

Every month since February 1987 the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation has produced one-hour TV programs on issues related to peace, social justice, economics, the environment, and nonviolence. The Olympia FOR's program airs several times every week for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. You can see TCTV's schedule at www.tctv.net.

You can also watch the program described below (and many more than 150 of our previous monthly interview programs and also many special programs) at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org. Simply click the TV programs link, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch. Many of our website's TV program listings also include links to documents describing the program in Word and/or .pdf format.

The description below summarizes our TV interview and includes a little more information that we did not have time for during the one-hour interview.

June 2016

“TPP and Other ‘Free Trade’ Schemes Endanger Us All”

by Glen Anderson, this TV series' producer and host

For decades now, presidents and Congresses of both big political parties have been pushing for “free trade” schemes that promise jobs and prosperity. But – when enacted – these schemes have actually produced the **opposite**.

For example, Democrat Bill Clinton pushed for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and expanding the World Trade Organization (WTO). Republican George W. Bush pushed for several “free trade schemes.” Democrat Barack Obama pushed Bush's plans to completion, and Obama is pushing hard to complete the huge Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) involving a dozen Pacific Rim nations.

Mainstream politicians – and mainstream news media – simply assume that these “free trade” schemes are good and fail to adequately consider their serious problems.

This month's TV program **does** examine their problems. We expose the problems that politicians and mainstream news media have been refusing to deal with.

Instead of “free” trade we need “**fair**” trade – trade that really protects workers, consumers, environments, human rights, and democracy.

Our guest, Gillian Locascio, had an impressive background before she started working as Director of the Washington Fair Trade Coalition:

Our TV guest is Gillian Locascio, Director of the Washington Fair Trade Coalition, a statewide coalition that includes about 60 member organizations, including labor, environment, human rights, faith-based and many other kinds of community organizations. She is a real expert on the issue of “free trade,” and she provides solid information and fascinating insights.

Gillian has a strong background in community development, Latin American environmental and economic realities, etc. She saw problems first-hand while working in Panama, and elsewhere. She is seeing many problems in recent and pending “free trade” deals. Her experience gave her an empirical basis for the knowledge and analysis she shared with us on TV.

The concepts of “neoliberal economics,” “free trade,” “corporate personhood,” etc.:

These “free trade” schemes are based on some powerful people's assumptions about how they think eco-

nomics should work. Gillian summarized the reasoning behind deregulating trade and what has been called “neoliberal” economics.

The “free trade” ideology calls for expanding the rights of owners – investors – and expanding the power of big business corporations. Business “rights” have already been expanded because of the aggressive use of the notion of “corporate personhood.” “Free trade” deals radically disrupt the power dynamics even further because giant international corporations are rewriting the rules to enhance their profit at the expense of everything else. These “free trade” deals are not about trade so much as they are a corporate power grab.

What has resulted from existing “free trade” schemes (WTO, NAFTA, Korea, Panama, etc.)? A few examples:

Bill Clinton’s North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) involved the U.S., Canada and Mexico. It went into effect in 1994. Since then the U.S. has enacted “free trade” deals with South Korea, Panama, and several other countries. They have caused problems for the environment and the climate. We discussed some examples.

The Canadian province of Quebec passed a moratorium on fracking for oil under the St. Lawrence River. A Canadian oil company wanted to frack there, so it created a U.S. affiliate solely for the purpose of suing the Canadian government to force it to pay damages for \$250 million in profits it says it could have made if it could have fracked there.

The American people spent years convincing President Obama to prevent a Canadian oil pipeline company (TransCanada) from building the Keystone XL pipeline in the northern U.S. When Obama finally decided not to allow it, the Canadian company used NAFTA to sue the U.S. for \$15 billion in profits it would lose. If TransCanada wins, NAFTA would cost the U.S. taxpayers \$15 billion.

The Canadian province of Ontario wanted to protect the climate and create jobs, so it created a “green jobs” program that preferred taxes going to local jobs. But the preference for hiring local people is illegal under the “free trade” rule, so Ontario’s “green jobs” program is stalled.

