

## EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: ERNEST SIMON'S IDEALS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN ENGLAND, 1934-1944<sup>&</sup>

*Educación para la ciudadanía democrática: los ideales de  
democracia liberal y educación para la ciudadanía de Ernest Simon  
en Inglaterra, 1934-1944*

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**Abstract.** In 1934, with the increasing threats to democracy from such totalitarian nations as Italy and Germany, Sir Ernest Simon (1879-1960), a British industrialist and former Liberal MP, founded the Association for Education in Citizenship (AEC) to advocate reform in citizenship education for cultivating democratic citizenship. Simon's efforts and his distinctive approach towards citizenship education, which was different from that of his contemporaries such as Fred Clarke, R. H. Tawney, and Richard Livingstone, have been discussed and acknowledged by historians. Even so, few historians have attempted to grasp Simon's ideals of liberal democracy and how his democratic ideals were reflected in his views of citizenship education. Due to a lack of connection between Simon's democratic ideals and his views of citizenship education, previous literature not only fails to explain in what way Simon's approach towards citizenship was «liberal», but also misinterprets Simon's ideas of citizenship education. In view of this, the current paper explores Simon's views of democratic citizenship and his campaign for a new citizenship education in relation to his ideals of liberal democracy in order to provide a better understanding of Simon's approach towards citizenship education. Moreover, it will help shed some light on the development of citizenship education in twentieth-century England.

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**Keywords:** Ernest Simon; Liberal democracy; Democratic citizenship; Citizenship education.

**Resumen.** *En 1934, con los crecientes desafíos a la democracia por parte de naciones totalitarias como Alemania e Italia, Sir Ernest Simon (1879-1960), un industrial británico y exdiputado liberal, fundó la Asociación para la Educación en Ciudadanía (AEC) para propugnar la reforma de la educación para la ciudadanía con el fin de cultivar la ciudadanía democrática. Los esfuerzos de Simon y su enfoque característico de la educación para la ciudadanía, que presentaba diferencias con respecto al de sus contemporáneos como Fred Clarke, R. H. Tawney y Richard Livingstone, ha sido tratada y reconocida por los historiadores. Aun así, pocos historiadores han intentado captar los ideales de democracia liberal de Simon y cómo se reflejaron en su visión de la educación para la ciudadanía. Debido a esta falta de vinculación entre los ideales democráticos de Simon y su visión de la educación para la ciudadanía, la bibliografía existente no sólo fracasa al explicar de qué manera el acercamiento de Simon a ciudadanía fue «liberal», sino que también interpreta erróneamente las ideas de Simon sobre la ciudadanía democrática y su campaña por una nueva educación para la ciudadanía. En vista de esto, el presente escrito explora la visión de Simon de la ciudadanía democrática y su campaña por una nueva educación para ciudadanía en relación a sus ideales de democracia liberal con el fin de ofrecer una mejor comprensión del enfoque de Simon a la educación para la ciudadanía. El artículo, además, ayudará a arrojar luz sobre el desarrollo de la educación para la ciudadanía en la Inglaterra del siglo XX.*

**Palabras clave:** Ernest Simon; Democracia liberal; Ciudadanía democrática; Educación para la ciudadanía.

## INTRODUCTION

Education for democratic citizenship has often been considered to be fundamental to the establishment, maintenance, and improvement of democratic societies. In 1934, Sir Ernest Simon (1879-1960), a British industrialist and former Liberal MP,<sup>1</sup> founded the Association for Education in Citizenship (AEC) to advocate reform in citizenship education for cultivating democratic citizenship. For him, this involved both moral qualities such as «a sense of social responsibility» and intellectual qualities necessary for making a sound judgment on public affairs, including

<sup>1</sup> Whereas his wife, Shena Simon, joined the Labour Party in 1935, Simon himself remained a Liberal until July 1946.

«habits of clear thinking» and «a broad fact of the political and economic world».<sup>2</sup> All of these qualities are necessary for a successful democracy. In general, Simon's efforts and distinctive approach towards education for democratic citizenship, which were different from that of his contemporaries such as Fred Clarke, R. H. Tawney, and Richard Livingstone, have been discussed and acknowledged by historians.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the historical literature tends to emphasize the AEC's effort as a pressure group and its main proposal that separate subjects such as civics, politics, and economics should be introduced into the curriculum. Simon's other views of citizenship education, which were also essential to a democratic society, have not been fully addressed by previous historians.

Furthermore, the fact that Simon's ideas of citizenship education were fully grounded in his ideals of liberal democracy has also been neglected. Few historians have attempted to grasp Simon's ideals of liberal democracy and how his democratic ideals were reflected in his views of citizenship education. Although Derek Heater correctly argues that «its [the AEC's] underlying purpose was to use schools as a means of strengthening liberal democracy in the face of the worrying totalitarian threat from both fascist and communist wings», he does not address how Simon's approach to citizenship education was related to his ideals of «liberal democracy».<sup>4</sup> Equally, Brian Simon points out that the AEC was «a truly "liberal" initiative», but does not fully account for this.<sup>5</sup> Due to a lack of connection between Simon's democratic ideals and his views of citizenship education, previous literature not only fails to explain in what way Simon's approach towards citizenship was «liberal», but also misin-

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Simon, «The need for training for citizenship», in *Education for Citizenship*, eds. E. D. Simon and E. M. Hubback (London: Association for Education in Citizenship, n.d; 1934?), 6-12 (pp. 11-12).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Mary Stocks, *Ernest Simon of Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963), 104-105; Guy Whitmarsh, «The politics of political education: An episode», *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 6 (2), (1974): 133-142; Gordon Batho, «The history of the teaching of civics and citizenship in English schools», *The Curriculum Journal*, 1 (1), (1990): 91-100 (p. 95); Y. Y. J. Wong, «Continuity and change in citizenship education in England in the twentieth century» (Doctoral thesis, University of Liverpool, 1991), 51-54; Gary McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction: The 1944 Education Act and the Twenty-first Century* (London: Woburn Press, 1994), Ch. 6; R. J. K. Freathy, «Ecclesiastical and religious factors which preserved Christian and traditional forms of education for citizenship in English schools, 1934-1944», *Oxford Review of Education*, 33 (3), (2007): 367-377 (pp. 368-369).

<sup>4</sup> Derek Heater, «The history of citizenship education in England», *The Curriculum Journal*, 12 (1), (2001): 103-123 (p. 106).

<sup>5</sup> Brian Simon, «Education for citizenship in England», *Paedagogica Historica*, 29 (3), (2006): 689-697 (p. 696).

interprets Simon's ideas of citizenship education. In view of this, through revisiting Simon's personal archive at the Manchester Central Library and his published books, articles and pamphlets, this paper explores Simon's views of democratic citizenship and his campaign for a new citizenship education in relation to his ideals of liberal democracy. In so doing, the current paper will further enhance our understanding of Simon's approach towards citizenship education. Moreover, by contextualizing Simon's democratic ideals, this paper will also help enrich historians' discussions of the character of democracy and citizenship in the 1930s.

## THE FAITH OF A LIBERAL DEMOCRAT

Due to his success in running the Simon Engineering Group, Simon was able to pursue his public career from the 1910s. In 1912, he was elected to Manchester city council as Liberal member for Didsbury and started pressing for social reform. He became lord Mayor of Manchester in 1921-2 and Liberal MP for Manchester Withington in 1923-4, and was re-elected in 1929. After his defeat at the election of 1931, Simon gradually withdrew from Liberal Party politics and turned his attention to the future of democracy as the arrival of the mass electorate domestically and the rise of totalitarian regimes overseas.<sup>6</sup> Despite his rich experiences in politics, Simon honestly confessed in 1935 that «I had begun to think in the last year or two about what democracy really means in connection with our campaign for the education of citizens».<sup>7</sup> In 1936, Simon stated clearly that, as far as the aim of democracy was concerned, «democracy insists on only one end: the freedom of the individual», which, for him, was «the full and free development of the personality of every citizen».<sup>8</sup> Thus, he argued that, a democracy should aim at «providing the opportunity for every individual to develop his faculties to the full, and to enjoy life and liberty in his own way».<sup>9</sup> This not only involved various «rights»

<sup>6</sup> Brendon Jones, «Simon, Ernest Emil Darwin, first Baron Simon of Wythenshawe (1879-1960)», in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition, May 2008). <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/article/36095> (accessed January 3, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Simon to R. Bassett, July 25, 1935. Ernest Simon papers, Manchester Central Library Archives, GB127, M11/14/14.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?», February 25, 1936. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/15a.

