we selected staff; how we selected children for the various homes. And that was published in *Human Relations*. [8] The first volume, I think, of that *Journal* that the Tavi [9] published. Tommy Wilson [10], Chairman of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations asked us to do write it, on the work of the hostels. Then I was asked to speak at the National Association for Mental Health's first clinical conference that was held after the war. I was asked to speak about the work in the Oxfordshire hostels. And from that I was then invited by NAMH to go on their staff to do this kind of work, to go round discussing with people working with children, the kind of things we'd been doing; the things we'd learned. So I was really on their staff for a year

organising short courses for people working with children in children's homes, boarding out officers.

A.C. Part of the same outfit as Robina Addis? (Interviewee no 1)

C.W. Yes, she was there, yes. And I suppose it was not long after, that advertisements were coming out for tutors for courses for child care officers, for boarding out officers, and I applied and got the Liverpool job, but then LSE invited me to go to LSE and I'm afraid I did. I went to LSE to start it up.

A.C. Can I ask you a bit more about the Curtis Committee. Were you involved in the work going on behind the scenes so to speak?

C.W. No, not at all.

A.C. You weren't lobbying away?

C.W. A bit later than the Curtis Committee, when they were beginning to think of legislation and it was beginning to be put forward in draft form, I remember being horrified that they were going to pass an act that dealt with the children who were in difficulties rather than all children. It seemed to me that what we wanted was a service available for all children. It wouldn't be used by the ones who didn't need it, but where do you draw the line and why wait until things have got to crisis point before you act? If you have to take a child in care why not be available to help when things are difficult? I remember going to discuss this with Miss Aves (Interviewee no 2) at the Ministry of Health. I went up and said "Why are they having an act like this? Surely they're not going to leave out all children." She said "You're twenty years too soon. In twenty years they might. But there's too much to do before then." Yes, I lobbied away alright. I went to a big meeting run by the Women's Group on Public Welfare [11] who published that book [12] on evacuation. I certainly went to that and I remember speaking at that, getting up from the floor and saying something. Oh yes, I lobbied away.

A.C. So did you have contact with Lettice Harford (Interviewee no 11) then, via that Women's Group?

C.W. No I didn't. She was in it wasn't she? No I wasn't a bigwig in any way. I was just a junior from the floor really.

A.C. I wonder whether you were able to identify certain key people and think I'll drop a few ideas in a few ears, like you said you did with Geraldine Aves.

C.W. No, I didn't really know them. I wasn't sufficiently in touch with the whole situation to know who to lobby. But I certainly attended this public meeting they held. And I certainly did bring this point up with Miss Aves, and other points too with her. For instance she used to call a meeting of all the welfare officers in one region during the war, and I went to this meeting. I am certainly not against lobbying, you know, and any lobbying I could do. I've always been one of these people who would lobby.

A.C. Can I ask you, was it a socialist family that you came from?

C.W. Not really, no. My father was a liberal and very anti-trade unions and that sort of thing. Certainly a liberal family. No, you get these ideas at LSE. You get these ideas in social work, you can't help it, if you are working with people who are deprived, I think. This is one thing I would get from my father was that he, too, was public minded. He was chairman of committees and things in the local authority. Chairman of the hospital committee etc., things like that, and he would certainly not mind using political pressure if he felt it was appropriate. So I think it wasn't something that was foreign to me, although I think the younger generation think they've got a corner in it. But we all did it, we did it always!

A.C. I think you were in your last year at LSE when you were at full flood last time we talked. You said you'd said to them "Don't talk to me about changing the system, I changed it."

C.W. Yes, I certainly did say this to students when I went back to LSE. This is very much later in my career. After my husband was dead and my job of Director of Child Care Studies had packed up and it was the Seebohm [13] era. Yes, I went back to LSE.

You can change the system from within and it's much more effective if you do that. And I have changed the system. I've taken part in changing the system.

A.C. You said you'd taken on all the children's officers.

C.W. Particularly taken a line on contact with the parents for the fit person cases. I was asked to run a conference by the National Association for Mental Health for all boarding out officers in England. When they came together and I put forward the way I was working in Oxfordshire, they really howled me down and said "You don't know what you're in for. This isn't the way we can work. These parents are no good and you'll soon learn."

But I had a week of this conference and we all ended up friendly, but they said "We like you alright but we don't think what you're saying is any good. It won't work." Except for two people, and I remember one of them very well. Somebody working in Surrey, and one other person, seemed to cotton on to the idea. But on the whole it was turned down pretty flat.

A.C. During this time I guess you were busy. All this experience was coming together in a coherent set of ideas for you. I'm thinking of the chapter you wrote in Cherry Morris [14], as Clare Britton.

C.W. Yes. Now that's got a history, because they were writing this book and the committee didn't include me, and they were having chapters from the various groups of social workers. There was a long argument. They said "Child care is not social work. We don't want a chapter on it." There was a discussion in that committee as to whether child care was social work or whether it wasn't.

A.C. That's very interesting.

C.W. You didn't know this?

A.C. No, and I've spoken to about four of the authors, contributors.

