

## Accommodating Resistance: Unionization, Gender, and Ethnicity in Winnipeg's Garment Industry, 1929–1945

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### Article abstract

This article examines the culturally particular and gendered ways in which Jewish immigrant women in the garment industry negotiated their new Canadian urban environments by participating in labour protest, indicating how the site of the strike was one structured by gender and ethnicity as well as by class. Canada's urban space both facilitated immigrant women's integration into society by enabling their interaction with Canadian political and economic structures and encouraged their retention of culturally particular ways of life by providing sites and spaces for politically charged gatherings that not only reinforced these workers' ethnic traditions but also put their status as militant women on public display. These women strikers' accommodation and resistance to Canadian society was also affected by Anglo Canadians' representations of them, by shifting unionization tactics—from radical to conservative—and by social constructions of gender, ethnicity, and class.

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*Cet article examine les moyens culturellement particuliers et générés par lesquels les femmes immigrantes juives dans l'industrie du vêtement au Canada ont négocié leur nouvel environnement urbain à travers diverses formes de manifestations ouvrières, en démontrant comment le lieu de la manifestation a été structuré par le genre, l'ethnicité et la classe. L'espace urbain canadien a servi à la fois à faciliter l'intégration sociale des femmes immigrées en permettant leur interaction avec les structures politiques et économiques canadiennes et à favoriser leur rétention de modes de vie culturellement particuliers en leur offrant un espace et des sites pour des rassemblements à caractère politique qui non seulement ont renforcé les traditions ethniques de ces ouvrières mais ont aussi mis leur statut de femmes militantes au grand jour. La façon dont ces femmes grévistes se sont accommodées et ont résisté à la société canadienne a également été affectée par leurs représentations anglo-canadiennes, l'évolution des tactiques syndicales—de radicales à conservatrices—et par des constructions sociales de genre, d'ethnicité et de classe.*

Opportunities to participate politically in the urban public sphere were often limited for the many Eastern European immigrant women who arrived in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. Labour organization, however, represented one site in which immigrant women could publicly confront socio-economic inequalities. Because of its largely female, ethnic work force, its high levels of militant protest, and its precipitation of both radical and conservative unions, the garment

industry in particular represents a valuable sphere in which immigrant women's adaptation to their newly adopted society, through public labour activism in urban contexts, can be studied.

Based on extensive research in garment union records and Department of Labour Strikes and Lockouts files, and drawing upon oral history interviews with garment industry workers, this paper examines the culturally particular and gendered ways in which Jewish immigrant women in the needle trades negotiated their new urban environments by participating in labour protest, indicating how the site of the strike was one structured by gender and ethnicity as well as by class. During the early 1930s a militant Communist-led union, the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers (IUNTW), dominated garment workers' activism, and the needle trades witnessed a series of explosive strikes that enabled women to participate in workplace negotiations. After 1935, however, the more bureaucratically organized International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWF) took command of labour organization, steered workers away from radicalism, and pacified female activism.<sup>1</sup> Using Winnipeg's garment industry as a case study of larger, national phenomena, and drawing upon American historian James Barrett's influential study of the ways in which European immigrants became Americanized through involvement in labour activity,<sup>2</sup> this article provides a nuanced explanation of how Canada's urban space facilitated immigrant women's integration into society—by enabling their interaction with Canadian political and economic structures through strikes and public demonstrations—and encouraged their retention of culturally particular ways of life, by providing sites and spaces for politically charged gatherings that not only reinforced these workers' ethnic traditions but also put their status as militant women on public display. Canadian cities thus enabled simultaneous accommodation and resistance.

These militant spectacles had a distinctive effect on the ways in which Anglo-Canadian newspapers represented women workers' gender and ethnicity. Between 1929 and 1935, a particularly turbulent time in the needle trades, city newspapers produced denigrating renderings of militant female labourers' ethnicity as deviant and their femininity as threatening, suggesting that these women radicals unsettled middle- and upper-class notions of acceptable feminine public behaviour. Their involvement in Communist unions, moreover, interfered with their accommodation to new urban environments. After 1935, less radical tactics of labour negotiation as dictated by Popular Front politics enabled Winnipeggers to reconceptualize ethnic women workers as

accommodating and benevolent members of society. Despite these representational shifts, however, both the radical, Communist IUNTW and the bureaucratic ILGWU functioned as sites of interaction between immigrant garment workers and their adopted societies.

This paper thus seeks to contribute to ongoing conversations in labour historiography in three ways: first, by examining the ways in which strikes and labour demonstrations operated both as spaces of immigrant resistance to Anglo-Canadian institutions and assimilative pressures and as sites of accommodation to North American culture and politics; second, by exploring how shifting protest tactics, from radical to conservative, affected the most marginalized of industrial workers—immigrant women; and third, by recognizing the diversity of working women's experiences and by highlighting the value of analyzing ethnic women's radicalism within culturally particular terms.

### **Women, Garment Production, and Unions: History and Historiography**

The story of Winnipeg's garment industry begins in the 1880s. At that time, the prairie boom town's economy was rooted in the production, processing, shipping, and storing of grain and agricultural products; the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) soon fuelled the growth of other industries. The garment trade emerged in response to farmers' and labourers' demand for work clothes suitable to the harsh western prairie climate, while the tailoring trade catered to the city's growing cadre of white-collar professionals.<sup>3</sup> The growth of the garment industry and the parallel expansion of railway and housing construction, lumbering and supplying, and secondary manufacturing was accompanied by an immigration boom, as the Laurier Liberals launched a massive advertising and recruiting campaign in the hopes of attracting Eastern European peasant farmers to the Canadian West. Prominent Winnipeggers feared the government and CPR were more interested in settling the Northwest Territories than in bringing newcomers to Manitoba and embarked on their own effort to attract immigrants. As historian Doug Smith notes, the actions of all three levels of government and the CPR infuriated Winnipeg's labour movement, which interpreted these efforts to recruit immigrant labourers as an exploitative, bourgeois tactic to create a surplus labour pool, depress wages, and obstruct working-class activism.<sup>4</sup>

Initially established as family-run cottage enterprises, then, garment manufacturing businesses were soon transformed by the growth of industrial capitalism and its demand for unskilled labour. After the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, an event that marked the end of Winnipeg's dominance as the largest receiving and supplying hub in Western Canada, garment manufacturers were able to secure abandoned warehouses at low prices and to establish thriving factories. Winnipeg's mass-produced ladies' garment industry continued to flourish in the interwar years as factory owners embraced modern practices of technological mechanization and scientific management. The scale of industrial growth should not be exaggerated, however, as most clothing factories remained relatively small, family-operated affairs with fewer than a dozen workers. The rise of mass consumerism and the growth of chain stores such as Eaton's and the Bay did allow some larger producers to diversify their factories and enabled select immigrant entrepreneurs to challenge the dominance of established manufacturers.