<sup>9</sup> Ernest Simon, «Can we define democracy? », July 3, 1939. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

of the individual, but also was about «happiness» of the individual.<sup>10</sup> In effect, «a fair chance for every child to develop its powers and faculties to the fullest extent» was in itself a great aim for Liberals like himself.<sup>11</sup> In line with the Liberal aim, Simon contended that democracy as a way of life was «based on a belief in the sacredness of human personality».<sup>12</sup> Its essence, he explained in the AEC's organ, *The Citizen*, was «the belief in the ultimate importance of every individual», which implies that «the State exists for man, not man for the State».<sup>13</sup> This was a key distinction between totalitarianism and democracy, Simon claimed. Whereas under totalitarianism «the individual exists for the sake of the power and glory of the State, and fulfils himself in service to the dictator», in a democracy, «the State exists to enable every individual to develop to the utmost his own personality as a member of the community».<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in a democracy, the State should also exist to «render possible a good life for its citizens».<sup>15</sup>

In order to achieve the democratic aim, Simon maintained that «the basic condition of a democratic government is that the ultimate power must be in the hands of the people».<sup>16</sup> He was convinced that «a people's government will aim steadily at giving the best possible opportunities to the common man».<sup>17</sup> His belief was underpinned by his observance of Moscow, which he visited in 1936, where housing was deplorable and dictators were more efficient than democrats only when they were doing the planning of great monuments.<sup>18</sup> In the light of this, he held that «Only a democratic government, where the power is in the hands of the

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Simon, «Definition of democracy», July 18, 1939. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Simon, *Liberalism in Local Government* (London: Liberal Publication Department, 1924), 9. Simon was a progressive Liberal in the 1930s and did not join the Labour Party until July 1946. See Stocks, *Ernest Simon of Manchester*, 125.

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Simon, «Education for democratic citizenship», October 27, 1938. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/5b.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Simon, «The faith of a democrat», *The Citizen*, 4 (July 1937): 5-13 (p. 13).

<sup>14</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ernest Simon, «The challenge to democracy», *The Citizen*, 3 (March 1937): 4-6 (p. 5).

<sup>16</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 9.

<sup>17</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ernest Simon, «Scandinavian speech», November 12, 1938. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/4.

whole people, can be relied on to keep in the forefront of its programme the welfare of the common man». <sup>19</sup>

Since the ultimate power must be in the hands of the people, Simon made a further argument that «a democracy is a State in which public opinion ultimately governs». <sup>20</sup> More significantly, he continued, «it must be a public opinion formed after full and free discussion». <sup>21</sup> As he expounded, democrats believed that «no man is wise enough to be allowed to impose what he considers “good” government on the people», and «wisdom in public affairs comes only from full and free discussion of all concerned». <sup>22</sup> Therefore, he defined democracy as «a method of government», a method «adopted by those who wish to give the fullest opportunity to every citizen to contribute what he can to public opinion, and so to determining the action of the government». <sup>23</sup> In essence, he added, democracy was «the method of reaching agreement by discussion and persuasion rather than by force». <sup>24</sup> Simon believed that «a form of government based on discussion and the search for common agreement, allowing the maximum of freedom and using the minimum of coercion», would «provide such conditions, material and spiritual, as to render possible the good life for every citizen». <sup>25</sup> Moreover, only through such a method of government, Simon noted, could democratic values be expressed. <sup>26</sup> As he illustrated, «The most fundamental difference between the democrat and the dictator lies in their respective attitudes to public discussion of public matters». <sup>27</sup> While in a dictatorship, «criticism or discussion of the dictator’s “truth” is the greatest crime a man can commit», in a democracy, the truth must be sought for by «full and free discussion» and «constructive criticism is the greatest service a citizen can

<sup>19</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 8.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Simon, «Speech by Sir Ernest Simon—The lag in main opinion», March 1938. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/18/3.

<sup>21</sup> Simon, «Speech by Sir Ernest Simon—The lag in main opinion».

<sup>22</sup> Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?».

<sup>23</sup> Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?».

<sup>24</sup> Simon, «Scandinavian speech».

<sup>25</sup> «A liberate but not an educated populace», *Manchester Guardian*, November 15, 1937.

<sup>26</sup> Ernest Simon, *The Smaller Democracies* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1939), 180.

<sup>27</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 7.

render».<sup>28</sup> Based on this, Simon maintained that «the basis of democracy is, of course, freedom [...] and that freedom can only be obtained where there is free discussion».<sup>29</sup>

It is observable that Simon defined democracy mainly from a political perspective. As a liberal thinker, Simon contended that democracy only meant «political liberty» and did not involve «economic equality».<sup>30</sup> In an article Simon prepared for an inter-party conference, which was held by the AEC in Ashridge in July 1937, Simon argued that although every democrat must believe in the importance of economic security and a minimum standard of living, economic equality could not be regarded as an essential aspect of democracy given that a dictator would certainly destroy liberty but considerably increase economic equality.<sup>31</sup> This argument, which Simon mainly drew from Reginald Bassett's book, *The Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy* (1935),<sup>32</sup> provoked a fierce debate during and after the conference. Clement R. Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party and a champion of social democracy, was strongly opposed to it. In his speech for the conference, Attlee contended that «liberal democracy based on economic inequality is not enough» and «democracy must extend right through every phase of human life».<sup>33</sup> He stated that he also wanted «freedom for the human spirit to grow», but «economic inequality is inimical to social justice and liberty».<sup>34</sup> As he put it, in England, freedom was «essentially attached to the possession of property».<sup>35</sup> In view of this, he criticized Liberals for not realizing sufficiently the conditions of freedom and argued in favour of «a freedom based on communal property and the rights of a citizen in an industrial democracy», that is, «economic equality».<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 7.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Simon, «Democracy and dictatorship», *Service in Life and Work*, 7 (28), (1938): 27-32 (p. 27).

<sup>30</sup> Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?».

<sup>31</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 8.

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Simon to Wright Robinson, July 25, 1935. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/14.

<sup>33</sup> C. R. Attlee, «Economic justice under democracy». In *Constructive Democracy*, ed. E. Simon (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), 113-124 (p. 114).

<sup>34</sup> Attlee, «Economic justice under democracy», 114.

<sup>35</sup> Attlee, «Economic justice under democracy», 116.

<sup>36</sup> Attlee, «Economic justice under democracy», 119, 123.



In a letter to Simon after the conference, G. D. H. Cole, a socialist and a member of the AEC's Council, also indicated that «I agree that economic equality in the strict sense need not be regarded as essential to democracy», but, he continued, «I regard it as essential, at the very least, that there should be no class living on unearned income inherited from a previous generation».<sup>37</sup> In fact, even those liberal thinkers within the AEC's Council did not give Simon's argument their full support. In an interview with Simon, the liberal economist, William Beveridge, reminded Simon that «if economic inequality goes too far [it] may overstrain and destroy the democratic machine», although Beveridge did oppose «absolute equality of income or even of opportunity».<sup>38</sup> The independent MP, Arthur Salter, also indicated that «While economic equality was not an indispensable feature of democracy, there was more democracy if there was more approach to economic and social equality».<sup>39</sup> Equally, the economist and advocate of the new liberalism, J. A. Hobson, held that although «complete equality of income and property is impossible and undesirable», «democracy must move towards greater equalization».<sup>40</sup> He pointed out that there was little concern over «those deep economic cleavages and demands which now play so dominant a part in democracy».<sup>41</sup> «The demands for economic equality, for State planning and control of key industries, for expansive social services and the finances which they involve», he continued, «transform the entire problem of democracy».<sup>42</sup> These criticisms reveal the unsettled and contestable character in terms of the definition of democracy in the 1930s, though Simon did attempt to find a consensus on this across political parties. This debate adds one more case to Helen McCarthy's question of Ross McKibbin's argument that in the 1930s the ruling definition of democracy was individualist.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> G. D. H. Cole to Ernest Simon, October 7, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>38</sup> A Note by Ernest Simon, Comment on «The faith of a democrat» by W. Beveridge, July 11, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>39</sup> «Planning for democracy», *Manchester Guardian*, July 12, 1937.

<sup>40</sup> J. A. Hobson, «Book review: Constructive democracy», *The Citizen*, 6 (March 1938): 17-18 (p. 18).

<sup>41</sup> J. A. Hobson, «Analysis of democracy», *Manchester Guardian*, February 15, 1938.

<sup>42</sup> Hobson, «Analysis of democracy».

<sup>43</sup> Helen McCarthy, «Whose democracy? Histories of British political culture between the wars», *The Historical Journal*, 55 (1), (2012): 221-238; see also Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 533.



More importantly, it is clear that many liberals of the time including Simon were no longer in favour of laissez-faire and individualism.

