

Military-Industrial Complex Show

Ottawa, May 27-28, 2009

by Koozma J. Tarasoff — June 15, 2009 — Link: goo.gl/UaPuVe
[CANSEC Ottawa Reports Since 2009](#)

If there is no fuel, there is no fire. And if there were no arms shows there would be much less weapons available for mass destruction, and the vicious circle of violence would diminish. Indeed, the propaganda of arms shows is a great stimulus for the sale of weapons around the world. What is our responsibility as business people, politicians, as workers producing weapons, as taxpayers? These are some of the questions that I came with as I went to the gates of Ottawa's [Lansdowne Park](#) May 27th and 28th where Canada's largest military arms bazaar was held. It was also called CANSEC, which is an annual defence and security trade show organized by the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI).

Though I was a photojournalist with accreditation from two journals, I was barred from entering the big exhibit on the excuse, as the security official working for the Event told me, 'Journalist are not allowed!' But with camera in hand, much curiosity, and inspired by a number of peace groups I would not allow me to be silenced.

It was in the late 1980s that I was allowed to enter the show called ARMAX, take photos, and do a story on the same site. Outside the gates were peace activists protesting the event. Amongst them was a young anthropologist Richard Sanders who that year (1989) formed the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade ([COAT](#)). With pressure from other peace and religious groups, the Ottawa City Council passed a binding Motion banning all arms shows from municipal property. Now, however, through a technicality, the City last year bypassed the elected Council and allowed [CANSEC 2009](#) to hold a trade show in Lansdowne Park, the municipality's prime, publicly-funded facility.

Richard Sanders, as coordinator of COAT and Editor of *Press for Conversion*, continued to spearhead the effort to oppose arms trade. In strategic sessions weeks before the event, Richard was the central source of information on the arms show by posting [links to the 200-plus](#) Canadian companies complicit in the manufacturing and trade of weapons of mass destruction. On the evening of the first day, a Rally and Candlelight Vigil was held at Southminster [United Church](#) with 500 people attending. The handout prepared by COAT, Ottawa's peace, church and



Raging Grannies for Peace

environmental groups provided the context for CANSEC (see sidebar below).

'The CANSEC war fair is organized by a lobby group representing the vested commercial interests of 700 of Canada's largest military exporters. It receives hundreds of thousands in federal government grants to promote exports and international marketing opportunities. CANSEC exhibitors sell a wide range of military products that are used to wage wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. These wars have claimed countless innocent lives.

'CANSEC is Canada's top arms industry exhibition and its function is to facilitate the international trade in products and services that are used to fuel wars now raging around the world. While we like to believe that Canada is a purveyor of global peace, our country is actually ranked as the world's 7th largest exporter of weapons systems. Corporations exhibiting at CANSEC manufacture everything from ammunition, automatic weapons, armed battle vehicles, rocket launchers and unguided air-launched missiles used to deliver cluster munitions and white phosphorus warheads. Other CANSEC exhibitors produce essential high-tech electronic systems embedded in virtually all major U.S. weapons, including fighter and bomber warplanes, warships and main battle tanks.

'In recent years, 90% of the value of Canada's arms exports were sold to 39 countries whose troops were engaged in wars raging around the world, most notably in Iraq and Afghanistan. These wars have taken the lives of more than 1.5 million people.

'CANSEC will be the first arms show on City property in two decades. All such events were banned by City Council in 1989. Weapons dealers and war-fighters can thank "unelected" City staff, who claim to have found a convenient legal loophole large enough to drive a battalion of tanks through to get to the arms sale at Lansdowne Park!

'We intend to stop this transgression of democracy from ever happening again. Anti-war activists do not want CANSEC held anywhere. A first step is to ensure that the ban on war shows, is respected for all publicly-funded City facilities. We also hope to remove these events from provincial and federally-funded facilities as well.'

The people at the Rally expressed sorrow that the arms exhibit is being held. However, they expressed hope that so many people turned out with passion to share their disgust with the military exhibition. Member of Parliament Paul Dewar said that Ottawa ought to be 'a place for peace, a City for peace'. City Councillor Clive Ducet pointed out that it is 'a blight on our history' to allow weapons in our cities. 'We know exactly where we want to go. We want to go for peace and against war', he said.



Paul Harris, member St. Patrick's Catholic Church



Professor Diana Ralph, of the Independent Jewish Voices, stated that we need to link the issue of war and war profiteering and Israel. 'We now sell hundreds of millions of dollars for Israeli weapons. In shutting down CANSEC we can help shut down atrocities, too.'

Wakil Zazai, founder of the United Afghan Association of Ottawa, expressed sadness because today we are creating conflict around the world by manufacturing tools to kill. Instead of experts working to create a better life for all, the experts are engaged here in showing how to better destroy people. 'How can they sleep at night?' asked Wakil. 'Shame', voiced the audience with approval to the speaker's question.