By 1937 Winnipeg possessed thirty-eight factories, ranging from minuscule family operations to larger mechanized production systems, which employed 1,223 workers, 1,000 of which were women.<sup>5</sup> The vast majority of these women were newcomers from Eastern Europe. The garment industry was one of the few spheres in which female immigrants could obtain employment in Winnipeg's discriminatory and paternalistic economy.

Garment workers' class, religious, and ethnic loyalties were often at odds in needle trades factories. "The workers in this ruthless industry," according to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, "are nearly all of foreign birth or parentage. A few English names are on the pay sheets, but a great majority are Ukrainian, Polish, German and Jewish."<sup>6</sup> By 1920 the predominantly Anglo-Saxon character of garment manufacturers had been challenged by entrepreneurial Eastern European Jewish immigrant tailors, who combined traditional values of craft pride with new forms of urban industrial discipline, which enabled them to mediate between the immigrant working class and the Anglo-Canadian business elite.<sup>7</sup> While some Jewish owners actively recruited Jewish immigrants to staff their factories, others, versed in Jewish working-class culture, feared Jewish workers' militancy and refused to hire ethnically similar labourers. Although common bonds of ethnicity occasionally blunted industrial disputes, Jewish workers often revolted against neighbours and relatives who had assisted their emigration to Winnipeg. Class oppression frequently overshadowed cultural solidarity; as one Jewish worker commented, "Why should I feel better if I am exploited by a Jew?"<sup>8</sup>

Life as a needle trades worker was incredibly difficult. "Some are old-timers in the trade," the *Winnipeg Free Press* reflected in 1934, "proud of 20 or more years as cutters or machinists. Others are young girls learning button-sewing and much simpler jobs in the industry. They all work hard and monotonously. Employers admit that working in their shops is a severe and steady grind."<sup>9</sup> Competition was fierce; employers reduced production costs by slashing wages and overburdening workers. Textile plants were situated in abandoned warehouses—originally designed to obstruct natural light and prevent air circulation—which exposed garment workers to hazardous overcrowding and unsanitary sweatshop conditions.<sup>10</sup> Such brutal workplace environments were not unique to the prairie city known for its history of bitter labour disputes and militant worker uprisings. In other North American garment manufacturing centres—Toronto, Montreal, New York, Chicago—the chronically unstable and competitive industry was notorious for its dangerous and exploitative character.<sup>11</sup> In the years before the Second World War, moreover, before the rise of an interventionist and welfarist state, workers faced intense repression from the combined forces of government and capital, which employed coercive and often violent tactics to protect employer rights and property and to preserve social order.<sup>12</sup> This repression of working-class radicalism, especially that of ethnic labourers, was particularly harsh in Winnipeg because of the legacy of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, which had been blamed on the agitation of Communist immigrant workers. Still, Winnipeg's immigrant labour force, women included, did not accept oppressive working conditions passively.

Union organization was one response to the negative consequences of industrial capitalism—alongside the rise of social reform movements and corporate welfarism—and had appeared intermittently in the city's

garment industry since the late nineteenth century. John Hample has outlined the many conflicts and strikes that occurred in the men's suit industry between 1887 and 1921, linking nineteenth-century craft unionism with the more radical industrial unionism under One Big Union (OBU) organization in the twentieth century. Hample argues that custom tailors' involvement with the OBU enabled them to develop a more inclusive understanding of class-consciousness, building solidarity with other sectors of the city's working class, particularly immigrants, while also retaining traditional forms of craft pride.<sup>13</sup> Ladies' garment unions also made efforts, largely unsuccessfully, to organize needle trades workers. The United Garment Workers of America (UGW) established the first union of women workers in 1899, while the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, led by militant immigrant Jews, and the OBU made similar attempts in the early twentieth century. Some garment industry unions participated in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, such as local 32 of the Winnipeg ILGWU whose leader Shia Feldman was a member of the General Strike Committee, and the OBU Tailors' Unit.<sup>14</sup> Still, neither the UGW nor the ILGWU had achieved much success in organizing the needle trades and, by the late 1920s, when the industry began to boom, the ILGWU was non-existent in Winnipeg, while the OBU had suffered severe setbacks due to post-general strike repression of radical activity.<sup>15</sup>

Historians of the garment industry have become increasingly aware of the ways in which women needle trades workers resisted workplace exploitation. The works of scholars such as James Mochoruk and Donna Webber, and Mercedes Steedman have illustrated how women workers, as targets of employer discrimination and as victims of industrial capitalism, challenged the paternalistic attitudes of male factory owners and union leaders and frequently rejected manufacturers' efforts to render them powerless.<sup>16</sup> Rather than passively accept exploitation, female workers attempted to navigate the gendered structure of needle trades unionization in ways designed to enhance both individual and collective bargaining power.<sup>17</sup> Steedman argues that the shift from IUNTW industrial unionism, which emphasized shop floor activism, toward ILGWU international unionism, characterized by a central administration that was more critical of rank-and-file participation, provoked a significant decline in women's ability to enact progressive reform through unionization.<sup>18</sup>

