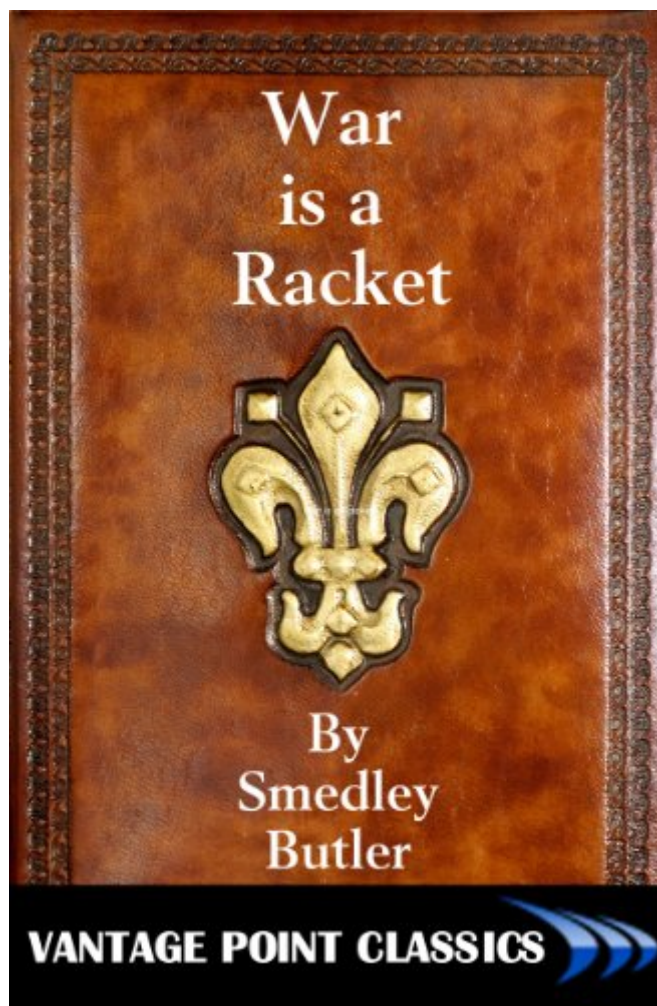


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War Is A Racket



Synopsis

In *War Is A Racket*, Butler points to a variety of examples, mostly from World War I, where industrialists whose operations were subsidised 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." In another often cited quote from the book Butler says: "I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents." The book is also interesting historically as Butler points out in 1935 that the US is engaging in military war games in the Pacific that are bound to provoke the Japanese. "The Japanese, a proud people, of course will be pleased beyond expression to see the United States fleet so close to Nippon's shores. Even as pleased as would be the residents of California were they to dimly discern through the morning mist, the Japanese fleet playing at war games off Los Angeles." Butler explains that the excuse for the buildup of the US fleet and the war games is fear that "the great fleet of this supposed enemy will strike suddenly and annihilate 125,000,000 people." In his 1987 biography of Butler, *Maverick Marine*, Hans Schmidt gave a brief review: "Butler's particular contribution was his recantation, denouncing war on moral grounds after having been a warrior hero and spending most of his life as a military insider. The theme remained vigorously patriotic and nationalistic, decrying imperialism as a disgrace rooted in the greed of a privileged few." Content From Wikipedia

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Customer Reviews

It would seem the more things change, the more they stay the same. Is there anything in here that is a revelation? Not really! If someone does not know by now that government overpays for goods, or that government buys antiquated, outdated, or useless products to prop up an industry which benefits a specific politician from a specific location, that person must be living under a rock somewhere. Although, I find his recommended solutions to be noteworthy, I personally do not think they would work exactly as expressed in today's society, but variations of his solutions could and should be implemented so that everyone shares in the responsibility; businesses should NOT profit from selling products to the government - at any time, let alone just during war time. It should be their civic duty to provide the products at, or around, cost. Supposedly, this is the pamphlet version of a book by General Butler, but I felt it was worth the hour or so to read. I did not find out anything

new other than the fact that this type of crony capitalism between industry and government has been going on for much longer than I thought. But this is the sort of thing that happens when government/politicians enrich themselves through crony deals with for-profit businesses who provide millions of dollars in donations to said politicians in exchange for extremely lucrative government contracts!

