

SEG (New Zealand) meeting: Ten years after the Pike River mine disaster

Political lessons in the fight for truth about the deaths of 29 miners

Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand)
20 April 2021

The Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand) (SEG) will hold an online public meeting on Saturday, May 8, at 4PM NZ time, to discuss the political lessons of the Pike River mine disaster and the families' fight for justice, in opposition to the ongoing cover-up by the state.

Please click [here](#) to register to attend on Zoom.

In November 2010, 29 miners were killed in a series of explosions at Pike River Coal's underground mine. This was not a random accident, but the outcome of deliberate decisions to place production ahead of workers' safety. The mine was a death trap, with grossly inadequate methane drainage, monitoring and ventilation systems, and no emergency exit.

Since then, successive National Party and Labour Party governments, along with the police, the courts and regulatory agencies, have protected the company's chief executive and others responsible for these flagrant safety breaches.

Those complicit in the disaster include the governments that dismantled safety regulations, and the Department of Labour, which knew about Pike River's breaches but did not shut it down. The Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union also took no action to protect the miners. Following the disaster, union leader Andrew Little defended Pike River Coal, falsely saying it had a good safety record.

Little is now the Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry in Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's Labour Party government. Labour and its allies, the Greens and NZ First, pledged in 2017 to re-enter the mine to search for evidence and bring those responsible to justice.

This promise is now being brushed aside. Little has announced that the government will end the

underground investigation and seal the mine, in the face of opposition from the families of those who died. The government is making entirely bogus claims that there is "no money" to proceed beyond a roof-fall into the mine workings.

The Pike River disaster contains urgent lessons for the working class in New Zealand and throughout the world—including in countless countries where corporations and unions are forcing workers to risk their lives amid the out-of-control coronavirus pandemic.

The decade-long cover-up is an example of class justice, with parallels internationally including the Moura mine disasters in Australia, Upper Big Branch in West Virginia, the collapse of the CTV building in New Zealand and the Grenfell Tower fire in London. In every case, those responsible for dozens or hundreds of deaths have been protected by the political representatives of big business.

At this meeting, speakers from the Socialist Equality Group (NZ) and the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) will expose the role played by National, Labour and the unions in defending Pike River Coal. They will also outline a socialist perspective and strategy for workers who are fighting to defend their safety and their lives, including the need to form rank-and-file workplace committees that are independent of the pro-capitalist trade unions.

We urge workers and young people to share this announcement widely, attend the meeting and discuss these critically important issues.

Times for this meeting:

New Zealand: May 8, 4:00PM

Sydney: May 8, 2:00PM

US Eastern time: May 8, 12:00AM (midnight)

India: May 8, 9:30AM

London: May 8, 5:00AM



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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