



The TPP If Ratified: Corporations Will Overturn U.S. Laws, Speed up Destruction of the Environment, Outsource Jobs...

Don't Give a Damn About the TPP? You're Going to Wish It Gave a Damn About You

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Try this at home. Dress up corporate. Stand on a corner with a clipboard. Hover a drone with a video camera nearby. Ask passersby:

1. Who's in the Super Bowl?
2. Who should be president next year?
3. What was just signed in New Zealand that, if ratified, will let corporations overturn U.S. laws, speed up the destruction of the environment, outsource jobs, encourage [slavery](#), eliminate food safety standards, make medicine cost even more, censor and restrict the internet, impede reform of Wall Street, and make those 20 people who own as much as half the country even richer at your expense?

This is a clear-cut case where Meatloaf is just wrong. Two out of three really is bad.

Former U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, and others who had seen all or part of the text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, used to say that just making it public would stop it dead. But that depends on a number of factors, I think. The TPP has now been made public. Twelve nations have just gone ahead and signed it. And their hope is to see their governments ratify it during the next two years.

The destruction wreaked by NAFTA can be seen in thousands of hollowed out towns across the United States, if you trust the bridges to get you there and are willing to risk drinking the water. But public discussion of NAFTA's impact is not a popular topic in the corporate media, consolidated post-NAFTA and worsened ever since.

The 1993 corporate media debate over whether or not to create NAFTA looks bizarre to us today. You can [go back and watch](#) Vice President Al Gore (pro-NAFTA) debate wealthy crank Ross Perot (anti-NAFTA) on television. That such a thing existed is crazy enough to contemplate in this anti-democratic day and age. But then watch Perot make the debate about the damage NAFTA was going to do to the people of Mexico. You know as well as I do what the universal response to that line of reasoning would be today across the political spectrum of media-approved voices. Say it aloud with me: *Who the hell cares what happens*

to Mexicans!

In fact, the TPP is almost entirely ignored and avoided. When it's mentioned it's as something our authoritarian government knows better how to handle than we do. Its defenders, including President Barack Obama, present it as a way to jab a finger in China's eye. Its opponents argue that it attacks U.S. sovereignty and benefits foreign nations. What, if anything, it does to Vietnamese workers, for example, is just not registering, and the idea of a U.S. billionaire in 2016 bringing that to public attention as a moral concern would get you mocked as a dreamer faster than Hillary Clinton changes positions when a check book is opened.

The Free Trade Area of the Americas and other post-NAFTA corporate deals have been stopped by public pressure, and the TPP can be as well. What is it up against?

First, the [text of the thing](#) reads like a stack of phone books filled with this sort of gripping drama:

« Article 14.1: Definitions — For the purposes of this Chapter: computing facilities means computer servers and storage devices for processing or storing information for commercial use; covered person 1 means: (a) a covered investment as defined in Article 9.1 ... «

I know you can't wait to find out what happens next, but I suspect there's a section somewhere criminalizing quoting too much of the document. The problem is not just dryness, but also vacuity. We sometimes imagine that politicians save their vague platitudes for speeches and then pack concise substantive and enforceable policies into actual legislation. Not true. The TPP is a pile of substantive policies scattered into an enormous pile of meaningless blather, with no color coding to tell you which is which.

There are [people with expertise](#) who will decode it for you, but there is not room for them in corporate news reporting, given the possibility that Ben Carson might say something stupid soon. Even the massive, nonviolent resistance in New Zealand in the face of preemptive arrests and intimidation, and demonstrations all over the United States, doesn't seem to make good news copy when a lineup of monsters want to announce their support for torturing people.

How dare I call them monsters? Well, exactly. Election distraction doesn't just distract. It also divides and conquers. Donald Trump actually opposes the TPP, but his fans will consider me evil for objecting to his racism. Bernie Sanders credibly opposes the TPP, unlike Hillary Clinton, but to mention that is to bring down thunder on your head from both Clinton and Jill Stein backers.

Margaret Flowers [explained](#) some TPP facts recently on the aptly named Real News Network. The entire document fails to mention climate change, she said. « This is a binding agreement, » she points out, « whereas the agreement that was made in Paris, the climate treaty, is a voluntary agreement. So this actually supersedes that voluntary agreement. » Corporations, she said, « under TPP, can sue governments if our laws interfere with their expected profits. So if we pass a law that basically provides protection of the environment in some way, maybe we ban fracking. That would be great. Or stop offshore drilling. A foreign company can then sue our government and say that that law interfered with their profits and sue us for loss of expected profits. Now, what this typically does and has done in the

past is that it actually changes the country's law, because rather than facing billions of dollars in fines, countries would just rather repeal those laws and not have to deal with that. »

Flowers had this advice on what to do:

« People will be particularly focused on their members of Congress during the break, February 14-21. So we really encourage people to get involved, to learn more about this. We need to stop this. And they can do that at FlushTheTPP.org. »

We should notice that she said to pressure Congress. Here are [the senators who voted for Fast Track](#), which means no debate or amendments on the TPP, and [the House members who voted for Fast Track](#), as well as the [four horses' asses](#) of the TPP apocalypse.

Other good targets are President Obama and media executives. The wrong targets are presidential candidates. Organizations that have steadfastly resisted putting any resistance up to Obama for seven years have been heavily involved in pressuring people like Hillary Clinton who hold no public office and whose every campaign promise should be carefully ignored as not worth the breath that articulates it. Hillary Clinton's State Department helped create the TPP, and she consistently praised it, calling it the « gold standard, » [right up until she began](#) claiming to « oppose » it without committing to stop it.

Some of us recall eight years ago when Clinton and Obama and all the Democratic primary candidates promised to fix NAFTA, except for Congressman Dennis Kucinich who promised to undo it entirely on his first day as president. Obama never lifted a finger to fulfill that promise, and neither has Clinton had a word to say about it. Bernie Sanders, like Dennis Kucinich, is actually credible, so electing him might actually make a difference on this issue. But spending the next 12 months as spectators to an election will be fatal.

We need principled, issue-based activism. You can start by [signing this petition](#), and finish by shaming out of TPP support any office holder who doesn't want to be voted out of office.

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War Is A Lie: Second Edition, published by Just World Books on April 5, 2016. Please buy it online that day. I'll come anywhere in the world to speak about it. Invite me!

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