Gender segregation and inequality were facts of life in the needle trades, but these divisions were based on a definition of skill that was not inherent to clothing workers' abilities but was historically constructed through the feminization of industrial garment production. Women's allegedly natural capabilities—sewing and embroidery—were institutionalized in the workplace, while male garment workers, who already occupied the privileged and skilled positions of cutters, pressers, and supervisors, strengthened their negotiating power through unionization and collective bargaining. Although men appreciated women workers' numbers on picket lines and used their sweatshop degradation to arouse societal sympathy, practices of unionization essentially excluded female labourers and instead functioned as means through which male workers constructed masculine working-class identities independently from women.<sup>19</sup>

Women's participation in radical activities was also limited by dominant cultural norms and values. Historians of working-class women have

long debated the extent to which middle- and upper-class Victorian notions of respectable domesticity and femininity can be said to characterize the ways in which working-class women conceived of proper gendered behaviour. While some scholars argue that middle-class notions of female wage earning as temporary and supplementary, of male labour as the backbone of family economies, and of women as delicate creatures naturally unsuited to industrial labour became accepted truths within the working class as well, others have suggested that the harsh material realities of working-class life limited labourers' acceptance of these middle-class views.<sup>20</sup> These observations are also suggestive of the ways in which gendered ways of experiencing the world may have shaped women workers' radicalism by providing a constant reminder of the societal impropriety of female militancy.<sup>21</sup> While those workers who had internalized middle-class understandings of feminine passivity may have been reluctant to transgress social norms by engaging in radical activity, then, other women labourers may have rejected such norms as irrelevant to the grinding poverty of daily life and may have thus have had fewer qualms over participating in public workplace radicalism.

Needle trades organization was not only gendered; the ways in which women garment labourers experienced processes of production and patterns of protest were also shaped by ethnicity, race, and culture. Labour historians have recently sought to complicate studies of working-class militancy by examining cultural influences on forms of labour organization and protest. Scholars including Franca Iacovetta, Donna Gabaccia, and Fraser Ottanelli, for example, have pointed out that labour historians' preoccupation with notions of respectable womanhood have been framed in reference to Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American notions of femininity and may not necessarily be applicable to immigrant women.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Ruth Frager and Roz Usiskin have suggested that Jewish-Canadian immigrant garment workers approached labour activism in ways inspired by traditions of leftist radicalism deeply entrenched in Jewish culture.<sup>23</sup> Frager argues that Jewish homeland culture, though changed in North American environments, often contained ideals of female respectability that did not necessarily preclude acts of public protest or labour activism.<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Guglielmo has demonstrated the multiplicity of means through which Italian women needle trades workers in New York participated in workplace struggles both inside and outside of institutionalized union structures.<sup>25</sup> Guglielmo's insightful depiction of the distinctively female, Italian practices of protest—promoting labour reform within Italian workers' clubs to heighten class-consciousness, networking with neighbouring Italian women to build solidarity, encouraging multi-generational activism to educate younger children in leftist thought—is indicative of the varied and subtle ways in which ethnocultural considerations informed working-class radicalism.

Other scholars have examined the ways in which labour organization facilitated immigrant adaptation to North American communities. James Barrett, for instance, suggests that in the United States, working-class politics provided a framework within which ethnic newcomers were able to understand urban American political and economic systems; unionization thus provided a path toward acculturation and socialization for immigrant working classes.<sup>26</sup> Winnipeg's garment workers' unions similarly functioned as mediators between immigrant labourers and

their adopted society. The unions in Barrett's study, however, originally comprised native-born workers who chose to include immigrants in their organizational tactics. The Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union are distinctive because they were formed by immigrants, who imported leftist ideologies from Europe while also adapting these radical values to North American urban culture. Militant IUNTW unionism enabled immigrant women to directly confront Anglo-Canadian capitalist society by staging militant spectacles in public spaces; although this activism introduced immigrant workers to Canadian economic and political institutions, it also ensured that radical labourers were labelled as subversive foreigners—as outsiders—by the mainstream press. ILGWU organization sought to revise these dominant perceptions of immigrant workers as deviant and alien and, by pursuing accommodation to Winnipeg society rather than staging urban pageants of resistance, altered societal representations of immigrant workers' gender and ethnicity.

The remaining sections of this article will bring together these historiographical insights into the influence of gender, race, and class upon immigrant workers' experiences with an analysis of the ways in which strikes and labour demonstrations, as one facet of union activity, facilitated immigrant women garment workers' accommodation and resistance to Anglo-Canadian urban society.

### ***Industrial Unionism, Women Workers, and the Public Spectacle of Radicalism***

The 1920s to the 1940s were difficult years in labour's drive to organize the needle trades. Workers' desires to improve their lives and working conditions often fell victim to nasty infighting among politically, ethnically, and organizationally diverse unions—the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Unions (ILGWU), the International Fur Workers' Union (IFWU), the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA), and the United Garment Workers (UGW), in particular—whose leaders tended to focus more on competing with one another for the loyalty of workers, usually by launching smear campaigns against the other unions, than on ameliorating the exploitation of labourers by the capitalist system. During the 1920s, the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) followed the party line of the Communist International in the Soviet Union and pursued a policy of "boring from within," working within established unions such as the ILGWU and the UGW as members of the Trade Union Education League (TUEL), an organization dedicated to promoting industrial as opposed to business unionism, in an effort to convert workers and unionists to the Communist cause.<sup>27</sup> After 1928, however, the Communist International predicted the imminent collapse of the global capitalist system and ordered Communists around the world to withdraw from established unions and to form separate, revolutionary unions.<sup>28</sup> In the Canadian garment industry, this dual-union policy of the "Third Period" of the Communist movement resulted in the withdrawal of Communists from conventional needle trades unions such as the ILGWU and the ACWA, the formation of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers (IUNTW), and the creation of the Workers' Unity League (WUL), an umbrella organization for Communist unions across the country that was established out of the former TUEL. The revolutionary, Communist-led IUNTW, whose leadership was almost exclusively Jewish, would spend the next seven years battling not only the capitalist Canadian state but also the established international and craft-based unions.