- C.W. Well, that is so. I was invited in very late indeed to that.
- A.C. When I read that book recently the thing that struck me was that Jean Snelling's (Interviewee no 18) contribution and your contribution still stand today. I went back and told my colleague Alison, "Have you read that thing Clare Britton wrote?" That still stands.
- C.W. I can't remember what the chapter in the Cherry Morris book was called.
- A.C. It describes the new child care service and also how to work with children, about the things you've been saying about keeping in touch with families and why, and several case examples.
- C.W. Yes, that's right, I'd forgotten. But it is interesting to me that they did debate this question for quite some time before I was invited to write this chapter.
- A.C. How did it go your way? Who carried the day do you know?
- C.W. I don't know. I wasn't in the debating arena. I suppose amongst the committee themselves. It was very much a new service. And you see it was the first students who went into local authorities who were told firmly "This is not a social work service. This is an administrative service."
- A.C. By their employers?
- C.W. By their Children's Officers, in quite a few cases. The students used to come back to me and say, this is what we've been told. Is it true? So I said "The job is what you make it. That's the point. You've got to fit into an administrative framework, yes." Perhaps I always felt that perhaps this was the most ghastly mistake we ever made – to try and fit in a social work service to a local authorities structure.
- A.C. Where would you have put it instead?
- C.W. Set it up as a separate department, or something. It could have been another quango but I suppose it would have met its death if it had been. But it does seem to me that we put into an archaic local authority structure a personal service to individuals which was quite unlike anything else they did. I feel very strongly on the question of holidays for child care officers. Local government holidays are not long enough for social workers. In fact I fought very hard in the Children's Officers group on this question. In 1963 I spoke at the Association of Children's Officers (ACCO) [15] Annual Conference. They were all complaining to me "Where are your students? You train them and we never see them in our local authorities. They aren't available. We never get a trained student, a trained worker." I really took that as a challenge, and did go into it quite a lot with my past students and many of them just couldn't stand the pressure of work, because there was no good supervision, no supervision at all really, except on administrative procedure. So they got stuck with frightfully difficult cases which they couldn't solve and they left the authority. They moved on. They moved round and round and round the country, two years here, two years here. Nobody stayed. Ursula Behr (Interviewee no 3) is quite exceptional, stayed in her job all the way through. The rest moved. I really think they moved because they couldn't get any further with their case unless somebody could help them. There was no-one to help them.

At that conference in 1963 I also planted the seed for Training Officers. To me that was the most important speech I ever did, that one. I really planted that seed. I wasn't in the Home Office then. I was still at LSE and I was able to say "Why do you local authorities keep on expecting the Home Office to turn out workers for you all? Why don't you set about training your own staff?" Somebody got up and said "Do I understand that you indicate we should all become training authorities?" I said "Absolutely. Why not? That training that you can provide in the local authority is the other side of the training we do in the universities. If students are not going to get support when they get out there with you, they're going to leave." In fact I got some very good examples of people who had done just that, a student I'd met not long before, who was giving up and going to serve in a flower shop. Couldn't stand it any longer. And other people going out of the service who we'd trained, wasted money on. And I think it was lack of supervision and lack of holidays. People doing a social work job can't fit into the statutory holiday which was allowed in a local authority. Not on! And I said this out loud. "You must rehash, rethink, your whole structure. People must have sabbatical leave, three months, six months, every so often to look forward to. And you must really plan this into your staffing, or you won't keep them. The good ones can't stand it." I feel very strongly on these points.

A.C. We're still waiting for that one.

C.W. I know.

A.C. One of the things that interested me when I was talking to Miss Behr yesterday - it was something I hadn't realised - was how quickly in the child care service the child care officers had understood the need for boundaries and the use of direction when working with children and some adults. I was surprised I suppose because I'd always had it at the back of my mind, that up to the early 60's, mid 60's, anything that smacked of direction was regarded as incompatible with casework which was committed to a permissive, all giving, all understanding, never say "No." That's a bit of a caricature, perhaps, but I was thinking of how PSWs wouldn't take on statutory duties in National Health Services because it would ruin their relationship with the client if they had to do a compulsory admission. Child care officers would do compulsory admission to care. I was surprised at how they understood that from the word go, and we're talking about '48.

C.W. I've never identified with that point of view you know. That you are just the all-caring, all-giving. At the end of the Mental Health Course we all went out to a pub in the evening in the last year of our course, and I said "Well I've enjoyed this course enormously but the last thing I'm going to be is a PSW. I want to be in the hurly burly of what's going on in the world." It's not a view I've ever taken, of being precious, a preference for being stuck away in a clinic. Far better to come to grips with reality, in practice.

A.C. One of the things that's struck me, going round having these conversations, is that there actually is a difference, at this stage anyway, in the way in which people tended to write about what they were doing and what they were actually doing: the oral tradition in social work and what people were being taught by word of mouth by tutors on courses and by

supervisors, and to each other. And there's a gap between that oral tradition and a lot of the things that were written when social workers tried to write, if you like, generalise, in a decontextualised way about their work. They found it very difficult to express general principles. It was easier to talk about people, and the things they were doing with people, that's something that's been conveyed by word of mouth rather than written, than they did drawing out the general principles, and saying "This is what we do."

