



## **Chapter 1**

### **THE INQUIRY PROCESS**

#### **WHY HAVE AN INQUIRY?**

1.1 On 5th October 1985, four Tottenham police officers entered the home of a Black woman, Mrs Cynthia Jarrett, and searched it. During the course of the search Mrs Jarrett collapsed, and soon after she died. On the following afternoon a demonstration outside Tottenham police station passed off without any serious incident. But during the evening and night of 6th October, a violent disturbance took place at the Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham. A police officer, PC Keith Blakelock, was killed. Several buildings were set on fire, as well as many motor vehicles. Guns were alleged to have been fired at the police. Officers armed with plastic bullets and CS gas were deployed but not used. In a television interview, the senior officer for the North London area, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Richards, claimed that the disturbances were "the most ferocious, the most vicious riots ever seen on the mainland". In the weeks and months following 6th October, police officers remained on the estate in considerable numbers, and raids were carried out by large squads of police upon dozens of homes.

1.2 The disturbances were the third to have happened in the space of a month. On the nights of 9th and 10th of September 1985 two men had died in a Post Office which had been burned in the course of disturbances which stretched over two days in the Handsworth and Lozells districts of Birmingham. The local authorities for that area acted swiftly to investigate the causes of the disturbances. Following the refusal of the Home Secretary to set up a public inquiry, the Birmingham City Council set up an independent public inquiry under the chairmanship of a barrister. The West Midlands police force participated in that inquiry. The Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Committee of the West Midlands County Council sponsored a review panel to establish the nature and extent of



legitimate grievances of the Black community, and to make recommendations for urgent action. Both of these inquiries published their reports in the early months of 1986.

1.3 On 28th September 1985, Mrs Cherry Groce, another Black woman, had been shot and paralysed inside her home in Brixton by a police officer carrying out a raid. Disturbances broke out on the streets of Brixton over the following day. A police officer was suspended and later charged, and awaits trial on a charge of causing grievous bodily harm to Mrs Groce with intent.

1.4 On 14th October 1985 the council of the London Borough of Haringey called for "a thoroughly independent public inquiry into the death of Mrs Jarrett and subsequent events and into the break down in police/community relations in Tottenham". The council resolved that if there was not an adequate Government response, it would set up its own independent public inquiry. The Home Secretary again decided not to exercise his powers under the Police Act 1964 to set up a public inquiry. In a letter to Haringey's chief executive, the Home Office referred to Lord Scarman's inquiry, and said:—

"The Home Secretary does not believe that a rerun of such an inquiry would be likely to cast a new perspective on the situation: The broader issues raised by the disorders continue to be the subject of widespread public debate and in the Home Secretary's view there are no grounds for believing that there are radical new solutions waiting for an inquiry to uncover."

The Home Office claimed also that a public inquiry would cut across the investigation of the Police Complaints Authority into the death of Mrs Jarrett.

1.5 There then followed a delay of several months while the council tried to find a person who would be willing to be chair of the independent inquiry which they wished to set up. Mr Mark Bonham-Carter said publicly that he would not serve as chair because the Commissioner had indicated that the police would not participate. In our view this was not a good reason; the issues raised by the disturbances and the grievances which were being voiced demanded urgent investigation. But the delay was unfortunate — by the time we began our work, memories had faded and some of the impact which the Inquiry could have had was lost.

1.6 In early February 1986, Lord Gifford QC was asked to take on the chairmanship of the Inquiry and accepted. Some of the other members of the panel had already been approached; others were invited by the chair himself. The aim was to bring together a broad based panel of people who had personal and professional experience of the issues which the Inquiry would have to confront. From the outset the Inquiry Panel asserted its independence; we did not, for instance, accept the terms of reference drafted by the council, but drew up our own terms of reference to enable us to conduct a wide-ranging inquiry into the underlying causes of the disturbances. The qualifications of the members of the panel, and the terms of reference of the Inquiry are given in the preface to this report. The council approved the appointment of the chair and four members of the Inquiry Panel, and its terms of reference, on 18th February 1986. The membership of the Inquiry Panel was finally completed with the appointment of Mr Randolph Prime at the end of February.

1.7 At a well-attended opening meeting on 21st February 1986, the chair explained why the members of the panel had agreed to take part:—

"Why have we taken on this task? Because we believe that an inquiry is needed. We believe that you in this community want an independent and fair inquiry. Your presence here indicates that this is so.

"People do not attack the forces of the law out of mere wickedness or a sense of fun. As Lord Scarman said only last week in a televised broadcast, 'Public disorder usually arises out of a sense of injustice.' There are causes to these events going back over many years. They must be recorded and made known.