Communist influence in Winnipeg's needle trades during the early 1930s reflected national patterns of unionization. The WUL, whose membership included other radical organizations in the textile and resource-extraction industries in addition to the IUNTW, was also a product of the dual-union policy of the Third Period and sought to oppose the craft-based Canadian Trades and Labour Congress (TLC). The TLC had responded to the exploitative industrial relations, intensifying unemployment, and economic hardship of the 1930s with resignation. Labour activism, TLC members reasoned, would be unsuccessful amongst the masses of starving workers who, faced with harsh necessities of survival, would accept any wage. But the TLC misdiagnosed the ways in which Depression conditions shaped workers' response to unemployment and was wrong to predict working-class passivity. Workers interpreted the labour organization's inactivity as indifference toward their plight, which intensified radicalist sentiments. Rather than defer to manufacturers' impositions of wage cuts and layoffs, industrial labourers challenged institutionalized exploitation and engaged in escalating levels of militant protest. Communist labour activists argued that radical unionization was the only means through which workers could challenge employers' authoritarian practices and exercise control over their lives.<sup>29</sup>

Labourers' willingness to battle oppressive economic and political institutions, in the face of intense job competition, threats of unemployment, and biting poverty, illustrates the harsh material realities of Canadian life during the Depression. Such economic hardship implied that working-class women's wage earning was necessary for familial survival. Despite societal chastisement for working outside the home during a time of high unemployment, women continued to seek paid labour during the 1930s in an effort to ameliorate hunger, homelessness, and material scarcity.<sup>30</sup> As in other Canadian urban centres, Winnipeg's state institutions and social infrastructure were ill prepared to provide adequate relief for the impoverished unemployed. And rather than sanction collective bargaining or address workers' grievances, the federal and provincial governments responded to labour unrest with intensified levels of repression, often resorting to violent means of suppressing working-class discontent.<sup>31</sup> In this harsh and repressive climate, industrial unionists' urgings to seize control of production and to protest capitalist exploitation often appealed to desperate workers, both immigrant and native-born. Not all members of Communist unions such as the IUNTW were members of the Communist Party of Canada, nor did all participants in strikes hope to see the end of capitalism. But Communist-led unions, to many workers, appeared willing and able to ameliorate some of the worst abuses of the capitalist system.

In Winnipeg, leaders of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers urged female labourers to individually and collectively resist industrial exploitation by challenging employers' power. Evidently responsive to these calls, needle trades workers frequently revolted against sweatshop conditions, and clothing factories throughout the city witnessed escalating protests and explosive strikes. Garment industry protest in the 1930s thus functioned as an important arena through which immigrant women were able to confront systems of dominance and hierarchy. Although union representatives assumed prominent roles in encouraging militancy, IUNTW organization was not a simple mechanism for exercising top-down control of labouring classes, as workplace

confrontations were often the result of rank-and-file workers' spontaneous uprisings. Whether the immediate cause of dispute concerned unfair dismissals of workers, attempted wage cuts, or increased workloads, needle trades labourers were eager to voice discontent.

Immigrant women workers were frequently the instigators of militancy. When female labourers decided to revolt against sweatshop conditions, men often followed. In a 1931 strike at the Jacob-Crowley Co. ladies' cloakmaking factory in Winnipeg, for instance, fifty women decided to strike in protest against wage cuts and firings.<sup>32</sup> Prior to the actual walkout, IUNTW local no. 9 had gathered at the Jewish Liberty Temple to discuss problems at the Jacob-Crowley plant. "At this meeting," explained the *One Big Union Bulletin*, "the 33 finishers (girls) voted for a strike and the 5 operators voted against a strike."<sup>33</sup> Finishers were among the least skilled and lowest paid employees of garment manufacturing plants and were, consequently, predominantly immigrant women.

These women were also among the most militant of picketers during the dispute. Several female labourers were quickly arrested for "being disorderly in connection with the strike," reported the *Winnipeg Tribune*.<sup>34</sup> One woman was convicted in court for denigrating strike-breaking women as "dirty scabs" and "rats," while another female worker was fined fifteen dollars for disorderliness.<sup>35</sup> The victims of these alleged assaults were also women; firm co-manager J. H. Crowley complained, as his female strikebreakers had expressed fear of being attacked by the militant striking women.<sup>36</sup> Observing these incidents of woman-on-woman violence, the *Winnipeg One Big Union Bulletin* attempted to rally working-class support, warning, ominously, that "the wage slaves are getting fed up."<sup>37</sup> Despite facing gender, ethnic, and skill discrimination, women participated in union activity and used the IUNTW to challenge capitalist society. Women wage slaves' discontent erupted in similar ways throughout the early 1930s.

When one female employee at the A. M. Hurtig Fur Company voiced dissatisfaction with working conditions, for instance, and was consequently fired,<sup>38</sup> union leaders and male workers took the woman's complaints seriously. IUNTW officials claimed that the worker had been discharged for attending a union meeting, and twenty-six men and four women responded by launching a general walkout of company employees and demanding that the woman be reinstated. This conflict escalated into nearly four weeks of violent picketing, which featured a mass demonstration of a thousand needle trades workers who met at the Jewish Peretz Hall in North End Winnipeg and defiantly marched around the city's garment district. Eight hundred clothing workers subsequently gathered at the Talmud Torah and pledged one half day's wage per week to support the striking fur workers.<sup>39</sup> Although the explosive protests that characterized Winnipeg's needle trades most often failed to alleviate workplace conditions, such revolts demonstrated the ways in which class solidarity maintained the potential to bridge gender divisions and, moreover, indicated the ways in which immigrant women could seek control over their labour by claiming the right to protest Canadian institutions within the urban context.

Some Jewish women from Eastern Europe were able to hold minor leadership positions in the male-dominated unions. Bertha Dolgoy migrated to Winnipeg in 1922 as a thirteen-year-old girl who was ignorant of her new country's language and customs. She quickly integrated

into Winnipeg's North End radical Jewish community, obtained her first job in the needle trades at the age of fifteen, and joined the IUNTW in 1929.<sup>40</sup> Unable to achieve a skilled job or supervisor position in the factories, Dolgoy became a correspondent with the *Toronto Worker* and was respected as "a prominent member of the Needle Trades delegation."<sup>41</sup> Throughout her life in Winnipeg, Dolgoy learned to wield union organization as a tool for confronting her adopted city and, through her leadership, acted as a "radical ethnic broker"—an intermediary figure similar to those documented by historians of immigrant radicals who functioned as conciliators between newcomers and receiving societies—in introducing newly arrived immigrant women to Canadian economic and political institutions.<sup>42</sup> She believed that the freedom to challenge capitalist society was inherent to Canadian culture, something the immigrant working class knew but employers did not: "The main exploiter found out that I am active in building the Industrial Union amongst the needle trades and that I am a member of the Communist Party. The manager of the shop has forgotten that we live in a land of 'democracy,' even though he needs my labour, he fired me because I saw that the workers need to be united."<sup>43</sup> Dolgoy's radical insights into the ironic contradictions between Canada's self-proclaimed liberalism and practised suppression of workers not only represented efforts to ameliorate labourers' dismal lives, they also identified important gaps in mainstream social reformers' rhetoric.

Although "problems of the working girl" captured the attention of progressive reformers in the early twentieth century, these activists did not conceptualize women to be wage earners in their own right.<sup>44</sup> Rather, bourgeois Anglo-Canadian social activists perceived women as guardians of morality, purity, and family values. Since women were responsible for raising children, mainstream reformers were concerned about immigrant women's inability to educate their children within Canadian traditions. Industrial legislation was intended to protect women as wives and mothers; livable wages and sanitary work conditions were designed to safeguard women workers' morality and reproductive health. Female labourers were expected to remain at home following childbirth, an ideal that ignored the fact that most immigrant families could not afford such a luxury.<sup>45</sup> Employed women who were active in militant unionism violated these norms. Women, naturally, were not radical.

But the participation of ethnically diverse, female, working-class needle trades labourers in strikes and other radical demonstrations suggests that middle-class notions of respectable femininity and womanly domesticity may not have blunted these women's militant tendencies. That is, the eagerness with which working women embraced militant protest indicates that they may not have been inhibited by the gendered mainstream ideologies characterizing union involvement and workplace revolt as improper and unladylike, particularly in the harsh and repressive climate of Depression-era Canada. Oral histories suggest that those who were critical of female militancy pointed to poverty and desperate material circumstances as restraining forces; fears over appearing unladylike did not guide workplace conduct.<sup>46</sup> Jewish workers especially appear to have enjoyed the support of relatively large, active, radical ethnic communities that encouraged female militancy. Jewish culture was fundamentally patriarchal, and most middle-class Jewish women, like Anglo-Canadian women, were expected to cease their involvement in the paid labour force upon marriage. But working-class Jewish men

and women interviewed about their experiences in Winnipeg's needle trades decades after the Depression did not remember marriage as an impediment to women's participation in the paid labour force,<sup>47</sup> and Jewish women's subordination to men was not necessarily equivalent to the bourgeois Victorian "cult of true womanhood" in which women were perceived as too passive and fragile to venture beyond the sanctity of the home.<sup>48</sup> This is not to say that Jewish women dominated IUNTW leadership, for they did not, or that the industrial garment union sought to challenge gender-based inequities in the workplace or to promote feminist concerns, for it did not. Nor is this to say that Jewish women were essentially "more radical" than other women or that Anglo-Canadian and Jewish conceptions of femininity were diametrically opposed. This is simply to suggest that women's class and ethnic backgrounds affected the ways in which they understood their participation, or lack thereof, in radical workplace activities such as strikes and public demonstrations.

Whether or not garment workers measured their behaviour against the cult of true womanhood, the mainstream press certainly did, taking care to emphasize female needle trades strikers' deviancy from the middle-class norm.<sup>49</sup> The bourgeois, paternalistic language used in the 1931 *Toronto Star* to describe female Jewish strikers in Toronto was typical. "One man," the newspaper reported, "claiming to be an innocent bystander was pounced upon by some half dozen irate females who grabbed him by the hair, then pushed him head first through a plate glass window."<sup>50</sup> These women, dressmakers organized within the IUNTW, allegedly mobbed policemen and strikebreakers until they were ultimately arrested: "The first patrol car was so crowded with the arrested fighters that the police had to push them in like sardines in a can. One woman kicked and screamed furiously. She was hard to handle. She gave the police all they could do to shove her into the wagon. Another fellow was held down on the sidewalk by a bunch of women . . . the policeman was checked by six or eight women. They clung to his coat, his arms, his belt, anything in reach . . . but the big fellow shook the women off."<sup>51</sup>

Because striking needle trades workers were perceived to contradict bourgeois ideas of feminine respectability, the media sensationalized female radicalism as a threat to social order. The newspaper's construction of these women as sardine-like, screaming, hysterical, clinging to the policeman like predatory animals, moreover, rendered their humanity and their material hardships invisible.

Newspapers' denigration of women radicals as irrational and animal-like not only denied the impoverished realities out of which workers' protests emerged, they effectively dismissed the possibility that female militants were capable of mounting serious resistance to bourgeois institutions. As Joan Sangster, Joy Parr, and Dana Frank have observed of other North American labour disputes involving women strikers, media characterizations reduced female workers to roles of the excitable follower or the vulnerable waif in need of male protection.<sup>52</sup> But such representations, which made light of women strikers' allegedly silly desires to play the radical militant, were largely reserved for Anglo-Canadian strikers. When the woman striker was an ethnic immigrant, affiliated with a Jewish, Communist-led union no less, elements of subversion and danger emerged. In the eyes of the press, these strikers were not just harmless, foolish girls.

The Winnipeg media, for instance, emphasized the foreignness of ethnic women needle trades strikers, representing them as alien figures who were potentially threatening to the social order. One of the more notorious of these radicals, Jewish immigrant Freda Coodin, prominent member of the IUNTW, became rather infamous for her militant picketing. According to the press, Coodin—"alleged picketer and ring-leader of the strikers"—was arrested during one strike for reportedly threatening scabbing women with death.<sup>53</sup> According to victim Pauline Furer, Coodin had terrorized her home and had promised to break every bone in the strikebreaker's body if she continued to scab. Fur worker Ruth Loeb also testified against "the Coodin woman," yet, according to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Loeb had bravely resisted these threats.<sup>54</sup> "The pretty, brown-eyed fur worker promptly telephoned her employer," newspapers proclaimed, "who drove to her home early the following morning" despite the militant strikers lurking about.<sup>55</sup> Mainstream media reporters demonized Coodin, constructing her as a lawless villain who preyed upon innocent girls, writing, "'You dirty scabs, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves,' the Coodin woman snarled at [Loeb] and another girl as they pulled up in an automobile at the shop."<sup>56</sup>

Freda Coodin claimed that one strikebreaker at Hurtig Fur, Simon Lesternick, had slapped her in the face while she was picketing outside the plant. Although several witnesses independently confirmed these allegations, the judge concluded that the charge "was 'very little short of absurdity. It was unlikely,' he said, 'that Lesternick would have attacked Miss Coodin . . . I believe the accused [Coodin] deliberately held Lesternick and called upon her comrades to attack him.'"<sup>57</sup> Witnesses testified that Coodin had not been present at the home of Pauline Furer—they had issued the threats to Furer themselves—and that she had not orchestrated industrial militancy. Coodin's lawyer Solomon Greenberg attempted to invoke rhetoric of Coodin's female vulnerability with the hopes of exonerating her, and claimed the charge was "a frame-up" whereby "Miss Coodin, a woman, was singled out for a harassing prosecution, while the man who had assaulted her in plain view of the police 'was given a seat of honor at crown counsel's table.'"<sup>58</sup> Adolph Hurtig, co-owner of the fur-manufacturing plant, admitted that "he had seen Miss Coodin parading up and down outside his store on several occasions, but at no time had she misbehaved herself."<sup>59</sup> The judge dismissed all evidence that would have vindicated Coodin, found her guilty of nine charges of assault, intimidation, and unlawful assembly, and sentenced her to nine months in jail.<sup>60</sup> Coodin contracted tuberculosis while in Stony Mountain Penitentiary and died at the age of twenty-three.<sup>61</sup> Her tombstone, engraved with the inscription "A Victim of the Hurtig Furrier Strike August 1933," was defaced the day after it was erected, the word "Hurtig" scratched out of the inscription.<sup>62</sup>

As Coodin's story illustrates, society constructed gender in complex ways. While emphasizing the innocence of female victims of radicals' aggression, the mainstream press demonized women strikers as examples of femininity gone wrong. Winnipeggers acknowledged the necessity of working-class and immigrant women's labour for family survival; however, those workers who actively confronted industrial exploitation violated acceptable standards of conduct. But needle trades strikers' activism suggests that they refused to complacently accept bourgeois rhetoric concerning the incidental, temporary, and inconsequential nature of women's paid labour. Needle trades workers, both men and

women, later recalled that female participation in the garment industry had been vital to familial survival.<sup>63</sup> Women in the needle trades bore a double burden—female and ethnic—and their resilience to criticism for embodying Anglo-Canadian middle-class fears of subversive foreigners and for violating the performance of female respectability in urban spaces indicates that ethnicity and gender may have informed their class-based militancy in very subtle ways.

Communist newspapers interpreted anti-Communist criticism as evidence of bourgeois oppression and as motivation for further militancy, while mainstream Winnipeggers considered increased labour activism as cause for intensified denunciation. As demonization and proletarianization became increasingly intertwined, Winnipeggers constructed the entire needle trades workforce, regardless of gender, as subversive foreigners, illustrating the pervasive fear of labour radicalism and the connection between radicalism and immigrants in Depression-era Canada, a fear that had lingered since the upheavals of 1919. The dominant mainstream image of prototypical needle trades strikers—Communist, alien, and therefore frightening—emerged during an IUNTW-led strike at the Jacob-Crowley cloaking plant. The press was careful to reinforce the destructiveness and differentness of the strikers, linking these constructs with the workers' ethnicity. "Menacing crowds" began to gather outside Jacob-Crowley, according to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and soon "trouble was brewing" as the street became cluttered with "a shouting, muttering mass, waving their hands vigorously and conferring excitedly amongst themselves."<sup>64</sup> The mob of male and female foreign workers became "enraged when they saw an auto bearing a group of 'non-sympathizers' driving out of Portage onto Main Street" and "with an enraged roar, crashed through the police lines and rushed at the vehicle. The driver, however, was on the look-out, and stepping on the gas, he sped away, leaving the howling crowd far behind."<sup>65</sup>

Factory co-owner J. H. Crowley explicitly blamed the conflict on foreign forces: "One of the leaders is a woman, who, I have heard, has been to Russia and been thoroughly schooled in the Communist methods of agitation. The strike was staged without any warning. No representatives of the workers came to see me or my partner to let us know they were dissatisfied."<sup>66</sup> Foreignness, radicalness, and subversiveness became interwoven in this struggle, which was fought not just over working conditions and union recognition but also over the ways in which workers' class, gender, and ethnicity would be represented in mainstream and radical presses, and Winnipeg's elite was careful to emphasize the ways in which labour radicals did not belong in the city. The press and the elite were able to capitalize on middle-class Winnipeggers' long-standing convictions that radicalism was a philosophy alien to North America, the product of foreign agitation. Winnipeg mayor Ralph Webb, for example, warned the city's "citizens" against the activities of garment industry "Reds," and blamed Communists for industrial agitation in the needle trades.<sup>67</sup> The juxtaposition of "Reds" and "citizens" implied that these identities were perceived to be mutually exclusive—one could not be a Red citizen—which reinforced the construction of garment workers as alien and facilitated their exclusion from Winnipeg's mainstream.

