

Congress MUST KILL the Trans Pacific Partnership

By JIM GOODMAN

Trade is good, but “Free Trade” doesn’t work for farmers or workers or most everyone else.



Free trade does, however, work spectacularly well for corporations who have over 600 advisers to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations — we have no access to the negotiations, corporations have plenty. From a practical point of view it would make more sense if we made our own shoes and computers. We should grow less grain for European (and American) livestock and more food for ourselves. We could actually pay workers here a fair wage and US workers could afford to buy US goods and perhaps own a home and send their kids to college.

No Increase in Profits for Farmers In farm country we are told these trade deals will allow us to export more goods and in so doing, increase our profits. I have farmed

for a good many years and I have, over the course of that time, known many farmers, most of them who farm on a much larger scale than I do. I have yet to meet a farmer who directly exports abroad, or even one who has the volume of product or operational infrastructure to do so.

Free Trade = Corporate Profits Farmers products ultimately end up in the hands of some corporate entity, a multinational corporation which handles the exporting importing and generally takes most of the profit. Free trade defines an agreement that has as a first (and sometimes only) priority, the best interests of corporations; namely, their profits. At what expense those profits are taken is apparently of little concern to the trade negotiators and in particular the corporate rep-

resentatives that are active participants in the otherwise secretive TPP negotiations, or the other trade deals Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). Fair trade, on the other hand, would put the interests of people and the environment ahead of corporate profit. Fair trade would protect jobs rather than off-shoring them as has historically happened after passage of all free trade agreements.

No Consideration for People Free trade has no consideration for cultural preferences because it has no consideration for people. Japanese farmers and consumers prefer to grow and eat their traditional varieties of rice, not imported rice — that should be their right, not so under the TPP.

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Food safety standards under free trade would, by design, fall to the lowest common denominator. Lower safety standards on food imports, like lower labor safety standards, reduce operating costs and thus increase corporate profit.

Increased Health Care Costs Pharmaceutical companies would be granted extended monopoly patents, thus increasing health care costs and access to generic medications. Banking interests insist on and will get, Financial Service Agreements that would severely limit the ability of governments to restrict the trade of risky financial products or in general their ability to regulate “too big to fail” banks.

Downward Wage Spiral Perhaps most distressing to the US economy, free trade agreements have always forced workers into a downward wage spiral. Jobs tend to flow to wherever wages are the lowest. The TPP would set the stage for member countries like Vietnam with its \$2.75 daily wage to become

an even lower cost labor alternative than China. I have watched and opposed these “free trade agreements” for decades — they keep getting worse.

In summary Fair Trade Agreement have:

- Moved living wage jobs to economies where they have become slave labor jobs;
- Busted unions and fired union organizers;
- Devalued the place of women in agriculture;
- Moved food production to wherever food can be produced at the lowest cost;
- Increased food imports to the extent that food safety inspections are nearly non-existent;
- Aggressively promoted GMO’s (genetically modified organisms) and the corporations that produce them;

- Pushed US agriculture into a system of commodity cropping and CAFO’s (confined animal feeding operations);

- Pushed indigenous farmers worldwide off the land and into urban slums;

- Made farm workers and livestock expendable commodities;

Each trade agreement gets worse Each trade agreement takes away our control, each trade agreement shifts wealth upward and leaves the world more impoverished.

The actual trade aspects of TPP are little more than a sales pitch to garner support for passage. TPP is really about fundamentally restructuring our democracy and our society—if passed, the results will not be pretty.

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