

# TTIPing the balance how?

WHAT'S HAPPENING with the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the planned bilateral EU-US trade agreement? How will it affect us? Jude Kirton-Darling, MEP for the North East of England, briefed the NUJ's Freelance Industrial Council on this.

The European Parliament only has a scrutiny role in TTIP and this is a very blunt power – MEPs can't amend TTIP, but they can vote to reject the whole thing.

The Parliament resolved in July to delineate "red lines" that TTIP must not cross. The trade agreement should not stop EU member states from "re-organising" (that is, nationalising) public services such as the NHS "according to the will of the electorate." But TTIP can "lock in" privatisation once it's started, by giving investors in other countries access, making it more difficult to "re-organise" public services.

There's also a red line on labour rights, which like many minimum standards are very different on each side of the Atlantic. All EU states sign up to International Labour Or-

ganization rules on labour rights, while half of US states have "right to work" strike-busting legislation. In Tennessee, the State governor overruled Volkswagen's attempts at collective bargaining with the United Auto Workers union.

One threat is from "Investor State Dispute Settlements", which would be private tribunals arbitrating between corporations and governments. The theory is that these are written into such agreements to protect investors from "expropriation" in foreign markets. In practice, tribunal decisions – behind closed doors – are based on commercial law. One alarming detail is that just one London law firm currently providing a third of all arbitrators. The European Parliament has agreed that for ISDSs, everything will be in the public domain.

The UK government is the biggest cheerleader for a neo-liberal version of TTIP. It wants to keep healthcare and adult education on the table, while other EU countries want to keep these out of it. US Democrat Presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton

has said some "very negative things already" about TTIP. The countries are about a third of the way to a deal on TTIP. US President Barack Obama has to initial a deal by November 2016. Jude feels the most likely outcome is that TTIP becomes a "building blocks" agreement, setting in motion subsequent deals on the specifics of pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and so on.

Some of journalism is covered by existing GATTS deals. There is talk of "broader trade in digital services". Jude says "audio-visual services" – such as film-making – have been excluded, but "written digital services are a bit of a grey zone – it's hard to tell what's in and what's affected."

What can we do? We need to demonstrate now to MEPs and to Westminster that "people outside the room care about it." The more public debate there is, the more MEPs can "open the box" about the backroom deals the "corporates" and their allies in governments are trying to pull off. So at the least write to your MP and MEP now.

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## Salon in Salford

Following the very successful Freelance Salon event in London – see the January *Freelance* at [www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1512salo.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1512salo.html) – the concept is going on tour. Put the date in your diary if you're in the North of England:

**Wednesday 18 May**, somewhere in Salford. For time, location and booking information please revisit [www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1603salo.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1603salo.html)

## No to Armageddon!

NUCLEAR weapons are hitting the headlines once again, with the debate on whether to replace the UK's Trident nuclear submarines and the missiles and warheads they carry – and there's a demonstration to protest Britain's nuclear deterrent on Saturday 27 February.

This year is the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations: the first session of its UN General Assembly was convened on 10 January 1946 at Central Hall, Westminster. It is not often recalled that the UN's very first resolution was one seeking to ban nuclear weapons worldwide.

On 28 January 2016, an Open Ended Working Group was established at the United Nations in Geneva, to bring together, for the first time, 131 countries to work on the draft leg-

islation for a nuclear ban (see [www.icanw.org](http://www.icanw.org)). The United Kingdom has so far not attended this group.

On **Saturday 27 February** the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) will be joined by non-governmental organisations from both the disarmament and the environmental movements, including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Compass, War on Want, Pax Christi, The People's Assembly, Stop the War International, International Peace Bureau, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Medact, Scientists for Global Responsibility, Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

The march will start at noon from Trafalgar Square. Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition will attend.

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1946: opening session of the UN General Assembly

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## Investigate this Bill, again

THE UK government's Draft Investigatory Powers Bill has attracted quite a lot of attention, not least due to deep-pocketed internet service provider corporations spending money to complain that it would force them to spend money.

The Bill of course has much wider implications for privacy and freedom of expression – in particular, from

journalists' point of view, vagueness in drafting leading to threats to the protection of confidential sources – despite the safeguards that we reported in the January *Freelance* ([www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1512ipb.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1512ipb.html)).

On 2 February the NUJ's full submission on the Draft Bill was published at [www.nuj.org.uk/doc-](http://www.nuj.org.uk/doc-)

[uments/nuj-submission-to-the-parliamentary-joint-committee-on-the/](http://www.nuj.org.uk/doc-uments/nuj-submission-to-the-parliamentary-joint-committee-on-the/) – read it if you care about media freedom.

The Parliamentary Committee tasked with looking at the Bill was required to report by 11 February. Watch this space (at [www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1603ipb.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1603ipb.html)) for updates.