C.W. Yes, I think this is true. It is another task on top of what you've already done. And I do think people didn't put it into words enough. I can only talk about child care service because that was what I was concerned with. At the beginning they were far too busy and pressed. As for general principles, it was difficult to see them emerging, difficult to see what we were doing, but I think they gradually began to be formulated in conferences. You see ACCO started fairly early. Really started by the first year's course, the Child Care lot at LSE and Cardiff. The two courses got together, and with ACCO they began to formulate principles. The formulation first took place in speeches in these conferences. They played a very important part, the conferences, in just doing this job. After all you've got to have an arena, you've got to have someone to talk to if you're going to do this. The lack of supervision too would play into this wouldn't it? People immersed in a case, nobody there to say "Aren't you doing this and this and this? Aren't these general principles?" This is what a supervisor does, or helps the student to do; to verbalise what they are doing and to see general principles in it. That was completely lacking to begin with. In fact when I started the Child Care Course [16], I only sent people into local authorities for one day a week, and even that was quite revolutionary at LSE, because it would have been a waste of their time to stay longer. They would see a whole lot of things done, that it wasn't a good idea for them to see. And it would have been a waste of time. We could do better with them in college.

A.C. When you were at LSE you were tutor on that course and you'd written that chapter in Cherry Morris, by then you were in a different position really from the one you were describing when I asked you earlier about your contact with the Curtis committee. You said "Well, I was just a junior person then." But you weren't a junior person any longer by the time we'd got to now.

So as tutor to that course did you then have Home Office contacts? Did you play any part in the 1950 joint circular [17] that went out on the desirability of coordinating? When there was a debate going on as to whether the child care legislation should be tightened, or whether they should make better use of what existed by having coordinated committees. Did you play any part in it?

C.W. I played no part in the Home Office side of it, no. As a tutor I wouldn't. But I would certainly play a part in professional discussions at ACCO conferences, and also probably in going round to local authorities. You see I had the job of selling trained workers. They weren't automatically wanted. I don't know if Miss Behr told you but some of the first students to come off the first three years' courses couldn't get jobs. They weren't wanted as

trained workers. People were suspicious of them, so I just thought that one thing I could contribute to this is that every time I'm asked to visit a local authority to speak to some staff group or committee group I must say "Yes". So I literally toured the country. There was almost not an authority I didn't know. Except the far north who were a bit cut off anyway. So I got round the local authorities quite a bit. I wasn't in on any formal discussions.

- A.C. I wondered whether you were either friendly with, or just happened to know, those people who were involved in the formal discussions?
- C.W. Yes, I knew some of the Home Office inspectors, but you see I think they wouldn't be directly involved. Only the hierarchy would be concerned with the legislation. The Children's Officer group I'm sure would put pressure on the legislation. In fact I know they did. Miss Wansbrough-Jones [18] in Essex got that famous word "promote" into the '63 Act. Promote the welfare of children. Now in '63 I spoke in Cardiff to the Children's Officers' Association conference and I started off "Have you noticed a new note? Something we've been waiting for, for a long time. We are now officially allowed to promote. Before we'd done it, but now it's official." And this is very very important. So we have the three p's – protect, prevention and promotion. This was a landmark in history and on the basis of that, the '63 Act, the government had committed themselves to producing more trained staff for the local authorities. And that's where I came into the Home Office.
- A.C. My background was with Family Service Units (FSU) [19] and I always thought of that '63 Act as a vindication of PSU/FSU's work. Did you ever come into contact with FSU?
- C.W. With David Jones [20] of course, yes.
- A.C. Was your thinking influenced by what you saw going on there?
- C.W. Not specially. I felt very much in line with it. I got David always to come and meet students.
- A.C. On the child care course?
- C.W. Yes. I believed very much in what he was doing.
- A.C. I don't know if it's fair to ask you this or not, but I remember when I first went into the residential child care, when I was a student at LSE and had some holiday jobs in Herefordshire and Hampshire, and the thing that struck me then was the easy and rather facile way children were being fostered. It almost appeared that there was some kind of league table amongst Children's Departments as to who could get most children fostered, and not to be too fussy about how it all took place. A bit like how you were describing it happening during the war with the two card system and at the same time there was John Bowlby's [21] World Health Organisation monograph, '52 or '53, "*Maternal Care and Mental Health*". I remember John Spencer [22] thrusting it into my hand and telling me to read that, and Aichhorn's "Wayward Youth". [23] The residential staff took quite a bashing really, at that time.
- C.W. Quite a bashing. In fact I remember one residential staff member saying to me "I no longer like to say what I'm doing. When people ask what my job is

I no longer like to say.” There was another influence at work. The Committee of Estimates annual report noted, in 1954 I think, that it was much cheaper to board out than to have a child in a children’s home. So that was another very strong incentive to the local authorities to board out.

The league table was published or course in the annual figures. I remember being at a meeting at the Home Office and it being said, by the then Head of the Children’s Department “The boarding out has gone ahead this year. I can’t think why it’s pushed ahead so fast.” So I remember saying “Well, I can. Because you publish the league table ever year, and people want to go up it. There’s a very strong pressure on any authority, and some very bad boarding out has been done. Kids are being uprooted from children’s homes they’ve known from their infancy and put in a foster home. And some terrible things are happening.”

A.C. And did that message get through eventually?

C.W. I don’t know at all. One can only say things and you never know what happens.

