



Press Release

May 3, 2021

STATEMENT OF APPRECIATION

Today, it was announced that to mark May Day 2021 – International Workers' Day – the Construction Safety Campaign UK had recognized the efforts of three individuals by awarding them the prestigious Robert Tressell Award for Services to Working People. Amongst those recognized was our colleague and friend Eric Jonckheere.¹

On the plaque which was presented to him today in Belgium the full inscription read: “For services to working people, particularly in the Belgian Association of Asbestos Victims and the international network of asbestos victims.”

For over 20 years, Eric has been working to right the deadly wrongs done to people at home and abroad whose lives had been stolen by asbestos companies. His asbestos odyssey began with the asbestos cancer death in 1987 of his father Pierre (aged 59) who had been employed as an engineer by Eternit, the world’s largest asbestos-cement conglomerate, at its factory in Kapelle-op-den Bos. In 2000 as his Mother Françoise lay dying from the same disease, Eric and his brothers Pierre-Paul, Stephane, Xavier and Benoit promised they would continue the fight to expose the asbestos scandal. Sadly, before this promise could be fulfilled two of his brothers died from the same cancer: Pierre-Paul in 2003, aged 44 and Stephane in 2009, aged 46 years.

Eric became a figurehead of the asbestos struggle in Belgium and abroad. In Belgium, he pursued his Mother’s case through the courts, finally achieving a successful verdict in 2017 – 17 years after she had died; he pioneered epidemiological research to identify cancer hotspots near Eternit factories and campaigned for asbestos remediation of the urban and rural environments, the decontamination of schools and improved rights for Belgian asbestos victims. Internationally, Eric has been a pivotal force in the establishment of a network through which information and evidence is exchanged, grassroots action mobilized and calls to ban asbestos amplified.

Speaking about Eric’s work, Sugio Furuya Coordinator of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network said:

“The immediate connection Eric is able to establish with asbestos victims in Japan is remarkable. The story of Eric’s family has a resonance that cannot be denied and whenever he speaks about the tragedy which has befallen his family, the response is immediate and overwhelming. His presentations are not fueled by anger but by a need to expose the truth and find ways to protect future generations. In 2017 Eric took part in an asbestos workshop in Manchester attended by a Japanese delegation, all of whom had met or heard of him. Needless to say there were a lot of photos taken!”

¹ The other 2021 awards went to the family of the late Jack Mondey, Australia and the family of the late Francie Graham, Scotland.

With this press release, we would like to acknowledge the Construction Safety Campaign for its sustained efforts to encourage all those who have fought corporate malfeasance, exposed government ineptitude and progressed safer technologies. We would also like to congratulate Eric for his extraordinary contribution to the global fight to end the asbestos slaughter, improve conditions for the injured and give a voice to those silenced before their time by the deadly actions of asbestos profiteers.

Notes to Editors

More information on the organizations which have issued this press release can be found on the following websites:

- Asian Ban Asbestos Network
<http://anroev.org/aban>
- International Ban Asbestos Secretariat
<http://ibasecretariat.org/>
- La Asociación de Víctimas del Amianto (Association of Asbestos Victims)
<https://avida.es/>
- Associazione Familiari Vittime Amianto (Association of Asbestos Victims' Families)
<https://www.afeva.it/>
- Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum UK
<https://asbestosforum.org.uk/>