

UK: Justice4Grenfell meeting endorses May government's inquiry

Robert Stevens
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The Justice4Grenfell (J4G) campaign held a public meeting in North Kensington on Thursday, titled, “How do we get justice for Grenfell?”

The only answer provided to an audience of around 150 was through the various bodies of the capitalist state—first and foremost the government’s official Inquiry under Sir Martin Moore-Bick.

Immediately after the Grenfell Tower fire that claimed at least 71 lives, angry residents demanded that those responsible must be arrested and brought to justice. A series of meetings were organised at which survivors and residents repeatedly denounced Moore-Bick’s bogus “consultation” over the proposed Inquiry.

Nearly eight months later, the inquiry is being given support by Justice4Grenfell, with just a few minor caveats. Its website declares that “J4G will be engaging with the Public Inquiry on behalf of its membership.”

In its call for the meeting, Justice4 Grenfell declared, “It’s vital that *those in authority begin to act upon community demands immediately*, and lessons are learned, so that no community ever has to face what this community has endured in the last eight months—*only through the responsible authorities implementing action and change*, will Justice be done and be seen to be done, by those that matter” (emphasis added).

The first public meeting Justice4Grenfell has held for months featured a platform of tried and tested representatives of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, brought together by the dominant political tendency in the organisation, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

The featured speaker was Labour MP Emma Dent Coad, who was elected as the MP for North Kensington covering the Lancaster West housing estate where Grenfell Tower was based. The other main speakers were Fire Brigades Union (FBU) General Secretary Matt Wrack and National Education Union joint leader Kevin

Courtney, both of whom have longstanding connections to the SWP. Chairing the meeting was Moyra Samuels, an SWP activist.

Detailing the proposed terms of his cover-up inquiry, Moore-Bick stated that he would not allow any discussion over issues of a “social, economic and political nature.”

The Inquiry has no powers to prosecute anyone and will not even report on the first stage of its proceedings—into how the fire started and spread—until autumn this year, well over a year since the Grenfell fire.

Meanwhile the “criminal investigation” being held by the Metropolitan Police has not resulted in the questioning, let alone arrest of a single person.

All that Samuels could muster in protest was to register “a creeping sense that justice is not going to be served.” Her only concrete complaint was that “we have not been allowed a diverse community panel in the inquiry.”

Dent Coad attempted to convince the audience that she felt their pain. “I’m also from round here and I’m very, very angry ... and this ... anger is driving me every day,” she said, after stating, “I can’t see we are getting justice.”

Dent Coad had “problems with the choice of judge,” “problems with the terms of reference.” But mainly because Moore-Bick is a “white male”—“I went to the opening session [of the Inquiry] and I just saw a whole room full of white men. Nothing against white men, but it doesn’t look anything like us lot, did it?”

Dent Coad is of Spanish and English parentage.

She said that residents seeking the truth should vote at the next local elections in May for Labour politicians and, specifically, for Dent Coad, who is standing again as a councillor as well as an MP.

A few months ago, as it became clear to everyone that the Inquiry would be the latest in a long-line of government cover-ups, the FBU threatened to withdraw its support, with Wrack stating last August, “How is it remotely possible to seriously examine the causes, spread

and results of the fire without examining ‘social, economic and political’ matters?”

Despite such reservation, Wrack personally released a statement to FBU members that the union “will participate as fully as possible in the public inquiry” and had been granted “core participant” status.

In reply to the question, “What else can I do about the Grenfell tower fire?” Wrack instructed union members to “make sure politicians keep Grenfell at the forefront of their minds. FBU members should raise the issues with their local MP, councillors and take part in the union’s campaigning work.”

The pleas from the platform to work with Moore-Bick and pin all hopes in the election of Labour councillors and MPs was met at times with angry interjections from members of the audience who demanded that those responsible for what several referred to as “social murder” be arrested and sent to jail.

Samuels actually left her seat on one occasion in an attempt to placate and calm down some of the more vocal audience members, who were demanding that the interests of those survivors who are still homeless and living in hotels needed to be addressed.

One man who demanded to know several times why no one responsible had yet been arrested, interrupted the speech of Brian Richardson, a barrister and representative of Stand Up to Racism—a meeting point for Labour “lefts,” trade union functionaries and the SWP.

When Richardson was speaking about the case of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, the man shouted out, “People did get arrested at the time. No one’s been arrested at the moment... It’s not a hard case, this case. Whoever gave the green light for the cladding to go up needs to get arrested.”

Richardson attempted to make the question of racism a central factor in the Grenfell fire, but was again shouted down. “Racism was undoubtedly a significant factor in the contemptuous way in which local council treated people, not just in Grenfell but in this part of the borough in the last few years,” he said.

In response an audience member replied, “Why are you making it about racism? It’s not a race thing. We’re multi-cultural around here.”

Another shouted, “It’s a class thing.”

In her final intervention, Dent Coad cynically claimed direct affinity with those who have suffered and been made homeless as a result of the Grenfell fire.

“I have been homeless,” she asserted. “I’ve sofa surfed. And I lived in a squat for two years, so I do know what

it’s like to be homeless and I don’t know too many MPs that can say that. This is why I’m fighting for you because I do know what it’s like.”

Dent Coad doesn’t know what it’s like. Her background is one of wealth and privilege. Her father, Professor Charles Enrique Dent CBE, was a professor of medicine whose ancestry can be traced back to Christopher Columbus and 19th century British prime minister, Spencer Percival. Dent Coad was brought up in Paultons Square, Chelsea, one of the capital’s most affluent areas. Her first husband was Sir Hadley Gregory D’Oyly, 15th Baronet.

She graduated from the Royal College of Art with an MA in History of Design in 1992 and served as a councillor for 12 years, including a spell as leader of the opposition group, before becoming an MP. Whatever experience of “homelessness” she experienced was an interlude in a life of comfort that depends on her ability to sell the Labour Party—which has socially cleansed more working class Londoners than the Conservatives—as an ally and friend.

The Grenfell Fire Forum, established by the Socialist Equality Party, opposes the government’s cover-up inquiry. The Forum was established as a democratic platform to discuss the way forward in the fight for justice, not on the basis of appeals to the representatives and institutions of the capitalist state, but in opposition to them.

The next meeting of the Grenfell Fire Forum takes place on February 17 at 2 p.m. at the Maxilla Social Hall in North Kensington. All are welcome to attend. Details below:

Grenfell Fire Forum meeting

February 17, 2 p.m.

Maxilla Hall Social Club, 2 Maxilla Walk
London, W10 6SW



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)