

# The Three Ugly Sisters of Transatlantic Trade: TTIP, CETA and TISA

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*One knows to be on one's guard immediately one hears that the USA and the European Union are negotiating some 'big deal' on transatlantic trade. Sure, big deal - in trading terms - typically means big power, big money and big mess. But when one also hears that it's all being done in secret, then one has to add 'big scam' too.*

The designers of the trade agreements claim that they will bring greater GDP and more jobs at both ends; a view which has been widely challenged by those likely to be on the receiving end.

So let's spell it out: TTIP stands for Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. It's Big Brother brokering new trade deals between the USA and the European Union. CETA stands for Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. It is pretty much the same deal, but is being brokered by Canada and the European Union. And lastly there's TISA, for Trade in Services Agreement, also involving the USA and EU, with some other countries in on the act. Here, it is 'services' that are under the spotlight.

Common to all of these is the fact that 'we the people' are being kept entirely out of the picture. All negotiations are being hidden from public scrutiny, with special 'secret courts' being established in off-shore venues, where national governments can be sued if they are accused of protecting the right to prohibit certain imports or maintain trade tariffs.

For example, the majority of countries in the EU do not allow most varieties of genetically modified seeds and plants that the US seeks to export. This would raise an immediate dispute under the protocol of TTIP.

Such a position will be re-scrutinized under the terms of these new trade agreements. US hormone-enriched beef and chlorine-washed chickens are another example of products currently blocked by the EU, and for good reason. There are many such controversies that all find their place in a negotiating time-table designed to get a comprehensive new trade package into law as soon as possible, with no parliamentary intervention and no public vote.

Pause for breath. Just what is going on here? Let's call a spade a spade: it's a massive and fraudulent attempt by multinational corporations to wrest a further degree of control over global trading, thereby undermining the ability of nation states to administer their own trading laws.

TTIP, CETA and TISA can, for the sake of this summary, all be seen through the same lens. In each case, multinationals' extensive role in creating new regulations opens the door to a

race to the bottom in standards of quality set for foods, the environment and public services. In the case of TISA, governments are being pushed into accepting a mandatory privatization of public services – an overt way of giving big business the say-so in all matters of public interest.

In the UK, the National Health Service would be particularly vulnerable. But so would thousands of government backed, or supported, social enterprises throughout Europe.

Under TTIP/CETA we would see the end of such individual delights as the Cumberland sausage and the Cornish pasty. The Parmigiano-Reggiano, Black Forest Gateau and Alsace Grand Cru. No domain names would be allowed in this free trade free-for-all.

Fighting to save these products will be an uphill task. The defenders would need to familiarize themselves with 'ISDS' (Investor State Dispute Settlement) procedures. Procedures that will not be heard in normal courts of law, but under TTIP are slated to be heard by a jury composed of corporate lawyers and specialist international 'experts', deliberating their cases in secret courts. In other words, a neat bypassing of any recognised legal system. A complete scam by any standards.

## THE GOOD NEWS

The TTIP negotiating process has been ongoing for a number of years now. However, it is presently bogged down by disputes at both ends and looks close to collapse. France has recently called for an end to negotiations and dropping the entire process. Other European countries are joining this call, with Germany's economy minister Sigmar Gabriel stating "The negotiations with the USA have de facto failed, even though nobody is really admitting it."

CETA and TISA are still in process, with CETA being the closest to ratification by Canadian authorities. It will then move on for ratification to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament. It appears that this agreement contains less contentious trading terms, as France is broadly accepting the current outline. However, it still smacks of a regime that will go over the heads of the people and simply fuel the coffers of the canniest exploiters of the global market place.

What both the EU and US actually need is the antithesis of these monster 'free trade' agreements. They need to reinvest in local and regional forms of production and consumption, carried out on a genuine human scale. Work as though people mattered. We have seen quite enough destruction at the hands of multinational and transnational corporations busting their way into foreign countries and ruining their internal trading patterns.

In the end it's just another type of war. Who needs it? The planet is already saturated with irrational violence.

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