

LUCAS AEROSPACE COMBINE
SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE

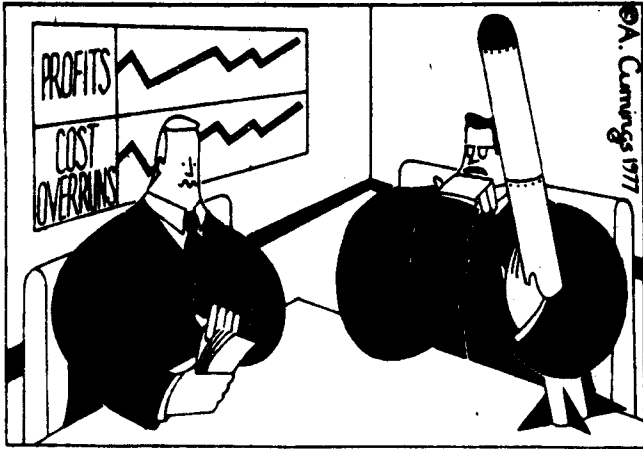
1.50



NORTH EAST
LONDON POLYTECHNIC

Longbridge Road
Dagenham
Essex RM8 2AS
01-590 7722 Ext 2007/8

CATS CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE
INDUSTRIAL & TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

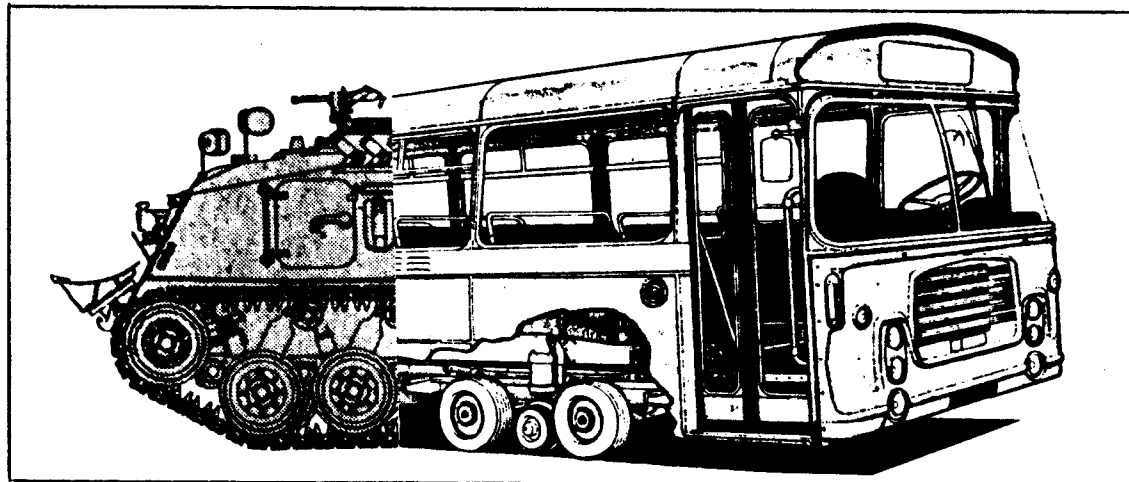


JULY 81

ARMS

"I CAN'T SEEM TO SHAKE THESE RECURRING NIGHTMARES OF THE GOVERNMENT ASKING US TO MANUFACTURE SOMETHING USEFUL."

CONVERSION



Information Pack

INFORMATION PACK ON ARMS CONVERSION

CONTENTS

- 1 'INTRODUCTION - WHY ARMS CONVERSION IS IMPORTANT'
 - 2 'ARMS CONVERSION' (CAITS Paper)
 - 3 'ARMS CONVERSION PLANNING - THEORY & PRACTICE'
 - 4 'DEFENCE EXPENDITURE - WHO PAYS, WHO BENEFITS?'
 - 5 'THE IMPACT OF MILITARY SPENDING ON THE MACHINISTS UNION'
(Paper by Marion Anderson for the International Association
of Machinists & Aerospace Workers)
 - 6 'MILITARY SPENDING, DEFENCE CUTS & ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT'
(Statement issued by the General Executive Council of
the Transport and General Workers Union.)

