

The Trans-Pacific Partnership's "Global Economic Coup": Secret Negotiations Behind Closed Doors

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This week, secret 'negotiations' are underway in a remote resort in Lansdowne, Virginia for the greatest global corporate coup in history. It's called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and if you haven't heard about it, then you are in the majority because there is a virtual media blackout in the United States.

To raise awareness of the TPP and to delay the 'negotiations', I [shimmied up a 20 foot-high metal pole](#) early yesterday morning in the driveway of the Lansdowne resort and attached myself at the top to a tripod. Negotiators abandoned their cars and walked up the driveway past me on the tripod and our banners that read "Trading away People's lives and Planet's future" and "[FlushtheTPP.org](#)"

Police arrived almost immediately and initially threatened to spray me with pepper spray and to taser me until I came down. A member of our team tossed me a pair of goggles. I quickly attached my safety lines and then I let go of the poles. I was ready for their assault and willing to accept it knowing that millions will lose their jobs or have poverty wages and slave working conditions, will suffer or die because they are unable to afford necessary medications and that the planet will be poisoned even more by large corporations if the TPP isn't stopped.

I write negotiations above in quotation marks because this process really amounts to the U.S. using its power to bully smaller nations such as Vietnam, Brunei, Chile and Peru into agreeing to a trade treaty that larger nations will then sign as written. The TPP will redefine the terms of globalization in a way that completely resets the social contract in favor of corporate rights rather than human rights.

In fact, this agreement is largely being shaped by corporations. Ron Kirk is the US Trade Representative. He works for the Office of the President. And he has 600 corporate advisers working with him. These advisers have real-time access to the text of the treaty as it is being negotiated so they can comment and suggest amendments. However, members of Congress have very limited access to the text. Congress members can only see the text if they go into a private room to read it, and they cannot take a phone or pen and paper with them. And the media and public have no access to the text. We only know what has been leaked, and that is pretty scary.

The 'negotiators' are trying to give the appearance of being inclusive, but it is a complete sham. On September 9, they held a Stakeholder Briefing at which non-profit organizations were allowed to make presentations to the negotiators and ask questions. [Kevin Zeese of ItsOurEconomy.us](#) described how the drafts favored corporate greed over human needs and criticized how they were negotiated in an anti-democratic way. He asked if the U.S.

Trade Representative would guarantee a democratic process including open debate in Congress and amendments rather than 'fast-tracking' the treaty. The representative said that she could not guarantee that, pretty much confirming our concerns that this treaty will be rammed through without committee hearings, amendments or debate. After the briefing, many who attended marveled at the skill of the negotiators to avoid answering questions.

My broad concerns are with the secrecy and lack of democracy. The trade negotiators know that if the public knew what was in the agreement there would be a mass uprising here as there has been in other countries. They are calling this trade agreement a 'partnership' because the public is aware of the harm of 'free-trade' agreements. [NAFTA has been responsible](#) for the outsourcing of nearly one million US jobs and crashed the Mexican economy. The TPP is being called '[NAFTA on steroids](#).'

Even in Leesburg, VA, where many of the people are conservative, every person we met supported our protest when we explained why we were there. We were protesting the TPP because what we know so far is that it will:

- [Allow corporations to sue nations](#) if laws such as those protecting the environment or labor conditions interfere with corporate profits.
- Create a [private corporate tribunal to hear these cases](#) in which the judges are largely corporate lawyers.
- [Extend the patent period for pharmaceuticals](#) which will keep prices high and medications out of the hands of those who need them.
- [End "Buy America" provisions](#) which will lead to greater job outsourcing.
- Further [de-regulate Big Finance](#).
- [Undermine internet freedom](#) of speech, right to privacy and due process, and hinder peoples' abilities to innovate.

TPP is the biggest corporate power grab in history. Under the TPP transnational corporations will have more power than individual nations. [President Obama promised to renegotiate NAFTA](#) in a way that was favorable to the American people. However, it appears that the opposite is happening with the TPP. We are [asking President Obama](#) to live up to his campaign promise of greater transparency and release the text of the TPP. We are also asking that there be a democratic review process in Congress before a vote on the TPP.

Time is of the essence because this is the final round of negotiations in the U.S. TPP negotiations were started under President Bush but didn't really get going in earnest until three years ago. The goal of the White House is to complete the TPP soon because larger nations are interested in signing onto it.

I ask that every person who reads this to forward it to their family and friends. Pressure your local media to cover the TPP. Do what you can do to raise visibility. We can stop this global corporate coup if we expose it. And we must stop it if we want a healthy future for ourselves, our families and all people across the globe.

Last Sunday I stood with hundreds of people outside of the Lansdowne Resort. We chanted, "The TPP stinks! Flush the TPP." Visit [FlushtheTPP.org](#) for more information and sign the petition.

Click [here](#) to see a photo story of the action.

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