Even serious, documented dangers to human health and safety cannot outweigh NAFTA’s mania for overruling local protections. A Mexican community was suffering health and safety problems from a toxic waste plant. A U.S. company wanted to expand its toxic waste plant. Mexico had documented proof of the dangers to human health and safety, but the U.S. company sued under NAFTA and won.

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP):

For a number of years the business and political elites have been working to devise and gain approval for the next gigantic “free trade” scheme, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the TPP. The TPP would involve a dozen nations around the Pacific Rim, as this map shows:



The TPP is basically like NAFTA, but would cover many kinds of issues and would give giant international business corporations even more powers than NAFTA. If enacted, this global model for international trade would likely be entrenched for the next 50-100 years.

How would the TPP affect workers?

Decent people want workers to be safe and well paid. But the TPP would reduce safety and reduce wages because international business corporations would be able to fire the workers in countries that have more rights, better safety, and higher wages, and move operations to countries with grossly inadequate rights, lack of safety, and low wages.

All “free trade” schemes threaten workers’ rights. People who support “free trade” schemes keep saying that they include “labor standards” to protect workers. But those labor standards are grossly inadequate, and the TPP has practically no enforcement whatsoever. (This is true also of “environmental standards” that also

are weak and also have practically no enforcement whatsoever.)

Also, powerful forces politicize these standards in ways that hurt human rights. One of the countries in the TPP is Malaysia, where a great many electronic devices are manufactured for sale in the U.S. Malaysia is a nation with notoriously horrible human rights, including widespread human trafficking and slavery. In 2015 mass graves were discovered that indicated widespread torture and killing of people confined there. This was embarrassing the Obama Administration and causing the U.S. Senate to be concerned. So the Obama Administration's State Department upgraded Malaysia's status from unacceptable to OK with more watching, in order to allow Malaysia to continue as a TPP country. The TPP's "labor standards" are phony, and the Obama Administration's whitewash of Malaysia has proved that.

How would the TPP affect food, farmers, and consumers?

More and more people care about various aspects of food, including food safety, local farming, sustainability, reducing pesticides, mandatory labeling of GMO foods, and so forth. The TPP threatens all of these.

- The U.S. government appointed a former lobbyist from Monsanto to write much of the agricultural parts of TPP.
- Various aspects of food systems seriously hurt the climate. We want local agriculture instead of transporting food long distances, but these "free trade" deals promote exporting food rather than growing it locally. They impose disincentives for small-scale local food. TPP and its transatlantic equivalent, the TTIP (explained later in this article) would restrict "buy local" programs and undermine local food economies.
- Pesticides endanger farm workers, people who handle pesticides, and consumers. The U.S.'s food system is already problematic in many ways. TPP and TTIP would make it worse.
- Farmers want to save seeds. "Free trade" schemes that address "intellectual property" and patents on seeds would interfere with that.

- See interesting information at the Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy: www.iatp.org/issue/trade

The TPP would affect various kinds of intellectual property rights:

"Intellectual property rights" include issues such as patents, copyrights, music, computer software, agricultural seeds, traditional knowledge of medicines, etc. The TPP would protect giant international corporations at the expense of ordinary people, traditional farmers, people who know and use traditional medicines, etc. We should be asking, "Whose 'intellectual property rights' get protected – and whose don't?"

We should protect fair usage for ordinary people, including farmers want to save seeds, people who harvest and use traditional medicines, etc. TPP and TTIP threaten all of these.

Net neutrality and censorship are big issues. Public opposition stopped a bad piece of congressional legislation, the "Stop Online Piracy Act" (SOPA), which would have made internet service providers (ISPs) watchdogs for whatever is carried through their systems. To protect themselves, they would be pressured to spy on people and shut down controversial content. The public defeated SOPA, but the TPP would include some parts of SOPA anyway. TPP would unfairly criminalize people and endanger our rights.

How would the TPP affect people's access to affordable medicine?

Similarly, people around the world – including poor people – need access to affordable medicine. The TPP would endanger that. Doctors Without Borders is very much concerned about poor people's access to generic drugs and other affordable medicines.

Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS):

One of the TPP's most horrible, democracy-destroying problems is the gross power imbalance that would happen when a foreign corporation opposes a law or regulation adopted by a nation, state, or local government. The TPP has a procedure for dealing with these conflicts. This procedure is called "Investor-State Dispute Settlement" (ISDS). Our TV interview discussed this peril and some examples of bad results from cases

from existing “free trade” schemes. ISDS is a totally bogus system.

An honest system for resolving disputes must be transparent and have real due process and real accountability. The TPP’s ISDS is unjust and downright bogus in all of these ways. The cases are decided by the same international corporate attorneys who sometimes argue big businesses’ cases before the ISDS tribunal and sometimes serve as judges hearing cases their colleagues have brought. This is a severe conflict of interest.

Soon after John Oliver’s video expose of ISDS regarding tobacco, the Australian case was thrown out. The ISDS setting is very much influenced by politics.

The Global Trade Watch (www.globaltrade-watch.org) part of Ralph Nader’s Public Citizen organization (www.citizen.org) has information about problems with ISDS.

The U.S. has lost two ISDS cases under WTO. Germany and Canada have lost major cases. The TPP would increase the number of countries that could sue the U.S. ISDS imposes very huge costs upon nations whose laws – even laws protecting workers or consumers or environments or health or safety – are ruled as interfering with “free trade.” The ISDS is allowed to consider what’s good for the public but is **not required** to.

See information about some examples of ISDS cases at www.isdscorporateattacks.org.

ISDS and Lawsuits – Environment / Climate / Energy:

Procedures for Investor-State Dispute Settlements (ISDS) have already been used in previous “free trade” schemes. Giant corporations have used these to prevent us from protecting our environment and climate.

After Japan’s Fukushima nuclear power disaster, Germany decided to shut down their existing nuclear power plants. Two were owned by a Swedish company, which sued Germany for about \$6 billion under a U.S.-based ISDS. Germany lost that case. As a result, Germany has become more concerned about ISDS – and concerned about the European equivalent of the TPP, the TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. This experience shows how ISDS can bite the hand that feeds you, because previously Germany

had used ISDS against poor countries in order to enrich German corporations. Now Germany has discovered that the shoe is on the other foot.

Two lawsuits filed under NAFTA were mentioned earlier in this article. They illustrate what ISDS does:

- After years of public pressure, the American people finally convinced President Obama to stop the Keystone XL pipeline that would carry dirty tar sands oil from Canada through the U.S. to the Gulf of Mexico for export. But Keystone XL’s company – TransCanada – used NAFTA to sue the U.S. for \$15 billion to force the U.S. to let the Canadian company build the pipeline in the U.S.
- One of the most dangerous practices of the oil and gas industry is fracking underground to break apart the geology so they can extract gas and oil. It is terrible for the environment, terrible for water aquifers, and terrible for the climate. So the Canadian province of Quebec passed a moratorium to stop fracking under their St. Lawrence River. A Canadian oil company created a U.S. subsidiary solely in order to be able to use NAFTA to sue Canada to force Canadian taxpayers to pay the company \$250 in damages for lost profits.

Climate scientists say that we absolutely must leave 80% of fossil fuels underground, because burning them would be devastating for the climate. However, if a government were to prevent coal or oil or gas companies from extracting their fossil fuels, those giant corporations could sue that government for many, many billions of dollars in profits the corporations estimate they would be losing.

Likewise, more and more communities are mobilizing to stop oil and coal projects, so ISDS would put those communities at more risk for losing expensive lawsuits.

TPP’s problems also pertain to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP):

While people have been focusing on the TPP, which covers 12 nations around the Pacific Rim, there is a similar scheme underway to cover the U.S. and much of Europe – the nations in the European Union economic network. It is called the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)**. The schedule

had called for negotiations to be completed in 2014, but they are far behind schedule.

The TTIP would be bad in many ways, just like the TPP. Greenpeace Netherlands found and leaked many documents about the TPP. Much information is at www.ttip-leaks.org

Typically, Europe has required that something be proven safe before it is allowed to be marketed. This is consistent with the “precautionary principle.” In contrast, the U.S. has typically allowed things to be marketed and waited for people to later prove they are unsafe. The TTIP would break down the “precautionary principle” and put Europeans at risk through the lower U.S. standards.