'A BETTER DEAL FOR GOVERNMENT WORKERS'
(Extract from the wage claim for industrial Civil Servants
dealing with diversification in the Defence industries.
TGWU. 1978)
 - 7 SOURCES OF INFORMATION
-

INTRODUCTION - WHY ARMS CONVERSION IS IMPORTANT

Disarmament

The recent resurgence of support in Britain for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the European Nuclear Disarmament movements has shown that there is a growing awareness of the threat of nuclear war and opposition to government policy on the deployment of nuclear weapons.

The development of these campaigns is vitally important both in raising people's consciousness to the effects of a nuclear confrontation, while the state and the media exercise a conspiracy of silence on the subject, and in lobbying individual M.P's, political parties, trade unions, etc, in order to achieve changes in defence policy.

Yet it is easy to forget that this rapidly growing movement is not a new phenomenon. The 'Ban The Bomb' campaigns of the 1950's and 60's also developed mass support for a period of years but this then declined before they achieved the central objective of nuclear disarmament.

The demise of the old 'Ban the Bomb' movement was partly due to the general problems of sustaining mass support for long periods of time and partly because such pressure around the world helped to set up Test Ban Treaties, Arms Limitation Talks, etc - which suggested that the Arms Race was being contained and might even lead to disarmament.

The problem facing the new CND movement therefore is going beyond the education of a new generation of nuclear disarmers, to the implementation of a disarmament programme. This cannot be separated off from the problem of a reduction in defence expenditure, and its employment consequences, as a whole. The cancellation of the Trident programme would threaten thousands of jobs in Barrow and in Rosyth directly, and thousands more indirectly as a high level of defence expenditure became unjustified with the end of Britain's role as a nuclear power.

There is likely to be opposition both to disarmament and defence cuts from workers in the defence sector unless specific, comparable work is available in the civilian sector. The involvement of these workers in the development of alternative production proposals is important also to strengthen campaigns at the level of the workplace and community in order to ensure that policies on defence cuts, adopted at national level, are adhered to.

The Labour Movement

Reduction of defence expenditure has been the policy of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress for many years but under the previous Labour Government the Defence Budget remained at the same level of 11% of total Public Expenditure from 1973 to 1979. It was under that administration also that a decision was taken 'behind closed doors' to spend £1000m on the Chevaline replacement for the Polaris nuclear warheads. At the time few Government ministers were even aware of this

controversial decision and there was no debate in Parliament or the Labour Party.

Unfortunately, such expenditure does not improve the job security of trade unionists in the defence sector. The present Conservative Government is planning to increase defence expenditure at the rate of 3% per annum in real terms, in accordance with NATO directives but is going to reduce the number of civilian workers directly employed by the Ministry of Defence by 48,000 over the next 5 years.

With the TUC pledged to support defence cuts trade unionists cannot campaign against redundancies in private or public defence industries by demanding an increase in the level of expenditure, even if that created more employment. The only way out of this dilemma is the conversion of defence dependent production facilities to civilian production. The Alternative Corporate Plan proposed by the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee has shown in detail how this can take place.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE PLANS BASED ON ARMS CONVERSION PROVIDES SUPPORT ON ECONOMIC TERMS FOR CAMPAIGNS FOR DISARMAMENT AND, BY INVOLVING WORKERS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, CAN APPLY PRESSURE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL POLICY FOR DEFENCE CUTS.



