

(9) Concerned Citizens: *Opposing Military Air Shows*

Since 1997, the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade has been encouraging activists across Canada to use their local air shows as opportunities to raise awareness about peace, human rights, development, social justice and the environment and other important issues. More and more organizations have begun to confront politicians, the media, community organizations, and the general public, with challenging questions about our society's attitudes to war, war technology and violence in entertainment.

War shows give us a chance to raise awareness about the functions of the warplanes at military air shows, the real economic reasons behind so many wars and the social and environmental impacts of war.

Research is first step in organizing educational and/or protest activities around your local air show. For instance, it is useful to know:

- when is the next military air show?
- who organizes this event?
- who are its corporate sponsors?
- who are its media partners?
- what charities are involved?
- what military aircraft will perform?
- does city council sponsor the show?

Build Support

- Hold events to discuss and build support for a campaign. Hold a video showing, an interfaith peace service, a panel discussion or debate.
- Make presentations at the meetings

of different organizations, and in schools and churches, etc.

- Form a coalition to oppose the show
- Call for a boycott of the air show. Ask supportive NGOs to educate their own members and to urge the public to boycott the air show

At the War Show

- Hold signs and banners in sight of cars driving to and from the air show
- Set up an information picket to distribute leaflets inside or outside the air show. (Leaflets can be designed for children and/or their parents.)
- Organize an alternative tour of the warplanes to describe to spectators details about the aircraft that are not discussed by air show announcers
- Set up an info table to distribute information or an exhibit to display art by children who have been bombed by the types of warplanes on display
- Tour the show wearing T-shirts with peace slogans and/or graphics
- Perform some "street theatre" to dramatize the effects of these war planes on civilians

Nonviolent Action

- Organize a boycott of corporations that won't stop sponsoring air shows.
- Contact community groups that collaborate with military air shows and urge them to withdraw their participation. If they refuse to withdraw from these events, urge the community to withdraw all financial support

for these groups.

- Hold a prayer vigil right next to one of the most offensive warplanes
- Unfurl banners in front of warplanes
- Put photos of victims onto warplanes
- Stop air show operations by entering the area over which warplanes perform. (Aircraft flights are supposed to stop if people enter this area.)
- Organize a citizens' inspection team to enter and investigate a military air show, in search of warplanes to be used as evidence of war crimes
- Use nonviolent tactics to blockade the entrance to war shows
- Direct symbolic disarmament action

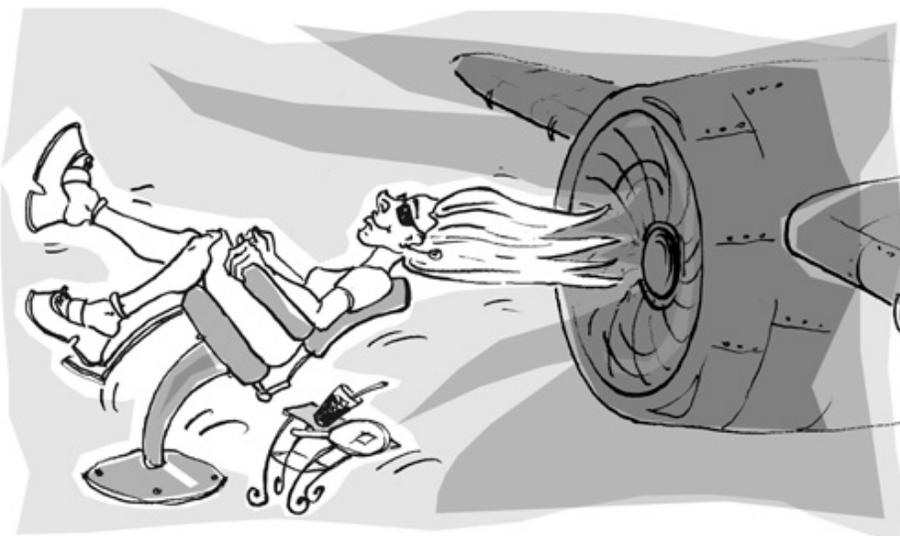
Hold Counter Events

- During the NATO war against Yugoslavia in 1999 an anti-war protest march from Parliament Hill to the government's war department was timed to coincide with Ottawa's air show. Publicity for the event, pamphlets and a Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade speaker made the connection between the warplanes at the show their use in NATO's war.
- Protest against any military trade shows or conferences that may be held in conjunction with the air show
- Hold an alternative event, like a peace festival, to counter the war show

Produce a Video

- Produce a documentary about why your local air show should be opposed
- (continued on the next page)*

Abbotsford International Hair Show



Even peace activists have a sense of humour. That's why a group of Mennonites is holding the first-ever Abbotsford International Hair Show.