How were TPP and TTIP developed?

Both the TPP and the TTIP were developed in secrecy. Even Congress was not allowed to know what was in them. They were developed by international corporations’ big shots, not with broad representation by labor, environmentalists, consumers, farmers, or other people representing the broad public interest.

These “free trade” deals radically disrupt the power dynamics because giant international corporations are rewriting the rules to enhance their profit at the expense of everything else.

The supporters of TPP and TTIP claim that it will be good for us, but those claims do not stand up to scrutiny. It is not true that merely expanding trade will increase prosperity. That is just a “trickle-down” argument.

If something good was not explicitly “carved out” for protection in advance, it would be prohibited under TPP and TTIP.

Fast Track:

One of the most suspicious aspects of previous and current “free trade” schemes is that presidents have demanded that – even before Congress could see the actual wording – Congress would commit itself to a “Fast Track” rubber stamp process in which Congress would simply vote on the humongously complex scheme – with practically no time to read and understand it – and with practically no debate – and with no amendments.

Recently Congress passed this “Fast Track” arrangement pertaining to the TPP, the TTIP, and other “free trade” schemes that might come along. I’m alarmed that this merely greased the skids for passing them without adequate scrutiny – utterly violating the spirit and function of democracy – and I’m disgusted that many members of **both** political parties in Congress abdicated their responsibility to study legislation before passing it.

Washington State’s U.S. Senators and House members:

Both of the U.S. Senators from Washington State – Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell – seem to blindly support these “free trade” schemes. So do a number of our state’s U.S. House members. Most of Thurston County is in Washington State’s 10th Congressional District. Our U.S. House member, Congressman Denny Heck, says he is still undecided. This is even after many of us have spent years explaining to him why the TPP is bad.

Timelines for TPP and TTIP:

The TPP’s timeline is behind schedule. Now Congress seems afraid to take up this unpopular issue before the November 8, 2016, election, because voters could retaliate against them for supporting it. Or perhaps they and the Obama Administration know that they do not have enough votes to pass it before the election. The Obama Administration is in control of timeline for waiting to introduce it in Congress to start the Fast Track “clock” ticking. Public opposition is crucial in preventing it from ever having enough votes lined up.

Many people are saying that Obama and Congress will wait until after November’s election and pass it during the “Lame Duck” session at the end of 2016, when it will be too late for voters to punish the Congress members who vote for it. For more information see the “No Lame Duck Uprising” part of www.flush-thetpp.org

The TTIP’s timeline is farther behind than the TPP’s timeline. It’s important to emphasize that public opposition can delay these forever. All three of the top presidential candidates – Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump – have stated they oppose the TPP.

The TPP and TTIP are not fixable. We must stop them altogether.

Mainstream news media fail to cover this at all – or cover it only from pro-business bias:

Most people know nothing at all about the TPP or the TTIP. Mainstream media have been ignoring them altogether or – when they do cover them – cheer them as good for trade and good for prosperity. They avoid acknowledging these “free trade” schemes’ serious problems.

Public opposition did stop MAI, FTAA, and 2009’s WTO expansion:

The powerful economic and political power pushing for these “free trade” schemes can seem overwhelming. So it is important for ordinary people to remember that we did indeed stop some terrible “free trade” schemes in the past. It’s important to emphasize that public opposition can delay the pending ones forever and stop them altogether.

We stopped the **Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI*)** and the **Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA**)**. Now if we stop TPP and TTIP, this would be pivotal in stopping the “free trade” mania altogether and helping the world community find better ways to deal with global economics.

* **MAI = Multilateral Agreement on Investments:** This emerged in the late 1990s and was strongly opposed by civil society organizations and low-income nations because it would give giant huge corporations huge powers that people and nations would not be able to control. However, its ISDS features have been inserted into TPP and TTIP.

** **FTAA = Free Trade Area of the Americas:** It emerged from a meeting in Miami in 1994, but – building on the opposition to WTO in Seattle in 1999 – huge protests occurred in Quebec, Canada, in 2001. It has been stalled for a number of years.