Performances by the Raging Grannies, made up of courageous and concerned women from Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, provided a colorful and thoughtful message at the demonstration outside the CANSEC gates with their 'Peace Garden' as well as with their rendition of 'When nobody marches off to war, Hurrah, Hurrah....And we will all feel great when nobody goes to war.'

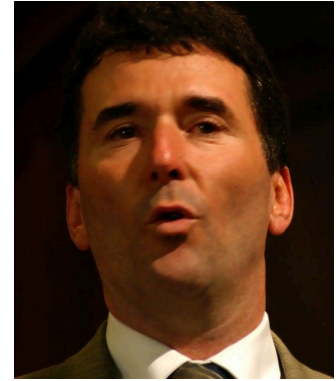
The Grateful We're Not Dead band and poet-singer Evelyn Voigt provided wonderful music throughout the evening. As well, the Quand Les Hommes Et Salaam choir sang 'What would happen if people would live in love. The world would be quite different.' The choir led the people out of the church in a candlelight procession to the gates of the arms exhibit.

But before we left, Richard Sanders of COAT summarized the gravity of Canada's complicity in the arms trade around the world, as summarized in the brochure. Then he showed a terrific anti-war [music video](#) he produced with the background excerpts using tunes by Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger, dedicated to the memories of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Richard raised the critical moral questions: 'Who are the criminals? Are they workers in the companies? The investors? The taxpayers? Or all?' In conclusion, Richard Sanders urged all to work in raising awareness of the wider public: 'Let's ensure this is the last military show on City property. Then we can work to kick them out of provincial facilities as well as from private properties.'

On the final day, I again showed up in front of the gates and was turned away from entering as a photojournalist. There were only a handful of us peace activists. However, we were treated with the presence of a young lady from the Maritimes who persistently and courageously expressed her heart-felt rage by confronting from the sidelines military, embassy, business and other persons who entered the gates of CANSEC with the following:

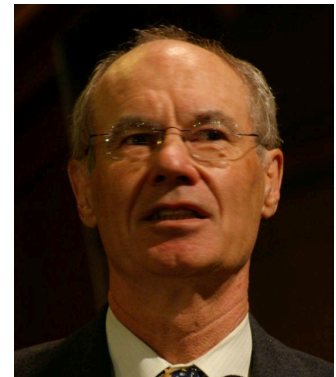
'The arms show is a racket. It is a sham!'
'It's bad for the kids and it's bad for the environment, and it



Paul [Dewar](#) , Member of Parliament



Evelyn [Voigt](#) , poet



Clive [Doucet](#) , Ottawa City Councillor



Professor Diana [Ralph](#) , Independent Jewish Voices

should be shut down.'

'The arms show is wrong! This is a shameful racket!'

The lady holding the sign 'Get out of Afghanistan' and expressing her rage was small in stature, but loud with facts and emotion. She has two young children and has a law degree, an MBA in Commerce and is currently working on a PhD. She is Tamara Lorincz, Member of the Halifax Peace Coalition. Her voice and message were sincere, firm and courageous. It made my day. She expressed her views elegantly and with finesse.

Tamara's central expression that '[War is a Racket](#)' reverberated in my mind, as it probably did with others who heard it. The words are taken from the title of a book by Major General Smedley Butler published in 1935. See excerpts from his famous [1933 speech](#) available in [video](#).

As a retired U.S. Marine Major General Smedley Butler, one of only 19 people to be twice awarded the Medal of Honor, in which Butler frankly discusses from his experience as a career military officer for 33 years how business interests have commercially benefited from warfare. In his book Butler points to a variety of examples, mostly from World War I, where industrialists whose operations were subsidized by public funding were able to generate substantial profits essentially from mass human suffering. The work is divided into five chapters:

1. War is a racket.
2. Who makes the profits?
3. Who pays the bills?
4. How to smash this racket?
5. To hell with war!

It contains this key summary:

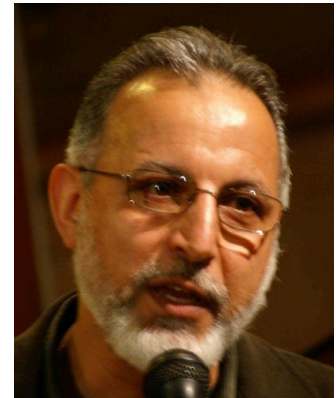
'War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. Only a small "inside" group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes.' (Wikipedia.org).

What is left to do? Peace activists are urged to show solidarity at the City Committee Meeting and at Council. At the June 2nd meeting in the City Hall, the response was overwhelming; 80 speakers recorded their names, but the day ended with only two-thirds being heard. The rest of the speakers, including myself, were heard on June 15th, 2009. Here is my presentation:

Good morning!



