LONDON LABOUR
BRIEFING
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LONDON LABOUR FOR BENN AND HEFFER

TARGET 55!

The challenge to the Labour leadership announced by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer should be supported by Labour Party members throughout London.

Under successive right wing leaders, Labour has lost considerable ground to the Tories and the SLDP (previously the Alliance). The time has come to stop the rot.

The left must organise in London to deliver at least two thirds of the constituencies, that is 55 (out of 84) and at least half (12 out of 23) Labour MPs in support of the Benn/Heffer challenge.

Over the last decade Labour in London has seen some dramatic changes. Between 1979 and 1981, nearly one third of Labour MPs in London defected to the Alliance. They took with them scores of Councillors and numerous trade union officers. These defectors caused considerable damage to the Labour Party — damage which has been seriously underestimated by Labour's national Leadership.

By NARENDRA MAKANJI
Chair, Labour Party Black Sections
Haringey Councillor

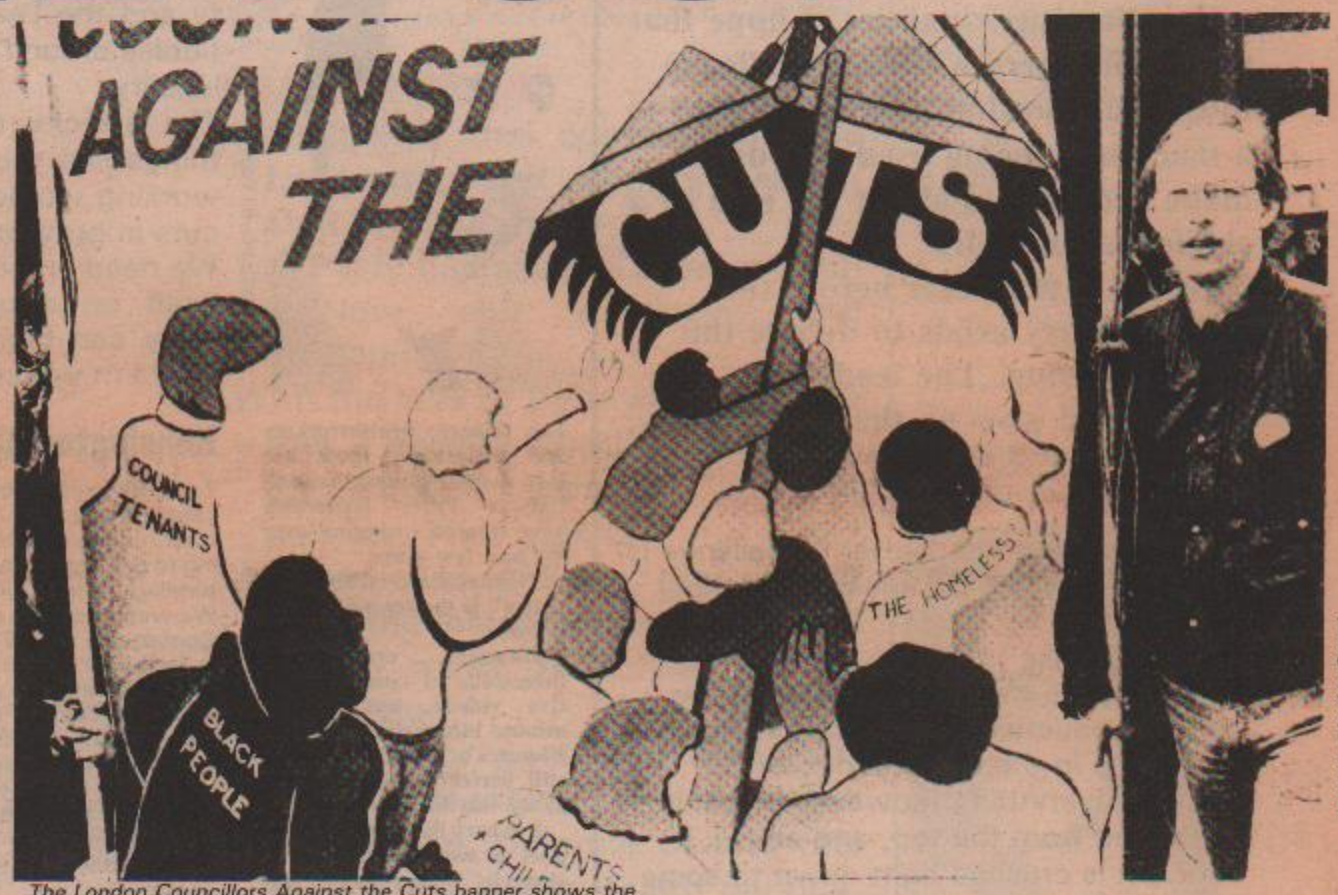


PHOTO: Martine Stead

The London Councillors Against the Cuts banner shows the alliances which the leadership campaign offers us the chance to strengthen.

Between 1981 and 1986 a left wing coalition sought to recover the ground with the London Regional Executive working closely with the GLC, ILEA, and London Boroughs to address the problems faced by London's working people.

Exciting, popular initiatives were developed and implemented, with neither support nor encouragement from the Leadership. On the contrary, positive candidates for important seats — such as Peter Tatchell, Russell Profitt, Sharon Atkin and Deidre Wood — were publicly and privately shunned, with disastrous consequences.

The coalition came under stress in the rate-capping campaign in 1985, was severely damaged by the abolition of the GLC in 1986, and finally collapsed in the weeks following the 1987 General Election when the hoped-for salvation of a Labour government made it clear we would have to continue the fight against the Tories.

Under the Thatcher regime, unemployment increased to 410,000 in 1986 and is currently being kept around 350,000 (mainly due to MSC Restart and other programmes). There are now as many unemployed in the capital as in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark combined!

Black people, women, lesbians and gay men have born the brunt of the Tory onslaught — both economically and through the attacks on civil liberties.

The Tories have hit hard those who are employed by cutting wage levels (both actual and social) and by attacking democratic rights at work, under the quaint title of "deregulation of labour". The people of London are experiencing increased poverty, rocketing homelessness, decaying infrastructure, and a near breakdown in public transport and health care.