In many ways, Jewish radicals involved in the IUNTW wanted to be excluded from Winnipeg's mainstream. While some needle trades workers emphatically denied Communist direction—the government

had outlawed the Communist Party of Canada in 1931—others vigorously advocated overthrowing the capitalist Canadian state.<sup>68</sup> When city council offered to mediate, IUNTW organizer Joshua Gershman condemned the plan, claiming that third-party arbitration was a tool used by the capitalist class to "beat off the attack of the workers, kill their spirit, mislead them and weaken their ranks."<sup>69</sup> State intervention was inevitable, however, since during violent strikes employers were swift to station police around their factories. Workers claimed that the RCMP used terrorist tactics against the striking labourers and infringed on their legitimate right to picket public space. When these protests failed, labour radicals boasted of their ability to resist the entire machinery of the state—police, bosses, courts, demagogues, and "labour fakers" who collaborated with the bourgeoisie—and urged one another to "smash the united front of the bosses and fakers and help build a fighting union."<sup>70</sup> Such rhetoric was typical of Communist labour activists during the dual-union period, when, in the hopes of fomenting revolution, industrial unionists denounced all non-Communist labour organizations and leaders as reactionary, collaborative "labour fakers." This condemnatory language was partly a product of the infighting between ideologically distinctive unions; as Ruth Frager points out, one cannot take the Communists' rhetoric at face value. The "labour fakers" chastised by radicals were not in fact right-wing demagogues but anti-Communist, mostly socialist, labour activists.<sup>71</sup>

Such political divisions within the left were further complicated by factions within pro- and anti-Communist camps and by Jewish cultural considerations. Anti-Communist leftist activists included anarchists, Trotskyites, left labour Zionists, right labour Zionists, Bundists, and socialists, none of whom could agree on the best solution to combating class and anti-Semitic oppression aside from their opposition to Soviet Communism.<sup>72</sup> In 1931, for example, an article submitted to the *One Big Union Bulletin* by Branch 169 of the *Arbeiter Ring* condemned Communism in the needle trades. The *Arbeiter Ring*, or Workmen's Circle, was a Jewish radical organization dedicated to promoting workers' rights and fostering Jewish cultural solidarity. Branch 169 was an Internationalist/revolutionary Marxist faction of the organization, affiliated with the Jewish Labor Federation, which had leftist chapters around the world.<sup>73</sup> The *One Big Union* article, however, criticizes the Jacob-Crowley cloakmakers' strike. After denouncing IUNTW leader Isadore Minster for ordering workers to strike against their will, the anonymous author concludes that the conflict proves "how lightly and irresponsibly the Communists play with people."<sup>74</sup> The article ends by stating, "Workers, don't let yourselves be fooled by the fine phrases of the demagogues—Communists! Workers, don't let this last 'strike' leave you depressed—mobilize your strength, create a strong union where you will be able to go on with your fight for a better future."<sup>75</sup> This rhetoric, which echoes Communist efforts to denigrate "labour fakers" such as social democrats and socialists, illustrates the ideological diversity among Jewish labour radicals. Social democrats within the *Arbeiter Ring* were increasingly separating from the doctrinally stringent Marxist Communists and, after civil war erupted within the Circle, *Arbeiter* radicals expelled the moderates in 1932.<sup>76</sup>

Despite this factionalism, and despite the fact that involvement with Communist unions facilitated their exclusion and their stigmatization as foreign agitators during a time of intense repression and anti-Semitism,

adherence to leftist ideologies and participation in labour activities reinforced socialist traditions rooted in Jewish working-class culture. According to historian Roz Usiskin, radicalism originated through the secularization of ancient Judaic communitarian philosophies during industrialization, which produced international workers' associations that amalgamated socialist ideologies with Jewish cultural traditions.<sup>77</sup> Jewish immigrants carried these ideas across the ocean and established workers' organizations in Winnipeg, as elsewhere, which enabled them to capitalize on ethnic ties in order to foster class solidarity.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Irving Abella has written that "to many immigrants who had become alienated from traditional Judaism, the Jewish labour movement provided a new home—and perhaps even more, a new spiritual temple. . . . Indeed, for most urban Jews it constituted their first real introduction to Canadian life. It served not only as an agent for economic benefits, but also as a cultural shelter."<sup>79</sup> During garment industry strikes, for instance, workers often gathered at the Jewish Peretz Hall, a socialist free school, or the Talmud Torah, a religious school dedicated to the Hebrew language, where union members spoke in Yiddish.<sup>80</sup> Traditional cultural spaces thus took on new meanings when used in the context of labour protest. Leftist thought and Jewish culture were intertwined; strikes and protests provided spaces within which ethnic identities were strengthened through resistance to bourgeois capitalism. In their efforts to fight the disciplinary tactics of state institutions such as police and to resist the regulatory apparatuses of urban governance such as prohibitions on public picketing, immigrant women strikers sought an alternative to the Canadian liberal state. Labour organization, then, functioned as a site of cultural retention and could blunt the assimilative pressures of life in a new country.

Yet the general societal legitimacy of unionization and public protest simultaneously operated to socialize immigrant working classes to Anglo-Canadian norms. This process of accommodation functioned in a way akin to Michel Foucault's notion of liberal governmentality, which suggests that the absence of constraint—the freedom to occupy urban spaces and to protest workplace discrimination, for instance—in fact operates as a form of constraint.<sup>81</sup> That is, by using forms of resistance recognized by Anglo-Canadian urban society, immigrants were internalizing Western, liberal disciplinary norms, Communist rhetoric notwithstanding. Workers' demonstrations allowed women newcomers access to city spaces typically denied to them, but their movements were carefully regulated and contained by city officials. Public strikes and protests thus also functioned as practices through which immigrant radicals became governed in a liberal state. The question then remains whether these workers' culturally particular background may have mediated the disciplinary effects of liberal governmentality.