Quand Les Hommes & Salaam Choir



Wakil [Zazai](#) , United Afgan Assoc. Ottawa



Sister Helene Lebrun



Grateful We're Not Dead musical group



[Raging Grannies](#) for Peace

My name is Koozma Tarasoff. I am a photojournalist and writer, a tax-paying citizen of Ottawa for 40 years. I was born in Saskatchewan to Doukhobor parents. My ancestors were exiled from Russia to Canada more than a hundred years ago in 1899 because in Russia they burnt their guns in a mass protest against militarism and wars. For them wars were immoral and outdated.

Today more and more people around the world recognize war as institutionalized murder. War requires us to go against our human conscience and what we know to be wrong. (See '[Essay on War](#)' by Quaker Jonathan Dymond.)

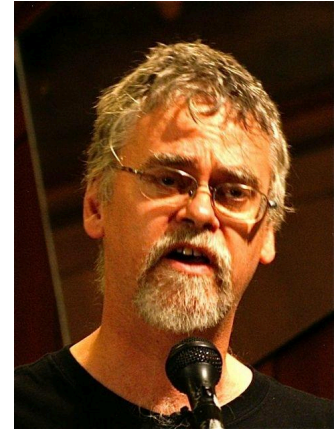
War preparation and wars contradict the central core of our human values in our civil courts; this incongruity has stimulated the United Nations to work and ensure that 'the scourge of war will be no more'. The military industrial complex is a threat to our society, as President Eisenhower warned us years ago. Also its partner, the military-academic complex, referred to by Senator Fulbright, is alive and well in North America today. The ingenuity of our scientists is misplaced in this unethical industry because they are occupied with inventing ways of killing better. But by putting them to work on peaceful uses, they can make more money out of peace than we can out of war.

An educator from Regina, Saskatchewan writes: 'There is plenty of money to be made in the peace industry, and not so many of our people and those across the ocean would need to die. Dead people do not pay taxes or contribute to social or economic national growth. They do not vote.' The latest federal budget [Public Accounts of Canada, 2007-2008](#) shows that the defence budget is more than the federal government spends on Environment, Education, Fisheries & Oceans, Health Canada, Justice, Human Resources and International Aid **combined**. Shame!

As a photojournalist with accreditation to write about CANSEC I came to the gates of the exhibit, but was turned away. Silenced!

In 1989 I was allowed to enter the ARMAX show and do a story. This was just before the City Council banned arms trade on Municipal property. The new Council bypassed the former ban last year without going to the citizens for a plebiscite. As a result, democracy has suffered.

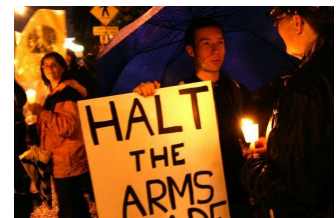
At the gates of Lansdowne Park, there was a legitimate voice of a young lady from the Maritimes (a lawyer, environmentalist and ethicist on business). She spoke with inner rage calling the arms show 'a racket'. 'It is bad for the kids and it is bad for our Earth', she told the people who were



Richard [Sanders](#) , COAT Co-ordinator



Handing out candles for vigil



Bill Bhaneja, Canadian Dept. of Peace Initiative

arriving at the gates. In pointing out that the word 'racket' is appropriate, the lady referred to the title of the book [War is a Racket](#) published in 1935 by retired U.S. Marine Major General Smedley Butler, who showed how business interests have commercially benefited from warfare.

CANSEC fits the same category — it is a racket whose goal is to make money, lots of money, ultimately on the backs of dead bodies. The companies with a vested interest in war answer to their shareholders, not to the general public. Unfortunately, much of the public has become desensitized and easily accustomed to the 'normalcy' of militarism and war. The propaganda of war has taken its toll.

Peace is not just a federal issue. It is rightly a municipal one. Fresh air, clean water, poverty, housing, health, education, transportation, energy, culture, climate, fire-fighting and policing are issues that affect people directly in municipalities. It is time that the City of Ottawa develops its green and nonviolent mentality so as to become a peace-building leader for other cities of Canada and the world.

As a first step, let's stop the arms trade shows on City property. Remember that the power of preventing war consists in the power of refusing to take part in it. These wars will only stop if each of us, in our own small arena of power, takes the opportunity to say No. This is your opportunity to say No and the war trade shows on City property. Let's speak truth to power. Let's allow the culture of peace to take root in our Board Rooms and in our Neighbourhoods. As the building block of much of our world's population today, the Municipality can play an important role in giving peace a chance. I call on all citizens of Ottawa to take a stand on this issue — one small step that is in your power.



Tamara Lorincz, Halifax Peace Coalition



Policeman shakes hand with peace activist