Faced with these criticisms, Simon responded in his note that he was not unaware of the harm poverty and insecurity could do to democracy.<sup>44</sup> In effect, he believed that, in a democracy, «as education improves the majority will demand more economic equality than is likely to be demanded or conceded in any other form of government».<sup>45</sup> However, instead of insisting that economic equality was essential to democracy, he indicated that «the only way in which in the long run a wise decision can be made as to what is the best economic system is by democratic methods of trial and error in response to a free and informed public opinion».<sup>46</sup> As he had explained to Cole earlier in 1934, «the future social order should depend on the convictions and desires of educated democrats, who would choose the kind of representatives they want and would bring pressure to bear on them to produce the kind of social order they wanted».<sup>47</sup> This chimed with what he had been advocating —the democratic method of government. His solution to this issue was also reflected in his approach towards citizenship education.

In principle, as a Liberal, Simon did not adhere rigidly to any socialist doctrine such as nationalization, but sought to deal practically with difficulties as they arose.<sup>48</sup> The flexible liberal approach was once explained by himself in his book, *Liberalism in Local Government* (1924). After nearly 12 years of membership of the Manchester City Council, including his service as Lord Mayor of Manchester in 1921-1922, he discovered that with respect to any extension of municipal trading, the Labour Party always supported it on principle, but for the Liberals, «the only principle they recognize is the obligation to give the best and cheapest service to the public».<sup>49</sup> In the so-called Yellow Book, *Britain's Industrial Future* (1928), which Simon, Walter Layton, and other liberal thinkers of the Liberal Summer School produced as a report of the Liberal Industrial

<sup>44</sup> Ernest Simon, «Economic democracy», August 20, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>45</sup> Ernest Simon to Ernest Barker, May 28, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/15.

<sup>46</sup> Simon, «Economic democracy».

<sup>47</sup> Ernest Simon to G. D. H. Cole, November 30, 1934. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/14.

<sup>48</sup> Ernest Simon, «Capitalism or socialism», [n.d., 1937s?]. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>49</sup> Simon, *Liberalism in Local Government*, 14.

Inquiry, this approach was also manifest. The report claimed that, with regard to the confronting positions of Individualism and Socialism, there was «no question of principle», but «one of degree, of expediency, and of method».<sup>50</sup> Some years later, during the Second World War, Simon actually campaigned for the nationalization of the whole land with a view to rebuilding Britain after the war.<sup>51</sup>

On this ground, Lancelot Hogben, a socialist and professor at the University of Aberdeen, once accused Simon of being too conservative.<sup>52</sup> In reply to Hogben, Simon explained that the difference between Hogben and himself was that Hogben was «certain that socialism is a good thing», but he himself only believed that «democracy is the best way of finding out whether or not socialism is a good thing».<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Simon was quite doubtful of socialism because he was «not sure that a completely socialistic system will necessarily work».<sup>54</sup> He was frank to Hogben that he did not know «how people are going to be selected for jobs under socialism», and «how the incentives to production will work». Above all, «there is no evidence whatever how the production under socialism will compare with that under capitalism».<sup>55</sup> Even so, it did not follow that Simon intended to maintain the existing social order. As he claimed earlier in his diary, «My political aim is to give the best chance to every child, and to remove the excessive inequalities of today».<sup>56</sup> Thus, he wrote a letter to Hogben, stressing that:

I have spent about half my time during the last thirty years trying to change and improve things —housing, local government, education, etc., in fact, in your words, to increase «liberties», and I flatly refuse to accept the label even from you as a supporter of the status quo.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Britain's Industrial Future: Being the Report of the Liberal Industrial Inquiry of 1928* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1928), 456.

<sup>51</sup> Ernest Simon, «The rebuilding of Britain: Plan it now», *Manchester Guardian*, January 30, 1941; Ernest Simon, *Rebuilding Britain—A Twenty Year Plan* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1945), 170.

<sup>52</sup> Lancelot Hogben to Ernest Simon, September 30, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>53</sup> Ernest Simon to L. Hogben, October 8, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>54</sup> Ernest Simon to L. Hogben, October 8, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>55</sup> Ernest Simon to L. Hogben, October 8, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>56</sup> Ernest Simon's diary, February 27, 1925. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/11/5 addnl.

<sup>57</sup> Ernest Simon to L. Hogben, October 13, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

Between June and December in 1938, Simon's visits to several small countries where democracy was successful, especially in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, also reinforced his belief that economic equality was not fundamental to democracy. Simon indicated that the socialist parties in three countries all became moderate and practical when they formed the government.<sup>58</sup> He emphasized that «None of them has made any attempt at the socialization of industry, but they have all endeavored step by step, by practical measures, to raise the standard of living, to check monopoly, exploitation and abuse».<sup>59</sup> Moreover, they «have always put democracy first in the sense that [...] they have endeavored to get agreement by allowing full discussion on each practical proposal, and by reasonable compromise».<sup>60</sup> Hence, in his view, the success of these countries was not due to socialism, but due to democracy. As he stated to Beatrice Webb, «these countries are working very much on the lines of the Liberal Yellow Book, encouraging but controlling capitalist production, and using its taxable capacity for the public benefit, and working step by step, by whatever means at any given moment seem best, towards a juster [sic] social order».<sup>61</sup>

The democratic approach towards a better social order was emphasized by Simon. In refuting Marxist-Socialists' claim that «violent revolution is the only possible way of getting rid of capitalism», Simon indicated that in Britain the power and wealth of land-owning classes had progressively diminished in the 1830s and 1840s without violence.<sup>62</sup> For Simon, «The vital difference between the Marxist and the democrat is that the former is a pessimist who has no sufficient faith in the goodwill and common sense of the ordinary man to build up a just economic order».<sup>63</sup> This faith would involve «an optimistic faith in humanity», a faith that «given freedom and power, men will educate one another, will develop traditions and habits of friendly co-operation, and will in the long

<sup>58</sup> Ernest Simon, «The socialist parties of Scandinavia and England», January 21, 1939. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/16/57.

<sup>59</sup> Simon, «The socialist parties of Scandinavia and England».

<sup>60</sup> Simon, «The socialist parties of Scandinavia and England».

<sup>61</sup> Ernest Simon to Beatrice Webb, January 3, 1939. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/16/57.

<sup>62</sup> Simon, «Economic democracy»; Ernest Simon, «Peaceful change in democracy», February 3, 1938. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>63</sup> Simon, «Economic democracy».

run produce a social order which will give the best possible opportunity of the good life for all». <sup>64</sup> Based on this faith, Simon once wrote to his younger son, Brian, to persuade him not to commit himself definitely and publicly to Communism without very serious consideration. In Simon's view, communism was a creed which did «base itself in class warfare and in deliberate violent revolution», and abandoned «the ideal of democracy, of progress by reason and persuasion which constitutes the greatest triumph». <sup>65</sup> As Simon observed in Moscow, although the Bolshevik régime «may well have been the quickest available method of arriving at what democrats would regard as a high standard of civilization», this had led to «the ruthless suppression of all criticism and protest» and «the callous treatment of those who get in the way». <sup>66</sup> Hence, he concluded that «a just social order may be arrived at by democratic methods and in no other conceivable way». <sup>67</sup>

## CITIZENSHIP IN A LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

As stated above, for Simon, the success of democracy presupposed that the common man had enough goodwill and common sense. Hence, he argued that the first quality that a citizen should possess was «a sense of good neighbourliness». <sup>68</sup> This implied «a deep concern for the good life of his fellows», «a sense of social responsibility», and «the will to sink his own immediate interests and the interests of his class in the common good: to do his full share in working for the community». <sup>69</sup> Simon indicated that a democrat's philosophy should contain «a large element of love of his neighbour» because he was convinced that «If democracy is to survive, democrats must actively serve their fellows». <sup>70</sup> Simon's belief was reflected in his expectations for his sons, Roger and Brian. In a

<sup>64</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 6, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Ernest Simon to Brian Simon, January 9, 1935. Brian Simon papers, UCL IOE Archives, SIM/4/5/10.

<sup>66</sup> Ernest Simon, *Moscow in the Making* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), 226-227.

<sup>67</sup> Simon, «Economic democracy».

<sup>68</sup> Ernest Simon, «Educating our masters», April 21, 1938 (For the A.M.A. Journal). Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/5b.

<sup>69</sup> Ernest Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», in *Training for Citizenship*, eds. E. D. Simon and E. M. Hubback (London: Association for Education in Citizenship, 1935), 7-16 (p. 13).

