

## Rio Tinto - Demonstration Speech 5/6/2021

Colin Aries

We are standing where many many people have stood before. Many of those people haven't lived to tell the tale. Rio Tinto is no stranger to protest. They are contestably the most protested company on the planet. Founded in 1873 by a multi-national consortium that included opium smugglers, banks and early major investment from the Rothschilds. They have been around for 148 years. And they have been embroiled in controversy and protest from the start. The early environmental movement was born out of issues caused by Rio Tinto and led to the formation of the Anti-Smoke League and the League Against Calcinations. They were the recipients of possibly the first ever environmental protest in 1888 at the Rio Tinto copper mine in the Spanish town of Huelva. Where around 12,000 people protested against the practice of open-air pyrite roasting which was causing huge problems to people's health and the environment. The protest was broken up by the local cavalry unit who ended up shooting and bayonetting around 200 people. In the 148 years of their history, they have worked alongside some of the most despotic regimes ever to have graced this planet. Spain's General Franco. Chile's Augusto Pinochet. South Africa's apartheid regime. Indonesia's Suharto. It has often been said that Rio Tinto was founded in blood. This really is true.

Rio Tinto is a global company operating in around 36 countries across 6 continents, including: Australia (18), Brazil (2), Canada (9), Guinea (2), USA (3), Chile (1), Iceland (1), Madagascar (1), Mongolia (1), Mozambique (1), New Zealand (10), Oman (1), and South Africa (2). Rio Tinto has many assets and subsidiary companies. Most of whom operate totally independently of the parent company. This arrangement incidentally, Rio Tinto uses many times as an excuse to plead ignorance on many issues.

It produces Aluminium, Lithium, Copper, Zinc, Diamonds, Gold, Bauxite, Industrial Minerals, Iron Ore and Uranium. They own and operate open pit and underground mines, mills, refineries, smelters, power stations, research and service facilities. They also use their own railways, ports and ships to deliver materials to customers.

Formed in 1873 Rio Tinto is listed on the London and Australian stock exchanges and has a market capitalization value of £96 billion. And despite problems at Juukan Gorge, outstanding reparation issues at Bougainville and Grasberg, still managed to pay its shareholders a record \$9 billion this year. Aswell as a £7.2 million pay deal plus £27 million in shares to its disgraced outgoing CEO Jean-Sebastian Jacques.

During the 80s at Rio Tinto's Panguna mine on the island of Bougainville, in Papua New Guinea. Local communities fought an ongoing battle with Rio Tinto over environmental damage and the distribution of profits. Rio Tinto were dumping toxic waste and tailings into pristine waters polluting rivers down to and out into the sea. Local communities could no longer farm, fish or hunt. They had to change their traditional diets and became reliant on brought in food whereas previously they were totally self-sufficient. People became impoverished and the benefits promised by the building of the mine never materialized. These communities went from total self-reliance to an existence of dependency within the space of a decade. Rio Tinto destroyed these communities. There were many protests which culminated in a people's uprising in 1989 that succeeded in closing down the mine. The government brought in troops and Rio Tinto provided transport and helicopters for these troops. A blockade was enforced which Rio Tinto played a key role in instituting. This developed into a civil war that lasted for almost a decade and claimed around 20,000 lives. The mine remains closed and Rio

Tinto sold its shares in the mine to the Papua New Guinea Government in 2016 and effectively walked away from what was becoming a growing problem for them. Pollution from the site was still causing problems to the environment and local population who now have many health issues and still cannot farm or fish. This mine has made billions for Rio Tinto but has totally impoverished the people of Bougainville. Claims for redress are being made and legal complaints have been filed. Rio Tinto are contesting. The case is ongoing. The site is still seeping toxins 31 years after it closed.

This is one of the problems with most mining companies. The waste. Rio Tinto are in the process of developing the Resolution mine in Arizona USA, which is being contested by local tribes. The mine development will encroach onto sacred land called Oak Flat held by the San Carlos Apache nation and has ancestral significance for many tribes in the area. The area contains petroglyphs and historic and prehistoric sites dating back many thousands of years. The block caving method that Rio Tinto plan to use will destroy and permanently destabilise the whole area, which at present has many hiking trails and is a hugely popular area. Rio Tinto still hasn't forwarded a plan for dealing with the waste and tailings. The mine contains an inferred resource of 1.624 billion tonnes consisting of 1.47% copper and 0.037% molybdenum. This will produce tailings waste of around 1.5 billion tonnes. This is a toxic slurry of ground up rock that still contains the chemicals such as cyanide which are used to extract the minerals. Plus containing a mixture of other resources such as lead, mercury and zinc which have been deemed uneconomical to retrieve. These tailings are typically held behind dams which are themselves made of mining waste. As a mine grows, the dam is just added to. They leak. They are full of holes which continually leach into the local environment and water courses. On average 3 – 5 tailings dams have a serious failing every year which result in a direct loss of life. There are an estimated 18,000 tailings dams in the world ranging in size and nature. Several are by volume the largest manmade structures on earth. Only around 3,500 are presently in use. Which means that dotted around the globe, there are around 14,500 unmonitored toxic lagoons leaching their contents into their local environments. Once a company has exhausted a mine they walk away. There is no periodical monitoring of any kind. They've got what they wanted. These toxic lagoons and piles of contaminated waste are just left. Dust polluting the air and covering everything in a layer of contamination and chemicals are left to seep into the local land and water courses. And the people who pay the cost are the local populations wherever that is in the world. From Saltlake City in America, to Mongolia, Indonesia and Africa.