A.C. My fantasy is that you got endless feedback from it!

C.W. No! No! No! Unfortunately one never knows. I mean I think it threw me very much back on to the whole question of assessment and how do we assess a situation for one kind of care or another. I gave a paper at a United Nations seminar and brought this in quite heavily about this time. And tried to make out a scheme of the different kinds of kids we get to deal with.

A.C. Your paper, *Casework and Agency Function*. Was that written as some kind of reaction to the generic course?

It was given at the annual meeting of the old Applied Social Studies students, wasn’t it? I wondered whether it was somehow connected with the generic idea and wanting to reaffirm something which you thought had got lost perhaps.

C.W. No. I certainly remember being asked to talk to that group to my surprise. Because I was very much *persona non grata* with them.

A.C. Why, because of the history of the course?

C.W. Yes. Because of the history and all the things that went on at LSE I started to plan the course. I worked five years on committees planning the thing, and then was not invited into it! It never occurred to me that this would happen. Never occurred to me! It didn’t. So we were left with a separate child care course and child care students being trained in the generic. An impossible situation. Two lots of students that never spoke to each other. So when I was asked to continue it for another year, I said “No. Not on. Can’t go on like this.” So we dropped to 20 places for training at LSE, because I dropped out of the course. They would have let me go on indefinitely but it just wasn’t fair on anybody. Absolutely mad! I was not wanted on the generic course and I was out of it. I was ill for a year as a result. Then I took another year’s leave of absence and then I thought “Yes, I shall go back.” I was asked many times to go back and run the whole thing by Professor Titmuss. [24] But by this time I was beginning to



take my psychoanalytic training and I often said “No.” In the end I really went back for the sake of linking child care into the new training. For the sake of the past students. I was very unhappy back there for a long time and in fact never enjoyed it, although I did teach on it. Some things I enjoyed. The students you always enjoy, but it was a very difficult thing for me this.

- A.C. The title of that paper, did the students ask you to speak on that?
- C.W. No. I always think “What do I really want to write on?” before I accept an invitation. Is there anything I would be interested in to explore? Something I don’t know about, or hadn’t thought of. I think I chose the title. It was a bit of a challenge to the generic idea because I wanted to make the point that the agency was set up for a purpose, and that unless you worked through the function of the agency you could get off-beam very easily. I think it was making every agency think about themselves.
- A.C. The key sentence is “Agency function is the central dynamic of the whole casework process”, you said.
- C.W. Yes. Because it’s where society and the individual meet. It’s the meeting place.
- A.C. That’s why the article rang a lot of bells for me and brought a lot of things together for me. What I thought were disparate ideas that I was interested in, came together in that sentence. The individual and society meet there.
- C.W. Yes, absolutely. And there’s been a force that’s produced this agency, or goodwill on the whole, and that’s what we’ve got to cash in on.
- A.C. What do you think is the most important idea during this period when you first came into social work up to the period I’m interested in which is ’59; what would you put down as being the most important idea of that period?
- C.W. What is the distinguishing thing about ’59? Why have you chosen ’59?
- A.C. It’s when Barbara Wootton wrote *Social Science and Social Pathology* [25] or when it was published. I’ll invite you to comment on that at the end. It’s one of my last questions: “What would you say about the criticisms that were made of social workers at this period?”
- C.W. By her?
- A.C. Well, she epitomises it. Audrey Harvey [26] was also saying things.
- C.W. And she quotes me in that. To show how ridiculous it all is! I’ll tell you what the most influential idea was that influenced social work practice.

What was influencing social work practice was ideas coming from dynamic psychology. Absolutely. I mean we were applying these principles, if you like, to the practical situation. I think this was the dynamic that came through. A new attitude to people in need was being established and attitude influences technique, thinking, everything, the lot. Where did it come from? I think it came from those of us who were teaching. Quite a group. We met together and had conferences on our own. Where did we

get it from? We got it from the Mental Health Course. I think [Sybil] Clement Brown (Interviewee no 7) has got a lot to answer for. She did give it to us. We were introduced to it there. Some of us followed it up not just in the clinic setting. We applied it in the wider setting. And this is the point. I had a very split-second decision to make in Oxfordshire. I was a PSW I was employed for the hostels for difficult children, and I was asked to take on the administration of the hostels, ordering equipment, seeing and reporting back, building things that wanted doing, and I did accept that. It was tremendously important to me that I did accept it because my credibility in the hostel situation was greatly enhanced by the fact that I had access to resources, other than just human resources. I could get more equipment for them, or I could put orders in for more equipment. I could do this, that and the other. I think it was terrifically important all that. This is meeting the situation you find. It's that, not just sticking to what you've been taught, but meeting with the knowledge you've got, meeting what you find. How's it going to work best.