<sup>70</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 12.

letter to Brian, Simon noted that «one of the things that matters to us most in the world is to see you well started before we die in some career in which you can make yourselves useful to your fellow men».<sup>71</sup> In addition, Simon also emphasized the value of voluntary organizations in this respect. In his visit to the Scandinavian countries, he pointed out that, as the Lord Mayor of Manchester, he had to preside at meetings of all the charitable organizations in Manchester and thus had «an unequalled opportunities of learning how far the democratic voluntary principle has been carried in England».<sup>72</sup> In these voluntary organizations, he highlighted, «thousands of citizens undertake public work of this kind with no reward or publicity, simply from a sense of responsibility for public work and for the general welfare of the whole of their fellow citizens», which, for him, was «the reality of our [Britain's] democracy».<sup>73</sup> As the English philosopher and exponent of Liberalism J. S. Mill indicated, voluntary associations were a demonstration of public spirit in England.<sup>74</sup> Following this tradition of liberal democracy, according to McCarthy, the vision of voluntary associations as schools of citizenship became even more prominent between the wars, since it was more essential to cultivate public-spirited citizens after the franchise extensions of 1918 and 1928.<sup>75</sup>

In accordance with his faith of democracy mentioned above, Simon also argued that «The citizen of democracy must also be a man of independent judgment, he must respect the individualities of others and therefore be tolerant of opinions in conflict with his own, [and] he must prefer methods of discussion and persuasion to methods of force».<sup>76</sup> Simon pointed out that democratic citizens' chief virtues were «inde-

<sup>71</sup> Ernest Simon to Brian Simon, January 4, 1934. Brian Simon papers, UCL IOE Archives, SIM/4/5/1/11. On how Simon educated his sons in liberal values and active citizenship to prepare them for public life, see Gary McCulloch and Tom Woodin, «Learning and liberal education: The case of the Simon family, 1912-1939», *Oxford Review of Education*, 36 (2), (2010): 187-201.

<sup>72</sup> Simon, «Scandinavian speech».

<sup>73</sup> Ernest Simon, «Democracy in Manchester», December 4, 1939. Ernest Simon papers, Manchester Central Library Archives, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>74</sup> J. S. Mill, «Centralization», in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Vol. XIX (Essays on Politics and Society)*, ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 579-613 (p. 603).

<sup>75</sup> Helen McCarthy, «Associational voluntarism in interwar Britain», in *The Ages of Voluntarism: How We Got to the Big Society*, eds. M. Hilton and J. McKay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47-68 (pp. 53-54).

<sup>76</sup> Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 13.

pendence» and «love of liberty», which made them very different from citizens of Fascism, that is, «docile, self-sacrificing, unthinking followers of their leader».<sup>77</sup> The citizen must also «love truth» and «desire to seek it no matter how great the difficulties [are] in the way».<sup>78</sup> As Simon observed, the citizens of the smaller democracies he visited in 1938 did have the character of freedom since they were «independent peoples, loving and insisting on freedom» and they were «free to speak their minds frankly, to criticize and oppose the government».<sup>79</sup>

Apart from a love of freedom and truth, Simon emphasized further that «One of the chief virtues of the citizen of democracy is activity».<sup>80</sup> It is often supposed that Simon was proposing passive democratic citizenship rather than active and participative democratic citizenship because citizens only had to engage in voting. However, a democratic citizen, he stressed, «must take some active part in public affairs; both because his help is needed and because experience is an essential part of judgment».<sup>81</sup> A citizen's activities may include «to join a party, take an active share in choosing and electing a good candidate both locally and nationally», and «to do one's share in forming public opinion in all ways open to one».<sup>82</sup> Simon believed that a democratic citizen «must help to build up a tradition like that of the Athenians, who, in the words of Pericles, considered a man who took no part in public affairs "not as quiet, but as useless"».<sup>83</sup> The strong influence of ancient Greece as an exemplar for democratic ideals also found expressions in the ideas of Victor Gollancz, a socialist publisher and a chief promoter of the Left Book Club (LBC), a left-wing organization for citizenship education.<sup>84</sup>

Since citizens of democracy must be free thinkers and active actors, Simon argued that they also needed certain intellectual qualities. For

<sup>77</sup> Ernest Simon, «Can we educate for citizenship? What qualities should a citizen have? », [n.d., 1930s?]. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>78</sup> Simon, «Educating our masters».

<sup>79</sup> Simon, *The Smaller Democracies*, 178.

<sup>80</sup> Ernest Simon, «The citizen's activities», [n.d.]. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/18/3.

<sup>81</sup> Simon, «The citizen's activities».

<sup>82</sup> Simon, «The citizen's activities».

<sup>83</sup> Simon, «The need for training for citizenship», 11.

<sup>84</sup> Gary McCulloch, «Teachers and missionaries: The left book club as an educational agency», *History of Education*, 14 (2), (1985): 137-153 (p. 148).

example, they must have «habits of clear thinking» so as to «acquire the power to recognize their own prejudices» and to «discuss political and economic questions with the same calm, the same desire to understand the other person's position, and the same precision and absence of over-statement, as they would discuss a problem in mathematics».<sup>85</sup> In order to build up a sound judgment on public affairs, they must also acquire «some knowledge both of the world of today and of the history of its development; of politics, of economics, of geography, of biology, and the social sciences generally».<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, they must be «interested in the affairs of the modern world».<sup>87</sup> Simon noticed that citizens of the time devoted less time to public affairs because public affairs had become more difficult to understand and amusement had become more attractive and easier than before.<sup>88</sup> As Brad Beaven and John Griffiths indicate, in the 1930s, «a considerable number of working-class males were lulled into apathy, too consumed with the world of film fantasy to embrace their democratic duties as British citizens».<sup>89</sup> The cinema, Andrew Davies explains, was seen as providing a dream world which allowed them to forget their hardships.<sup>90</sup> In the light of this, Simon stressed that «we cannot, even in the best democracy, expect everybody to take an active interest in public affairs», but «unless the great majority do so [...], we can never hope to succeed in the most difficult task before mankind; the building of a just and efficient social order».<sup>91</sup>

Inevitably, an objection which was often made to Simon's ideals was that «the modern world is so complex and difficult that the ordinary citizen cannot hope to understand it, and that we must therefore abandon

<sup>85</sup> Simon, «The need for training for citizenship», 12.

<sup>86</sup> Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 14.

<sup>87</sup> Ernest Simon, «The problem of transfer», in *Education for Citizenship in Secondary Schools*, eds. E. D. Simon and E. M. Hubback (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 11-24 (p. 13).

<sup>88</sup> Ernest Simon, «Citizen of democracy: Leisure and amusement», [n.d., 1930?]. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>89</sup> Brad Beaven and John Griffiths, «Creating the exemplary citizen: The changing notion of citizenship in Britain 1870-1939», *Contemporary British History*, 22 (2), (2008): 203-225 (p. 217).

<sup>90</sup> Andrew Davies, «Cinema and broadcasting», in *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, ed. P. Johnson (London: Longman, 1994), 263-280 (p. 278).

<sup>91</sup> Simon, «The faith of a democrat», 12.



democracy, and leave government to dictators or experts».<sup>92</sup> In answer to this, Simon admitted that «the average voter can never be expected to form a useful opinion on the many detailed and complex issues of modern politics and economics».<sup>93</sup> However, Simon reminded his opponents that «politicians can only govern in a democracy as public opinion allows them».<sup>94</sup> Thus, even the ordinary voter should have a sound opinion «on the broad issues of policy» so that he/she could help to «build up a responsible and effective public opinion» and to demand that the job should be done by the government.<sup>95</sup> Simon indicated that the history of working-class housing in Britain during the interwar years provided the best illustration of the working of public opinion. The public, he explained, «has understood nothing more than a general demand for houses» since there had been «pressure to spend money on housing».<sup>96</sup> In the light of this, Simon maintained that the average voter should acquire «a conviction [...] that poverty must be abolished; that [a] child must grow up healthy, well fed, well housed, in beautiful surrounding, and must be given the best possible education».<sup>97</sup> «For the actions of Parliament depend on public opinion; only if our citizens constantly demand and work for progress, will our government be enabled to lead us in building up a just social order» he stressed.<sup>98</sup>

Apart from judging on measures, Simon claimed that the average man should also «judge wisely on men».<sup>99</sup> This was especially important for Simon as franchise had been extended to all men and women over the age of 21 who met minimum property qualifications (i.e. tenants or owners

<sup>92</sup> Ernest Simon, «Education for democracy» (Article for *The New Statesman and Nation*), June 18, 1934. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/15a.

<sup>93</sup> Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 14.

<sup>94</sup> Simon, «Education for democracy» (Article for *The New Statesman and Nation*).