Apparently, some things are timeless in the "military-industrial racket". General Smedley Butler, the most decorated American soldier probably ever, points out in this essay some MIC moves that remind the reader of skullduggery in the Iraq War, Vietnam War, etc. Long before General Eisenhower's classic speech, General Butler sounded the alarm. I guess leave it to the soldiers to be able to spot this stuff. Great read, highly recommended.

I recommend reading this book. It only takes about 20 minutes and can be found online for free. It was written in 1935 and much of what he predicted came true and much of what he observed is still true. The analysis of profit and warfare versus who is making the real sacrifice is good. Many of his objections, while philosophically correct (in my opinion), have been taken out of the equation for the time being. He had a lot of heartburn over the draft and who got sent and how much they got paid. Now we are pretty much all volunteer and get paid relatively well. Of course I think this just makes it easier to send troops to war and he would probably have been against that result. He finishes with a 3 step method to limit wars and a great closing line, "TO HELL WITH WAR."

Although General Butler is correct in his assessment of the purposes of war, and the comments he makes in 1935 are eerily familiar in the wake of the Gulf Wars and the "War on Terrorism" today, his solutions are naive at best and do not reflect the historical realities that the world saw less than ten years later. He says, for example, that the Germans cannot attack the US because they cannot reach our shores. This ignores the development of ICBMs, which Goddard and Von Braun were working on for the Nazis at the time, as well as the creation of Army and Marine rapid deployment forces, equipped to establish a "beachhead" in a foreign nation and hold it for at least a month, now possessed by every world power today. Despite this, the book is worth reading because it gives a view seldom discussed today; how war makes money for the children of the rich, while killing the children of the poor...

This simple book should be required reading for all Americans (and beyond). It is a blunt, honest,

straight-forward account of what war actually is composed of and true motives, actors and reasons behind it. It's a read you can enjoy in a single sitting. It'll probably make you uncomfortable. But, through discomfort comes growth.

Smedley Butler states his anti-war stance very simply, - because of the malfeasance implicit in the dealings of the Military-Industrial sector with Central Government. Always at the expense of the ordinary taxpayer, in terms of exorbitant pricing of supply contracts, as well as physically being the literal cannon fodder for the war effort. He says the politicians and industrialists want the ordinary soldier to risk all, at no personal risk to themselves. SB lays it bare suggesting remedial solutions that seem simplistic nowadays, but realistic for the time in the 1930s before the lessons of World War 2. A quick easy read suited for anyone as an introductory prelude to deeper study into the military-industrial engagement with government in the conduct and causes of war. This is a three star review of a much deeper and larger five star issue.

I had read this book online awhile back but just recently picked up a paper copy. This book is a very worth reading. Maj. Gen S. D. Butler, unlike most anti-war activists, was a highly decorated professional soldier who renounced the political and financial "game" of almost all modern wars. I agree with Butler in having a strong national defense and absolutely no foreign intervention (Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.). This is a definite read for a libertarian patriot.

Don't buy the paperback with the Uncle Sam figure on the cover. At 28 pages, it's either a pamphlet reprint or it is edited down. It is a very superficial treatment of the subject - a disappointment. I was visiting Butler's house last week, spoke with relatives, and I went looking for his book, prepared to be impressed. I am hoping that he has more substance than what is in this 28 page pamphlet. It is a screed against capitalism, but the Army that bought the millions of dollars worth of equipment that he points out as unnecessary, or leftover, or out of date, gets a free pass. He blames the sellers, but does not inquire about the buyers. The famous quote about being the "gangster for capitalism" is not in the book. It is from a speech he gave on the same subject. Perhaps this is his whole book - if so, it is freely available online. Don't waste the shipping charge for these 28 pages.

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