

# News from everywhere

LUCAS AEROSPACE has finally turned down the 'alternative corporate plan' proposed by Lucas shop stewards, highlighting the fact that 'social responsibility' in science and technology can mean all things to all people.

The stewards had proposed that the company switch to producing a range of 'socially useful' products, as a way of avoiding redundancies caused by defence cuts and the general downturn in the European aerospace industry.

Lucas management said they intend to concentrate on their traditional business, which involves the development of aircraft systems and components for the aerospace and defence industries... "Lucas Aerospace maintains that aircraft are obviously socially useful. We need aircraft for defence," they said.

Lucas Aerospace employs 13,000 people, having thrown 5,000 on the scrapheap over the last five years. In April the company told unions that 273 people at its Burnley plant were surplus to requirements.

The stewards' alternative plan, drawn up a year ago, details how Lucas could switch to producing medical equipment, artificial limbs, better braking systems for coaches, energy conservation systems, etc.

The emphasis is on social usefulness as against profitability, on non-polluting and resource-conserving technology, and on reversing the trend towards the de-skilling and fragmenting of jobs.

The secretary of the LA Combine Shop Stewards' Committee, Ernie Scarbrow, commented that manage-

ment's response was "an object lesson to anyone who thinks companies are going to change simply because they are presented with serious and well-argued proposals."

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"IF THE SHREWSBURY Two had been Iranians, they wouldn't only have been wrongly jailed, they would also have been executed."

With that message the Nabarde Kargar (Workers' Struggle) group in Britain is launching a campaign for the restoration of trade union rights in Iran.

The Iranian counterpart of the TUC was formed in 1920, but after the CIA-inspired coup in 1953 all trade unions were suppressed by the Shah's dictatorship.

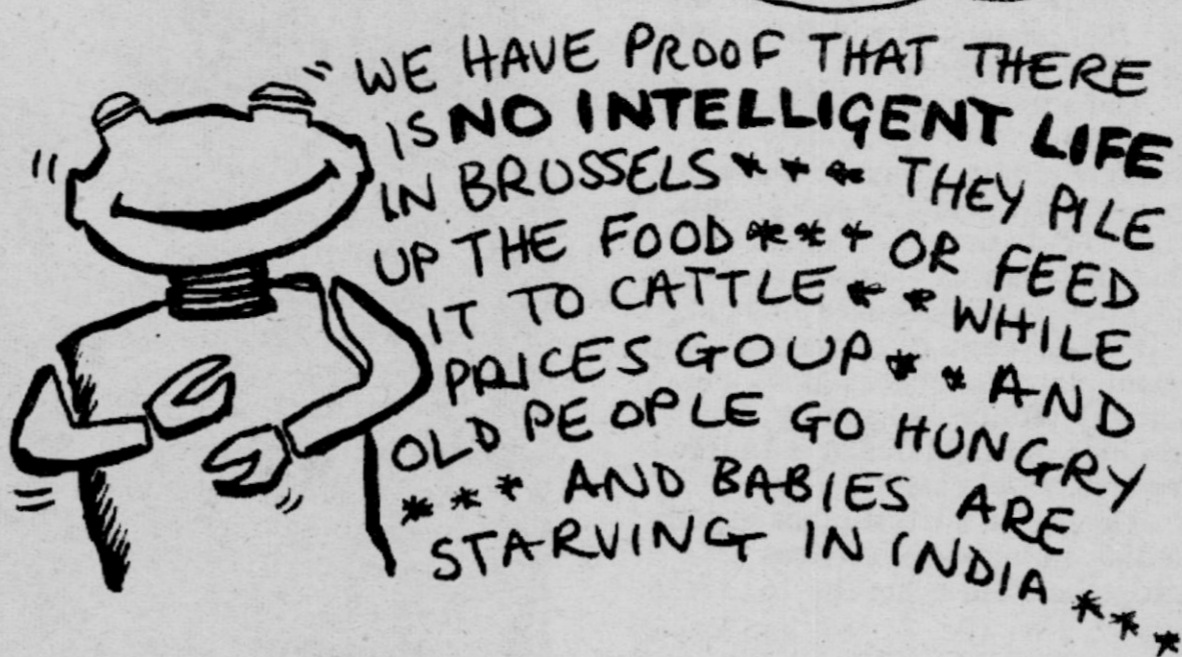
In a recent strike for higher wages, 25 textile workers were shot dead. The British TUC is well informed on the situation in Iran, but so far has taken no action. The Labour Government currently enjoys cordial relations with the blood-stained Shah.

The new campaign needs support in all organisations of the labour movement. It is pressing for a British labour movement mission of inquiry to be sent to Iran to investigate workers' rights.

More information from: CRTURI, P.O. Box 21, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1.