<sup>95</sup> Simon, «Education for democracy» (Article for *The New Statesman and Nation*); Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 14.

<sup>96</sup> Ernest Simon, «Twenty years of housing», December 7, 1939. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/6.

<sup>97</sup> Simon, «Can we educate for citizenship? What qualities should a citizen have?»; Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 14.

<sup>98</sup> Ernest Simon, «Suggested manifesto on the teaching of democracy in schools» to be signed by vice-presidents of the AEC, [n.d., December, 1937]. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>99</sup> Ernest Simon, «Can the citizen judge men and measures?», March 2, 1938. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/18/3.

of property and paying local rates) since 1928.<sup>100</sup> As he contended, «Democracy is based on the assumption that the average citizen will, given a reasonable political and economic system, reasonable education and reasonable leadership, be capable of giving a sensible vote on men and measures».<sup>101</sup> Hence, he stressed that a further quality which the citizens of democracy must possess was «the capacity to choose a good representative and to trust him when chosen».<sup>102</sup> That is, the citizens should have «the power to appreciate the value of wisdom and integrity in public representatives, and a willingness to trust and follow leaders possessing these qualities».<sup>103</sup> Simon affirmed that «failure to elect the best men as political leaders and to respect and follow them is a failure of democracy».<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, a leader of democracy should also have «such knowledge and experience and such power of clear thinking, as will enable him to form sound judgments on the main problems of policy».<sup>105</sup> More importantly, as Simon stated, the leader should have «the energy, initiative and personality necessary to leadership, along with the power to put his mind into a common pool».<sup>106</sup> Compared to dictatorship, Simon believed that «only the intelligence and open-eyed co-operation of leader and led can create a leadership that is both stable and progressive».<sup>107</sup> For successful working of democracy, each citizen of democracy should take on their own duty and to cooperate with each other in public affairs.

## THE CASE FOR A NEW EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

In order to produce citizens with the required moral and intellectual qualities, Simon proposed to form a national body (a Council or Sub-

<sup>100</sup> Pat Thane, «The impact of mass democracy on British political culture, 1918-1939», in *The Aftermath of Suffrage*, eds. Julie V. Gottlieb and R. Toye (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 54-69 (pp. 57-58).

<sup>101</sup> Ernest Simon, «Public opinion: Analysis of the share of individuals», February 2, 1938. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/18/3.

<sup>102</sup> Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 15.

<sup>103</sup> Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 15.

<sup>104</sup> Simon, «Education for democracy» (Article for *The New Statesman and Nation*).

<sup>105</sup> Simon, «Educating our masters».

<sup>106</sup> Simon, «Educating our masters».

<sup>107</sup> Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 13.

ject-Association) to advocate training for citizenship and the Association for Education in Citizenship (AEC) was thus established in May 1934.<sup>108</sup> In effect, the AEC was not the sole pressure group calling for citizenship education in England. In the early twentieth century, since training in citizenship of the time was characterized primarily as religious or moral training, the Moral Instruction League, which began in 1897, became the Moral Education League in 1909, the Civic and Moral Education League in 1916, and finally the Civic Education League in 1918, had been advocating civics and citizenship teaching until the early 1920s.<sup>109</sup> Partly due to its effort, in 1932, Simon did observe that some elementary schools of the time gave lessons in civics to the older boys and girls, which were mainly descriptive and aimed at teaching the child something about his own town, and how local and national government was carried, and arranged visits to municipal activities.<sup>110</sup> According to Tom Hulme, Simon's book, *A City Council from Within* (1927), was even used in civic classes in Manchester.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the impact of the League was short-lived and sporadic, and, more importantly, it did not succeed in influencing the conservative mindset of the Board of Education.<sup>112</sup> For example, the Hadow Report on *The Education of the Adolescent* (1926), questioned the necessity for civics or citizenship and preferred indirect teaching through the subject of history, for, it claimed, «a little consideration of the responsibilities and duties of the individual towards the community in which he lives will show that they arise out of conditions which are historic in character».<sup>113</sup>

Hence, in the 1930s, Simon still complained that «There is practically no definite teaching designed to educate the child as a future voter».<sup>114</sup>

<sup>108</sup> «Formation of council for education for citizenship», in E. D. Simon and E. M. Hubback, *Education for Citizenship* (London: Association for Education in Citizenship, n.d.; 1934?), 28; «Education in citizenship: A new association», *Manchester Guardian*, May 17, 1934.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Brett, «Citizenship education in England in the shadow of the Great War», *Citizenship Teaching and Learning*, 8 (1), (2013): 55-74 (pp. 61-64).

<sup>110</sup> [No author, Ernest Simon?], «Vocational training for citizenship», August 30, 1932. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>111</sup> Tom Hulme, «Putting the city back into citizenship: Civics education and local government in Britain, 1918-45», *Twentieth Century British History*, 26 (1), (2015): 26-51 (p. 44).

<sup>112</sup> Brett, «Citizenship education in England in the shadow of the Great War», 64.

<sup>113</sup> Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent* (London: HMSO, 1926) (Hadow Report), 196.

<sup>114</sup> [No author, Ernest Simon?], «Vocational training for citizenship».

As Simon pointed out later, «democrats still make the assumption [...] that a liberal education is enough».<sup>115</sup> They assumed that:

Since the quality of the citizen is determined by his whole character, we can best attain our desired end by the indirect method of endeavoring to turn out young people sound in body and mind, equipped both with the tools that will enable them to earn a living and with some knowledge of the cultural and ethical inheritance of civilization.<sup>116</sup>

Simon objected to this and indicated that the greatest obstacle to citizenship education was the attitude that «education for citizenship should be indirect».<sup>117</sup> As he explained, «this generally means that the qualities required for a citizen, as sketched above, are not to be taught but, on the other hand, are expected to emerge from the general influence and attitude and from casual allusions of the teacher».<sup>118</sup> In disputing this, Simon reminded his contemporaries that «This political world is so complex and difficult that it is essential to train men just as consciously and deliberately for their duties as citizens as for their vocation or profession».<sup>119</sup> In other words, a «more effective and direct education for citizenship» was needed.<sup>120</sup>

Despite this, as far as moral qualities are concerned, Simon argued that moral teaching «must always be mainly indirect».<sup>121</sup> As the secretary of the AEC, Eva Hubback, explained, «the scope for direct ethical teaching and discussion is limited».<sup>122</sup> Simon once noted to his son Brian that «I am now beginning to think that the real difficulty in educating citizens is to produce the right kind of moral outlook», especially «sympathy and

<sup>115</sup> Simon, «Education for democracy» (Article for *The New Statesman and Nation*).

<sup>116</sup> Simon, «The need for training for citizenship», 9.

<sup>117</sup> Ernest Simon, «Education for democracy», *Political Quarterly* (July-September, 1934): 307-322 (p. 320).

<sup>118</sup> Simon, «Education for democracy», 320.

<sup>119</sup> Simon, «The need for training for citizenship», 11.

<sup>120</sup> Simon, «The case for training for citizenship in a democratic state», 16.

<sup>121</sup> Ernest Simon, «Direct or indirect E. For C. », January 19, 1938. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>122</sup> Eva Hubback, «Education for citizenship in the school», *The Citizen*, 4 (July 1937): 24-27 (p. 25).

understanding with one's fellow men».<sup>123</sup> In this respect, Simon believed that literature such as John Galworthy's *Caravan* (1925) would «help one to understand one's fellow men and lead one towards sympathy and away from Hitlerism, violence and intolerance».<sup>124</sup> Other virtues like unselfishness, courage, and self-control should be taught, he argued, «mainly by example at home and in the school, but also affected by the kind of teaching of literature, history, etc.».<sup>125</sup> Apart from this, he also admitted to his older son Roger that in developing education for citizenship, «The side we are weakest on is the moral one».<sup>126</sup> He believed that «Fundamentally by far the most essential aspect of the whole thing is what kind of religion or philosophy of life men and women have»<sup>127</sup> In a letter to his brother, Simon stated that «a man's religion or philosophy should make him take an active interest in the welfare of his fellows».<sup>128</sup> That would be «a religion of the welfare of mankind», he indicated.<sup>129</sup> Hence, «ideals or philosophy of life» were indispensable and Simon maintained that they should be «mainly taught indirectly by example», but «considerable influence specially [sic] of religion and again of history and literature» should also be taken into account.<sup>130</sup> Clearly, as Susannah Wright indicates, Simon himself was an agnostic and he substituted fundamental beliefs like «a duty to work for the common good» and «equal opportunity for all to attain the maximum development of faculty and desire» for the Christian faith. However, facing the debates within the AEC over how far the ideals of democratic citizenship should be either religious or humanist in nature, he did not deny the potential importance of religion in citizenship education, though what he meant by «religion» was not necessarily

<sup>123</sup> Ernest Simon to Brian Simon, August 17, 1934. Brian Simon papers, UCL IOE Archives, SIM/4/5/1/19.