ARMS CONVERSION

INTRODUCTION

CAITS has been involved with the arms conversion issue - the systematic change of use of military production facilities to non-military products and services, in a number of ways, principally:-

1. Because the Lucas Aerospace workers' corporate plan actually represents an example of this 'change of use' of military production facilities.
2. Because the Lucas Aerospace workers' corporate plan has shown how British trade unionists can actually carry out trade union policies on the reduction of arms spending - without jeopardising their jobs.
3. Because the Lucas Aerospace workers' corporate plan has highlighted the need to meet unmet social needs - counterposing socially useful products against military equipment.
4. Because the Centre has developed many international links with trade unionists and others on the question of arms conversion - based on the above features of the corporate plan.

Whilst CAITS is not principally concerned with arms conversion, its close ties with the Lucas Aerospace Combine and its corporate plan has led the Centre to act as a type of resource for groups interested in the issue.

CAITS' principal task in this has been to explain the significance of the Lucas Aerospace workers' corporate plan to the question of arms conversion.

The Centre has often been asked to make some fuller statement about arms conversion, and this follows.

WHAT HAS CAITS DONE ON ARMS CONVERSION?

Within the UK the Centre has developed and maintained close ties with the Campaign Against Arms Trade, and, to a lesser extent with the Armament and Disarmament Information Unit at Sussex University. These ties have in practice centred on the Lucas corporate plan, involving exchanges of information, contacts and so on.

Following the UN Conference on Disarmament and Development CAITS collaborated with Dr Mary Kaldor (Science Policy Research Unit, Sussex University) in a research proposal on arms conversion. However, as the UK Government

refused to provide the UN with any funding for this international Disarmament and Development research project, very little UN money came to this country, and the project proposal failed. During this period of collaboration it was discovered that the 'official' disarmament unit comprised 2 people within the Foreign & Commonwealth Office !

CAITS personnel have given a large number of talks to church-based groups, UNA groups etc. on the issue of arms conversion 'the Lucas workers' way'.

During 1978 CAITS worked with the Transport & General Workers' Union on the preparation of a job security demand for workers in Naval dockyards and ordnance factories. This claim was prepared in conjunction with TGWU shop stewards and was based on alternative products and production proposals. The TGWU have produced a policy document arguing for alternative work for their members in military establishments.

CAITS' links with arms conversion groups in the U.S.A. were rapidly established in 1978, when a CAITS worker visited Washington DC, Philadelphia, and Buffalo. Talks were given and contacts made with several members of Congress, the 'SANE' organisation, various American Friends Service Committees, Environmentalists for Full Employment, a Union of Autoworkers Local at the Bell Aerospace plant in Buffalo, etc. In 1979 a similar trip was undertaken to the West Coast. In Washington and Oregon several Machinists' Union Locals, and 'trades councils' were contacted and talks given, CAITS helped to start the Puget Sound Conversion Project in the Seattle area, many State legislators, Mayors etc. were seen. In California work was carried out with the Mid-Peninsular Conversion Project (in Silicon Valley).

Regular contact and exchanges of information occur between CAITS and many of these organisations in the U.S.A.

Through its U.S. contacts CAITS has gained a great deal of information about a number of legislative measures on arms conversion that are under consideration in Senate and Congress. The Centre has provided the International Committee of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee with details of these legislative proposals, and has convened a meeting of Labour MPs to receive information directly from the principal author of this U.S. legislative material.

Following a preliminary meeting with a union official from the Italian Metalworkers Union, CAITS was invited to a meeting in Italy on arms conversion with that union, and the German metalworkers union, I G Metall. There has subsequently been a great deal of exchange of information between CAITS and these two unions, and a further meeting will occur late in 1980, in Germany.

ARMS CONVERSION & DISARMAMENT IN A WORLD OF CONFLICT

As Charles Levinson has shown, there are several levels of reality in international relations. Massive trade deals are concluded between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., whilst the two countries are ostensibly in an

arms race against each other, both events occurring within a framework of diplomatic detente. The U.K. refuses arms exports to El Salvador, yet sells military equipment to Chile; communists in the U.K. are reviled, whilst trade deals with the USSR are lauded.

