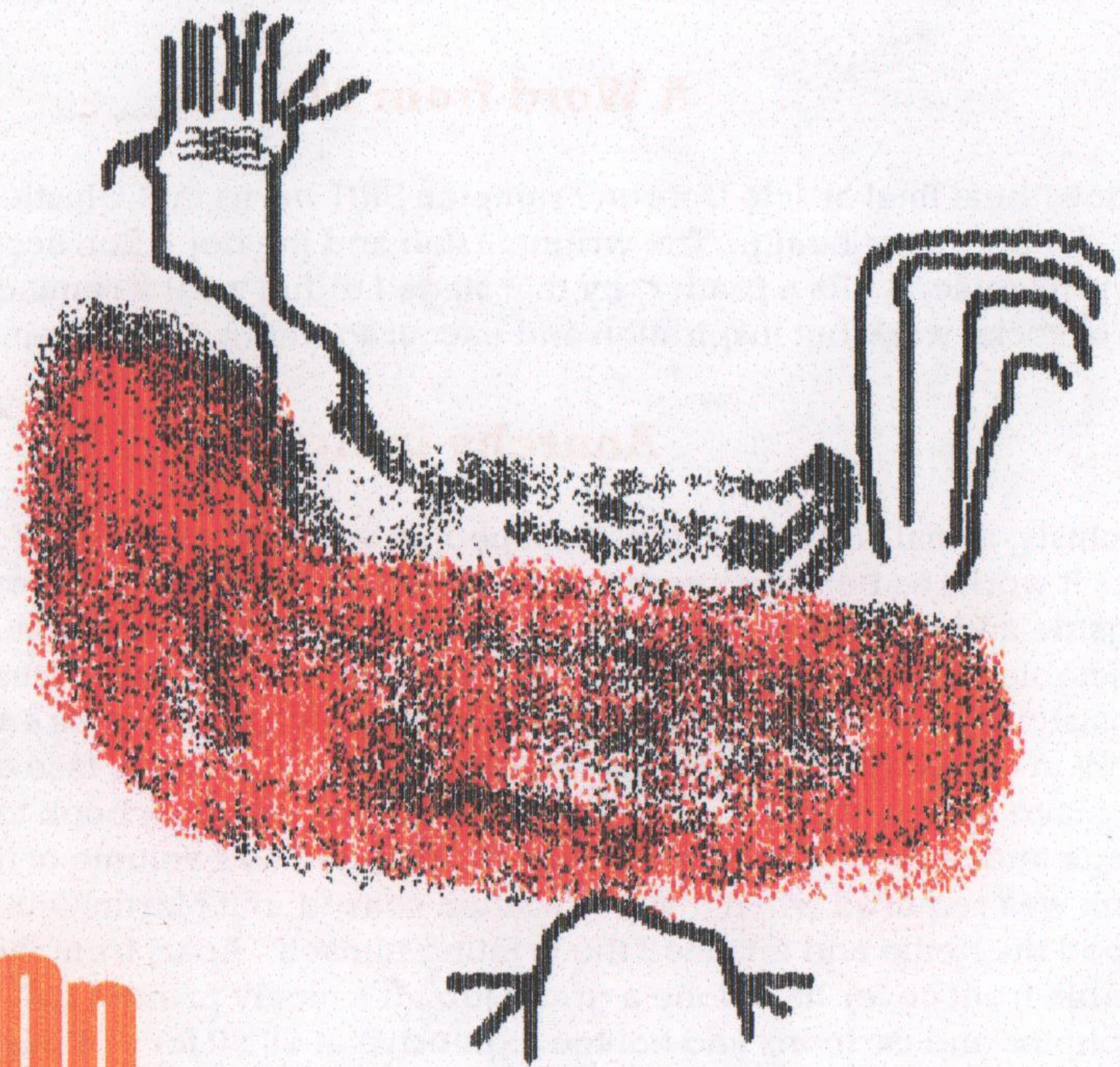


Cock O' the North

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Banned by Freedom Issue
JUNE / JULY 2005

20p

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NORTHERN ANARCHIST NETWORK (NAN) CONFERENCE:

The next conference of the NAN is to be held at Wrekin, (Telford) in Shropshire on Saturday 23rd, July 2005. This is the first time the Nanistas have held a meeting so far South.