The Grasberg mine was a joint venture between Rio Tinto and Freeport McMoran. It is situated in West Papua which has been embroiled in a fight for independence from Indonesia since the 1960's. It is the world's largest gold deposit and second largest copper deposit among other metals. It is situated at a height of 14,000 feet and is 70 miles from the sea. And between the two there was nothing but virgin rainforest. Just the construction of this mine and all the facilities it required was an environmental disaster. Roadways, pipelines, processing plants, ports and harbours all being built on the bulldozed land of what was pristine forest. This is another issue with most mines. They are not located in convenient places. Constructing the infrastructure has huge implications on local environments. The land clearance isn't done with care and consideration and environmental reparation never given a thought. Hillsides are sluiced with high power jets totally destroying wildlife habitat and polluting water courses and trees are bulldozed and burnt.

The mine once up and running was dumping 200,000 tonnes of tailings into the local river systems every single day. In the mining world this is known as the 'riverine' method of tailings management. It

is not cost effective to build efficient tailings facilities on top of mountains at 14,000ft That would seriously affect shareholder dividends. So all the tailings are dumped straight into the rivers and the rivers action is used to move this contaminated, toxic slurry downstream to more favourable location where it supposedly slurried off. This has quite obvious catastrophic consequences. Local populations had been protesting from the onset. In 1996 local people rioted destroying \$3 million in equipment and shutting the mine down for three days. Shortly after the Rio/Mcmorran partnership started providing significant support to the Indonesian government and military to ensure the protection of the mine. Reportedly making an initial investment of \$35 million in military infrastructure and vehicles and paid at least \$20 million to the military and police in Papua between 1998 – 2004. Serious human rights violations have occurred around the Grasberg mine. Indonesian security forces have indulged in indiscriminate killings, torture, intimidation, and disappearances of local people up to the present day. Mine security being the pretext for this abuse.

Since the 60's over 500,000 West Papuan civilians have been killed by Indonesian police and military forces. With many more being raped, tortured and imprisoned. Basic rights such as freedom of speech are denied and Papuans live in a constant state of fear and intimidation. This abuse has seriously intensified over the past few months. Indonesian forces are building up military capability in West Papua and there is coverage in these past few weeks of villages being strafed and bombed in order to drive communities away from their ancestral homes and make way for exploiting western mining companies and agri business. Incidentally, it is these exploiting mining companies that provide the materials to the arms companies that are making fortunes from providing despotic regimes with the war machines that are being used to commit these atrocities. Rio Tinto has been accused of complicity due to their reliance on the Indonesian military and police for security at the mine. In 2018 Rio Tinto sold its shares in the Grasberg mine to a company owned by the Indonesian government. And walked away. Although it is still making money from it.

The Oyu Tolgoi Phase 2 project mine in Mongolia is a joint venture between Rio Tinto, Turquoise Hill (a Rio Tinto subsidiary) and the Mongolian government. It is a \$6.7 billion project that has received a \$4.4 billion loan from international financing – International Finance Corporation, Netherlands Development Finance Company, European bank of Reconstruction and Development - the project is designed to turn an open pit copper mine into a deep pit mine. They have hit problems. It is running over budget and there are discussions at the moment as to who should pay the short fall. The Mongolian government are threatening to pull out of the deal. Essentially because once the loans have been paid. They don't stand to make very much money. It's all going to Rio Tinto. The financial packages offered to countries like Mongolia, Mozambique and West Papua are not designed to make money for the countries. They are designed to link the country to the project and ensure the countries unconditioned support in the exploitation that will follow.

This mine like most mines has always been a problem for the locals. Mine operations worldwide require VAST quantities of water. Which they will draw from local water supplies and aquifers. The existing open pit mine at Uyo Tolgoi has already created issues among the local population. Springs and water courses have dried up and pasture land for cattle has withered. This has had devastating effects on these nomadic tribes who are now forced to travel further and further in the search for water and pasture. Publically owned documents do not identify enough water supplies to sustain the 40 years expected life of the new mine without depleting the water supplies that the herders depend on. Communities have already experienced severe impacts from the open pit mine and now face

further harm from the underground expansion. The open pit mine has already diminished water access and water quality, reduced pasture area and made traditional nomadic herding livelihoods in the area all but impossible to maintain. Rio Tinto claims to be working with locals. It quite obviously doesn't.