The deterrence argument, used to justify the arms race in many countries cannot in reality be separated from other economic and political questions. Economic chauvinism in many nations is expressed militarily, both in terms of military might, and through overt or covert threats to other nations. Political power within nations is often expressed through the medium of military threats to other nations. Social cohesion and stability is often enforced through the ideology of international conflict, via nationalistic jingoism.

Leaving aside religious wars (religion used as a supreme ideology?), the economic base of international conflict appears to be becoming more important - most notably over oil at the present time. Economic survival during a world recession may come to 'necessitate' the protection of economic interests, via the annexation of resources, land, nations. So countries spend ever more on military equipment, denying research, energy and resources to the very social needs that are supposedly to be protected through military events.

And above and among all this are the multinational corporations, which themselves have a determining effect on nations' economic life. Direct political intervention may appear rare (ITT in Chile), but political intervention most certainly exists. Nations beg these corporations to invest in their country rather than another, special low tax rates are invented, factory space is let rent-free, corporations are invited into countries with the promise of no organised labour and very low wage rates. At the consumption and social cultures are destroyed as they become markets for the corporations. Whole nations change in order to accomodate these massive corporations - with political and material favours going to those politicians that pave the way.

Many of these multinational corporations are of course directly or indirectly involved in the supply of military equipment. Some nations such as the U.K. actually have State-funded organisations to assist military sales by these corporations.

Who is to be believed? The military chiefs who say that limited military intervention, plus an umbrella of high-cost deterrence is necessary in order to protect free citizens? The diplomats, in the UN and elsewhere that seek a shaky international ordering, at the expense of 'small' wars, repression and the high-cost military umbrella? The bosses of the multinationals that seek profit at anyone's expense whilst proclaiming the 'end of ideology', whilst selling arms to support international military conflict?

National political life in many nations is heavily infected by these three groups - leading so often to undebated decisions which lead to ever higher military preparedness.

'Freedom' and 'economic survival' are becoming interchangeable jingoisms for the support of military preparedness in the U.K. and elsewhere. In Britain suspicion of any Left-directed initiative has been whipped up quite dramatically since 1979, with freedom being counterposed, as of old, against 'the Orwellian vision of the Left' (Margaret Thatcher's words), which negates freedom. This re-emergence of 'personal freedom at all costs' since its last de-bunking in 1945, has fitted in well with the 1970s notion of economic competition as warfare. Working people in Britain must supposedly compete with working people in Germany or Japan or 'die', British industry must compete or die. The British economy has become a god to which people must be sacrificed - just as the nation state embodies a type of divinity which requires human sacrifice - in an actual war or potential war.

How can any real semblance of internationalism survive under such conditions? The arms economies, and the arms manufacturers provide the means whereby military and political decisions and events in the furtherance of war are allowed to take place - take away the means and these cannot occur - this is the basic point of arms conversion.

But bearing in mind the several levels of reality in international relations, it is impossible to conceive of arms conversion as a technical issue, although at one level this must be considered. The only valid starting position appears to be unilateral disarmament - as an expression of rejection of both nationalistic and international arguments for the arms race. This would have to be accompanied by a rejection of economic chauvinism which creates economic 'warfare' between peoples of different nations, otherwise disarmament remains in a ghetto. The contradictory political role of multinational corporations has to be understood, and international contact and cooperation between workers of different nations working for the same corporation is crucial. The forging of new democratic processes in this sort of programme is required in order to challenge the 'diplomats' and their nationalistic or 'international elite' positions which excuse or encourage the build up of arms.

Just as the formation of economic enterprises helped working people to collectively realise their exploitation in earlier years, so now do the multinational corporations provide a means for an international response to exploitation, economic, social and political - with the ultimate exploitation being the sacrifice of people in war. This is the point at which CAITS may enter - by helping to forge those links, and helping people to understand how the multinational corporations work.