"When there is conflict in society it is always the powerful institutions which find it easy to put out a version of the events which — even if it is only based on hearsay — is reported by the mass media as if there were no other truth.

"Those without power have no such voice. Our task is to listen to the powerless as well as the powerful. To listen to the ordinary people of this community and the organisations which represent them. And having listened to everyone, to produce recommendations which can be used to bring about change."

1.8 In the particular context of the Broadwater Farm, there was a need to provide a channel for the grievances and complaints of the



local community, and to investigate a number of disputed issues. There was bitter dispute about the circumstances of the death of Mrs Jarrett, and a widespread distrust of the Police Complaints Authority, which was then investigating the conduct of the officers who entered her house. There was bitter dispute about the way in which the disturbances broke out, with accusations of deliberate planning and provocation on both sides. And beyond all that, there was bitter dispute about the record and the reputation of a whole community. As we shall show, a large section of the police and mass media saw the Broadwater Farm as a centre of well organised criminality. To many others in authority, both in central and local government, Broadwater Farm was a showpiece, a model of what a responsible and hard working community could do to better the conditions of all its members.

1.9 The Inquiry set itself four objectives:—

- (1) To seek out evidence in the most thorough way possible and from the widest possible range of opinions;
- (2) To reflect that evidence objectively and impartially in our report;
- (3) To make an independent and logical analysis of that evidence;
- (4) To make sensible proposals for the future which can be studied by those who have responsibilities to bear for the welfare of the community.

## THE WORK OF THE INQUIRY

1.10 At the outset of the Inquiry, during the opening session on 21st February, we became vividly aware of a cloud of fear which hung over Broadwater Farm. Some who attended sat far away at the back of a gallery. Others shielded their heads when a television crew tried to film the audience. Many more, we were told, would stay away and not come forward. During our first full hearing we asked Floyd Jarrett how we could approach such people. He replied:—

“I can’t really see a solution because you see they have become so frightened that they don’t know who to trust in the system.”

Joanne George, social service community worker at Broadwater Farm said:—

“I think people are still afraid to talk to anybody, because they fear being arrested. Even though the Inquiry has explained about confidentiality, they just feel that they can’t risk doing that. And unfortunately it is probably those people who know more about

what happened on 6th October than any of us who are free to come and talk here.”

To us, this climate of fear was itself a matter of intense concern. It is deeply disturbing if people not only have strong grievances, but dare not speak out about them.

1.11. To secure our first objective, we went far beyond the normal inquiry process whereby any interested person or organisation was invited to put in written submissions and give evidence at public hearings. We turned the Inquiry into an active process. Members of the Inquiry Panel themselves, as well as the Inquiry staff, knocked on doors, held interviews, and attended meetings in the community. We published two newsletters, which were distributed throughout the Broadwater Farm Estate and neighbouring streets. At the public hearings, we encouraged participation by members of the public. In all these ways, we reached out into the community. We could not remove the cloud of fear, but by treating people’s fears as being serious and reasonable, we believe we obtained far more information than a formal “judicial” inquiry would have done.

1.12 The statistics of our work show that we invited evidence from 116 organisations, and from all members of the Haringey Council. We held 22 public hearings, at which we heard a total of 77 witnesses. We held recorded interviews with 80 people. At meetings and visits to the estate, we listened to many more who wished to speak without fear of being identified. We were also aware of the danger of relying solely on the views of those who chose to come forward. Since it was apparent that people living in a number of the Broadwater Farm blocks would have had a clear view of the disturbances, we called on 178 homes and received a number of accounts of what people had seen. We believe we were able in this way to build up an objective picture of what took place.

1.13 We were aware also that there were disputed views about who represented the “community” of Broadwater Farm. While there were organisations which the council accepted as being representative, others, including the police, appeared to dispute that they were. Deputy Assistant Commissioner Richards in his report on the disturbances (the Richards report) spoke of normal policing methods being resised by “a vociferous minority”.



1.14 We wanted as far as possible to ascertain objectively who were "the community" on Broadwater Farm and what they thought about the key issues before the Inquiry – the police, crime, the estate, the Youth Association. We therefore commissioned a survey to be carried out by a team from Middlesex Polytechnic, headed by Dr. Jock Young. The survey drew a large sample of 700 adults out of a total of about 1800 adults on the estate. We asked for people's co-operation in responding to the survey, and got it – the response rate was 75.2%, which is far higher than other surveys in similar areas. The results are analysed in Chapter 7 of the report.

1.15 The Inquiry also undertook or commissioned three further pieces of research:–

- (1) Members of the Inquiry and staff carried out a study of the treatment by the local media of the Broadwater Farm Estate and of "riots" in general.
- (2) The Inquiry employed its own research worker to make a independent evaluation of Haringey's economic and social conditions, and the policies of the council in relevant areas.
- (3) The Inquiry commissioned the consultancy firm, Equinox, to consider initiatives aimed at assisting in the economic development of the Broadwater Farm area in the field of small businesses and co-operatives.

This research provided material which we use in making our proposals in Chapter 9 of the report.

1.16 By gathering evidence in these forms, we believe that we have obtained as full a picture as was possible in the time available. We have only been able to achieve this through the strenuous and devoted work of the staff of the Inquiry, the interviewers, transcribers and researchers, and more important still, through the co-operation of the hundreds of people who gave time to speak to us.

### THE SUB JUDICE QUESTION

1.17 The days from 6th to 7th of October saw two tragic deaths, those of Cynthia Jarrett and Keith Blakelock. Both had been greatly loved and admired. Their deaths, and the need to prevent such tragedies from recurring, were in our minds continually and underlined the seriousness of the Inquiry. In the case of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett, the inquest into her death has been concluded, and we have been free to comment on the evidence given and the verdict recorded.

Regrettably, we cannot deal with the circumstances surrounding the death of PC Keith Blakelock. A number of people are awaiting trial for his murder. It would be unlawful to discuss, even in general terms, how he was killed and who was to blame.

1.18 However, PC Blakelock had died in a place removed from the main areas of action, following a particular incident of which most people involved in the disturbances would have been unaware. The pending proceedings do not preclude a discussion of all the other issues relating to the outbreak of the disturbances and the course they took.

1.19 By the end of May 1986, 162 people had been charged with offences alleged to have been committed on 6th October. 13 people have now been charged with riotous assembly, of whom six are also charged with murder. 62 are charged with affray, some of whom face other counts of burglary, throwing petrol bombs, and of manufacturing petrol bombs.

Most of the others were charged with lesser offences such as threatening behaviour and burglary. Only three of the riot or affray cases have been dealt with by the court. We mention in Chapters 5 and 6 that these trials also prevent us from expressing a conclusive view on the legality of certain actions and on certain aspects of the police investigation after the 6th October.

### THE INQUIRY AND THE POLICE

1.20 From the outset we made it clear that we wanted to have the full participation of the Metropolitan Police in the Inquiry. Even before his appointment became public, Lord Gifford asked for an informal meeting with D.A.C. Richards, in order to assure him of the independence and serious purpose of the Inquiry. This request was not accepted. On 20th February 1986, Lord Gifford wrote to the Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Newman:–

"I am most anxious that the police view should be fully put to the Inquiry, particularly on the general questions which are certain to arise about police/community relations. I would wish to be entirely flexible in the way in which that view should be made known. I understand that it may not be appropriate for the police to be officially represented in the public sessions of the Inquiry – though we would welcome such representation if it were desired. I hope, however, that you and Mr Richards will leave the door open for



other forms of communication with us, whether written or oral, public or private."

1.21 On 26th February, the Commissioner wrote giving three reasons for declining to give evidence to the Inquiry:—

- (1) He referred to the inquiries which were already taking place, namely the inquest into Mrs Jarrett's death; the report of D.A.C. Richards; the investigation of the Police Complaints Authority; and the internal review undertaken by the Metropolitan Police. He said that "a further inquiry would be likely to add little to those already undertaken".
- (2) "The statutory procedures for accountability laid down for the Metropolitan Police are to the Home Secretary and the borough consultative groups. Your inquiry cuts across those lines of accountability."
- (3) He referred to the pending criminal proceedings which he claimed would be "an effective barrier to investigations under some of your terms of reference."

The Commissioner ended that "in all the circumstances, I am not persuaded that any useful purpose would be served by our meeting."

1.22 On 4th March, Lord Gifford replied to these three points:—

- (1) "The inquiries which you mention are all limited in scope. Those which are independent of the police, are limited to the circumstances of Mrs Jarrett's death. The report to the Consultative Group (The Richards report) has aroused considerable controversy and cannot be regarded as presenting the full account of the causes of the disturbances. The internal review concerns policing procedures rather than the underlying causes of disorder. I am convinced that it is right to probe further.
- (2) We do not set ourselves up as a body to which the police should be accountable. Rather we are a group of concerned citizens, seeking to discover the truth as best we can, and to make recommendations which might prevent a recurrence of the tragic events of last October.
- (3) We accept that there are limitations imposed by the sub judice rules. But there are considerable and important areas of the Inquiry which do not require findings to be made about specific sub judice incidents."

Lord Gifford concluded by asking the Commissioner not to close his mind to the possibility of an exchange of views at some stage, if there

were developments in the Inquiry which made it reasonable to approach him again.

1.23 On 6th May, after we had heard ten days of evidence, Lord Gifford wrote again asking for the view of the Metropolitan Police on key questions which had by then emerged. The questions were put under ten headings:—

- (1) Police co-operation with the Broadwater Farm Estate.
- (2) Police intelligence about Broadwater Farm.
- (3) Drug trafficking in September, 1985.
- (4) Police deployment around 7.00 p.m. on 6th October 1985.
- (5) Police tactics during the disturbances.
- (6) Methods of making arrests.
- (7) Levels of policing.
- (8) Racist behaviour by police officers.
- (9) Police training.
- (10) The future.

Lord Gifford concluded:—

"I urge you to respond as fully as possible to these questions. It would seem to me that your reasons for not wishing the police to participate in our Inquiry would not preclude you from commenting on these important issues over which my colleagues and I — both as an Inquiry Panel and as London residents — are deeply concerned."

1.24 Sir Kenneth Newman's reply on 28th May was brief:—

"Thank you for your letter of 6th May 1986, the contents of which have been noted.

"My letter of 26th February set out the reasons in declining to give evidence to your Inquiry into the Broadwater Farm disorders. Nothing has occurred since which leads me to alter that reasoning, and your letter contains nothing which causes me to reconsider that decision."

1.25 We deeply regret the decision of the Commissioner and find his reasons to be unconvincing. Because of the position which he took, it was difficult for a number of police officers whom we knew to be anxious to talk to us, to do so openly. However we have not been short of material from which we can discover the views of police officers about issues relevant to our Inquiry. The Richards report is clearly intended to be the definitive statement of the police command



about the disturbances and their causes. Very different perspectives from junior officers have been expressed in numerous articles and letters in the *Police Review*, the *Police* magazine and *The Job*. The accounts given by the officers who searched Mrs Jarrett's home are available to us from their evidence to the inquest. Finally, we have been able to have a number of informal personal conversations with police officers of different ranks.

### THE COST OF THE INQUIRY

1.26 The London Borough of Haringey allocated £250,000 to the Inquiry. The discretion as to how that money should be spent has been ours entirely. A final account will be presented to the council, but on a provisional assessment, we estimate that we will have kept the Inquiry costs below £225,000.

The main items of expenditure have been the fees paid to the chair and other panel members (other than Bishop Harvey who has claimed no fee), provisionally assessed at £61,000; the fees and wages of the Inquiry staff, the counsel to the inquiry, and the researchers and interviewers (provisionally assessed at £49,000); the survey done by the Middlesex Polytechnic (£25,000) the Equinox study (£6,500); the overheads of the Inquiry office (provisionally £47,000); the cost of transcription services (£14,000); and the printing of the report and its summarised version (£20,000).

## Chapter 2

### THE ESTATE AND ITS PEOPLE

#### THE CONFLICTING VIEWS.

2.1 One of the most remarkable features of this Inquiry has been the extraordinary conflict of opinion about the estate itself and its community organisations. In the view of most witnesses from the estate and from the local authority, the estate had realised enormous achievements, benefitting young and old alike, principally because of the hard work and caring approach of the organisers of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association. Their achievement had been recognised by the personal support of Sir George Young, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, and by the visit of the Princess of Wales in February 1985.

Tricia Zipfel, consultant to the Department of the Environment summed up this view:—

“For the community to have achieved what they have achieved, over four years of hard, hard work, is highly significant and gives enormous hope to other people. We have brought tenants from all over Britain to look at Broadwater and talk to the Youth Association. I do not feel I would be honest if I undersold the achievement of what has happened there.”

2.2 But a negative and condemnatory view has also been expressed. As we shall see, it has come from sections of the press and from people living in streets near the estate who rarely go there. It is also the view of a great many police officers, who, while recognising that this view of the estate existed, claimed that it was entirely false. As the leading article in *Police*, the monthly magazine of the Police Federation, put it in November 1985:—

“The official picture of Broadwater Farm Estate as a beehive of flourishing rehabilitation and positive community involvement, which was fostered by skilful propaganda from the Department of the Environment and Haringey Council (and swallowed by TV and