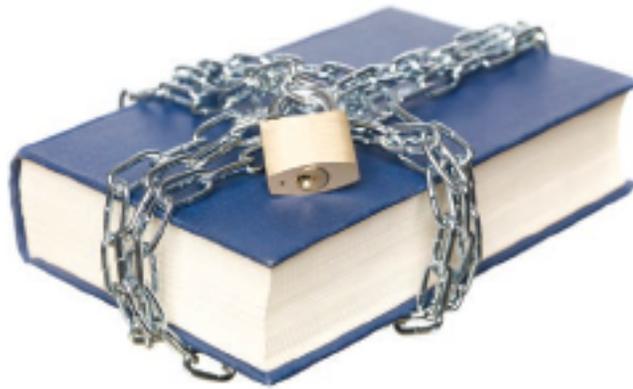


# THE TRANS-PACIFIC SLAM JOB

By Scott C. Tips



Do you remember when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) were proposed and passed? (Well, CAFTA didn't really pass, except through legislative trickery.) Promises were made about the abundant benefits that would fall into the laps of its signatories, but especially into the lap of the United States. None of those promises were ever kept, except to the large corporations in partnership with their government concubines.

And "Free Trade" as a name in those agreements' titles? That was a misnomer if there ever was one. Those incredibly lengthy documents were all about "Managed Trade" and not the free market. If they had truly been about free trade, then it would have taken one-page, maybe two (for the signatures) to set forth the parties' agreement: "All tariffs and trade barriers between and among the signatory parties are hereby eliminated." So, the Agreements are nothing but a costly joke and a way to usher into our lives a soul-numbing harmonization that already is reducing our freedoms into dim memories and pat slogans of patriotism.

Now arrives yet another insult to our freedoms – the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which some are already describing as "NAFTA on steroids." The TPP, as it is called, is a very-secretive, multi-national trade agreement currently being negotiated among eleven different Pacific-Rim countries and pushed by both Republicans and Democrats. In its fourteenth round of negotiations – which just finished in Leesburg, Virginia, as you read these words – the parties hope to make wide-ranging changes to all parties' laws, rules, and regulations. (See <http://www.ustr.gov/tpp>)

Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, the United States, and recent newcomers Mexico and Canada (since June 2012) are the negotiating partners. China is a noticeable absence, but the office of the United States Trade Representative has announced that it hopes that 40% of the World's population will eventually be covered by this Agreement. In the same way that the European Union sprang from the loins of the European Economic Community (another free-trade partnership), I see the TPP as the real debut of the global World Government for which some have been so fervently working.

***Secrecy Par Excellence***

The TPP is so secretive that even Senator Ron Wyden, chairman of the Senate committee charged with jurisdiction over “trade” agreements like the TPP, has been blocked from reviewing the United States’ own negotiating proposals. Yet, 600 corporate representatives – excuse me, lobbyists – have full access to TPP documents and a special role in negotiations for the United States, let alone all of those other lobbyists acting with the other participating countries.

When you consider that even the World Trade Organization allows its own negotiating texts to be issued to the public, this secrecy is rather strange. Stranger still is that the parties to the TPP have agreed that they will not make public any of their negotiating texts until four years after the deal has been concluded or abandoned!

Couple this secrecy with the feeble coverage by the mainstream press and you have the typical recipe for disastrous surprises for the citizens of these eleven countries as their own laws and customs are overturned.

### **Here’s the Rub**

So what will this “trade” agreement do? Well, since it is so secret, we don’t really know the full extent of what good or harm it will do. **But**, some parts of the texts have leaked out and they are not pretty.

There are 26 chapters to the Agreement; but, unsurprisingly, only two of them deal with trade matters. The rest – the 24 other chapters – are a wish-list of the Elite. So, calling this Agreement a “trade agreement” is like calling an automobile a radio. As Lori Wallach wrote in her article, “NAFTA on Steroids,” “Think of the TPP as a stealthy delivery mechanism for policies that could not survive public scrutiny.”

From what we do know, the TPP threatens to extend restrictive intellectual property laws into its partner countries and rewrite international rules for their enforcement. Leaked drafts of the Agreement reveal the negotiators’ plans to limit freedom of speech, right to privacy and due process, as well as cripple individuals’ abilities to innovate. This includes making copyright infringement a *criminal* offense! (See the February 2011 draft Chapter on Intellectual-Property Rights at <http://keionline.org/sites/default/files/tpp-10feb2011-us-text-ipr-chapter.pdf>)

And according to Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), “the U.S. is asking countries to create new, enhanced and longer patent and data monopoly protections for multinational pharmaceutical companies so they can keep competitors out of the market and charge higher prices for longer.” Again, texts are not fully available, so we cannot confirm all of these statements.

Yet, it is clear that in another chapter of the agreement, an expansion of NAFTA’s nasty corporate tribunals is planned. These tribunals have been used under NAFTA to adjudicate “trade” disputes and strike down public-interest legislation. TPP would create a three-person tribunal of attorneys to adjudicate legal disputes concerning governmental laws, rules, and regulations that do not comply with the terms of the TPP. And in an amazing conflict of interest, these very same attorney-judges would be permitted to switch sides in other cases and represent the plaintiff corporations!

It is guaranteed that in this Agreement there are other outrageous intrusions upon our substantive and procedural freedoms, ready to be sprung at the appropriate time. Fortunately, although the United States and other countries are in a strong push to complete this Agreement, it has not yet been finalized. This is mainly because of Australia's objections to TPP's faux-court system and New Zealand's complaints about the overriding of its own drug-pricing policies.

### **What Can Be Done**

If we wait until after the Agreement is signed, then the likelihood of any of us being able to change the Agreement will be next to nothing. And if the passage of NAFTA and CAFTA is any indicator of the future, then we can surely expect more lies, threats, and outright chicanery when the TPP comes up for a vote. Still, spreading the word about the Trans-Pacific Partnership is imperative, as is contacting your Federal legislators to demand accountability. The more light that is shined on the TPP and the more of a stink that is made about it, the better the chances that it will be exposed as the fraud it is and defeated.

Some clever people have even offered a reward for the full negotiating text of the TPP. (See [http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1439/content\\_item/freetpp](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1439/content_item/freetpp)) That is a good start, which I fully support. We need all of the action that we can muster on this assault, because this time they are going for the golden ring – the golden ring that is intended for our noses and with which they expect to lead us around. We cannot allow that to ever happen.

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