ARMS, THE ECONOMY, AND EMPLOYMENT

As has been said previously, the build up of military capability and the military expression of power is used by nation states for internal purposes, such as the attainment of social cohesion and stability in civil society (and sometimes within the military establishment itself). This usually expresses itself through nationalism, the protection of freedom, economic survival of the nation and its citizens. In postwar years arms production itself has become integrated into arguments relating military preparedness with economic survival. High spending on arms and

arms production is itself now justified in terms of direct benefit to national economies. Military R&D is supposed to 'spin off' benefits for medical science, or the communications industry. Military production is supposed to make viable enterprises which otherwise would not exist. The export of arms is supposed to make a valuable contribution to the balance of payments.

Yet economists in a number of countries have contested this view. They have maintained that high military spending damages national economies. In the USSR the military have first priority for high quality steels and plastics, plus first call on the best qualified technicians and scientists. In the U.S.A. it is concluded that areas with a high dependence on military or arms production facilities have suffered more economic and social distress and dislocation than other areas. In Britain no less than 52% of total Government research and development expenditure is located in the 'defence' industry, compared with 3% in housing.

The most comprehensive information about arms spending and its effect on national and local economies appears in the U.S.A. A recent United Nations study on the arms industry concluded that nothing useful could be said about the impact of arms on the British economy as real information was so closely guarded.....

In the USA much recent work on the arms economy has been sponsored by the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers. In 30 States, many of them major recipients of military contracts, IAM members suffer a net loss of job opportunities when military spending is high. A Pentagon budget of \$ 124 billion costs the machinists' union over 118,000 jobs in the civilian sector - with a net job loss of 30,000 jobs a year. The IAM, the machinists' union is supposed to be the major beneficiary of arms spending in the U.S. In general, every additional \$1 billion of Pentagon spending causes a net loss of 11,600 jobs in the U.S.

Apart from the jobs question, several U.S. researchers maintain that high arms spending is inflationary. Firstly because most military contracts operate on a cost-plus basis; a recent report by the General Accounting Office showed that 55 major Pentagon projects cost 70% more than was originally estimated - 47% of which was attributed directly to bad planning and mismanagement in the contracted corporations. Secondly because military spending pre-empted spending on other goods - goods which are actually of use to people and to the economy. Thirdly because the Government borrows high-cost money in the markets to help finance military spending. Fourthly because military contractors also bid for large sums in the money markets - tending to cause an increase in interest rates.

Finally in the U.S. there is research on the impact on the civilian economy of high military spending in relation to the pre-emption of scientists, technicians, investment and production capabilities. It is argued that mass transit, housing and other civilian facilities have suffered because of this arms industry induced distortion in the economy.

In Britain there have been three case studies on alternative work for military industries - alternatives to the MRCA Tornado, the Chieftan Tank, and the ASW Cruiser. In each case an assessment of skills and facilities has been made, and specific alternatives suggested. These alternatives include: mining machinery, irrigation and other types of marine pumps, alternative energy source equipment, recycling plants, marine engines, medical technology, etc.

So far in Britain there is only circumstantial evidence available on the adverse effects of high military spending on job opportunities, inflation, and the health of the industrial sector as a whole. But there have been no convincing arguments made for a rejection of the main propositions of the American studies, and several commentators maintain that the U.S. studies can be generally applied to most European countries with high military spending.

On several counts therefore a 'change of use' for military production facilities is desirable:-

- * More jobs per £ or dollar in non-military work.
- * Military R&D and production starves other sectors of the economy.
- * High military spending is inflationary.

However, a more difficult issue to face is export earnings from the sale of military equipment - Britain is still near the top of the international league of arms exporting countries, and it is the second most important world supplier of police and paramilitary equipment. But whilst export earnings are significant, what is the cost? Could similar earnings occur through the export of civil goods, and would this require the truly massive R&D and investment expenditures that the capital-intensive arms industry requires? This is a significant point, and one that is naturally joined by the question of numbers of jobs created per £ or dollar earned through exports.