<sup>124</sup> Ernest Simon to Brian Simon, August 17, 1934. Brian Simon papers, UCL IOE Archives, SIM/4/5/1/19.

<sup>125</sup> Simon, «Direct or indirect E. For C.».

<sup>126</sup> Ernest Simon to Roger Simon, November 5, 1935. Brian Simon papers, UCL IOE Archives, SIM/4/5/10.

<sup>127</sup> Ernest Simon to Roger Simon, November 5, 1935. Brian Simon papers, UCL IOE Archives, SIM/4/5/10.

<sup>128</sup> Ernest Simon to Ingo Simon, September 22, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/4.

<sup>129</sup> Ernest Simon to Brian Simon, December 15, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/5.

<sup>130</sup> Simon, «Direct or indirect E. For C. ».

Christianity.<sup>131</sup> In view of this, to assert that Simon's approach to citizenship education was completely secular and that religion played no role in it, as previous historians often do, would be somewhat misinterpreting his ideas.

While moral teaching was mainly indirect, Simon argued that the teaching of intellectual qualities should always be direct. In terms of interest in the affairs of the modern world, Simon indicated that «there is no transfer from unrelated subjects to the social sciences» and «the only way to interest pupils in the modern world is to study public affairs».<sup>132</sup> Similarly, «the vast mass of knowledge required in order to form sound judgments on public affairs can only be taught directly».<sup>133</sup> As he explained, «politics cover a field of the utmost complexity» and thus «it is clear that sound political judgment cannot be acquired without at least as much direct training as is needed in other fields».<sup>134</sup> Apart from politics, there should also be direct teaching in civics and economics.<sup>135</sup> With regard to clear thinking, Simon maintained that «in order to judge seriously in the complex affairs of today, direct instruction in such thinking in the social sciences is essential».<sup>136</sup> This was because, he noted, economic thinking, which was quantitative thinking and involved political and moral arguments, differed from the simpler kind of clear thinking required in languages and in science.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, thinking without the interference of prejudice and emotion, he illustrated, could «best be studied in the social sciences where they constantly arise».<sup>138</sup> On this ground, Simon proposed that social sciences including civics, politics and economics should be introduced into curriculum as separate subjects in elementary and secondary schools, «especially during the last year or two of the student's career».<sup>139</sup>

<sup>131</sup> For more on Simon's view of religion, see Susannah Wright, *Morality and Citizenship in English Schools* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 181.

<sup>132</sup> Simon, «The problem of transfer», 21.

<sup>133</sup> Simon, «Direct or indirect E. For C. ».

<sup>134</sup> Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?».

<sup>135</sup> «Education under the dictators: Sir Ernest Simon and a new menace», *Times*, April 25, 1935.

<sup>136</sup> Simon, «Direct or indirect E. For C. ».

<sup>137</sup> Simon, «The problem of transfer», 22.

<sup>138</sup> Simon, «The problem of transfer», 23.

<sup>139</sup> Simon, «The need for training for citizenship», 12.

Simon was clear that «the years from sixteen to eighteen are the most fertile for teaching citizenship».<sup>140</sup> However, in the 1930s, the majority of pupils had to leave schools at the age of 14 and had no further formal education. In Simon's estimation, in 1932, if definite teaching in economics was postponed until the years 16 to 18, it would only be enjoyed by 1.2% of the school population.<sup>141</sup> In that case, the majority of pupils would leave schools without any direct training in citizenship. Worse still, after leaving schools, the young people also hardly obtained knowledge about politics, economy and civics. As Selina Todd indicates, despite the fact that the membership of youth organizations like the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides peaked in the interwar period, only a minority of the young people took part in political activities.<sup>142</sup> Although the major political parties all had youth wings and some young people were involved in the trade union movement and the Co-operative Movement, young people's major interests were clearly dancing, the cinema and courting.<sup>143</sup> Undoubtedly, Simon was clear that the task of the teachers would be made easier if the length of compulsory full-time education were extended and if it were followed by part-time education up to the age of 18, which he strongly supported.<sup>144</sup> Simon emphasized that only in these circumstances could they «be able really to educate the average boy and girl to take an intelligent interest in public affairs».<sup>145</sup> Despite this, Simon believed that even under existing conditions, a good start should be possible.<sup>146</sup> Sharing Simon's view, Hubback suggested that at senior and central schools, which provided education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 or 15, «courses in public affairs should be taken for at least a year, preferably as near as possible to the end of school life».<sup>147</sup> As for

<sup>140</sup> Simon, «Education for democracy» (Article for *The New Statesman and Nation*).

<sup>141</sup> [No author, Ernest Simon?], «Vocational training for citizenship», August 30, 1932. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>142</sup> Selina Todd, «Flappers and factory lads: Youth and youth culture in interwar Britain», *History Compass*, 4 (4), (2006): 715-730 (pp. 719-720).

<sup>143</sup> Todd, «Flappers and factory lads: Youth and youth culture in interwar Britain», 720, 725.

<sup>144</sup> Ernest Simon, «The aims of education for citizenship», In *Education for Citizenship in Secondary Schools* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 1-10 (p. 10).

<sup>145</sup> Ernest Simon to L. J. Cadbury, June 5, 1935. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/14.

<sup>146</sup> Simon, «The aims of education for citizenship», 10.

<sup>147</sup> Eva Hubback, «Method of training for citizenship», in *Training for Citizenship*, eds. E. D. Simon and E. M. Hubback (London: Association for Education in Citizenship, 1935), 17-48 (p. 27).



secondary schools, these courses could be taken in the fifth or be left to the sixth-form stage.<sup>148</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Simon had to face the criticism that direct teaching in politics, economics, and civics would inevitably lead to propaganda or indoctrination of political or economic doctrines as happened in totalitarian countries. In dealing with this, Simon reminded teachers not to forget that «no child can be shielded from propaganda outside school hours». <sup>149</sup> Indeed, as Adrian Bingham points out, the circulation of daily newspapers doubled in the twenty years after 1918 and by 1939 over seventy percent of households possessed a wireless licence. <sup>150</sup> The growth of mass media like newspapers and radio broadcasting in the interwar period and the increasing penetration of the media into the everyday life of all social classes had made children more susceptible to propaganda. Hence, Simon stressed that if children were to be so educated that they would ultimately be able to judge wisely in public affairs, teachers should face up to the difficult problem of teaching controversial affairs and at the same time avoid propaganda. <sup>151</sup> For Simon, propaganda was «the dogmatic inculcation of beliefs». <sup>152</sup> The democratic method of education was «the exact opposite of propaganda; to encourage study and independent thought, to put the fact before the pupil, and help him to learn to think clearly, to understand the foundation of the society in which he lives». <sup>153</sup>

In this view, Simon argued that when facing the contention between capitalism and socialism, teachers should merely «teach facts» and «put the arguments on both sides of a case as impartially as possible». <sup>154</sup> By means of distinguishing opinions from facts, not only could teachers avoid prejudice, but pupils could also be taught to see through humbug and propaganda. Clearly, Simon's approach to controversial issues

<sup>148</sup> Hubback, «Method of training for citizenship».

<sup>149</sup> Simon, «Educating our masters».

<sup>150</sup> Adrian Bingham, «An organ of uplift?: The popular press and political culture in interwar Britain», *Journalism Studies*, 14 (5), (2013): 651-662 (p. 651).

<sup>151</sup> Ernest Simon, «Propaganda and education» (Memo No.1), [n.d., 1937?]. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/18/1.

<sup>152</sup> Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?».

<sup>153</sup> Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?».

