

Occupy the Trans Pacific Partnership: Civil Disobedience Blocks Entrance to Site of TPP Negotiations in VA

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Dr. Margaret Flowers scales a tripod, blocks trade negotiators entering upscale golf resort; other activists erect a 75-foot high banner suspended by 10 weather balloons



by It's Our Economy



September 11th, 2012

Lansdowne, VA - Two people were detained this morning after a tense stand-off with police while blockading international trade negotiators from entering the Lansdowne Resort, site of the secretive Trans Pacific Partnership negotiations taking place this week. Other activists greeted the arriving international negotiators with a 75-foot high banner suspended by weather balloons shaped like giant buttocks that read "Free Trade My Ass: Flush the TPP."

A rapidly growing movement is organizing to oppose the unprecedented lack of transparency surrounding the Obama Administration's handling of the TPP discussions. While 600 corporate lobbyists have been allowed access to and input on the draft texts from the beginning of negotiations three years ago, the public and even members of US Congress have not been allowed to see what is being proposed on their behalf.



“People need to know that the Trans Pacific Partnership is being negotiated in secret to hide the content. The TPP will redefine the terms of trade in ways that give corporations power over nations, makes them unaccountable and threatens the health of people and the future of the planet,” said Baltimore native Dr. Margaret Flowers, co-director of ItsOurEconomy.us, as she dangled by a climbing harness 20 feet above the pavement and dozens of agitated police officers and sheriff’s deputies. Flowers is a medical doctor and said she was moved to take action in particular because she is concerned about the likelihood that the TPP would increase drug prices by expanding corporate patent rights.

Police responded aggressively at first to the blockade, threatening to taze the metal poles suspending Flowers and to pepper spray the mother of three into compliance. Confused trade negotiators abandoned cars and attempted to walk towards the hotel complex. Stymied by how to safely remove her and open the roadway, police representatives eventually sought to negotiate Flowers exit. Flowers only agreed to be removed if her colleague, Dick Ochs, who had been handcuffed and detained for blocking the road was also released. Eventually the police agreed to release Flowers and Ochs if she lowered herself on her own accord.



Dick Ochs Blocks the Road



Dick is taken into custody



The Lieutenant, Tarak Kauff and Kevin Zeese negotiate the exit.



Margaret refuses to come down unless Dick is released



No arrest for Margaret, Dick Ochs released

“The TPP is called a ‘trade agreement,’ but in actuality it is a long-dreamed-of template for implementing a binding system of global corporate governance as bold as anything the world’s wealthiest elite has attempted before. It is outrageous that civil disobedience like this is necessary to have the public’s voice included in these discussions. The stakes are just too high for the world’s environment and for farmers, workers and all of our intellectual property rights far into the future for these decisions to be made behind closed doors.” said Laurel Sutherlin of Rainforest Action Network, one of the organizations supporting this week’s demonstrations.



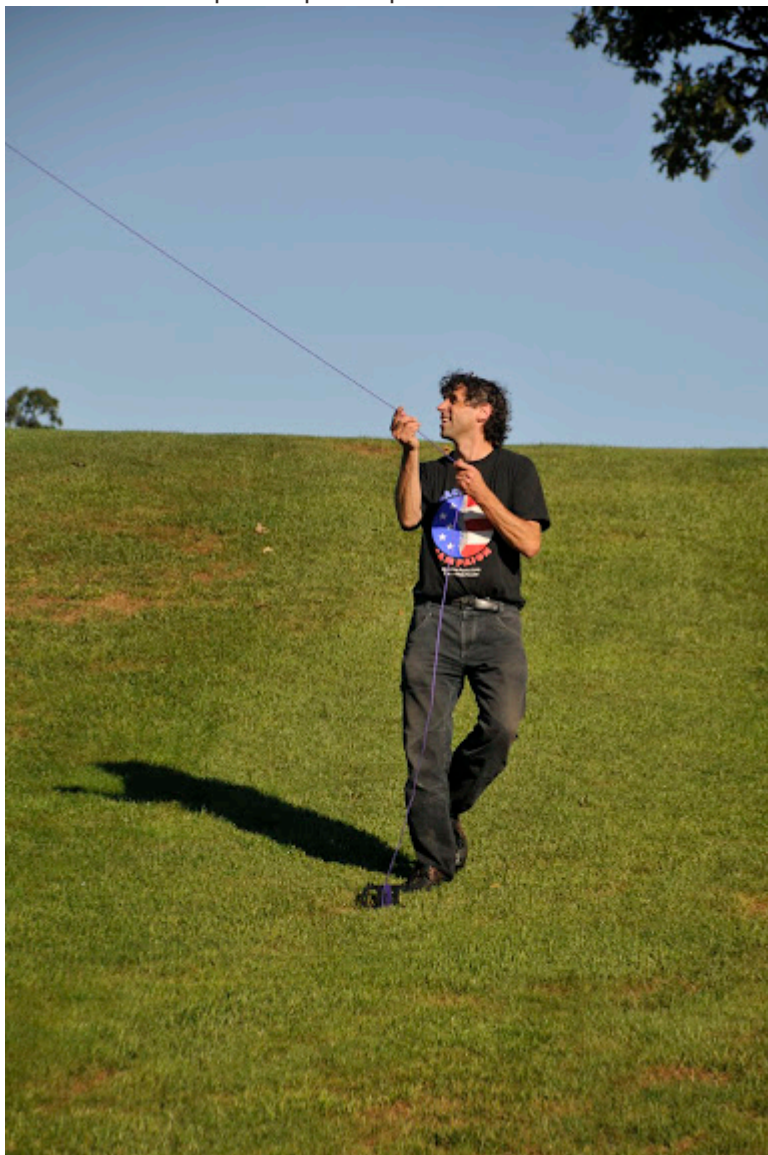
Phil Ateto, Ellen Barfield, Lisa Simeone and Dick Ochs hold sign along the road Today's actions follow a colorful rally on Sunday at the same location that was endorsed by dozens of regional and national environmental, labor and social justice organizations. Members of this diverse coalition, upset by the TPP's complete lack of transparency, have orchestrated a series of demonstrations throughout the week of negotiations.



Arthur Stamoulins of Citizen's Trade Watch (which was not part of this action) is interviewed by Eddie Becker
In 2008, candidate Obama promised that as president he would renegotiate NAFTA with

Canada and Mexico with new terms favorable to the United States. Now his administration is negotiating one of the largest corporate trade agreements in history, that would outsource jobs, lower wages and undermine environmental, consumer and labor laws.

In a report on the TPP, Kevin Zeese, co-director of Its Our Economy wrote: “the Trans-Pacific Partnership would do even more harm to U.S. employment than NAFTA. The TPP is being negotiated in secret by the United States, Australia, Brunei, Chile, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam. It contains an unusual provision, a docking agreement, which allows other countries to join. This October, Canada and Mexico are expected join the TPP. Later, Japan and China will likely join but it will almost certainly not stop there. The TPP could set the standard for worldwide trade – a major reshuffling of our social contract with almost no public participation.”



Bill Moyer of the Backbone Campaign



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For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca