

SCOTTISH SENIORS



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Issue 41/March 2016

TTIP - TRADE DEAL OR POWER GRAB ?

The European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA) are pressing ahead with negotiations to finalise the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). It is often presented by its supporters as a trade deal based on co-operation, fairness, and respect – so nothing to worry about then!

German Ministers have had limited access to its terms, under the watchful eyes of staff from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Cameras and mobile phones were banned and any discussions with constituents on what they had seen were also forbidden.

British MP's have not yet been given the opportunity to inspect the trade deal-Brussels is preparing to sign up to it on our behalf!

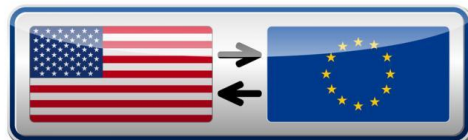
Speaking on TTIP, John Hillary, War on Want said 'MP's are expressly forbidden from sharing any information with the general public, despite the fact that it is our rights that are being traded away behind closed doors.'

In Parliament, pro-TTIP MP's have said that protestors shouldn't object to the deal because it is secret....so from their point of view we can't really know that a problem exists.



Unfortunately for them we know enough thanks to the

TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP



Wikileaks exposure of some of the documents:-

a) The investor-state dispute settlement clause allows companies to sue the government (which in reality means us as taxpayers because the government has

no money in its own right) if policy affects their profits.

b) So how safe will our public services, the NHS or our bus passes be? Michael Bowsler QC acting on behalf of trade union UNITE found that TTIP's procurement rules could force the NHS to contract out services and this would pose a threat to future governments over public ownership of the health service. UNITE Assistant General Secretary Gail Cartmail said, 'This legal advice shows beyond doubt that the NHS is at risk from the European trade deal with America.'

c) Some trade unions have argued for an opt-out clause in relation to the NHS, however even if this could be achieved politically, it would be difficult to apply due to the high level of integration of health and other services.

d) We know who The European Commission's trade department discussed the deal with. Of 597 closed-door meetings up to February 2014 on TTIP, 528, that is 88 %, were with business lobby groups.

e) Our government will be bound by these treaties. What our elected politicians can

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CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992

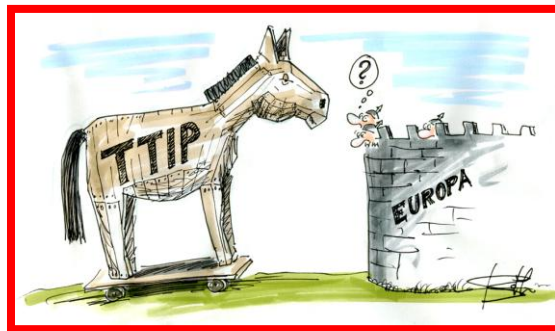
and cannot do will depend on reams of clauses and sub-clauses put together in the shadows by global corporations. If we elect a government that wants to adopt another economic model --- well, that will be illegal.

So, TTIP and other similar agreements (such as CETA, TISA highlighted in our text boxes on page 3), are not just trade treaties they are designed to destroy our hard-fought for, democratic right to vote and to choose a government that will put the interests of working people, and the planet, before that of profit hungry global corporations.

The natural outcome of a world already run for corporate greed can be seen in Oxfam's recent findings that the world's 62 wealthiest people own as much as the globe's poorest half - around 3,600,000,000 people.

As Oxfam's Mark Golding observes 'it is simply unacceptable that the poorest half of the world population owns no more than a small group of the global super-rich - so few, you could fit them onto a single coach.'

Globally, the gap between rich and poor has widened dramatically in recent years. As Oxfam notes, in 2010 it took the combined wealth of the richest 388 people to equal that of the poorest half of the world. It goes on to say, 'In a world where one in nine people go to bed hungry every night, we cannot afford to carry on giving the richest an ever bigger slice of the cake.'



Protest movements are growing throughout Europe and beyond as we learn

more about the basis and consequences of 'trade treaties' such as TTIP and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Protestors rallied against the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in Auckland, New Zealand in early February this year.

Signing TPP were representatives of New Zealand, USA, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Peru, Chile, Vietnam, and Brunei.

The peaceful protest march obstructed the traffic in the centre of Auckland. Trade unions, environmentalists, doctors, Maori groups and consumer groups say TPP will have disastrous consequences for employment rights, public services, and national government power to regulate global corporations. 800 million people will be affected by this deal.

The Scottish Pensioners Forum is proud to have taken a policy decision at their Annual Conference in 2015 to oppose the power grab by global corporations that is TTIP. It rejects the maximisation of private profit through deregulation and holding down workers' wages, pensions and social benefits. This is not the kind of world that we want to leave for our children and grandchildren. Instead, we support the growing worldwide opposition to TTIP and its like.

The SPF urges all members to lobby political parties, speak to friends and neighbours, write to local papers, and more, highlighting the dangers associated with this treaty in terms of both its economic consequences and its threat to our democratic right to vote for a government of our choosing.

"In a world where one in nine people go to bed hungry every night, we cannot afford to carry on giving the richest an ever bigger slice of the cake."
Oxfam, 2010

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The Motion on TTIP passed at SPF Annual Conference 2015:

'The Scottish Pensioners' Forum is alarmed at the impact of TTIP on public services in Scotland and the direct challenge to elected democracy that it represents. This is a particular concern to Scotland's pensioners who are reliant on good quality publicly owned and therefore accountable public services.

We therefore call on parties to not only seek exemption for the NHS from TTIP but to go further and refuse to become a signatory to any and gives private corporations more power than elected government

Further campaigning details to follow in subsequent Newsletters

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT (CETA)



CETA, The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, is a trade agreement between Canada and the EU. The negotiations were completed in August 2014. War on Want have said,

'CETA is a major new business deal. It represents one of the 'new generation' of trade treaties on behalf of big business that are set to undermine our democracy and undermine our basic rights.'

THE TRADE IN SERVICES AGREEMENT (TISA)



TISA, The Trade in Services Agreement, initiated by the USA and Australia now including the EU and twenty other nations. Participants represent 70% of the world's trade in services.



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Elinor McKenzie, SPF Executive Committee Member, who also wrote and researched this edition's report on TTIP, also brought these articles to our attention:-

Milking It! Tory MP and lawyer Geoffrey Cox QC was recently deemed to have committed a 'serious' breach of rules by the Parliamentary Standards Committee.

Cox, MP for Torridge and West Devon, was forced last month to make an apology to the House of Commons after failing to declare earnings totalling £400,000 for legal work done between January and August 2015, until long after the deadline established in rule.

Cox blamed the retirement of his chambers' head clerk for the 'oversight.' Interestingly, he tried to claim expenses of 49p for milk four times over the same period.

More fat cats milking it!

It now takes only 22 hours for the chief executive officers of the Stock Exchange 100 companies with the highest market capitalisation (FTSE-100) to 'pocket' more than the average yearly pay.

While in August 2015 less than 25% of FTSE-100 companies were living-wage accredited.

The High Pay Centre found that chief executive officers get 183 times more than their average employee compared with 47 times in 1998.

So, more evidence that redistribution of wealth is taking place – from the poor to the rich.

Remember, if there is something you would like us to include in our next newsletter, for example a certain forthcoming event or a particular issue you are campaigning on, please get in touch with us to have your say.



SPF 25th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 25th Annual Conference of the Scottish Pensioners Forum will take place on **Tuesday 7th June 2016** at the **City Chambers, Glasgow**.

The event is open to all SPF members and affiliated organisations and guest speakers have yet to be confirmed. We hope that you can come along and celebrate another successful year for the SPF.



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