- A.C. So the most important idea was the injection of dynamic psychology and its application to social work and techniques.
- C.W. To social work situations, to human situations that we dealt with in social work. Yes, I do think so. And the very big task of trying to fit ourselves into a structure that already existed without us. To make ourselves acceptable.
- A.C. And those ideas did influence practice?
- C.W. Absolutely. And also the integrity of the family and that didn't just come from us. I think that came from dynamic psychology. It did of course. It's built into the church attitude isn't? It's built into our country's attitude in a sense.
- A.C. There was a lot of concern about the family in a very negative sort of way in this early post-war period with the growth of the welfare state, because of a whole group of people who thought it was going to undermine the functions of the family. And that was an attitude wasn't it? Stripping the family of its functions. There were various religious leaders who were concerned about that too, weren't there?
- C.W. I think the application of dynamic psychology to the problems of the family was in line with other growths, too, the psychiatrists and people were coming round. They'd had to meet the problems of the war and everything else.
- A.C. Let me ask you about Barbara Wootton then. Some rather critical things seem to have been said about social workers during this period. But I'm wondering what you'd say about it all.
- C.W. I don't think I ever read Barbara Wootton, except the thing she said about me.
- A.C. I can recap on the argument. She said that social workers during this period were overly concerned with individual motivation and you didn't pay enough attention to the social context in which the clients had their problems. She says that social workers made very extravagant claims for

what they might do, and if they were so clever and omnipotent then perhaps we should feed some of the world's leaders to them, because they'd be able to sort out some of the world's problems. She says that really the true function of the social worker is to do for the poor what well-off people pay their solicitor or personal private secretary to do, and all you need is a modicum of good manners and some secretarial skills, she says. I think that's really about the size of it.

- C.W. Well, in a sense on this last point she's right in way. We have to be advocates on behalf of our clients who haven't got access to public voices or eminences who can put their case. They haven't and we often have to be advocates. I can see her point, that's the trouble. We could easily get bogged down in the detail of the family dynamics of the individual, and lose sight of the structure. I feel so strongly that the two things have to go together. We have to be altering the structure to meet the individual, and helping the individual within the structure. I think you can't ever take your hand off either of these things. It's tremendously important and it always has been to me, to see the context in which I'm working. Is the context appropriate, can I make it more appropriate? When I was teaching the applied social studies course, I had one of my year students back after they'd been in their jobs for a year, and they all were very hopeless and said "We can't do the casework. Casework's not possible to do in our jobs." I remember saying to one of them who was a medical social worker "Well, come on. Why can't you do the casework? What's stopping you?" "Well, here I sit with a client in my room and I'm getting on, we're having an interesting interview and they keep knocking at the door" So I said "What are they knocking on the door for?" "Oh somebody wants an ambulance, or somebody else wants some arrangement made for convalescent home, *et cetera*." I said "Is that your job or not?" "Well I suppose it's my job but it means I can't do any social work." So I said "Isn't this social work?" and then I remember making the point that some of the most profound things we do to touch the lives of other people, are in terms of the provisions we make for them. Not in anything we say. I really believe that, very strongly. Unless you can meet the basics, it's high faluting to talk. There was a danger of us becoming high faluting, some people becoming high faluting, and cutting themselves off from the practicalities of every day. Students were always saying they wanted to do "deep casework". So I said "The deepest casework you'll do is making good provision for somebody. That's caring. Basic fundamental caring without which life isn't possible." I feel very strongly about this. And put it over.
- A.C. Can I ask you my last question? You don't have to confine yourself to a period for this question; any time span you like. What do you look back on as being the best social work thing you have done in your career? It's intentionally vague, you can say as many things as you like. Something you think back on with pleasure and pride that you did, and you're pleased about it.
- C.W. I think taking a stand on the fit person cases. That morning I went and got out the Act. I knew I must be sure of the Act and really making a stand on that one because I think it was absolutely vital to do that. Somebody had to do that at some point. I think that's the thing I'm most glad I did. Not particularly the thing I enjoyed doing most. That is another subject. I think

I'm pleased with myself for not falling into their trap and taking on something in this limited way. And I got away with it. I was allowed to do it, put it into practice. It was very important to me. I think it was noticed by other people it did have an influence on others eventually.

A.C. Can you think back on any individuals or families that you've helped?

C.W. I've got individual cases that followed me around wherever I went., One very, very delinquent boy with a very high I.Q. Well, I rescued him over and over again. He was stealing all over the place. He'd got a ghastly mother, a very intelligent mother, and he was probably the illegitimate son of somebody quite high up. Nobody could hold him anywhere. He'd been in every hostel. I'd got five hostels and nobody could hold him. I was absolutely desperate about him and I suddenly thought of the council caretaker, the man who really looked after the council buildings. A man I knew and met every day going in and out, and I knew he had been a policeman and I knew that he was a football referee in his spare time. So I thought he'd be marvellous for my delinquent so-and-so. So I went and asked him. I said "Look I've got the most difficult case in the world, but he's terribly worthwhile if we can hang onto him." So he said "We'll have a go at him." He could report to me every day and tell me every day what was happening. And the boy knew this. I also did another very drastic thing which I'd no legal right to do in that case. I said to the mother "I am not giving you his new address." He came himself the boy, by then 15 or 16, into the office and said "What's all this about my mother not getting my address." I said "Listen. I'm giving you a chance. I'm giving you the only chance you'll ever get to make your own way without your mother ruining everything." Because she was the one who came and ruined every foster home, every hostel he'd been in - and he'd been everywhere. So I stuck onto him and this worked with this man, and I did not let her visit. I'd no right to. And he made good. He got School Certificate. He had several more stealing episodes into his mother's flat, which you'd expect. He then came to see me when I was teaching at LSE He arrived one day and said "What are you doing in this dump?" in a very snooty way. He said "I want you to know that I've changed my name by deed poll." And he'd taken quite a famous name and actually it was his aunt's.

