LONDON LETTER

A debate was arranged by our Ealing Branch (Socialist Party of Great Britain) with the "Union for British Freedom" — a pseudo Fascist organization. Victor Burgess was the appointed representative for the U. B. F. He is an individual with a pleasing personality and a disarming manner. Even the Communists "go easy" on him, and forego their jeers, boos and insults by gently taunting him with such remarks as "Come off it, Victor — you know that's not true," — and so on. Eventually, Victor felt himself unequal to the task which he had been called upon to perform and withdrew from the debate in favor of A. Raven Thompson who, we were told, could do their case more justice.

Raven Thompson was Mosley's chief lieutenant before the war and was known, at that time, as the philosopher of the British Union of Fascists — the British "Rosenberg". His name is anathema to all Communists and, needless to say, some SPGB members were apprehensive about such a debate.

The debate was held on the tenth of November at Kensington in south west London. I, personally, rather doubted the actual propaganda value of the debate, but it was a great lesson in democratic procedure and, in that respect, gave the Party some favorable publicity. It was a practical demonstration of the fact that the only way in which it is possible to defeat Fascism is to allow its exponents the opportunity to state their case. Having dragged their ideas into the light of day, we analyse, criticize, and finally paralyze them.

The debate lasted longer than the ten minutes which some people predicted. In fact, Raven Thompson's ordeal was dragged out to the full extent. He was saved from further mental paralysis by his good fortune in having the first half-hour which enabled him to waste that much time. Some of the Communists attempted to heckle him but, on the whole, it was a very orderly meeting.

A week or two ago, Sir Oswald Mosley announced to a meeting of Press representatives that a new British Union movement is to be launched in the New Year. This will incorporate all the neo-Fascist organizations which have sprung up since the war. The link between all these organizations had been obvious for some time.

At Gravesend, the Labor Party won its most crucial bye-election in a straight fight with the Conservative Party, since the Labor Government was formed two and a half years ago. In this constituency, during the General Election, the Labor Party gained a majority of nearly eight thousand. At that time there was also a Liberal candidate standing. The Conservative had good reason to believe that they would win this bye-election. The following reasons looked fairly good on paper, viz. the voting strength at any party running capitalism tends to decline after a time — this had also been confirmed in the case of the Labor Party since the General Election; there was no Liberal Candidate and the Conservatives thought that they would get the Liberal vote (5,000 in the General Election); and, finally, the trend as revealed in the Municipal Elections a few weeks previously when the Conservatives won many seats on local Councils from the Labor Party.

The Labor Party's reverses in the Municipal elections were a trump card in the hands of the opposition, although these are not always a reliable guide to the outcome of the Parliamentary campaign. It was generally considered that if the Conservatives won the Gravesend bye-election, Churchill would be immensely strengthened in his call for the Government to resign and for another General Election to be held.

However, in spite of the fact that the Conservative vote increased by about 9,000 the Labor Party retained the seat because their vote was increased by roughly 3,000. This was undoubtedly the most remarkable feature of a remarkable campaign. For a Government candidate to gain such an increase in votes after two and a half years is almost unprecedented. Naturally enough, because of the issues at stake, the Labor Party opened up with its heavy artillery. Every day of the campaign saw a coach-load of Labor M.P.s arriving to carry out canvassing work. Several Ministers addressed election meetings — including one or two members of the Cabinet (thus breaking an unwritten rule).

Miners were brought in from several coal-fields to do canvassing work, and Labor Party meetings were also supported by miners' choirs — complete with helmets and safety lamps, etc.

Well, in two and a half years the Labor Party hasn't lost a single seat to the Conservative opposition which just about sets up an all time record in Parliamentary history. This is all the more amazing in view of the continuation of war-time military conscription (vigorously opposed by the Labor Party since its formation), the introduction of a form of industrial conscription, a fuel crisis resulting in a very high (temporary) unemployed, bread and potato rationing and frequent cuts in other rationed commodities.

This loyalty and blind faith in the Labor Party is also reflected in yet another way — very revealing figures were issued recently, showing that man-hours lost owing to industrial disputes were only 1/15th of the number lost in the corresponding two years after the first world war. The significance of this is not overlooked by some members of the capitalist class and more than a few have come out in open support of the Labor Government, which was hardly a wise move on their part as it has given many workers considerable food for thought. Needless to say, profits have been soaring sky-high since the end of the war; and many more capitalists will begin to support the Labor Party — as long as it retains the confidence of the workers.

It is my conviction that if the Labor Party is in power, when the next crisis of overproduction hits us, it will be spent as a political force. It will be split, beyond repair, into many distinct factions. The Conservatives will last as long as capitalism, in my opinion.

When Edgware Branch debated with the Edgware Laborites behind closed doors (they refused a public debate "between two Left Wing organizations"!) we saw quite clearly the cleavage in ideas, opinions etc., inside the Labor Party — there were people with a Conservative-like mentality, crypto Communists and even a few who said they agreed with the SPGB object but insisted on a different approach to achieve it. Three individuals confessed to us privately that they knew nationalization wasn't socialism. One even confessed to a sore conscience! Incidentally, this latter conviction is often trotted out still by the more class-conscious members of Left Wing organizations. I see considerable progress for the Party in the not-too-distant future, when the Labor ship of state breaks up on the rocks of capitalist economy.

"Gush, mountains of gush" — that is how the Daily Worker of the C. P. described the nauseating spectacle of the recent Royal Wedding. However, the real Communist objection lay in the fact that the Prince Charming had Greek connections, and as everyone knows only too well the Greek Royal Family is "Fascist".

For weeks we had to tolerate as well as possible a spate of photographs, articles, leaders etc. in practically every newspaper and periodical. On the actual date of the wedding the evening newspapers excluded everything else! The ceremony was broadcast and most cinemas have shown a 35 min. film in technicolor of the procession.

Before the couple went on the first stage of their honeymoon, Romsey had been a peaceful little village situated in a peaceful and predominanty rural county. However, all this