New Zealand: Sister of Pike River mine disaster victim makes powerful statement demanding continued investigation

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The World Socialist Web Site *is re-posting a Facebook statement by Olivia Monk, whose brother Michael was one of 29 men who died in the November 2010 Pike River coal mine disaster in New Zealand. Andrew Little, the minister responsible for Pike River in Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's Labour Party-led government, has rejected a plan by mining experts, prepared on behalf of 23 of the 29 families, to fully investigate the underground mine and retrieve vital evidence that could lead to prosecutions. The government is preparing to permanently seal the mine, with the bodies entombed within, in order to protect the corporations, politicians, state agencies and union bureaucrats responsible for the unsafe conditions that caused it to explode.*

Since it was published on May 17, Olivia Monk's post has received hundreds of comments, shares and likes, reflecting broad support in the working class for the Pike River families' fight for a full investigation and for those responsible for the extremely unsafe conditions in the mine to be held accountable.

The Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand is appealing for readers throughout the world to send statements of support for the Pike River Families Committee's fight for justice. See: Justice for the 29 miners killed at New Zealand's Pike River.

My brother Michael was 23 years old when he was killed at work. He was a qualified carpenter who was working for a company that went into receivership, and needed a job. That's when he started working at Pike River. As a builder, rather than a miner, he didn't have the knowledge that many others did underground, he relied on the miners, the managers, the board that ran the company to keep him safe. Little did he know that he was working in an absolute death trap that could've blown at any time, and there were many who knew this and still put the men to work every day.

Unfortunately on Friday the 19th of November 2010 at 3.44pm, Pike River blew, and it killed my little brother, and 28 others. Our lives from that moment have been changed forever.

For 10.5 years we have been fighting hard to find out the truth of what happened that day. We have a fairly good idea, but only because we have fought behind the scenes to bring the truth to light. It's taken so many experts who have given their time for free over the years, and sometimes it's just taken luck, people giving us evidence they don't realise is important, and even sometimes it's been stuff that has been leaked by people that know of the injustices.

The police, several governments, politicians, Pike River Management have been so fixated on getting that mine sealed and locking away any evidence that would bring a conviction. They have even gone so far as to lock away all the evidence from the Royal Commission for 100 years, so that no one now will be alive when the embargo is lifted, a move that has never been done before. And why is that?

We have produced a feasibility study that proves that going a tiny bit further to the fan inside the mine won't cost anywhere near what they are saying it will, and will hold the answers. Yet in 19 days time, the Recovery Agency is set to seal that mine.

Minister Little stated the other day that he was more interested in focusing on the living, after years of using us as a political pawn to get himself and his party elected. Now I don't disagree that there are the living that need this money too. However, we found billions left over from COVID funds a couple of weeks ago, we managed to spend $12k on a funeral of a turtle, millions

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on a boat, so in the grand scheme of things, this figure isn't big bickies for a government.

And let's just talk about the living, my brother WOULD BE LIVING if he hadn't been killed by greedy selfish people that knew what they were doing was wrong. Some people call that murder.

And further on the living, why are we still sending living people to work in New Zealand and around 100 of them each year don't come home?

NO ONE has been held accountable for 29 men's death, NO ONE has taken responsibility, NO ONE has learnt anything from this, and NO ONE has any consequence if this happens again, we just keep killing people at work. Now that to ME, seems to be a way we can be focussing on the living.

I know a lot of you are tired of hearing all about this. I'm tired of living it every day, but I don't get to escape it. Every day I think about the different scenarios of how Michael may have died. The fact that we have seen images of bodies slumped over sitting against the rib of the mine and self rescuers caches open make it very possible that Michael was alive for hours or days, waiting to be rescued, and no one came. It's a pretty hard pill to swallow, and something I think about daily. There are a lot of people very keen to stamp out these theories, but the fact is that there is evidence, and could be more if we are able to get into the mine. Why are these people keen to stamp out all the evidence, what have they got to hide, and who are they trying to protect?

I would love to know the truth of what happened on that day, and the days after during the rescue and recovery. I would love to see people held to account for the murder of 29 men.

I would love to be able to fall asleep every night knowing the answers to all my questions so I could have a decent sleep.

I would love to see accountability shown and the lives of 29 brave men honoured.

Stop the sealing of that mine, and let us get the answers!

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