I was asked to go and speak at a conference. It was after my husband's death, so it must have been within the last ten years. I arrived there and the person who opened the door said to me "Do you remember me?" Of course, I didn't, actually I'd never met her, she went on "Do you remember Doreen X?" So I said "Yes, I'll never forget Doreen X." Well, she said "I'm her other social worker in Middlesex, and you were in the reception area during the war. She came from my area into yours." And we had some words together about it. She said "I'm still in touch with her, and she's an air hostess and she speaks several languages. She's gone up the scale. She's really quite a senior person now in the British Airways." I was absolutely thrilled with this because she was so difficult, this girl. I picked her up in an American army camp, aged 14, with a great scar across her dead white face, caused by her mother throwing her on the fire at a younger age. She was in care as a care and protection case because her mother had done her physical harm. She had straight flaxen hair and a deadpan white face and this scar and glasses. Anyway I took her to one of

the hostels and we had a terrific job to get her to settle. But fortunately the couple in charge really worked hard with her. They wanted a lot of support. She stole the woman's ring immediately. The ring was found and we discussed. I said "Could you lend her your ring on Sundays?" and say to her "It's very precious to me but you could have it one day a week." Anyway we all went through hell, one way and another, and she emerged. Her mother used to come down to take her out. She'd get completely drunk in Henley, and the police would bring Doreen home, back to the hostel. This went on repeatedly. It always happened like that. The police knew her very well. And I remember Doreen showing me a parcel she'd had from her mum. She was thrilled, and it was half a pound of grapes bought from a barrow, and simply wrapped in a piece of paper, all soaking wet. It's a wonder they ever got there, but they'd come from her mum. There was something there. We all struggled with this mum and it was very hard work. We got very disappointed over and over again. But fortunately the mother one Christmas Eve was in pub brawl and died. Fell and actually died. Then we all wondered what was going to happen to Doreen now. She said to the cook, who was a great friend of hers, "Can I come and sleep in your room?" And they let her. She moved her bed into that room. She slept there about a week and then went back to the others. And she did a lot of other things. She really had a regression, and the staff let her do it. She bought a baby's bottle, filled it with milk and went to sleep sucking it. And they let her do it. They were frightened stiff doing it, but they did let her do it. That didn't last long and anyway we got her through and at last it was time for her to leave school of course, and we got her a job with some friends of the hostel staff on a farm. She was one of these kids who like every other girl is mad on horses and animals, and we got her a job on a nearby farm where she could go for her half-days back to the hostel group, all beautifully settled. And Middlesex said "That's not enough money for her to earn. We've paid out all this money all these years. We're not going to supplement her any longer." So I got on the blower to Middlesex and said "I want to speak to the Director of Education." Because she was under his aegis, so they said "He's in a meeting." So I said "Will you get him out. It's urgent." He came out and spoke. And I said "Look, we've got a girl in your care," and I told him the story. "We've all been through hell. She's making it and we're not going to have it disturbed now for anything. If you make any more objections to this, I shall see that you get into print. I'll get it reported in the papers." I'd heard no more of Doreen X until recently, so that was a case I'm very pleased with. Because if I hadn't intervened in a heavy-handed way all could have been lost. I nearly said to the social worker "You aren't the one on the other end who had a finger in that pie?" I don't know. But that's the sort of thing you look back on and are very pleased about.

A.C. Thank you very much

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## EDITORS' NOTES TO THE WINNICOTT INTERVIEW

**[A]** Donald Winnicott (1896--1971) was an eminent paediatrician and psychoanalyst. He became well known for his insights and teaching on child development, mother-baby relationships, transitional objects, creativity and the sense of self. He gave credit for the nurturing of many of these concepts to Clare Winnicott, nee Britton, whom he married in 1951. His work has had major influence on a wide range of therapeutic settings and practitioners and a considerable amount of information is available at [www.squiggle-foundation.com](http://www.squiggle-foundation.com).

**1 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.

**2 The Mental Health Diploma Course at the LSE.** This one year course was established in 1929 with financial aid from the Commonwealth Fund in the USA and this support continued until the 1940's. However, as Professor John Stewart has established by researching the archives of both organisations, the relationship was a complex one and not without difficulties. The senior staff of the Commonwealth Fund had had strong views on how the course should be run – particularly in relation to the course content and the experience and qualifications of admitted

students - while the LSE wished to maintain its independence. However, threats to withdraw funding were not carried through and the course became established. For a considerable period this was the only course of its kind in the UK and hence carried considerable prestige. It formed a focus for the expansion of the profession of psychiatric social work from a very low base: in 1930 the newly formed Association of Psychiatric Social Workers had only 17 members. The curriculum included the different existing strands of psychiatric theory and practice; intra-family relationships; and disorders of childhood. Those qualifying went into, or returned to, a variety of work settings; child guidance, mental hospitals, local authorities and voluntary agencies. Over the years the influence of this course gradually spread. For a fuller discussion see: Stewart, J. (2006). *Psychiatric Social Work in inter-war Britain: American ideas, American philanthropy*. Michael Quarterly. [www.dnms.no](http://www.dnms.no) ; and Noel Timms (1964). *Psychiatric Social Work in Great Britain: 1939-62*.