There *is* a London effect! And only the Benn-Heffer campaign is able and willing to take it up, and turn the tide in London for Labour.

As the Leadership debate gets underway, we will not just be having a campaign *inside* the Labour Party. For the first time since the abolition of the GLC, there will be a strong, public force in the Labour Party conducting a campaign *against the Tories* — against their policies and the misery they have brought to working class people and showing that Labour has a clear, popular, *socialist* alternative.

This Leadership challenge can link those who have suffered most under the Tory regime with those who have and are fighting back.

But now is not the time to sit back and assume that when Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have won the arguments with Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley — as they will — the votes will come in spontaneously. The rank and file left will have to organise to make sure the wide support is translated into votes.

● In the constituencies, the left must pool its resources to make sure the campaign message reaches right out to the whole Greater London area. Outer London boroughs, with Tory Councils and Tory MPs, where the left has tended to be weaker in numbers, tend also to have more constituencies than inner London boroughs — constituencies with the same voting rights as inner London ones.

● In the constituencies, we must include the Labour MPs in the debate — and every constituency which swings behind the Benn/Heffer ticket must bring its MP with it.

● In Parliament, left MPs who back the Benn/Heffer challenge must be part of the campaign resources. Benn and Heffer won't be able to speak at every meeting in person; we need the other competent, left MPs to help speak at meetings and build the campaign, not only in their own constituencies.

● In the trade unions, we must use all the structures we have to reach rank and file trade unionists, and build a groundswell of support in the unions. It's no good saying that the Executives will make their own minds up anyway; even they are subject to pressure from their members! And anyway, this campaign will also be about building ongoing forces in the rank and file — and that must include the trade unions.

The Campaign Group has now made the move that rank and file activists in the Party had been hoping for. Now we must turn the great relief and excitement we all feel into organised, co-ordinated *action!*

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

WE'RE B BENN AN



PHOTO: Jane Conner

Diane Abbott speaking at the FAB lobby of Parliament, 21st January 1988.