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THREE out of every four social security employees earn less, for at least part of their working lives, than the families they make SS payments to. This was revealed in a report from the Low Pay Unit last month.



With tax and other deductions a family man would need £47.71 a week to equal the net income of a father on the SS long-term scale rate. More than half the clerks on the counter in SS offices are on a scale which runs from £23 to £50 a week.

The report's author, LPU director Frank Field, claims that a system where the poor administer the poor is being deliberately used to ration SS payments, and that this is the root cause of most of the aggro at SS offices.

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THE DUBLIN Farmers Defence Association are expecting a heated meeting with former film star Princess Grace of Monaco later this month.

The jet-set Princess has just bought 35 acres of good farmland in County Mayo which she intends to use for family holidays.

The Farmers Defence Association, which is struggling against the increasing sales of Irish land to absentee landlords, claims that the sale will "deprive the area of acreage needed

for agricultural purposes".

Princess Grace claims that the farm once belonged to her grandfather and is her "ancestral home."

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THE EMPLOYMENT situation in Northern Ireland worsened further last month with the cancellation of a 1,200 job expansion programme by Grundig, the West German electronics firm.

A £500,000 advance factory had been specially built for Grundig at Newry by the Northern Ireland Department of Commerce. But on the day that EEC regional policy commissioner George Thompson officially opened the factory it became clear that Grundig had changed its mind.

Meanwhile, the continuing strength of the IRA continues to hit the economy hard. In mid-April, IRA fire-bombs closed down an industrial estate in a Protestant part of West Belfast, costing about £4 million and 300 jobs.

Shortly before that, the same organisation, in a concerted attack more than halved the number of

hotel rooms in Belfast in a single day.

These blows got scant attention in the British Press, perhaps because they were expected events. But it is also true that they would be extremely discouraging to potential investors.

Unemployment is growing rapidly in Northern Ireland. A Rolls Royce plant, and a Standard Telephones and Cables factory have both recently closed. Three Ministry of Defence works will shut in the next two years, and the Americans are pulling out their defence base in Derry - with thousands of jobs lost.

In the face of these events the administration in Northern Ireland is flapping. And adding an element of panic to the confusion is the deadly plight of Harland and Wolff shipyard all set to make the world's tankers when the bottom fell out of the oil market. Ten thousand jobs depend on something turning up here.

As far as the government goes, the shipyard's solution will just have to turn up. No effort is being made to provide an answer to the yard's difficulties. But for the electricity service - finding it impossible, burning oil in its generators, to keep costs comparable with the UK - there is to be yet another official survey.

Likewise for Northern Ireland's gas supply - an inquiry, survey or feasibility study. No North Sea gas warms homes here; in Straban, co Tyrone, where a third of the population is out of work, gas costs over 52p a therm; in London it costs 12p a therm.

Gas isn't even nationalised in Northern Ireland - more than ten separate private and municipal undertakings run it.

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THE FOLLOWING Home Office circular was recently retrieved from a prison incinerator. Carrying a department heading P4, it was addressed to all prison governors: "In future a careful and detailed account is to be kept of any communist or left-wing periodicals or books sent in to inmates."

IF YOU are signing on at the labour exchange, take a friend along to back you up. Don't delay, because your claim is most unlikely to be backdated.

Decide beforehand what kind of job you want, and if you don't want one think of something you know you won't get.

Try to get on the Professional and Executive Register, where you stand the best chance of getting decent treatment, rather than the Commercial Register (white collar) or the General Register (which handles unskilled labouring jobs).

There are many ways of presenting information, and you should think carefully about what you tell them. People who have worked in a profession, or who have at least two A-levels, can insist on going on the Professional and Executive.

Provided you have your P45 and are "available for work" they can't refuse to sign you on, but you won't get any unemployment benefit for a week, so get a form B1 and take it round to the SS offices, phoning to make an appointment if you can.

Expect it to take all day, and if you've got to have your kids with you take along something for them to eat and drink. SS offices don't normally provide facilities such as drinking water. Sometimes not even toilets.

If you are claiming supplementary benefit for the first time, take all your papers with you, but show them the bare minimum. Things you could need include some proof of address, a letter stating how much a week you pay for full board if you are a lodger, a letter from your doctor if you are claiming for a special diet or extra heating. Again, don't go on your own.

Work out what you're going to say beforehand. Write it down and keep it for future reference - they will. Don't be intimidated into giving unnecessary information or into saying something you don't mean. The SS are not the people to tell your life story to. They enjoy collecting details about your health, housing, work record, debts, court appearances, etc.

# Your guide to Social Security

Despite their cloak of confidentiality, they work hand in glove with the police in getting information and catching 'wanted' people. They are also constantly in touch with social workers, housing officials, probation officers, education authorities, doctors, etc... Read every statement before you sign it.

