

The Trans-Pacific Partnership

Threatens the Future of Young People in America

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is poised to become the largest free trade agreement ever. Current negotiating countries account for 38% of the global economy and include the U.S., Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. Negotiators have kept the TPP text secret from the public but allowed access to members of special Advisory Committees which are dominated by hundreds of corporate advisors. However, based on leaked text, public statements, news reports and previous trade agreements, we can safely conclude that the TPP poses a special threat to young people.

TPP is Not about “Trade” – Today’s Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are primarily concerned about economic integration and have very little to do with actual trade (tariffs and duties on goods.) The TPP is a perfect example. The current draft of the agreement is reported to contain 29 chapters, but only about 5 of those chapters actually deal with trade issues. The remaining chapters deal with economic integration issues like intellectual property rights, investor-state dispute settlement, environmental regulations, and more. There is no end date to the TPP, which means young Americans could be dealing with this bad trade deal for most of their adult lives.

Secret Deal for the 1% – The special advisory committees utilized the U.S. negotiators are dominated by representatives of corporate interests. These are the same lobbyists who have hogtied Washington and used their outsized influence to stack the deck against average Americans. The public and even many members of Congress and their staff aren’t allowed to see what’s going on in these negotiations, but we’re supposed to trust that our best interests are kept in mind as this deal moves through negotiations.

Fewer Jobs and Lower Wages for Younger Workers – Young Americans entering the workforce already face a tough time finding jobs. In June 2014, the overall unemployment rate was 6.1% but the unemployment rate among 16-19 year olds was 21% and among 20-24 year olds it was 10.5%. And these unemployment rates do not even include the 1.24 million additional workers under 25 years of age who are neither employed nor actively looking for work because job opportunities remain so scarce. Under the TPP, this problem will only get worse. Globalization and trade deals have resulted in the loss of 6.8 million jobs. About half of these are service sector jobs concentrated in information technology, human resources, finance, purchasing, and call centers. The balance is primarily composed of good-paying manufacturing jobs. In addition, the majority of American households lose at least \$2,560 in income a year due to the downward pressure on wages and benefits caused by offshoring.

Putting Our Youth in Competition with Sweatshops – The TPP includes countries like Vietnam whose 2014 average minimum wage amounts to just 56 cents an hour – less than half of China’s minimum wage and just 8% of the U.S. minimum wage. Vietnam keeps its wages low through the brutal suppression of human rights including the right to form independent unions, freedom of expression, open access to the internet, freedom of religion and much more. Vietnam’s terrible human rights record has been well documented by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and even the U.S. State Department. The U.S. Department of Labor has cited Vietnam as one of only three countries in the world to engage in forced child labor in its apparel industry. Surveys have also cited unsafe working conditions in the apparel factories. All of

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this is important because Vietnam is the 2nd largest exporter of apparel to the U.S. behind only China. The TPP will reward Vietnam's government for bad behavior by giving it duty free access to the U.S. market and putting our workers – especially young workers – in direct competition with sweatshop and slave labor. Instead, trade talks with Vietnam should be suspended until it meets basic international standards for human and workers' rights.

Long-Term Environmental Damage – The TPP could sharply increase U.S. exports of natural gas – creating incentives for more fracking. The Department of Energy could lose its authority to regulate exports of natural gas to countries that have signed a “free trade” agreement with the U.S. that includes “national treatment for trade in gas.” The TPP could eliminate the government's prerogative to determine whether the mass export of natural gas to TPP countries – including Japan, the world's largest natural gas importer – is in the public interest. The resulting surge in natural gas exports would not only raise gas and electricity prices for consumers, but would ramp up the dangerous, chemical-laden practice of fracking and exacerbate the looming global environmental crisis our young people will inherit.

Additionally, the TPP includes special provisions that allow foreign corporations the right to challenge any domestic law, rule or regulation that breaches the expansive investment rights included in the agreement. These challenges would be heard by UN and World Bank tribunals staffed by private sector lawyers that could order governments to use taxpayer dollars to compensate the corporations for the loss of their expected future profits.

There are over \$38 billion in pending claims filed by corporations against sovereign governments using similar provisions in U.S. trade agreements. Most of these claims have targeted pollution clean-up requirements, climate and energy laws, medicine patent policies and other public interest policies. This system could make passing tougher environmental protection laws more difficult, ensuring increased pollution and environmental damage for years to come.

Tainted Food – 84% of the seafood we eat is imported – much of it from TPP countries. Yet, the FDA only inspects about 2% of our imported seafood, vegetables, spices and fruit. A 2011 report by the Government Accountability Office on seafood safety found that the FDA only tested 0.1% (1/10th of 1 percent) of imported seafood for drugs that may be present in imported seafood but are illegal in the U.S. because they can cause cancer, allergic reactions and antibiotic resistance.

Yet, even with this inadequate system, the FDA has detained hundreds of seafood imports from TPP countries because they were contaminated. For example, in Fiscal Year 2012, the FDA detained 206 imported seafood products from Vietnam alone because of the presence of salmonella, e-coli, methyl mercury, filth and other drug residues. In 2014, the Japanese government found that shrimp imported from Vietnam had chloramphenicol, an antibiotic which causes a lethal blood disorder and is banned in the U.S. The TPP, by greatly expanding our seafood imports, would result in even more uninspected, untested and tainted seafood imports entering into the U.S.



What You Can Do to Protect Young People's Jobs, Wages and Health

CWA

www.stoptheTPP.org

Communications Workers of America

7