Diane Abbott, MP

I support the leadership challenge because I am very concerned about the way the Leadership is going in the attempt to dump long-standing policies such as unilateral disarmament.

I hope the Leadership campaign will be an opportunity to debate policies rather than personalities. I hope that eventually there will be a challenge most years so that people get used to a machinery being used and don't make such a fuss about the idea of a challenge in itself.

Now more than ever before the Labour Party needs to debate the way it is going. The leadeship contest will give us the opportunity.

Harry Cohen, MP for Leyton

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer's challenge is sponsored by the Campaign Group of MPs.

The purpose is to:

- Challenge the current unattractive and unproductive Thatcherite style of leadership in the Party under which virtually everything (however trivial) is controlled from the top, and any criticism is crushed right down to some 30 local Parties currently under threat of suspension.
- Stop the draining of activity and morale amongst local Parties (caused by Labour's failure to effectively counter the Tories in the important areas of principle) and in fact revitalise them.
- Halt the rightward drift towards as SDP Mark II which abandons some of our most basic values and most necessary policies under an illusory chase for votes.

To provide instead a radical socialist alternative to Thatcher from now right up to the next election and beyond.

- Put socialist substance into the Party's campaigning instead of the current reliance upon PR media gloss. Labour has to concentrate upon the issues which most affect our people. In particular, the Party has to be clearly seen to support workers in struggle, rather than distancing itself from them.
- Provide a competent and effective Leadership, incorporating the above, so as to maximise Labour's opportunity to win the next election instead of the current drift towards further defeat.

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer's challenge on this basis is worthy of your maximum support and effort.

As a member of the National Labour Women's Committee, I find it more than ironic that the very men who have been actively arguing for a more democratic and representative women's organisation within the Party can at the same time throw their hands up in the air at the mere idea of a leadership contest for the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Party.

I ask myself how can the Leadership be sacrosanct, when the whole nature of local and regional representation is beng queried?

A Socialist challenge to the Leadership is essentia this year. If we leave it much longer we will find ourselves part of an American style election machine with whom we can only communicate by credit card and post and women will lose even in the small gains made so far.

Nadine Finch
National Labour Women's Committee



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

The miners, healthworkers and seafarers... these are just a few groups that the Labour Party leadership have seen fit to ignore over the past few years.

"Unpopular with the voters" is the reason usually given.

However, even with thousands of roses, expensive videos, and a last minute intervention by Neil Kinnock's aunty, Labour still performed disastrously at the last Election.

I expect the Party to support all workers involved in struggle against this government.

That is the main issue in this Leadership contest and is why I shall be urging members of COHSE to support Tony Benn's candidature.

Pete Marshall
(COHSE Regional Officer and London Labour Party Executive, in a personal capacity)

Bill Hamilton
Chair, Hackney North CLP

I welcome the candidatures of Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

As the government attacks the foundations of the welfare state through the Housing, Education and Local Government bills, and by starving the NHS, Labour's response is pitiful.

Back bench Tories are providing a more effective opposition than Labour. Kinnock and Hattersley are the best friends the establishment have got.

A fighting, socialist leadership can help transform the struggles being wages daily in the workplaces and communities.

We have a clear responsibility to support this challenge to a rotten leadership.

Valerie Veness
Secretary, Islington North CLP
Former Deputy Leader of Islington
PPC Nuneaton

The last three or four years have proved a disaster for Labour. We have seen an election lost because of a strategy that asked workers to pay the cost of the crisis, whilst no plans were made to tackle the power of capital.

We are now seeing vicious cuts in the NHS, local government, and social security and the Leadership of our movement fiddles around and urges compliance and legality.

The attacks on women grow through things like the Alton Bill, the forcing of working women back into the home and cuts in provision for carers.

We need an honest leadership that bases itself on struggle — not capitulation! Tony can begin that change and that's why I'm working for his election.

Kensington CLP officers

Tony Benn is a longstanding member of Kensington Labour Party.

Over many years he has shown himself more than willing to participate in local Branch life by, for example, attending his local Branch meetings whenever able.