**For more details ring Laurens: 01952 641852.
Or for updates go on Burnley Social Issues websites on:
BURNLEY VOICE oogleboogle.proboards23.com on the
Northern Anarchist Network meetings thread.**

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Editorial:

Burnley the Brave!

THE CASE OF THE EXPULSION of Jim Petty from the *Solidarity Federation* and the pressure from *Preston Solidarity Federation* put on the Burnley anarchists and the *Northern Anarchist Network (NAN)* to purge Jim from the anarchist family, has an historical resonance in classical Spanish anarchism. As does the vigorous local resistance to the purge by the Burnley anarchists; many of them new to anarchism.

Local sovereignty is something sacred to classical anarchism and the essential decency of putting the human being first, before the party machine or organisation is something which often sets anarchism apart from the authoritarian parties of the left.

In his book 'The People of the Sierra' (1971) based in Grazalema in Andalucia, the anthropologist Julian A. Pitt-Rivers wrote: 'The insistence upon municipal independence in the policy of the movement (Spanish anarchist movement) was tempered, as time went on, by practical contingencies which required a certain measure of centralised organisation.' But Pitt-Rivers adds '...this was an adaptation to the necessity for co-ordinated action rather than a change of heart.' The coming of the Civil War, he claims, did not change this spirit of independence: 'The rise to power of the Anarchists in the towns of the sierra in June 1936 (???) was followed by the establishment of "communism": Money was abolished and a central exchange bureau was set up in the pueblo which collected produce and redistributed it in accordance with a system of rationing.' Thus 'the assumption of power by the Anarchists rendered the pueblo not only, theoretically, an exclusive political group but exclusive economically as well.' >>

>>Yet, as in the case of Jim Petty, Julian Pitt-Rivers observes: 'There are some indications that this conception of the pueblo in the minds of small-town Anarchists created tension between the regional leadership and the local community. The Anarchist leaders from the large towns attempted, in the interests of organisation, to interfere with what the small-town Anarchists regarded as the autonomous rights of the pueblo which they themselves embodied, and that they often resisted.'

Pitt-Rivers refers us to Gamel Woolsey, *Death's Other Kingdom* (1939) for an account 'of a right-wing person defended by the Anarchists of his village from those in Malaga on the grounds of being "un hijo del pueblo" (a son of the village).'

It is perhaps not surprising that a national organisation such as the Solidarity Federation: with national funds and membership lists should behave in a bureaucratic fashion. This is the nature of the modern party machine in the developed world and why should we imagine that an organisation which claims anarchist principles would behave any different? I suspect there are those in the *Solidarity Federation*, who secretly admire devious political bodies such as *Respect* and the *Socialist Workers' Party*.

Fortunately there are decent people in the Solidarity Federation, and one can only hope that they make their feelings felt on matters such as the shabby treatment of Jim Petty. The platform of the *Northern Anarchist Network*, as it was constituted over a decade ago, remains open to all libertarians in the North. Members of the *Solidarity Federation* have participated since its foundation and Sol. Fed. veteran Comrade 'M' (sometimes referred to as 'The Green Man', because of his recent voting habits) has recently said that the Sol Fed has made no official decision to pull out of the *NAN*. The open forum of northern anarchism ~ the *NAN* ~ welcomes all, affiliated and unaffiliated Anarchists alike, within this our libertarian family for a radical North. ■

Spanish Civil War: 2006 - 70th Anniversary -

NEXT YEAR on July 19th, 2006, it is the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. The families of the International Brigade members are planning to mark the event and the Greater Manchester County Association of Trade Union Councils is going to join in.

The Manchester Trade Union Councils have set up a sub-committee which includes members of Tameside, Oldham and Salford Trade Union Councils. The intention is to hold a balanced commemoration which respects the views of all opponents of the military sedition in 1936. The libertarian representatives on the sub-committee have made it clear that the contribution of the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) and that of the Spanish anarchists cannot be neglected.

