

The EU/US TTIP in negotiation “can change power relations in our societies in favour of multinational companies and other strong economic interests”

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A statement unanimously adopted at the Congress of the Nordic Transport Workers' Federation in Malmoe, Sweden.

Statement of the Congress of the Nordic Transport Workers' Federation

Malmoe, Sweden, 22-23 May 2014

The EU and the USA are currently negotiating - in secrecy - a new treaty called the “Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership” (TTIP). It is being made out as a trade treaty, but it is much more far-reaching than a regulation of trade between the EU and the USA. While we realize that balanced and politically regulated trade is important for the development of our economies and our societies, the on-going negotiations between the EU and the USA represent challenges and threats which dramatically can change power relations in our societies in favour of multinational companies and other strong economic interests.

Since trade tariffs between the USA and the EU already are very low, these are not the main concern of the TTIP negotiations. The main focus is rather on other types of so-called “trade barriers”, and it is particularly the interests of big multinational companies which form the premises of the negotiations.

Central among the so-called “trade barriers” we find national legislation and regulations which are introduced in order to protect trade union and social rights, the right to enter into and maintain national collective agreements, consumer rights, public health, food security, the environment and a number of other essential values in our societies.

A TTIP agreement can, in other words, end up as a comprehensive project of deregulation, where rights which the trade union and labour movement and other popular movements have achieved after decades of hard struggle, can be weakened or abolished through a binding agreement between the EU and the USA. For example, powerful economic interests are now putting enormous pressure on the negotiators, in order to “harmonise” standards between the USA and the EU. Knowing that the US, particularly regarding trade union and social rights, have much weaker protection than what we have achieved in our countries, there are many reasons to fear the result of such a

harmonisation.

These negotiations also aim to introduce a so-called investor-state dispute settlement mechanism. This means that companies will be given the right to sue states, if they think that new laws or regulations can reduce future return on investments – including claiming compensation for possible loss of future profits. There are already many examples of states which have been sentenced to pay such compensation when they have accepted investment treaties with such clauses. In the next round, this can frighten politicians from adopting necessary laws in the future, since they can fear compensation claims from companies.

The Congress of the Nordic Transport Workers' Federation therefore demands:

1. That the negotiations of a TTIP agreement must be fully open and transparent, so that the population both in the EU and the USA can hold their politicians accountable for the results.
2. That no investor-state dispute settlement mechanism is accepted into the agreement.
3. That a possible agreement does not contribute to weaken laws and regulations which protect the environment, public health, trade union and social rights, the right to enter into and maintain national collective agreements, food security, consumer rights – or to prevent further development of such legislation. These must be subject to democratic processes – in the EU as well as in the member states.

Unanimously adopted