One visit to the SS should be enough to get regular Giro payments through the post. The first should arrive after about three days, though you won't get the full amount till you've had a visit from an SS visiting officer.

They like to make sneaky visits, so don't let them in if you haven't had 24 hours notice or if it's inconvenient. Ask to see their identity card and make a note of the name on it. When you let them in don't answer any questions you think are irrelevant.

If you're desperate for cash, try to get an emergency payment under section 13 of the SS Act, 1966. This allows the SS to make Giro payments "over the counter" in an emergency for instance if you lose your wallet or your house burns down, whatever your other personal circumstances.

The SS try to pretend that this section of the Act does not exist, but once you've applied don't take no for an answer - after all, it's an emergency.

You can get weekly additions to your basic rates of benefit, at the discretion of the SS, if you have "regular exceptional expenses". For instance the SS will keep up HP payments on "essential" items such as cookers, basic furniture and floor covering, and sometimes they will pay for a fridge if you have to keep

medicine in it. They can also give allowances for domestic help, extra laundry bills caused by illness or disability, and special diets.

Various rates of heating allowance are available if you have central heating and if you can get your home classified as 'hard to heat' or 'exceptionally hard to heat' - use your imagination! Heating allowances can also be paid on health grounds, from 55p weekly for 'restricted mobility' up to £1.65 if you cannot leave your bed or have a serious illness needing constant warmth day and night.

Lump sum grants can be paid under section 7 of the SS Act to cover 'exceptional need' involving things like fuel bills etc. Write to your SS office (keep a copy) claiming everything you can think of. Be sure to show the visiting officer your old clothes, and appeal if you aren't satisfied with the outcome.

The SS have power to pay any fuel bills, but they don't like doing it. Don't wait till the final demand to apply, and don't do any deals involving deductions from your weekly basic. If you have to appeal, ask the fuel board to defer action till after the appeal. If they say they won't, threaten them with the press. Apply for an extra heating addition too.

The SS can pay rent arrears to avoid eviction and break-up of a family. They don't like doing this either, and if you are a council tenant they may agree with the council to make you pay off the arrears at so much a week. Appeal.

Other things it might be possible to get grants for include: redecoration, repairs, furniture storage, tools for starting work, funeral costs, fires

and cookers. Generally it depends what you are prepared to fight for.

If the SS refuse to pay your rent because it's more than the 'fair' rent for the area, apply to the rent tribunal to have it reduced. They may also try to say that your accommodation is of too high a standard, but the SS Act states that you are not expected to move to somewhere of a lower standard.

Always say that heat and light are not included in your rent, otherwise they will deduct the £2.50 heating allowance. If you live with your parents the SS will try to allow you only £1 for rent - get your parents to say they will throw you out unless you pay full board and lodging. They could charge up to £18 a week, depending on the area, and you would get that plus £3.40 pocket money.

If you are sharing a house with several other people the SS will only pay the householder allowance to one person, or may split it between you.

If the house is mixed get every one's name entered on the rent book, otherwise they will try and say that couples are cohabiting.

The SS isn't keen on squatters, and may try hard to say that your squat is only temporary or not secure. Post a letter to yourself to prove that you're living there.

The SS will quibble about only paying the householder rate once, and about cohabitation if you are living collectively. To solve this, get everyone's names on rates and fuel bills.

If anyone in the squat is working, on no account mention this. The SS should pay deposits if

the gas or electricity board demands them, or come to an arrangement with them so that no-one has to pay. They will try and say that they don't make lump sum grants to squatters, but in fact they do - appeal if necessary.

If in doubt about how your benefit has been calculated, ask for a A124 assessment form. The SS have to show on this how they've worked out your benefit, and since one in ten of all claims are worked out wrong, you stand a good chance of getting an increase.

And the golden rule - if you're dissatisfied appeal. Write to the SS within three weeks of the decision you're appealing against, giving at least your brief reasons for appealing. Appeals cost nothing, and you don't need to be legally represented.

In two or three weeks you will be asked to attend a Supplementary Benefit Appeal Tribunal. Prepare your evidence carefully, and don't go alone - thanks to Claimants' Union activity in the past you can have two representatives with you, plus relatives, plus anyone else directly affected by the tribunal's decision, plus any witnesses you wish to call.

Make your case fully, and object to anything from the SS presenting officer that you think is irrelevant. Make sure the tribunal members understand that they have to make a decision based on law, not on the secret 'A-codes', which have no relevance in a tribunal. Before you leave get cash expenses payments, witnesses, etc from the tribunal clerk.

The result of your appeal should come through the post in a few days. If you lose you can re-appeal if you argue that your circumstances have changed. There is no right of appeal to a higher level, but in some cases you can take your appeal to the High Court.

● Prepared by Alternative News Service, London, with help from claimants' unions.