Although the sub-committee has yet to meet, the general idea is to coordinate activities such as meetings, film events, and exhibitions. An approach has already been made to the Corner House film theatre in Manchester with the intention of getting a series of films shown relevant to the Spanish War.

Tameside Trade Union Council and the radical regional journal *Northern Voices* has already established links with the major anarcho-syndicalist trade union federation—the CGT. On the 7th, April 2005, Tameside TUC and the Manchester Social Forum organised a meeting of building and planning in the city of Greater Manchester chaired by *Northern Voices*.

Jack Jones is being approached by Derek Pattison, President of Tameside TUC. Jack Jones, former General Secretary of the Transport & General Workers' Union and International Brigade member, told Mr Pattison that he had a high regard for the CNT members he met during the Spanish Civil War. ■

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~ Report banned by FREEDOM ~

Spanish CGT

by Larry Gambone.

I WAS WELL received by the International Relations representative of the CGT (Confederacion General de Trabajo) Angel Bosquet. We talked for about an hour, and I learned a great deal about the history and practices of the CGT. I told him that people in the English-speaking world know almost nothing about contemporary Spanish anarcho-syndicalism and I, in my small way, would do what ever was possible to change that situation. He gave me a pile of CGT literature and took me on tour of the Barcelona CGT headquarters.

The headquarters is very impressive, consisting of the top floors of a ten or eleven story building. Each of the individual industrial unions, such as teachers, metal workers or communications workers, has its own office. There are several larger meeting rooms, offices of the Salvador Segui Foundation (a CGT cultural grouping) and a bar-cafeteria with a tiled outdoor lounging area. This has a wonderful view of Barcelona as it is on the ninth floor. Next we went to the archives and library that comprise much of the tenth floor. The library alone consists of some 10,000 volumes on anarchism, syndicalism and related topics.

Now the CGT is not some tiny anarchist sect, but has 100,000 members and is the representative of some one million workers. * The Confederation is found in every corner of Spain, and is in fact, the third largest trade union grouping, only exceeded by the Socialist UGT and the Communist CCOO. The CGT is strong among bank workers, television, postal and hotel workers, but also has support among teachers, graphic artists, chemical, and cleaning workers.>>

* 'Rojo y Negro' Sept 2004, p11: 'La CGT se consolida como tercera fuerza sindical' There is a difference between membership and workers represented by the union. For actual membership see: <http://www.euro.eurofound.eu.int/2004/03/update/tn0403105u.html>

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>>The Confederation is composed of two basic structures: geographical and industrial. At the base lies the local union which is autonomous. Where there are 75 or more members in a vicinity they can form a union local which is open to all trades. Locals federate together at the city level, or where the city is very large, at the district level. These in turn, federate at the provincial level. The provincial federations confederate at the territorial level, Spain being made up of Catalonia, Euskadi, Asturias, Castile, etc. All of these form the national confederation.

When enough members are organised in an industry they can form an industrial branch. These industrial branches federate: for example bank workers have a federation for each of the major banks. The next level, is like a regular industrial union. For example bank workers belong to the Federation of Bank, Credit and Office Workers. The territorial confederation and the industrial union federations form a Confederal Committee. There is an annual general meeting of the CGT as well. It must be emphasized that the union operates from the bottom-up and members are not controlled by the confederal level.

How does the CGT differ from the usual far-left groupings and the regular trade unions? First of all, they do not think they have all the answers, or that the answers they do have are written in stone for all eternity. As they state in their Agenda Confederal 2004:

'Anarchism is not a closed or final doctrine, it expresses ideas that could appear contradictory; radical pacifism, or the justification of violent acts as social protest; extreme individualism and membership of syndicalist unions; absolute rejection of institutions and limited participation in them. Anarchism is characterised by its confidence in individual liberty and in the capacity to judge and act...'

