

**9.**

**CHALLENGING  
THE TiSA  
PROJECT**

In the name of 'freedom' the Really Good Friends of Services and Team Tisa are deliberately seeking to disrupt and destabilise today's already turbulent world. Their vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century offers a future where workers are vulnerable and expendable, and citizens and voters are disenfranchised. Their project is a fundamental assault on democracy, from its broad pro-corporate objectives and the secrecy of the negotiations, to the right of foreign states and companies to comment on a country's proposed laws and for tribunals of trade experts to pass judgment on a sovereign states policies and regulations.

Governments must be able regulate and respond to unanticipated problems as they see fit, and implement an alternative mandate they were elected to pursue, without the threat of a legal dispute or economic sanctions. The combination of TiSA's core text, annexes and schedules aim to fetter that sovereign authority *forever*, at a time when the legitimacy of the neoliberal model and these agreements are in crisis. If finalised, TiSA would foreclose the possibility of a progressive alternative vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that recognises and addresses the challenges ahead: to narrow the vast inequalities of wealth, gender and race within and between countries; ensure job security and social protections for workers and communities as they face the disruptive impacts of new technologies; radically rethink how we use natural resources, services, capital and technology in the face of climate change; rein in speculative and destabilising financial markets; and much more.

UNI's affiliates and their members are already confronting the challenges of e-commerce in multiple forms. Public telcos are struggling to survive privatisation and deregulation, the looming redundancy of land-lines, and competition from mobile and digital operators. Public postal services are increasingly automated, have been swamped by email, and face cutthroat competition from private express delivery services in deregulated markets. Online banking and call centres are becoming the main interface between banks and insurers and their customers, as e-finance accelerates the closure of high street branches and operations are consolidated offshore. The future of local businesses and jobs, the nature of work and where it is located, the ability to unionise and bargain collectively or take industrial action are all in jeopardy.

Many of novel e-services will not survive or will be quickly superseded. But there is no question that digital technology is transforming how capitalism functions, what workers do, where they are located, how they are employed, by whom and on what terms, and with it the ability of workers and unions to organise and bargain collectively. This transformation foreshadows decades of chronic instability, with the prospect of large scale unemployment and social disruption. The pace of change is unpredictable. Some technologies will replace labour, others will intensify the pace of work. Permanent employment will increasingly become precarious work, whether as contractors in call-centres or as nominally 'self-employed' whose terms are dictated by those who control the digital platform.

Defeating TiSA will not stop the '4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution' nor the threats it poses to workers and unions. But it will help to keep open the spaces for global and national unions to work with others to develop a collective strategy to protect people's rights as workers and as citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The immediate task is to ensure that the TiSA negotiations are not resumed. That requires a concerted campaign by UNI affiliates and others at international, regional and national levels to expose and oppose what governments belonging to the 'Really Good Friends of Services' have secretly proposed on behalf of the Team TiSA corporations – and to ensure that the same agenda is not transplanted to other free trade agreements or the WTO.