

# The Days of Future Past: the Lucas Plan

**Laurence Hall** shows how a radical model from the past can help us create a peaceful future.

With the vote on trident renewal fast approaching, YFGM's Trident Concern is focusing Young Quakers' strong opposition to all nuclear weapons. Yet if we are to win this struggle we need more than opposition, we need to show an alternative. Thankfully, our Peace testimony goes beyond simple opposition to war and militarism to a positive ethic of democratic equality. If ever there was a mass movement for an alternative model which embraced our testimony to its fullest, it was the one sparked by the Lucas plan.

In 1974, the workers of the military aerospace company Lucas were given the false choice that military production workers face today: produce arms or face mass redundancies. The workers, led by their shop stewards, rejected both in the most radical of ways: an alternative plan which was anti-militarist all the way through.

The Lucas workers would only produce peaceful, socially useful products with no production of military hardware nor products solely for profit. Yet the decision making process as to what was a peaceful, socially useful product also rejected militarist hierarchy. Lucas workers, academics and the wider community worked together democratically to discern what social needs could be best addressed by the Lucas workforce. The result was products far ahead of their time that served immediate medical needs, long term environmental needs and much more.

The peace principle of democratic equality was not just restricted to the product design. Management would not be by uncountable managers ruling over their workers like generals over their troops. The management and ownership of all aspects of production would be governed by the industrial democracy of all workers.

This anti-militarist ethos extended even to the technology used within production itself. They rejected technological processes which dis-empowered, de-skilled and destroyed workers. Instead they drew up new technology that would allow empowered workers to use their creative powers to the full extent.

Over the next decade, the Lucas plan started a mass movement of workers, community activists and leftist politicians to make the Lucas plan a reality in the UK and beyond. However, their hopes of a world purge of militarism were crushed by Thatcher and the neoliberal right.

Yet, the core of the Lucas plan can be revived once more by our generation's struggle against nuclear weapons and all forms of militarism. No longer will we only object but we will create a new peaceful alternative. We have nothing to lose but our militarist chains; we have a world of peace to win.