**3 National Association for Mental Health (NAMH)** was established in 1946 by the merging of three major mental health organisations. These were: the Central Association for Mental Welfare (established in 1913) - led by Dame Evelyn Fox; the National Council for Mental Hygiene (founded in 1922); and the Child Guidance Council (established in 1927), which set up the first child guidance clinics and launched training courses for their staff. The amalgamation was recommended by the Feversham Committee on voluntary mental health associations, which reported in 1939. The formal merger had to wait until the end of the Second World War.

**3a The Women's Voluntary Services (WVS)** was established in 1938 by Stella Isaacs (later Stella, Marchioness of Reading (1894–1971)). It was initially formed to help recruit women into the Air Raid Precaution (ARP) movement assisting civilians during and after air raids by providing emergency rest centres, feeding, first aid, and assisting with the evacuation and billeting of children. It was credited with helping to move 1.5 million people out of cities in the early days of September 1939. By 1941, 1 million women belonged to the WVS. After the war it was transformed to become a leading voluntary organisation in the field of social care. It became the Women's Royal Voluntary Service in 1966 and in 2004 simply WRVS in an attempt to modernise the image and partly in recognition of the fact that 11% of its 60,000 volunteers were men.

**4 The Curtis Committee** recommendations were embodied in the Children Act of 1948. This imposed on local authorities, under the direction of the Home Secretary, a duty to provide care for children deprived of a normal home life, as long as this was consistent with their welfare. Each local authority was to set up a Children's Committee and appoint a Children's Officer to take charge of a Children's Department with undivided responsibility for the care of such children. The Act required local authorities to exercise their powers so as to further children's best interests and provide them with opportunities for the development of their characters and abilities. The Act emphasised fostering as the preferred form of substitute care, and gave powers to authorities to continue assisting young people after they had left care. It provided no other means of assisting families other than the reception of their children into care.

**5 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.

**6 Poor Law Institutions.** The English Poor Laws were a system of poor relief which existed in England and Wales that developed out of late-medieval and Tudor-era laws before being codified in 1587–98. The Poor Law system was in existence until the emergence of the modern welfare state after the Second World War.

English Poor Law legislation can be traced back as far as 1536, when legislation was passed to deal with the impotent poor, although there is much earlier Tudor legislation dealing with the problems caused by vagrants and beggars. The history of the Poor Law in England and Wales is usually divided between two statutes, the Old Poor Law passed during the reign of Elizabeth and the New Poor Law, passed in 1834, which significantly modified the existing system of poor relief. The later statute altered the Poor Law system from one which was administered haphazardly at a local parish level to a highly centralised system which encouraged the large scale development of workhouses by Poor Law Unions.

The Poor Law system fell into decline at the beginning of the 20th century owing to factors such as the introduction of the Liberal welfare reforms and the availability of other sources of assistance from friendly societies and trade unions, as well as piecemeal reforms which bypassed the Poor Law system. The Poor Law system was not formally abolished until the National Assistance Act 1948, with parts of the law remaining on the statute book until 1967

**7 1933 Act.** The Editors cannot trace an Education Act of that year and so Clare Winnicott was probably referring to the Children and Young Persons Act of 1933 which included provisions for 'Fit Person' orders.

**8 Human Relations.** The Journal founded by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in 1947.

**9 The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations** is a British charity concerned with group behaviour and organisational behaviour. It was launched in 1946, when it separated from the Tavistock Clinic.

History of the Tavistock. The Institute was founded in 1946 by a group of key figures at the Tavistock Clinic including Elliott Jaques, Henry Dicks, Leonard Browne, Ronald Hargreaves, John Rawlings Rees, Mary Luff and Wilfred Bion, with Tommy Wilson as chairman, funded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Other well-known names that joined the group later were John D. Sutherland, John Bowlby, Eric Trist, and Fred Emery. Kurt Lewin, a member of the Frankfurt school in America, was an important influence on the work of the Tavistock Institute, according to Eric Trist (1911 -1993), who expresses his admiration for Lewin in his autobiography. Many of these founding members of the Tavistock Institute went on to play major roles in psychology. John Rawlings Rees became first president of the World Federation for Mental Health.

The Tavistock Institute shares common roots with other organisations that emerged from the Tavistock Clinic. This is a source of much confusion, though the facts are set out in the historical account by Eric Trist, one time chairman of the Institute, and Hugh Murray in *The Foundation and Development of the Tavistock Institute to 1989*. See [www.moderntimesworkplace.com/archives](http://www.moderntimesworkplace.com/archives)



10 **Tommy Wilson** An army psychiatrist, Lt. Col. ATM Wilson who helped launch the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations as a charity in 1946, separate from the Tavistock Clinic. He had written a report for the War Office in 1944 on *Psychological Aspects of the Rehabilitation of Repatriated Prisoners of War*. Perhaps his most intriguing report was a 1942 memorandum *Supposing you were a Nazi Agent: Fifth Column Work for Amateurs*.