Many constituencies and grassroots people are working to stop TPP and TTIP:

Giant transnational business corporations and their governmental supporters are huge and powerful, and they often defeat ordinary people, so this topic can seem huge and depressing. Fortunately, more people – and more constituencies of people – are working to stop them. People are doing serious organizing and making some progress. Some unexpected allies have emerged. We have many allies among various constituencies in the public. This is an opportunity to inform people and say “no.” City governments in Bellingham and Seattle WA have passed resolutions opposing TPP, and one is pending before Olympia’s City Council.

Many of us work on other issues. But these “free trade” schemes would interfere with our achieving our goals on those issues, so we need to stop the TPP and TTIP in order to allow us to make progress on the other vital issues we care about.

A big anti-TPP event will happen on Saturday June 25, 2016, in Wright Park, north of downtown Tacoma WA. This family-friendly event will include many enjoyable activities and opportunities for helping stop the TPP.

It has a Facebook page already. Look for information later in May at www.washingtonfairtrade.org

What do we want instead of these “free trade” schemes?

International trade can be good – but **only if** it protects workers, consumers, farmers, human rights, environments, and so forth. We need strong standards and enforcement. The current “free trade” schemes do not allow for enforcement of standards. We need **fair** trade, not “free” trade.

The Washington Fair Trade Coalition:

Our TV interview guest, Gillian Locascio, is the Director of the Washington Fair Trade Coalition. This organization is a statewide coalition of about 60 organizations – labor, environmental, faith, farmer, student and social justice groups – working for “**fair** trade” instead of “free trade.” They are based in Seattle with phone (206) 227-3079 and website www.washington-fairtrade.org

Other good sources of information on TPP, TTIP, etc.:

Many non-profit organizations have produced high quality information about this topic. Near the end of the interview I mentioned the list printed below. We also list them with the TV program's closing credits.

- Washington Fair Trade Coalition, (206) 227-3079, www.washingtonfairtrade.org
- Global Trade Watch (Part of the Public Citizen (www.citizen.org) organization that Ralph Nader founded decades ago), www.global-tradewatch.org
- Flush the TPP, www.flushthetpp.org
- Citizens Trade Campaign, www.citizenstrade.org
- Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy, www.iatp.org/issue/trade
- See specific information about ISDS at: www.isdscorporateattacks.org
- Greenpeace Netherlands found and leaked many documents about the U.S.-European equivalent of the TPP. This is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Much information is at www.ttip-leaks.org
- Also see the “Global Economics” part of the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's website, www.olympiafor.org

Further encouragement:

We are grateful to Gillian Locascio for sharing her solid information with us. She made a compelling case for the importance and urgency of stopping these “free trade” schemes:

- They would hurt workers, consumers, farmers, local communities, environments, and democracy itself.
- They are a massive giveaway of our power to giant international business corporations.
- They would transfer power away from ordinary people and from local communities and from accountable democracies to giant business corporations that are not accountable to us.

- These “free trade” deals radically disrupt the power dynamics because giant international corporations are rewriting the rules to increase their profit at the expense of everybody else.

Powerful economic and political forces are pushing for these “free trade” schemes. They can be stopped only by massive amounts of grassroots people-power and smart grassroots organizing.

Many of us work on other issues. But if these “free trade” schemes are enacted, they would interfere with our achieving our goals on those issues. Therefore, we need to also stop the TPP and TPIP in order for us to make progress on our other issues.

Now is the time to ramp up our pressure on members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House. Many of them – many Republicans and many Democrats – are **on the wrong side** of this issue.

Do not let them pass them during the “Lame Duck” session of Congress after the November 8, 2016, election. See the “**No Lame Duck Uprising**” section of www.flushthetpp.org

Get more information from – and work with – the Washington Fair Trade Coalition and the other good organizations who are listed in the closing credits and in the “TV Programs” part of www.olympiafor.org

If we work hard – and work smart – we can win!

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence by contacting the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation at (360) 491-9093 or info@olympiafor.org or www.olympiafor.org