<sup>154</sup> Simon, «Propaganda and education».

reflected his faith in liberal democracy and was distinct from the American left-wing educationist G. S. Counts. In his well-known work, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (1932), Counts agreed that «there must be no deliberate distortion or suppression of facts to support any theory or point of view».<sup>155</sup> Despite this, he emphasized that «Neutrality with respect to the great issues that agitate society, while perhaps theoretically possible, is practically tantamount to giving support to the forces of conservatism».<sup>156</sup> Thus, he claimed that teachers should not fear «imposition», but should assume social responsibilities and give to children a vision of a democratic society.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, Simon's approach differed from that of Gollancz and the Left Book Club (LBC). As Gary McCulloch has shown, Gollancz's central ambition was «to use political education to create enlightened social leadership and spread the message of socialism»<sup>158</sup>. For Simon, the LBC's approach was considerably anti-democratic. Therefore, he declined to speak at a rally under the auspices of the LBC in 1937<sup>159</sup>. Moreover, by avoiding active association with causes identified as left-wing, Simon could ensure that support for the AEC was cross-party and less one-sided politically.<sup>160</sup>

It is often misunderstood by historians that, for Simon, «direct education for citizenship» was equivalent to direct teaching of social sciences as separate subjects in the curriculum. In fact, Simon also considered teaching through existing subjects to be «direct» as long as the courses were deliberately and properly planned.<sup>161</sup> Simon emphasized that «training for citizenship is not a matter of an occasional lesson in politics or economics or current events».<sup>162</sup> Instead, he continued, «every subject can be taught in such a way as to be of great value to the future citizen».<sup>163</sup> Thus, he argued, «the arithmetic lesson can be most effec-

<sup>155</sup> George S. Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 9 (Originally published in 1932).

<sup>156</sup> Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, 51.

<sup>157</sup> Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, 20-21, 34-37.

<sup>158</sup> McCulloch, «Teachers and missionaries: The left book club as an educational agency», 139.

<sup>159</sup> McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, 98.

<sup>160</sup> McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, 97.

<sup>161</sup> Simon, «Education for democracy», 320.

<sup>162</sup> Simon, «Educating our masters».

<sup>163</sup> Simon, «Educating our masters».

tively used to clarify the problems of politics and economics». <sup>164</sup> He also complained that classics, history, and geography had been made «too abstract, with no relation to present-day life». <sup>165</sup> He once mentioned to his aunt that «I am getting converted to the view that a study of Greek life and thought is probably the best line of approach to understanding the world». <sup>166</sup> Plato and Aristotle constantly had thoughts about «all the fundamental problems concerned with citizenship», but he lamented that what he had devoted ten years to was all linguistic, which for him, was «almost completely useless». <sup>167</sup> Moreover, in Simon's view, history should also be «relevant to the understanding of the present and the future». In this view, he argued that citizens should learn modern history. <sup>168</sup> Moreover, the history of civilization and the development of the human mind should also be taught so that citizens could «appreciate what the search for truth has been done for humanity, how this has depended on freedom, [and] how this in its turn depends on democracy». <sup>169</sup> In so doing, Simon believed that democrats «need not even teach dogmatically that democracy and liberty are good things». <sup>170</sup>

Simon was not exceptional in recognizing the value of history for citizenship. Cyril Norwood, Headmaster of Harrow School from 1926 to 1934, argued in a speech that in secondary schools, «the last two years at any rate should be an earnest attempt to bring clearly into the minds of the children an outline of the world's history from 1760 to 1934, so that they may understand how the modern world has been shaped». <sup>171</sup> Besides this, Norwood also contended that geography teaching should focus on «the great food producing, the great raw material producing, areas of the world», «great centers of advanced scientific production», «great trade routes», and «great divisions of the human race». <sup>172</sup> Since

<sup>164</sup> Simon, «Educating our masters».

<sup>165</sup> «Education under the dictators: Sir Ernest Simon and a new menace».

<sup>166</sup> Ernest Simon to Mrs. Eckhard, November 9, 1935. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/2.

<sup>167</sup> Ernest Simon to Mrs. Eckhard, November 9, 1935. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/2.

<sup>168</sup> Ernest Simon, «The value of history», February 27, 1934. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/1b.

<sup>169</sup> Simon, «The value of history».

<sup>170</sup> Simon, «Can enthusiasm be expected from democrats?».

<sup>171</sup> Cyril Norwood, *The Curriculum in Secondary Schools* (London: Association for Education in Citizenship, [n.d., 1936?]), 6.

<sup>172</sup> Norwood, *The Curriculum in Secondary Schools*, 6.

these proposals were consistent with Simon's ideas, Simon conceived this as «an admirable and most challenging statement of a secondary school curriculum as a preparation for life».<sup>173</sup> More importantly, since Will Spens, chairman of the curriculum sub-committee of the Spens Committee on secondary education, told Simon that he was thinking very much along Norwood's line, Simon was anxious to republish Norwood's speech as a pamphlet.<sup>174</sup>

In addition to Norwood's speech, Simon also gave oral evidence to the Spens Committee to emphasize that «it is important that in the last years of school life the pupil should also receive direct instruction in citizenship through courses in politics, economics or public affairs», though much could be done through the ordinary subjects of the curriculum, especially geography and history.<sup>175</sup> Despite this, the Spens Report suggested that «study of the issues involved in national and international politics must in the main come at a later age».<sup>176</sup> This suggestion implies that, as Simon had warned, the majority of pupils would leave school without any direct teaching in economics, politics or civics. Furthermore, according to the report, during their education, information about national and international affairs and about local government should be taught through recent history simply «as arising from it».<sup>177</sup> The suggestions in the Spens Report were in accordance with Fred Clarke's ideas of citizenship. As the director of the Institute of Education London, Clarke also gave a speech at the conference in Ashridge. He asked the audience to «guard against thrusting into the teaching of citizenship to your children something of which they have no experience».<sup>178</sup> He thought that it would be «unnecessary and unwise» for schools to «teach to boys and girls what

<sup>173</sup> Ernest Simon to Cyril Norwood, December 24, 1936. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/15.

<sup>174</sup> Ernest Simon to Spencer Leeson, December 30, 1936. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/15.

<sup>175</sup> Evidence to be given to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1935. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/17/15a.

<sup>176</sup> Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools* (London: HMSO, 1938) (Spens Report), xxxvii.

<sup>177</sup> Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools*, xxxviii.

<sup>178</sup> «Education in citizenship: Ashbridge discussion on the schools' part», *Manchester Guardian*, July 13, 1937.

can be taught effectively only to adults». <sup>179</sup> In effect, for Clarke, citizenship education should be indirect. He once argued that «Citizenship is not like cookery, a technique; it is a life, and the whole range of education is needed for its production.». <sup>180</sup>

Due to the indirect approach displayed in the Spens Report, at the annual meeting of the Manchester branch of the AEC, Simon commented that the official attitude to citizenship education had still a long way to go. <sup>181</sup> Meanwhile, Simon also asked Shena Simon, who came to the meeting to discuss the Spens Report, whether a perfect administration could do more than ease the way for the right kind of teaching. <sup>182</sup> In fact, Shena Simon sat on the Spens Committee and put more emphasis on administrative recommendations than on curriculum. This was because, in her view, the removal of the inequalities in education system was the very foundation of education for democracy. <sup>183</sup> Shena Simon's view was shared by her mentor, R. H. Tawney. Tawney maintained that Simon failed to appreciate «the importance of whole environment, the class system, public schools, the short education, and that compared to all that the curriculum is of relatively no importance». <sup>184</sup> Indeed, at that time, Tawney argued that no other policies would be a «nobler symbol of a common citizenship» than the raising of the school-leaving to 15. <sup>185</sup> In addition, Tawney also noted that the co-existence of the public school system and the state school system resulted in «arrogance in the minority» and «a sense of inferiority in the majority», both of which were «inimical to good citizenship». <sup>186</sup> While agreeing with Shena Simon and Tawney that education for democracy could be impeded if pupils' opportunity to have access to education continued to be unequal, Simon insisted that the reform of citizenship education was also significant for a democratic

<sup>179</sup> Fred Clarke, «Training of the teacher», Ashridge, July 12, 1937. Clarke papers, UCL IOE Archives, FC/1/54.

<sup>180</sup> Fred Clarke, «An educator looks at the crisis», Address to the Canadian Club of Montreal, April 26, 1933. Clarke papers, FC/1/17.

<sup>181</sup> «Education in citizenship: A discussion of the Spens Report», *Manchester Guardian*, May 24, 1939.

<sup>182</sup> «Education in citizenship: A discussion of the Spens Report».

<sup>183</sup> «Education in citizenship: A discussion of the Spens Report».

<sup>184</sup> Ernest Simon to Eva Hubback, April 26, 1937. Ernest Simon papers, GB127, M11/14/15.

<sup>185</sup> R. H. Tawney, «Education in time of crisis», *Manchester Guardian*, August 17, 1939.

<sup>186</sup> R. H. Tawney, «The public schools». Memorandum to the Labour Party's Education Advisory Committee, January 1941. Tawney papers, LSE Archives, Tawney/II/50.

and just social order. As he believed, democracy would ultimately depend on each citizen's goodwill and common sense.