We were proud to send Tony as our delegate to Annual Conference in 1983, where he spoke out on our behalf in favour of British withdrawal from Ireland.

Most recently, we are indebted to him for delivering the Memorial Lecture on the first anniversary of the sad death of our comrade, Miriam James.

This personal relationship would alone incline us to support Tony in his endeavours. But what is more, our members fully share the sense of frustration, so widespread in the movement at present, at the failure of our leadership to fight for a socialist alternative to Thatcherism.

We have no hesitation, therefore, in declaring that we will work to win maximum support for Tony Benn in the Leadership Election.

Dave Holland, *Chair, Kensington Labour Party*
Steve Daly, *Vice Chair*
Jonathon Spencer, *Vice Chair*
Sue Parkes, *Women's Officer*
John Leadbetter, *Treasurer*
Mary Kenfield and David Spry, *Joint Secretary*

Andrew Yunge Gordon
Chair Woolwich & Eltham Labour Party Black Sections
Labour Party Black Sections National Executive
Publications Officer, LPBS

With millions of people, who are both angry and frustrated with eight years of Tory rule, I support the Benn/Heffer ticket because it is more important than ever that Labour and the Leadership show a strong and courageous stewardship to the angry and frustrated aspirations of people who desire a more equitable future within a socialist framework.

If the incumbent leadership, as they have so far shown, seem prepared to abort and further frustrate our supporters, and potential supporters, by "diluting policies by media consent", or being noser-inged by pollsters into an entanglement of "liberal conservatism", then the agonising decision by the Campaign Group to challenge for the Leadership is absolutely right.

Haringey Councillors Against the Cuts

We're backing Benn and Heffer to help our fight against the cuts!



Alf Lomas, MEP Lo West

The Labour Party, a democratic Socialis Europe, has proced election of its Lead So why all the fuss when Tony Benn ar because of widespr dissatisfaction with style of Leadership, consultation with o in the Labour Party, they would stand f Deputy Leader of t They have an impre the Labour Party, th integrity and intelle doubt, and they wo socialist Leadership



Eric and Tony give a voice to a contemporary socialism which is rooted in the experiences of millions of people.

As such their political vision is capable of being translated into a programme which can become an electable alternative to modern neo-liberalism or Thatcherism.

The Haddock team have abandoned socialism and have settled clearly and honestly into the camp of western European Social Democracy.

Their new found friends blew a hole in the Rainbow Warrior, privatized the steel

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industry in the Spanish State, ended index-linked pay in Italy and passed stridently anti-uinion legislation in Greece.

If you want a Labour Government again elect a Socialist leadership. We must get rid of Haddock!! The stink is too much to bear.

Steve Cowan
ILEA member,
North Westminster
ex Parliamentary
Candidate,
Orpington.

Tony Banks, MP Newham North West

Tony Benn is one of those rare politicians who has clearly learned from his times both in and out of office.

He understands the way capitalism works and the manner in which the institutions in our society are related one to another to maintain the power of the ruling class whichever political party is in office.

His ability to argue for the socialist alternative is so necessary at a time when unbridled capitalism has been made to look secure.

The Party needs Benn's ability to combine vision with experience and theory with practice.

All Labour Party comrades are urged to actively support Benn and Heffer in order to ensure:

- A leadership that backs workers in struggle, rather than which turns its back,
- An economic strategy which is aimed at undermining capitalism, not accomodating it,
- Policies which combat all forms of discrimination, not which pander to bigotry, and
- A Labour Party which leads public opinion and not which submits to opinion polls, and which tolerates, not persecutes, other internal opinions.

Support the Benn-Heffer ticket!

John Wray, Secretary
Jenny Gray, Chair
Leyton CLP

Hackney Councillors Against the Cuts

Hackney Councillors Against the Cuts are pleased to support Tony Benn's and Eric Heffer's bid for the Labour Party Leadership.

When in 1979 Thatcher came to office local socialists introduced a whole series of exciting intiatives opening up the Councils to the local communities they are supposed to represent. Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley did little to support our efforts and on occasions, such as Kinnock's Bournemouth speech on Liverpool, they have used their positions to undermine us.

Today, as the New Realist ideas of "value for money" replace provision on the basis of social need, Roy Hattersley and Neil Kinnock are doing their utmost to undermine any idea of resistance. If we are to defeat the onslaught of hostile legislation we need a Leadership that is prepared to fight back.

Vote Benn and Heffer!

Defend Local Government!

James Whiting, Convenor Hackney Councillors Against the Cuts

For years now the Labour Party has been dragged to the right by the Kinnock/Hattersley leadership. The whole thrust of the Leadership has been to appear "reasonable" and "fit to govern" — "reasonable" to the Tory press, and "fit to govern" on behalf of the establishment. Practically all socialist content has been dropped or modified, and every opinion poll leads to a further move to the right.

Nowhere has this been more marked than in London Labour Councils over the last year. People who stood on manifestos of no rent increases or cuts are now busy reducing the living standards of tenants and putting workers on the dole. The most remarkable thing about the dramatic reversals of socialist policies is that there has been absolutely no political debate.

The Benn/Heffer challenge for the leadership means that that debate can no longer be avoided. There can be no more "no alternatives"; now, all those supporting the Kinnock line will have to justify themselves politically. We will not be discussing a simple matter of who leads the Labour Party but the political direction of the whole movement.

For years we have seen representatives of the Labour Party at national and local level force through policy changes. Almost without exception this has been done by buraucratic manouvering. Hardly ever have we had the luxury of a real debate about the political consequences, either for us as a socialist party or the working class.

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have given socialists in the Labour Party a great opportunity, and we intend to make full use of it. We will demand a full debate on political principles and the future of the Labour Party. We want to know where we are being led — the simplistic answer of "parliamentary power" is not enough; we had that under Wilson and Callaghan and finished by laying the ground work for Thatcherism.

The result of this election is far less important than the opportunity it gives socialists to place the political direction of the Kinnock/Hattersley leadership under close examination. We intend to give Tony Benn and Eric Heffer our full support and will force the debate onto the agenda in very Branch and General Committee. If every real socialist in the Party takes this chance to expose the Kinnock/Hattersley leadership we can win the majority of constituencies and halt the slide to liberalism.

Lewisham Councillors Pat Waylett, Jon Lansman, Ron Stockbridge, Tony Link, Clifton Graham. (Apologies to those councillors we were unable to contact.)



PHOTO: Jane Connor

Sharon Atkin speaking at the FAB lobby of Parliament, 21st January 1988.

SHARON ATKIN

I welcome the contest for the Leadership and Deputy Leadership of the Party.

The Party has seldom been at such a low ebb politically and strategically.

With the loss of three elections in a row, I believe working class people need bold, audacious, socialist policies. That means

- **defence of policies that would shift the balance of power and wealth away from 2% of the population;**
- **support for good education services, anti-racist policies, rights for women, defence of and real investment in the Health Service, restoration of the local government powers and services and a non-nuclear policy.**

I believe that Benn and Heffer will campaign for disadvantaged groups, fight racism, and put forward socialist economic policies. Therefore it's essential that we have the right to choose socialism instead of social democracy.

I welcome the decision of the Campaign Group to stand Tony Benn and Eric Heffer for the Leadership elections.

The challenge is not about individuals. It is about style of leadership and policy formation.

Contested elections are an essential component of democratic socialism, an no socialist should be saying that they are a diversion or a distraction. (Although if it diverts energies away from the current witch hunt in the Party, I would welcome that too!)

We have only a few short years to win the next General Election — that cannot be done with the kind of glossy, empty "campaign" that lost the last one. But with a clear, socialist message we will win — that's what the leadership election is about.



PHOTO: Kevin Morton

Christine Shawcroft
Leader, Tower Hamlets Labour Group.



Tony Benn and Eric Heffer do not sell out to the media, but use every opportunity afforded to put across the case for socialism. They are experienced, articulate and direct and we need that now more than ever. Labour Party policy must escape from the media "image" straightjacket of couched phrases.