Rather than forcing dogmas down peoples' throats they actually listen to working people and the union gives workers what they want, not what intellectuals think they ought to want. I think much of the CGT's success can be found here. The CGT's direct-democratic structure allows the membership, and not the bureaucrats, to control the union. While not pushing dogmas, they promote a vision of society, an anarchist ethic encompassing individual liberty, autonomy, direct action, self-management and federalism. The union attempts, as much as possible, in daily life to live by this vision.>>

>>While highly critical of all forms of authoritarianism, they do not spend their energy attacking other radical groups. The CGT is a militant union, but you never see the sort of rhetorical radicalism—violent images or shouting about class war—in their press. They eagerly work with other unions which in some manner share their attitudes, attempting to create a global movement for 'alternative unionism', and have strong relations with other anarcho-syndicalists such as the Italian USI, the Swedish SAC, and the French CNT-F.

The CGT does not regard itself, or even the working class, as the whole struggle, seeing their union as one part of a broad movement comprising peasant unions, ecologists, co-operatives, womens' and community groups. They have good relations with the Zapatistas in Mexico and consider their union to be a member of the Anti-globalist Movement:

'The CGT is an anarcho-syndicalist organisation...which acts in the working world. But not all the problems are just in this area, nor are workers unaware of this fact. Thus, syndicalist, anti-authoritarians, pacifists, immigrants, ecologists, movements against sexism and the Anti-Globalist Movement are in the end one movement, one without "professional revolutionaries" in charge and with the consciousness that the transformation will involve all groups.'

The CGT spends much of its time attacking the wave of so-called privatisations going on in Spain and everywhere else. Many union members are government or social service workers. However, while defending social services and public workers, they do not defend the state or merely tail the left. The state is clearly seen as the enemy along with corporate capitalism and the vision of self-management and decentralisation is offered as an alternative. Once again the Agenda Confederal states:

'Self-management combined with direct democracy, mutual aid and solidarity present the complete and total alternative to the pyramid—the hierarchical, authoritarian and exploitative model of capitalist society incarnated in neo-liberal ideology.'

A narrow anti-political ideology they consider divisive. Many union members belong to, or vote for political parties, yet in practice are good syndicalists. But at the same time, the CGT never fails to point out the problem inherent in parliamentary politics and parties. Nor does the union have any time for nationalism, but the autonomy of union branches allows historically oppressed peoples such as the Basques and Catalans to have their own language, publications and federations.>>

>>The CGT's success will hopefully rub off on the other syndicalists. Already in France the CNT-F has experienced a surge in support, with some 5,000 members—compared with a few hundred a decade ago.** Syndicalist groups have appeared in former Stalinist countries and, although small, may yet experience growth. Orthodox unionism has crumbled in the face of neo-conservatism and maybe workers are open to the ideas of autonomous direct action. And since nothing exists in isolation, a rebirth of anarcho-syndicalism will only benefit anarchists of all varieties. ■

** <http://www.cnt-f.org/>

Section, La Confederation, Pt 4, 'CNT, de 1995 a aujourd' hui.'

Chris Draper review banned by FREEDOM: Anarchists in Social Work.

IF YOU WANT TO READ ABOUT BAKUNIN in Berlin, Proudhon in Paris or anarchists in revolutionary Russia or Spain, you'll have no trouble finding an informative text. If you want a book on the activities British anarchists you'll have a problem finding anything useful.

Most anarchist authors prefer romanticising revolutionary struggles abroad than recording and analysing the everyday anarchy around them. Colin Ward has long proved an honourable exception and now Martin Gilbert, Mark Newns, Peter Good, John Evans and Doreen Frampton have together compiled a chronicle of their everyday lives and conflicts as anarchists engaged in social work.

Soft Cops

Crudely dismissed as 'soft cops' by unthinking anarchists the authors eschew the temptation to portray themselves as fearless subversives and instead patiently describe and dissect the complex, ambivalent social work roles they've played. They each demonstrate that however restrictive and demanding the State may appear there are always opportunities to create bubbles of libertarian space.