Simon's campaign for direct education for citizenship remained unchanged during the Second World War, though he had to take a number of official posts to provide war services.<sup>187</sup> After the Norwood Committee on Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools was appointed in October 1941, the AEC submitted evidence to it. Due to the shortcomings in the Spens Report, the AEC's memorandum especially suggested that «an elementary study of descriptive economics and of public affairs [...] should be included in the curriculum of all boys and girls before they leave schools», and again re-emphasized that social studies should have an important place in the curriculum.<sup>188</sup> In the end, the Norwood Report was published in July 1943. It was mainly concerned with the Grammar School curriculum, and thus, again, citizenship education for the majority of pupils was not properly addressed. However, it did suggest that «lessons devoted explicitly to Public Affairs can suitably be given to older boys and girls certainly at the Sixth Form stage, and probably immediately before this stage». This was in line with Simon's stance, though it did not forget to add that the teaching of knowledge in political and social domain, could «best be given incidentally [...] through the ordinary school subjects».<sup>189</sup> Indeed, the Norwood Report was probably the first official report to acknowledge the desirability and feasibility of direct teaching in public affairs in later years of secondary schools. Therefore, when Hubback was reviewing the report, she commented that «the positive and constructive recommendations made by the Norwood Committee with regard to education for citizenship and the teaching of social studies have not been sufficiently appreciated».<sup>190</sup>

Nevertheless, the Norwood Committee's position on the teaching of political and social knowledge was in accordance with many contemporary educationists. For example, the AEC's own president, Sir Richard

<sup>187</sup> Stocks, *Ernest Simon of Manchester*, 112-115.

<sup>188</sup> Memorandum submitted to the Norwood Committee by the Association for Education in Citizenship. Board of Education papers, The National Archives, ED 12/479.

<sup>189</sup> Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Curriculum and Examination in Secondary Schools* (London: HMSO, 1943) (Norwood Report), 58-59.

<sup>190</sup> Eva Hubback, «Norwood report», [n.d., 1943?]. Board of Education papers, The National Archives, ED 136/681.

Livingstone, argued that school was not the time or place to give knowledge about the machinery of government and the duties of a citizen because it had no relation to the actual life of pupils and could not be digested by them. It should be given when men and women became citizens, he emphasized. In other words, «it was a matter for Adult Education».<sup>191</sup> For Livingstone, the best way to educate secondary school pupils to become good citizens was to learn «the art and virtue of living in a community» through school games, societies, camps and journeys abroad.<sup>192</sup> Similarly, H. C. Dent, the editor of the *Times Educational Supplement*, also believed that, for students under the age of 18, «The time is not yet for formal instruction in the rights and obligations of citizenship».<sup>193</sup> Like Clarke and Livingstone, he stressed, between the ages of 13 and 18, citizenship «will not be so much taught as learned through living».<sup>194</sup>

In July 1943, the White Paper on *Educational Reconstruction*, was also published and with regard to the curriculum of secondary schools, it merely suggested «a new direction in the teaching of history and geography and modern languages» in order to «arouse and quicken in the pupils a livelier interest in the meaning and responsibilities of citizenship of this country, the Empire and of the world abroad».<sup>195</sup> It did not specify what «a new direction» meant and did not even mention direct teaching in social sciences. However, it proposed that, for the majority of pupils leaving school at the age of 15, compulsory part-time education must be provided to all young persons from 15 to 18 unless they were in full-time attendance at school.<sup>196</sup> At young people's colleges, pupils would obtain «some education in the broad meaning of citizenship—to give some understanding of the working of government and the responsibilities of citizens and some interest in the affairs of the world around them».<sup>197</sup> This

<sup>191</sup> Richard Livingstone, «Education for a world adrift». In ed. R. Livingstone *On Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 109-232 (pp. 218, 220-221) (Originally published in 1943).

<sup>192</sup> Livingstone, «Education for a world adrift», 226, 230. Livingstone also gave oral evidence to the Norwood Committee in June 1942 to suggest that «the subjects of the curriculum should remain much as at present». See McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, 109.

<sup>193</sup> H. C. Dent, *A New Order in English Education* (London: University of London Press, 1942), 62.

<sup>194</sup> Dent, *A New Order in English Education*, 62.

<sup>195</sup> Board of Education, *Educational Reconstruction* (London: HMSO, 1943) (White Paper), 11 (section 35).

<sup>196</sup> Board of Education, *Educational Reconstruction*, 19 (section 68).

<sup>197</sup> Board of Education, *Educational Reconstruction*, 20 (section 73).



was exactly what Simon recommended before the war. Eventually, this proposal was legislated by the 1944 Education Act, which provided a new institution called «county colleges» for young people between the ages of 16 and 18 to attend at least one day a week. According to clause 43, young people would receive «such further education, including physical, practical and vocational training, as [...] will prepare them for the responsibilities of citizenship». <sup>198</sup> Despite this, due to financial difficulties, «county colleges» never came into existence in the postwar years. As for secondary curriculum, the Education Act did not lay down anything for schools. As McCulloch explained, this reflected the suspicion of direct state intervention in the content of the curriculum, strengthened by its contemporary association with totalitarian education policies. <sup>199</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This paper has explored Simon's ideals of liberal democracy and showed the close relation between Simon's democratic ideals and his views of democratic citizenship and citizenship education. As a Liberal democrat, Simon believed that the aim of democracy was to provide the best opportunity for every individual to develop his personality and to live a good life, that is, to build up a more just social order. To this end, unlike socialists who contended that democracy must extend to economic and social life, Simon insisted that «political liberty» was more essential than «economic equality». Simon was convinced that as political liberty was secured, the majority would demand more economic equality. For Simon, democracy was a form of government in which ultimate power must be in the hands of the people. Moreover, democracy implied «a method of government», which allowed the greatest degree of free discussion among citizens in search for common agreement and encouraged citizens' constructive criticism and contribution to public opinion. Simon insisted that a just social order could only be attained by democratic methods, not by force or violent revolution.

The democratic aim and method of government not only justify the necessity of the moral and intellectual qualities which, for Simon, was

<sup>198</sup> Board of Education, *Education Act 1944* (London: HMSO, 1944), 34-35.

<sup>199</sup> McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, 112.

essential for democratic citizenship, but also help clarify some misconceptions or misinterpretation by previous historians. First, since a better life for everyone was the goal of democracy, each citizen must have a sense of social responsibility and, when necessary, must sacrifice his own interests to the common good. The moral qualities, in Simon's view, required indirect moral teaching, especially through the influence of religion, history and literature. Thus, instead of being completely secular, Simon's approach towards citizenship education recognized the importance of religion. Furthermore, if democratic governing depended on the support of public opinion, for Simon, citizens should be active in forming public opinion through all ways open to them, rather than being passively engaging in voting. Based on this, citizens' ability to make independent and sound judgments on public affairs was crucial and it relied on some intellectual qualities like relevant knowledge, clear thinking without prejudice, and more importantly, an active interest in public affairs. In order to cultivate these intellectual qualities, Simon argued for direct education for intellectual qualities, which for him, not only meant direct teaching in politics, economics and civics, but also involved properly designed courses in existing subjects such as classics, history and geography.

Richard Pring correctly reminds us that words like democracy or citizenship and their meaning do not remain static because they all have «historical roots —roots, that is, in social, economic and political forms of life which are themselves constantly evolving».<sup>200</sup> Even so, Simon's democratic ideals and ideas of citizenship education still can provide us with some implications for the present practice and policy. First, Simon argued that, for the functioning of a democracy, citizens must be educated to take an active interest in public affairs and in forming public opinion, not merely in voting. To this end, civics or citizenship education as a subject has been well-established in school curriculums worldwide. However, for Simon, a good citizenship education was not equivalent to direct teaching in politics, economics and civics. It should involve all subjects, even including religion. It must be admitted that there is a danger that when citizenship education is confined to a separate subject, the civic values of other subjects might be ignored. In relation to this,

<sup>200</sup> Richard Pring, «Accountability, assessment and education for citizenship», in *Democratic Citizenship in Schools*, eds. Jane Brown, Hamish Ross and Pamela Munn (Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2012), 92-105 (p. 92).

Simon also emphasized that the most important and difficult part of citizenship education was not the intellectual side, but the moral one. How is this side of citizenship cultivated? Furthermore, in the face of terrorist attacks, democratic values such as the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs have been preached in many European countries.<sup>201</sup> It is indisputable that it is important to teach children democratic values. But, can we avoid teaching them dogmatically, as Simon strongly contended? These are some questions we must continue to ponder upon. ■

### Note on the author

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<sup>201</sup> For example, in November 2014, the Department for Education in the UK issued new guidance entitled «Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools»: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc> (accessed February 8, 2016).

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