Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

The central objective of the TTIP is to remove regulatory 'barriers' to trade, despite these regulations providing important safeguards to Health and Safety and the environment. It seeks to 'harmonise' regulatory regimes removing restrictions on business operations.

The EU have identified 8 'sensitive' areas, among others, where levels of protection would be undermined:

- Medicines
- Cosmetics
- Food
- Pesticides
- Nanomaterials
- Cloning
- Raw Materials
- Motor vehicles.

Just as an example, the testing of cosmetics on animals is completely banned in the EU, whereas in the US companies are free to engage in animal testing as they please.

Similarly food safety rules will be subordinated under TTIP to suit the American market, with nation states losing the right to prohibit import of animals from countries where there are epidemics of serious disease such as BSE or swine fever, if the exporter declares the animals are from a 'disease-free zone'.

In terms of public services, a document of June 2014 confirmed that medical and health services, social services, education at all levels, post, finance, telecommunications, transport energy, water environmental and cultural services are all on the table with TTIP, with commitments already in place across many sectors to allow US corporations full access to service markets of EU member states.

The regulatory 'barriers' are some of our most prized social standards and environmental regulations, such as labour rights, food safety rules, (including restrictions on GMOs), regulations on the use of toxic chemicals, digital privacy laws, and the banking safeguards introduced after the 2008 crisis. All these could be overturned by US corporations, or, if the nation state objects, TTIP will grant foreign investors the right to sue sovereign governments for loss of profits resulting from public policy decisions, totally undermining the democratic process that made the decisions.

Under this treaty ANY public service or procurement contract will be open to private companies, threating privatisation on a huge scale in key sectors.

In addition to the prospect of handing over public services to profitmaking companies, one of the most insidious effects of free trade agreements such as TTIP is that it becomes effectively impossible for countries to restore public services if they have already been privatized. This 'lock-in' effect will apply even more widely if TTIP adopts the 'negative list' approach seen in the EU's new free trade agreement with Canada, whereby all service sectors are surrendered to liberalization unless they are specifically marked out as exemptions (the ‘list it or lose it’ model). Foreign investors will be able to sue host countries for loss of profits caused by reversing earlier privatisations if investor protection measures are included in TTIP (see below). When the people of Slovakia voted in a leftist government in 2006 as a response to the unpopular privatization of health care, one of its first moves was to restrict the powers of private insurance firms to extract profits from the public health system. In retaliation, a number of health insurance companies sued the Slovak government for damages; with Dutch firm Achmea eventually seizing €29.5 million in public assets by way of compensation.

Perhaps the greatest threat posed by TTIP is that it seeks to grant transnational corporations the power to sue individual countries directly for losses suffered in their jurisdictions as a result of public policy decisions. This provision for ‘investor-State dispute settlement’ (ISDS) is unparalleled in its implications, in that it elevates transnational capital to a legal status equivalent to that of the nation State. Under TTIP, US and EU corporations would thus be granted the power to challenge democratic decisions made by sovereign States, and to claim compensation where those decisions have an adverse impact on their profits.

US tobacco giant Philip Morris is suing the Australian government for billions of dollars over its public health policy that all cigarettes must now be sold in plain packaging. Philip Morris is also suing Uruguay over measures to combat smoking in that country, where graphic health warnings are now required to cover 80% of all cigarette packaging.