

Socialist Equality Party public meeting on Grenfell Tower fire

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Our reporters
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The following are the closing remarks of Socialist Equality Party National Secretary Chris Marsden to its August 19 public meeting in London on the Grenfell Tower fire.

Everyone here is on the same page regarding the official inquiry into the Grenfell fire—it is a fraud. The terms of reference have been set by [Conservative Prime Minister] Theresa May. The government has picked the judge and it determines what can happen.

The police have chosen to frame their investigation around the case for corporate manslaughter, which means there is no individual responsibility assigned, even if there is a criminal investigation. And as the last gentleman who spoke indicated, these cases can take decades. Six people have finally been prosecuted over Hillsborough after 27 years, but hearing their cases has not even begun.

There is no possibility of any serious prosecutions taking place. I remember a few weeks ago, the police made this announcement about their investigation and they said: “We’ve got to interview hundreds of people including all of the firefighters that were there on the night, police officers, everybody involved. We’ve got databases of so many terabytes and all of that has got to be gone through before we can decide what we are going to do about it.”

Well I’m sorry, but we all know where David Cameron lives. We all know where Theresa May lives. We all know where all the guilty live. Their record has been forensically examined in the world’s newspapers. Masses of documents are in public circulation. Many people in this room, if they were given the opportunity

to do so, could present a serious case for the prosecution against those involved in the crime that was Grenfell Tower.

This is a massive cover-up and it’s going to continue. The issue is what we do about it.

I just want to take up two points. The gentleman there asked what do the working class do? Why is there inactivity by the working class?

Someone else countered by saying that workers are marching, they are fighting, they are disagreeing with things. It might be that they support the wrong parties, of the left or right—Bernie Sanders and then Donald Trump, Syriza in Greece, Corbyn and Labour here.

Those two issues are related.

There is fight in the working class. There is enormous anger in the working class. Grenfell has shown one thing above all—and that is the enormous ingenuity, dedication and seriousness of the working class. This is a crisis in which people were failed by the official system. And everything good that happened here happened because of the activity of local residents, because of what they did.

We know that the capacity exists, but I would say this: If you list the movements which workers have backed, put their confidence in, and what those movements have then done, then you can understand why it has been so difficult, over an entire historical period, for the working class to put its mark on society.

You just can’t talk about Syriza as an expression of something positive, because millions of Greek people supported Syriza on an anti-austerity ticket and then they signed up for worse austerity measures than those

put forward by the previous government! And you can't turn to Bernie Sanders who then backed Hillary Clinton—or Donald Trump to rescue the rust-belt workers when he is a multimillionaire, right-wing fascist sympathizer who's planning wars all over the world.

The issue that we are confronting here is a crisis of political leadership. It's not because workers won't fight. It's because there isn't a political tendency outside of this one that's prepared for a political struggle against the system—not this politician or that politician—the capitalist system. A fight for socialism: that's what's required. That is what Grenfell is bound up with.

What we intend to do from this meeting is to organise regular discussions where residents can come together. This public inquiry is going to proceed. It's a fraud. We will dissect that inquiry. We will oppose it. We will counter their propaganda with the truth. We will organise leafleting campaigns. We will do everything we can to make sure that this criminal venture that's been conducted by Kensington and Chelsea council, by the May government, by their predecessors, is not going to go without answer.

We are not going to have a Hillsborough scenario. They're not going to put this on the backburner, hoping it's going to go away. This has been too painful, affected too many people. It's encouraged outrage among broad masses of the population, not just in Britain, but throughout the world.

Grenfell Tower is a symbol of everything that is wrong with this society. It's understood in those terms. We have to give it that political focus. We must build the leadership that the working class deserves, one that won't betray, but will fight.



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