"In past years there have been some sombre actions at the air show. Our commitment to peace leads us to search for lighter ways of expressing our concern. This year we decided to have a little fun," said Elsie Wiebe, peace coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee BC.

Professional haircuts, styling and scalp massages will be given in a parking lot next to the military air show. Proceeds will go to victims of bombs dropped by North American fighter planes in Afghanistan.

Media

- Urge the media to give balanced coverage to this issue.
- Write letters to the editor, call radio shows and contact producers and assignment editors to complain about media promotions of war shows and/or unbalanced coverage.
- Encourage sympathetic reporters to cover the event
- Hold a media conference with community leaders.
- Arrange for op ed articles to be published in local newspaper
- Set up a radio debate between pro and anti-war show representatives
- Arrange for coverage by community and university newspapers and radio
- Make people aware that local media are "partnered" with the show. Urge these media partners to withdraw their support from war shows.
- Boycott media that persists in partnering with war shows.

Pressure Politicians

Federal

- Tell politicians why military air shows should not be subsidized. Urge them to ban these events:

David Michael Collenette, MP
Minister of Transport
Rm. 104, East Block, House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel.: (613) 995-4988
Fax: (613) 995-1686
E-Mail: mintc@tc.gc.ca

Sheila Copps, MP
Minister of Canadian Heritage
Rm. 511-5, House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel.: 819-997-0055
Fax: 819-994-1267
E-mail: copps.s@parl.gc.ca

- Tell the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency to revoke the charitable status of military air shows.

Director of Audit, Charities Division
Canada Customs & Revenue Agency
Place De Ville, Tower A
320 Queen Street, 12th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1A 0L5

Municipal

- Urge your City Council to oppose the presence of warplanes in your city.
- Urge local councillors to withhold or discontinue air show funding.
- If your city is a "nuclear weapons free zone," prohibit nuclear weapons delivery systems from entering the city.
- Complain about the excessive noise and air pollution caused by the show.
- Complain about the dangers to public health and safety caused by crashes at military air shows.

A Few Contacts

Here are a few activist organizations that have opposed military air shows in Canada:

Abbotsford, BC:

Elsie Wiebe
Mennonite Central Committee BC
31414 Marshall Road,
Abbotsford BC V2T 3T8
Tel.: (604) 850-6639
Fax: (604) 850-8734
Email: peace@mccbc.com

Hamilton, ON:

Randy Kay
Fathers Day Coalition for Peace
Box 19, 1280 Main Street West
Hamilton ON L8S 1C0
Tel: (905) 627-2696
Email: hasc@tao.ca
Web site: www.hwcn.org/link/fdcp

Ottawa, ON:

Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade
(see back cover)

Saskatoon, SK:

John Bury
Veterans Against Nuclear Arms
Tel.: (306) 382-0021
Email: burybjd@sk.sympatico.ca

Toronto, ON:

Matthew Behrens
Toronto Action for Social Change
PO Box 73620,
Toronto ON M6C 1C0
Tel.: (416) 651-4514
Email: tasc@web.net

Winnipeg, MB:

Darrell Rankin
Peace Alliance Winnipeg
745 Westminster Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3G 1A5
Tel.: (204) 453-3994; (204) 586-7824
Email: rnknfile@mb.sympatico.ca

Note: If you are involved in opposing military air shows, but are not listed here, please contact COAT.



COAT's VIDEO documentary: "Mothers' Day at the War Show"

narrated by Marion Dewar (former Mayor of Ottawa)

"Air shows" are at the forefront of a cultural epidemic in which militarism, violence and war technology are glorified and romanticised as family fun and entertainment

The video juxtaposes numerous contradictory images and interviews:

- war planes doing aerial stunts at the National Capital Air Show
- Pentagon footage of these same kinds of planes bombing Iraq
- Iraqi children's paintings depicting these war planes in action
- interviews with young air show spectators and Iraqi war victims
- destruction wreaked upon the civilian infrastructure of Iraq
- former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark in Iraq in 1991

To order, send \$27 (this includes postage) to
COAT, 541 McLeod St., Ottawa ON K1R 5R2