In May of last year at Juuken Gorge in Australia. Rio Tinto blew up a 46,000 year old sacred aboriginal site belonging to the Punta Kunti Kuurama and Pinikura Peoples. Despite what Rio Tinto claim, they knew the significance of this site at least 6 years ago. It's on their website. And it was mentioned in a video they made. Which is conveniently no longer available. Rio Tinto lied, misled and kept information from local people concerning what was happening at the site. Rio Tinto even carried on loading explosives after they had promised to delay the blast whilst they were carrying out negotiations. Then went and lit the fuse. The Punta Kunti Kuurama and Pinikura peoples have not been allowed access to the site since 2014. They have all been served with gagging orders that prevent them from talking to the press.

There are still 124 more aboriginal sites in Australia that have applications for mining permits. 26 sites have already received section 18 clearance.

One of Rio Tinto's newest projects is the Jadar mine development in Serbia. It is a green field development hopping to extract 55 thousand tonnes of Lithium, 160 thousand tonnes of Boron and 255 thousand tonnes of Sodium sulphate per year. It is presently in its feasibility stage with \$200 million invested to help it achieve this. The study should be completed by the end of 2021 and construction of the mine should take around 4 years. There are already protests by local citizens who are concerned about the impacts the mine could have on their own health, the environment and agriculture. They have done their research; they've seen the videos of tailings dam collapses. They have seen the reports of the damage Rio Tinto leaves in its wake. They are aware of Rio Tinto's reputation and are very worried. Rio Tinto though is playing its usual game. Paying no heed whatsoever to the locals and instead feeding them lies, misinformation, withholding information, trying to set up opposing community groups and no doubt the bribery and corruption of locals and government officials will follow at some point.

Mining was suspended at Rio Tinto owned Richards Bay Minerals in South Africa around 2 years ago because of security issues. there were serious concerns about air pollution, biodiversity loss, loss of landscape, noise pollution, soil contamination, soil erosion, waste overflow, deforestation and loss of vegetative cover, surface water pollution, ground water pollution and depletion, large scale disturbance of hydro and geological systems and mine tailings spills. Rio Tinto are keen to to get the mine back into operation and very worryingly are talking to authorities about how to resolve this issue. what generally follows is abuse and oppression. What Rio Tinto don't seem to understand, is that if they stopped playing the colonial master, treated local populations with more respect, treated your workforce better, didn't damage or pollute local environments and ecosystems. They wouldn't have security issues at virtually every mine they operate.

It isn't just local populations that Rio Tinto has an issue with. It is their workforce aswell. There have been numerous disputes with workforces and their unions in virtually every project they have been associated with. Australia, Iceland, USA, Canada, Mongolia and Namibia are recent examples. Unions representing workers at Rio Tinto in fourteen countries sent a letter to Rio Tinto's CEO on 7th October 2016, requesting to work collaboratively with the company to address problems related to the

company's increasing use of precarious labour. The disputes generally centre around Rio Tinto's efforts to increase output and decrease expenditure. It will bring in its own contactors and temporary workers which will be on lesser contracts than the present workforce. It will then try to renegotiate the old contracts whilst changing shift patterns to favour the cheaper workers and also forgoing on safety and manning issues. Fire and rehire are normal practice for Rio Tinto. Protests are dealt with very draconically. At Rio's Boron mine in California, after 5 months of negotiations, 570 workers were locked out of the mine and Rio Tinto refused to pay them. This totally devastated the local communities who because they were not entitled to benefits were effectively left with no money to live on. In Canada at its aluminium smelter plant in Alma Quebec it employed the same tactic, this time locking out 780 workers. You don't negotiate with Rio Tinto. And just to clarify, these workers were in negotiations, they were not on strike.

The primary interest of the extractive industry is profit. Benefits to the local population and protection of the environment are not major considerations to them and are provided to the minimum extent possible, and then usually only under pressure. Too often, local jobs are few and very temporary. Corporate funding for healthcare or education dries up after the mine closes. Ecosystems are left in permanent ruin and community divisions are irreparable. Responsible mining is possible. There are technologies that allow us to deal with tailings and water abstraction in a far more environmentally friendly manner. Such as dry stacking, thickened tailings, paste backfill and water reclamation. All of these measures will keep the dust down, prevent chemicals leaching into the environment and the water reclamation would significantly reduce the amount of water needing to be extracted. It is also very possible to engage with local populations far more and to treat them with a lot more respect. But these things all cost money and have implications for profit margins, time scales and shareholder payouts.

Rio Tinto was founded in blood. And in the 148 years of its existence, it has consumed vast quantities of it. It rides rough shot over everybody and everything. You could forgive Rio Tinto for its earlier transgressions if it had cleaned up its act. But the attitudes displayed by one of Rio Tinto's infamous former CEO's Sir Auckland Geddes in the boardroom of 1937 when he gave his Spanish worker quote 'since the mining region was occupied by General Franco's forces, there have been no further labour problems. Miners found guilty of trouble making are court marshalled and shot'. These attitudes still reside in the company today. They are a behemoth devouring the resources of this earth in order to feed their eternal hunger for monetary wealth. They bribe, they corrupt, they lie, they deceive and they collude. They don't care for people. They don't care for their workforce. They couldn't give a monkey about the locals where ever they are. They don't care for the environment. They pollute and they destroy and then when they have had their fill, they walk away.

That people is a little bit about Rio Tinto.

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