There is also no way round the question of the effect of exports on the importing countries. Third world countries for instance have increased their total military spending by no less than 600% since 1957, in real terms; we all know that few Third World countries have increased their Gross Domestic Products six times since 1957, so it might be said that military spending has helped to hold back the economies of these nations. This puts a very proper responsibility on arms-exporting countries - and this was clearly recognised by the United Nations two years ago in their Disarmament and Development session, and its subsequent research.

IS THERE A ROLE FOR LEGISLATION?

Bearing in mind that the major arms producers are usually regarded as important contributors to nations' economic life it is difficult to see how they could be cajoled into reducing the production of armaments by international bodies such as the UN - national governments in most Developed Countries have failed to act in any meaningful way as a result of UN or other international pressure.

Yet national governments are usually involved intimately in all aspects of arms production and sales, often materially assisting arms-producing companies. The separation of national government activities in the military field into international relations, and national economic life ^{however} acts against any direct translation of international disarmament decisions into a change of use of armaments companies' facilities.

For this reason there has been a growing interest in the possibility of appropriate legislation by national governments. In terms of major strategic decisions, such as those over the B1 Bomber, or the MX missile, governments tend to act within the established framework of high level military and political decisions over foreign policy. The proposers of legislation on disarmament and arms conversion have not however sought to intervene directly at this level. They have attempted to operate at a 'lower' level, partly in the hope that higher level decision making will be affected.

The best example of this is found in the U.S.A., where a number of legislative measures are currently being processed by the legislature. These measures are intended to operate directly at a local level, using Federal funds, and raise broader political questions about arms conversion and disarmament. A very brief description of the main proposals will illustrate this:-

The DEFENSE ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT ACT would establish a national conversion planning programme of alternative use committees at military facilities, create a national defense economic adjustment council in the federal government, establish a trust fund to pay worker benefits and finance local planning.

The DEFENSE DEPENDENCY & ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION BILL seeks ways for defense dependent communities to obtain state and federal assistance to help diversify their economies.

The BILL ON DEFENSE ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT would ensure one year's notification of military base closures or military contract changes, give a planning grant to threatened communities, and provide general assistance to laid off workers.

The DEFENSE ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT & RECOVERY ACT would ensure that a portion of any savings realised by the Dept. of Defense from any military cutback should be returned to the community for the purpose of economic adjustment and recovery.

There is significant opposition to this type of legislation in the U.S., but there is still some quite important support in both Congress and Senate. Several State legislatures have also come out in support of this type of legislation, including those States with a heavy dependence on military industries.

There are many more clear cut examples of defence-dependent communities in the U.S. than in Britain - the above proposals are of course designed to meet these communities' needs, so it would be unwise to consider any simple importation of these Bills and Acts into Britain. Yet there are many places in Britain which do depend heavily on military facilities for jobs and for the support of the local economy, so it would be unwise to disregard this sort of legislative approach.

In the British context enabling legislation is probably more appropriate than the more prescriptive measures being proposed in the U.S. Such legislation could make provision for the conversion of government-run military establishments in the event of a base or dockyard closure. It could also provide procedures whereby trade unions could have a right to negotiate with companies over compensation for cancelled or

changed military contracts, such compensation being either financial or in terms of other job opportunities, in the latter case such opportunities would be subject to negotiation.

It is CAITS' intention to encourage a debate about such legislative possibilities in the Labour Party.

ARMS CONVERSION THE CAITS/LUCAS WORKERS' WAY

It has always been the intention to raise arms conversion as part of a more general appraisal of corporations' policies and actions and their effects on workforces; These appraisals being carried out with shop stewards committees which represent blue and white collar workers.

The development of workers' own plans for their companies is the ultimate objective, and experience has shown that, given a real choice, the trade unionists that have engaged in this activity have not chosen military production as a basis for their plans.