The disasterous General Election result in 1987 means we have nothing to lose. Heads bowed uner the Tory yoke are lifting now; disquiet is expressed at Labour Party branch lever on how we have challenged Tory policies in recent years.

Footnote: next time at least one of the candidates will be a woman.

Kathy Ludbrook
Secretary, Ealing Southall CLP
(in a personal capacity)

Hackney

Ridley axes 600 Hackney jobs

By a Hackney Briefing supporter

Nicholas Ridley, Secretary of State for the Environment, has issued a directive instructing Hackney Council to close down its Direct Labour Organisation in 1989.

This move came as a complete surprise to Councillors and unions on March 31st, the day before the Easter holidays, and can only be interpreted as a further cynical political attack on local government.

It is a dramatic departure from the previous practice of th. Tories under the Planning and Land Act 1982 which obliges DLOs to make a 5% profit at least one year in three.

Between 1985 and 1988 Hackney DLO has made profits of over half a million pounds with productivity doubling. As a result it is one of the most successful in the country.

Despite this, Nicholas Ridley's justification is that the DLO has lost £5 between 1983-85 and rejects as spurious Council claims that the DLO has made a profit.

The consequences of the closure will be dramatic with over 600 jobs being lost and repercussions throughout most Council service areas. Also lost will be the valuable training initiatives Hackney has taken, particularly in terms of positive discrimination by targetting training courses at women.

Tenants in particular will be hard hit as more and more private contractors undertake work without the restrictions currently placed on them by the Council's select lists of tenderers.

The closure will be effective from April 1st 1989 when the Council will have no power to undertake works of new construction. The letter received by the Council prevents new work being tendered for after April 1st 1988.

John Dickens, UCATT steward and Chair of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, commented: "The unions will be mounting a massive campaign to win support for the DLO in Hackney and to drive home the point to Ridley that the DLO must stay."

The Council's emergency committee, meeting on March 31st, has decided to investigate all possible legal steps to challenge the directive. The Council intends to meet Ridley to "ask him" to reconsider his decision and also intends to seek a judicial review of the decision.

In the past Ridley has not listened to Labour Local Authority Leaders, as Margaret Hodge found to her cost, and there is no reason why he should treat Hackney any differently.

In comparison to most of the building trade dominated by cowboy firms Hackney DLO abides by Health and Safety regulations, provides sick pay, holidays and reasonably good pay. John Dickens said: "this attack will be 100 years' step backwards for building workers in terms of good pay and conditions."

Camden

Beck bows out of anti-racist struggle

By Cllr Adrian States Camden

Camden's Race Committee meeting on March 16th was the last to be chaired by Councillor Barbara Beck.

There was a long agenda and the meeting ended at 11pm.

It was to be followed immediately by a special meeting of the committee to discuss the effects of cuts on black and ethnic minority communities and support for organisations facing 100% cuts, the future of the Race Committee and the state of the Race Unit.

But at 11pm, Barbara Beck announced that she would not be chairing the special meeting, and walked out of the council chamber. So did the Vice Chair, Councillor Tony Dykes, the leader of the Council, and a number of other white, right-wing Councillors.

This left just three anti-cuts councillors (Sandra Plummer, Graham Shurety and Adrian States) and black and ethnic minority representatives who had waited some three and a half hours for the important issues of the special meeting agenda to be discussed.

As it needed at least five Councillors present for the meeting to start, it was abandoned for the night.

Had the black and ethnic minority co-optees to the committee for the previous meeting been allowed to continue as such, the special meeting would have taken place, but the Chair had made this impossible by a ruling earlier in the evening.

The cynical and disdainful way the Chair, Vice Chair, and some other Labour Councillors on the Committee treated the black and ethnic minorities present puts paid to any notion that Camden Council under the present Labour leadership takes seriously issues of anti-racism and equal opportunites.

It must surely have been apparent to whoever arranged for one meeting to follow the other that there would not be adequate time to discuss fully the items on the second agenda — and who is at their best after 11pm? But then not to announce beforehand that the Chair and majority of Councillors would not be present amounts to nothing less than gross deception.