Martin Gilbert's contribution reminds us that economic oppression is only one of the ties that hold us down. Individuals psychologically crushed by society gained strength from simply enjoying a fishing trip together.>>

>>As an anarchist Martin helped 'clients' avoid mind manipulation and the chemical cosh by creating an opportunity to get together and spend a relaxed, mutually supportive time angling in the local canal. He didn't supply anarchist tracts, but offered transport and equipment. The powerful recuperative value of this simple non-manipulative strategy was neatly portrayed in the film 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' when McMurphy (Jack Nicholson), yelled at fellow asylum escapee: 'You're not a loony anymore—you're a fisherman!'

'The days of Creative Social Work are Over'

Martin Gilbert's rather hopeful chapter is followed by a darker, more overtly political and historical piece by Mark Newns. Mark's interest in music and Tai Ji comes through in his writing. He provocatively quotes Zappa's lyric 'All your children are poor unfortunate victims of systems beyond their control'. He weaves his CV of social work initiatives through a powerful, sustained critique of the all-embracing hegemony of globalised consumerism.

Mark takes us on a guided tour through his 'career' with (amongst others) Liverpool Social services, the Chalk Farm Simon Community, Stevenage New Town Family Centre, Peckham Adventure Playground, 'a rehabilitation home for bad lads run by De-La-Salle Monks' and H Wing of Durham Prison. Occasionally Mark risks tipping the reader from criticism to despair. On page 39 he observes that as an anarchist social worker, 'you don't have a career but a series of engagements or skirmishes', but 16 pages later he implies even salaried skirmishes are impossible, claiming in the current authoritarian social work climate: 'If you don't collude with it, you don't work'.

Imaginative Industrial Action

Peter Good's work in a long-stay institution for people with learning disabilities erupted into imaginative full-scale industrial action that eventually ended in tears. He reveals how the hierarchies of the health service unions oppose radical action every bit as determinedly as management.

Supplying a salutary lesson Peter's piece suggests there's more solidarity amongst our enemies than our friends. He concludes by reminding us of the urgent need to transform the NHS into decentralised, community-led organisation. Unfortunately Peter didn't mention that just such a libertarian scheme had actually existed in pre-war Peckham. Commended by Herbert Read as a, 'great experiment with far reaching consequences in politics and sociology' >>

>>the Peckham model was rejected by the 1945 Labour government that instead created the present top-down, State controlled bureaucratic national sickness system.

The Dead Hand of Labour

The malign influence of Labourism runs like a thread through John Evens' three short chapters. Working on the Calcot project in South Wales, John got into trouble for the heinous crime of allowing a 'client' to use his office phone to make a complaining call to her Labour councillor. Next, as Director of the Afan Community Aid Council, John fell foul of his Management Committee of mainly Labour Councillors when he began digging too deeply into the scheme's finances.

When John subsequently became Senior Community Development Advisor to Telford Development Corporation he reveals that, 'Very soon I clashed with Labour councillors, though, I still had this curious belief in the party'. However, that particular episode ended happily following the favourable intervention of John's local MP, 'an amiable man who had taken many gay holidays in the West Indies'.

A Word from Matron

In a downbeat final article Doreen Frampton SRN warns that whistle blowing can seriously damage your health. The writing's fine and the depiction accurate but the message is misplaced. As a reader, by that stage I didn't want a reminder of the limitations of social work but inspiration and encouragement, not to abandon hope.

Anarchy in Action

Anarchists, social workers and normal people will find much food for thought in this book. It works as both a witness to vital historical change and encouragement to fight alongside and on behalf of the dispossessed. Refreshingly the authors follow no predictable party-line. In fact the various accounts are as full of frustrations and inconsistencies as social life itself. Yet these stories of strategies employed by the authors in creating libertarian spaces and relationships in the face of overwhelming odds make fascinating and inspiring reading. Just getting a book to press required courage and creativity for it was originally planned as a volume of the 'Raven'. A rethink was required when that publication ceased, but Martin Gilbert bravely grasped the nettle and financed the printing himself. Apart from the almost indecipherable front cover he's done a grand job. It's nicely printed and well illustrated with photos and cartoons and not too expensive at £8.50 for 154 pages.

'ANARCHISTS IN SOCIAL WORK; KNOWN TO THE AUTHORITIES', 154 pages, is also available on-disc, for details ring Martin Gilbert (tel: 01229 588141) ■