The experience of developing workers' plans in military and arms production facilities unavoidably raises many of the economic, social and political questions covered in this statement on arms conversion, not in just a theoretical way, but very practically - for the basic question is often about jobs or job security.

In this way there is a grass roots concern and knowledge developing amongst those people who are actually engaged in arms production. This not only represents a crucial sector of the population that disarmers have always sought to influence, but also represents a crucial force in the arms industry.

In this sort of approach it is possible to integrate:-

The question of jobs and job security in the arms industry.

The question of allocation of resources in the economy.

The question of civilian alternatives to arms production.

The question of 'real' international relations between peoples working in the same corporation, and therefore more generally too.

The question of democracy, and the effects on democracy of high military preparedness.

Arms Conversion provides a means whereby ordinary people can have a practical influence and effect on the arms race.

Mike George.

ARMS CONVERSION THE LUCAS WAY

by MIKE GEORGE

IN March 1976 the Lucas Aerospace management rejected the Corporate Plan proposals of the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee.

The Plan, containing 150 products which could be made in Lucas Aerospace, arose out of the mass canvassing of Lucas Aerospace workers and includes product proposals in the fields of medical equipment, oceanics, braking systems, alternative energy sources, remote control devices (teleshirics) and transport systems.

In 1976 the company asserted that the employees' best interests would be served by accepting the company's product policy — high technology military aerospace equipment; almost exactly two years later the company announced 2,000 redundancies.

Lucas Aerospace employed 18,000 workers in 1970, there are 12,000 currently employed, possibly 10,000 by 1980. The Corporate Plan serves several functions, it offers a constructive alternative to redundancy, it strikes at the heart of corporate policies, and it represents a stand against arms production. Workers in other companies have followed this lead, there are corporate plans being drawn up at Vickers, Rolls Royce, BAC, Chrysler, C. A. Parsons, Clarke Chapman and elsewhere.

There has been a large measure of support from a wide variety of trade union, Labour Party, pacifist and religious groups; interest overseas is even more pronounced, especially in Sweden, Germany, Austria, and America.

Yet two years on the stewards are still fighting for the Plan's implementation. After the outright rejection by management (though none of the products was faulted in a technical sense), the Combine Committee sought to bring pressure to bear on Government. The Government is the customer for nearly 70 per cent of Lucas Aerospace output, last year it gave Lucas Industries £56 million in

deferred company taxation. But whilst it is Labour Party policy to support the Corporate Plan proposals, the Government has expressed sympathy with the stewards, but nothing else.

In the meantime, the Corporate Plan proposals have received the official support of the Transport and General Workers and the engineering section of the AUEW. In May this year the TGWU brought out a joint claim for a wage increase and security of employment for its workers in ordnance factories and naval dockyards; the security of employment claim was modelled on the product diversification proposals of the Combine Committee.

There have been several meetings of sympathetic M.P.s and Ministers at the Department of Industry, usually Junior Ministers admittedly. These meetings seem to have established nothing except the Department's unwillingness to assist in any material way.

In 1977 Les Huckfield, Under Secretary of State at the D.I. consistently told M.P.s that the company were in fact negotiating with the Combine Committee over the Plan. When forced to admit his error he contended that the proper channel for this was via the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. The Combine Committee have recently obtained a meeting with the CSEU to discuss the plan.

There have recently been over 30 Parliamentary Questions asked in the House of Commons, and there are attempts to force a debate in the House of Lords. In addition, 72 shop stewards from Lucas Aerospace recently met with Albert Booth, the Employment Minister — so the pressure continues.

The Combine Committee seek Government pressure on Lucas Aerospace to conclude a planning agreement procedure over the Plan's proposals. This has been given more impetus by the recent announcement of about £8 millions of aid

Further information on Joseph Lucas Industries and the development of the shop stewards plan are given in a new pamphlet, LUCAS—AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN, published by the Institute of Workers' Control (30p) and also in the Young Fabian pamphlet, THE LUCAS AEROSPACE WORKERS' CAMPAIGN (50p).

Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee supply speakers for conferences, etc. Contact the secretary, Ernie Scarbrow, 86 Mellow Lane, East, Hayes, Middx.

to Lucas Aerospace. This Department of Industry handout is supposed to save jobs, but in effect it will not affect the 2,000 threatened redundancies. The Combine Committee are raising this in Parliament and elsewhere. Why does the Government give Lucas yet more public money without even a hint of a planning agreement?

So, the battle continues, workers have come up with complete technical specification for products which could be made in place of redundancy; products which are socially useful, unlike armaments, such as kidney machines, heat pumps for safe and cheap heating, equipment for Third World transport systems, a cheap, efficient city car. With the Government's supposed policies on arms reductions and the reduction of unemployment it might be thought that these sorts of proposals would be welcomed, but no.

Meanwhile, in January of this year the Combine Committee formed the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems (CAITS) in conjunction with the North East London Polytechnic, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. The Centre, based in the Engineering Faculty of the Polytechnic, researches the social and economic implications of socially useful production, it is engaged on technical development work on certain Corporate Plan products, and it is promoting the idea of socially useful production amongst workers in other companies and industries. The Centre has an economics group, a medical panel and an Advisory Committee to call upon, and is currently having discussions with Zambia and Tanzania over transport systems amongst other projects.

So, the Corporate Plan idea is spreading, opposition remains near-implacable, but the stewards at Lucas Aerospace, Vickers and elsewhere are determined that their proposals will succeed. They are seeking more official trade union support at all levels, they are developing the Plan itself at Lucas Aerospace, and, through CAITS they are deepening their arguments, both technically and economically. With current unemployment costing something between £5 and £8 thousand million a year, with over £3 thousand million of public money being pumped into companies that continuously displace labour, the stewards feel that their Corporate Plan proposals may actually be a cheaper option; not only that, but they are anxious to raise the issue of the allocation of productive resources.

In our so-called advanced country we still have millions of sub-standard houses, we lack cheap, efficient heating systems, we are desperately short of some types of medical equipment; but Lucas Aerospace workers who could be making these goods are to be thrown on to the dole queue.

These workers are demonstrating that a cut in arms production need not result in mass unemployment — it could also mean that we start to produce for social need instead of mass annihilation.

(Mike George is a Research Fellow and Acting Co-ordinator at the N.E. London Polytechnic of the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems.)

Chairman's AGM address . . . FRANK ALLAUN says 'NATO IS SNIPING AT DETENTE'

Although the British government is supporting the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament it is also about to increase arms spending in response to the demands of NATO. NATO is constantly sniping at East-West detente. It also is intolerable that at the same time as the UN Special Session Britain is boosting the sale of arms at its Aldershot exhibition.

There were however a few encouraging signs. Prime Minister Jim Callaghan had not gone along with those who wanted Western military intervention in Africa. He was right to stress that "we must live not die with Russia." Dr David Owen, in his May Day speech, had hinted at the value of unilateral moves when he said "everyone is waiting for someone else to make the first move on disarmament." In contrast the Tory Party was now led by some of the worst war hawks of the last 20 years. They openly talk of "winning" a war with Russia and are willing to spend more and more on arms. They refuse to see that there would be no "winner" in such a war.

In the next election LAP members must expose these Tory policies. This could ensure that disarmament was an issue in the election. It would provide the opportunity for us to put OUR views on peace and disarmament.

In Labour's 1974 election manifesto there were three promises that the government had failed to honour: no new generation of British strategic nuclear weapons; real cuts in Britain's military spending and an end to US Polaris bases in Britain. All three were still highly relevant and should be included in Labour's manifesto for the next election.

Along with other governments ours is doing a great deal of talking about disarmament. However action is needed as well as words. By carrying out these three promises Britain under a Labour Government would be doing something positive to put the arms race into reverse.