It is not yet known who will be chairing the Race Committee for the next municipal year at the next meeting in June; but for Barbara Beck it was an ignoble exit after the last three years as Chair.

STOP PRESS

After three days of inconsistent prosecution evidence Tottenham magistrates threw charges against Haringey *Briefing* supporters Craig Brewin and Mike Marqusee out of court.
Full story next issue



PHOTO: Richard Hawkins

A campaign of mass agitation in schools in Kensington and Hammersmith against the break-up of the ILEA came to a climax on Saturday 26th March with a 700-strong demonstration of parents, teachers, children and Labour Party supporters, from Holland Park school to Hammersmith Town Hall.

In the last few months, more than 2,000 people have attended school-based meetings to debate the break-up of ILEA. Despite justified criticism of some ILEA policies, the number of those who supported the Tory view could be counted on one hand.

The local march was a high-spirited affair, led by a marching jazz band, and made a splash along High Street, Kensington and King Street, Hammersmith.

Save London's Education (SALE), the local umbrella group set up the Labour Party activists to campaign against the Tory's plans, is vigorously promoting the Parents' Ballot, which is confidently predicted will reject the ILEA break-up plan by a huge majority.

Richard Hawkins, Kensington CLP

The North London Socialist Conference
for a fighting, united, feminist left
APRIL 16-17

THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

Women for Socialism
presents:

WOMEN'S LIBERATION and the STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

17 April
10am-noon
NORTH LONDON POLYTECHNIC
HOLLOWAY RD N7
(Holloway Rd tube)

HILARY WAINWRIGHT, LINDSEY GERMAN

plus four 'mini-conferences' on:

- women and trade unions
- women in struggle against racism and imperialism
- women and sexuality, the family and reproductive rights
- women against the cuts

mixed conference; women-only speakers
all women are encouraged to participate
fees (2-day conference): £5 waged, £2 unwaged
professional creche – places must be booked in advance
food (including vegetarian) and drink
limited access for people with disabilities

FOR DELEGATES FORM AND DETAILS PHONE 801-6041

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North London Socialist Conference
April 16-17th
North London Polytechnic, London N7
(Holloway Road tube)
Summary of agenda

Saturday
10.30-11.00 Thatcherism & the struggle for socialism with Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Sharon Atkin, Paul Foot
12.00-1.30 Workshops: green politics, the economic crisis, Ireland, trade unions, Victorian values, Gorbachev, animal abuse.
1.30-3.30 Black and ethnic minority communities in Nothern Ireland, Diane Abbott, Tishen Ugens, Stafford Scott, Lionel Jeffries.
4.00-5.30 Workshops: immigration and deportation, Southern Africa, anti-racism, black representation in the labour movement.
5.30-6.30 NORTH LONDON BENN AND HEFFER CAMPAIGN ORGANISING MEETING. Make sure your area is represented.
Sunday
10.00-11.00 Women's liberation and the struggle for socialism, with Irene Breughel, Lindsey German, Nadine Finch
11.00-12.00 Workshops: women in the unions, and the cuts, and racism; sexuality
12.00-1.30 Defending and improving local services with Steve King, Shahid Tilly, Alan Waters, Rosie Newbiggings, Sandra Plummer.
2.30-4.00 Workshops: health service, local government, transport, education, housing.

Closing Plenary: creating a movement for our times, with Jeremy Corbyn, Mandy Mudd, Narendra Makanji, Tony Banks.

THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

North London Socialist Conference
Saturday April 17th
Lunch break
North London Poly

Benn and Heffer:
That's the ticket!

With Sharon Atkin and Narendra Makanji
Help us launch the local campaign to challenge for the Labour Leadership!

RACISM, FASCISM AND RESISTANCE RALLY SOUTHALL - 4PM
April 23rd is the ninth anniversary of the death of anti-fascist campaigner Blair Peach in Southall. Rally at: Villiers High School, Boyd Avenue, Southall.

Plaque laying ceremony to commemorate the events of April 23rd 1979 - 6.30pm.

(Organised by Southall monitoring Project, Caribbean Focus, and Anti-Fascist Action)