11 **Women's Group on Public Welfare** was named such in 1940 having been set up by the NCSS in 1939 as the *Women's Group on Problems arising from Evacuation*. It was chaired by Margaret Bondfield (1873-1953), a Labour politician, who as Minister of Labour was the first woman cabinet minister in 1924. It became the Women's Forum in 1975 and closed in 1980.

12 **Our Towns, a close-up**. A study was made 1939-42 by the Hygiene Committee of the Women's Group on Public Welfare addressing concerns about evacuation especially of school children. Its Report in 1943 made a big impact on public opinion, partly through prominent coverage in *The Times*. Upper- and middle-class people were shocked by the appalling living conditions and poor standards of care experienced by many of the poorer families in the cities.

13 **1968 Seebohm Committee** (Home Office. *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*. London, HMSO (Cmd, 3703) which led to the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act and the birth of new local social services departments in 1971.

14 **Cherry Morris**. Succeeded Anne Cummins in 1929 as Head Almoner at St Thomas's Hospital in London. Twenty years later she was in post as Almoner at the National Hospital, Queen Square, London. Author of *An adventure in Social Work: The Northcote Trust 1909-1959* and Editor of *Social Casework in Britain*. (Faber, 1950). Including chapters by:

- Cormack, U. M. and McDougall, K. *Casework in Social Services and Casework in Practice*
- Snelling, J. *Medical Social Work*.
- Hunnybun, N. *Psychiatric Social Work*
- Deed, D. M. *Family Casework*.
- Britton, C. *Child Care*
- Minn, W. G. *Probation*
- Reeve, B and Steel, E. M. *Moral Welfare*
- Younghusband, E. *Conclusion*.

15 **The Association of Child Care Officers (ACCO)** was the main professional body for social workers looking after the welfare of children in the United Kingdom from 1949 to 1970. In 1946 the interim report of the *Curtis Committee on Children Deprived of a Normal Home Life* had recommended that training courses for fieldworkers in child care be set up at universities, and four such courses were established. In July 1948 a meeting of students on these courses was called to consider the setting up of a professional association; and in November 1949 the Association of Child Care Officers was formed.

In 1970 the Association merged with six other social workers' organisations to form the British Association of Social Workers, having been a member of the Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers since 1962.

**16 Child Care Course.** The first Child Care Course for the UK which was led by Clare Winnicott at the LSE from 1947 to 1958. Course material included child development, sociology, legal matters and paediatrics.

**17 Home Office 1950 Joint Circular.** In addition to the Home Office, this was issued in the names of the Departments of Education and Health and also the Scottish Home Department. An early example of identifying the need for inter-agency co-operation in child care policy and practice..

**18 Miss Gwyneth Marianne Wansbrough-Jones (1903-1979).** Children's Officer and Child Welfare Officer, Essex County Council. Graduate of Newnham College, Cambridge and later studied social welfare at LSE. During Second World War was attached to Ministry of Health looking after the welfare of women and children evacuated around the country and had 1,600 children under her care. Deputy to Geraldine Aves at MOH. In 1956 was a member of a UK team visiting Australia to establish how British children sent there by churches and other organisations were settling down. Served as Hon Secretary to the *Aves Commission on the Role of the Voluntary Worker in the Social Services*. (1966-1969).

**19 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](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc).

**20 David Jones.** General Secretary of Family Service Units from its foundation in 1948 to 1961 and later succeeded Robin Huwys Jones as Principal of the National Institute of Social Work Training.

**21 John Bowlby (1907–1990).** Psychiatrist. Was on the staff of the London Child Guidance Clinic from 1936 to 1940, and from 1940 to 1945 he served as a specialist psychiatrist in the Royal Army Medical Corps. From 1946 until his retirement in 1972 he was on the staff of the Tavistock Clinic, where he was director of the department for children and parents (1946–68). In 1946 Bowlby published a study of delinquent children entitled *Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves: their Characters and Home-Life*. The work which established his reputation began with an invitation from WHO in 1950 to advise on the mental health of homeless children. This led to the publication of *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (1951). Bowlby was the originator of what later became known as 'attachment theory'. His *Attachment*, (1969), was the first volume of the trilogy *Attachment and Loss*, followed by *Separation: Anxiety and Anger* in 1973. The trilogy was completed by the publication of *Loss: Sadness and Depression* (1980).

22 **John Spencer** (1915--78) Lectured in Social Science at the LSE 1946-53 and left to carry out an action research project at Bristol. Taught at Toronto University 1959-67. Was the first Professor of Social Administration at Edinburgh University 1967-78.

23 **August Aichhorn** (1878--1949) Austrian educator and psychoanalyst and one of the founders of psychoanalytic education. Renowned for his work with delinquent and disadvantaged young people. *Wayward Youth (Verwahrloste Jugend)*, 1925, is his only published book but others have made collections of his writings.

24 **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).

25 **Barbara Frances 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 give 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).

26 **Audrey Harvey**, (1912--1997) was a journalist and long-term contributor to the *New Statesman* and leading campaigner on welfare benefits and homelessness. Author of *Tenants in Danger* in 1964 and a founder member of the Child Poverty Action Group, she was impatient of a perceived lack of involvement by social workers in these fields. For this reason her name was often associated with Barbara Wootton's 1959 criticisms of social work – and this is mentioned by some of Alan Cohen's interviewees.

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