The largest Communist-led strike in Winnipeg's garment industry occurred in 1934 when the IUNTW guided over four hundred workers from nine different factories through a five-week strike to achieve increased wages and union recognition. Throughout this conflict, constructions of gender, ethnicity, and class were continuously renegotiated as immigrant workers battled the capitalist machinery of their new homeland. The mainstream press was quick to blame the strike on "outsiders," contending that the industrial dispute was "a product of communist agitation."<sup>82</sup> Although most employers refused to deal with IUNTW leaders, Montreal Cloak Company owner Max Goldberg quickly mediated an agreement with his workers. Claiming to have no problems

with the IUNTW, Goldberg reasoned that although he had to raise product prices in response to increased labour costs, he had no difficulty selling his stock. Workers were satisfied and business was profitable.<sup>83</sup>

Goldberg's conciliatory approach was an exception. During this strike, the depiction of immigrant garment workers as foreign agitators intensified. The city's mayor, Ralph Webb, declared that "'Winnipeg does not properly appreciate the reign of terror which the Communists are staging in our midst'" and argued that the striking immigrants were destructive to the city and subversive to Canadian values.<sup>84</sup> One female strikebreaker at Jacob-Crowley, Tanya Millar, reported to have received a threatening letter as evidence of Communist terrorism. "Mrs. Rotten Scab," the letter allegedly read, "as reward for your rotten scabbing, we will kidnap and drown your only living son. Let the life of your only child pay for your rotten scabbing. Yours truly. P.S.—We are kindly allowing you one day as notice."<sup>85</sup> Society chastised union activists for terrorizing the ideal woman worker—not radical—and Webb claimed to sympathize with the plight of Winnipeg's working class but warned it against attempting to improve its condition and listening to the "poisonous and insidious propaganda of the Communists."<sup>86</sup>

While the mainstream press constructed an image of Communists as subversive foreigners, the Communist press represented needle trades workers as a united and harmonious collective, regardless of ethnicity or skill. Bertha Dolgoy, for instance, contemplating the 1933 Hurtig Fur Company conflict that had ended in the death of Freda Coodin, reflected that what had made this strike significant "was the wonderful support it received from the needle trade workers of Winnipeg. There was no division of crafts—pressers, cutters, operators and finishers, all struggled together in support. There was no division of nationality—Jewish, English, Hungarians and Ukrainians fought side by side. And there was no division of the various branches of the trade."<sup>87</sup> Workplace protest thus also provided a forum within which Jewish workers could identify with Winnipeg's mainstream working class.<sup>88</sup> Industrial radicalism, to immigrant labourers, was a relatively inclusive ideology, in contrast to the exclusivity of traditional craft unionism. How could needle trades workers present a united front to capitalists if the working class was divided along ethnic or craft lines?<sup>89</sup> As Dolgoy claimed, Winnipeg's strikes had revealed "that workers organized into a militant industrial union which sweeps away barriers of craft, nationality and divisions of industry, can win the most difficult of strikes by their determination and solidarity."<sup>90</sup> Dolgoy's comments were undoubtedly exaggerated, a rhetorical effort to produce a sense of consensus and homogeneity among garment labourers; however, the significance of these beliefs resides in their expressed desire for shop floor unity. Indeed, strikebreaking workers were perceived as enemies more dangerous than capitalists. These were people who betrayed their own class. "What a shame to be known as a scab," one needle trades worker lamented. "There is nothing lower in the eyes of the workers."<sup>91</sup>

IUNTW solidarity, however, faced a fiercer enemy than subversive scab workers. From its inception, the Communist union had been waging war with more bureaucratically organized, international unions such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. The ILGWU, affiliated with the craft-based American Federation of Labor (AFL), rejected radical organization and sought collective bargaining between centralized union leadership and manufacturers. ILGWU leaders discouraged

rank-and-file activism and shop floor militancy in favour of arbitration, and urged garment workers to “pay no heed to strike orders given by irresponsible communists.”<sup>92</sup> This approach encouraged industrial unionists to denounce the ILGWU for using “New York gangster methods” to collaborate with bosses, intimidate IUNTW members, and betray the working class.<sup>93</sup> ILGWU members were reactionary, “high salaried bureaucrats,” Communists claimed, who divided needle trades workers against each other: “Groups of these yellow hoodlums, under protection of the police, are attempting to terrorize the less experienced strikers, beating pickets, and escorting A.F. of L. scabs into the shops . . . these strikers on the picket line are faced with the entire apparatus of capitalist state terror, in which the trade union bureaucrats and their parliamentary spawn play a role. Raise the question of A.F. of L. strike-breaking in your local meetings and give a decisive answer to the parasitic bureaucrats who fasten you still closer to capitalist exploitation.”<sup>94</sup>

But events in the Soviet Union combined with local issues to force the militant IUNTW to give way to the “gangster riff-raff” of the “reactionary ILGWU.”<sup>95</sup> Faced with rising fascism in Europe, the Communist International changed its radical philosophy in 1935 and encouraged revolutionary unions around the world to join mainstream labour organizations and create a united anti-fascist front.<sup>96</sup> The rise of Popular Front politics coincided with the collapse of Winnipeg’s 1934 IUNTW-led cloakmakers’ strike, which precipitated the extinction of industrial unionism in the city’s needle trades. Most manufacturers had refused to recognize the union and continued to discriminate against its members. After five weeks of vicious police repression and militant picketing, Louis Vassil of the IUNTW decided to call off the strike.<sup>97</sup> Immigrant Jewish radicals were defeated, workers began to distrust Communist leadership and withdrew from the union, and Communist union leaders re-entered mainstream labour organizations, from which many would soon be purged. Workplace conditions remained unchanged and wages dismally poor. ILGWU workers in Montreal complained that Winnipeg’s sweatshops were undermining their livelihood, since Winnipeg manufacturers could produce cheaper clothing by cutting wages. In response to this petition, ILGWU president David Dubinsky sent an organizer from New York to Winnipeg: Polish-born Sam Herbst.<sup>98</sup> International, national, and domestic events conspired to transform the fabric of Winnipeg’s garment industry organization.

### ***The ILGWU: From Radical Spectacle to Accommodative Collaboration***

Sam Herbst’s takeover of the Winnipeg needle trades was controversial. When he first arrived in the city, Herbst later reflected, he had found “a dismal situation . . . the cloakmakers had been mauled by manufacturers in an ill-fated strike, the employers were certain no union could be organized, the workers themselves were passive and afraid of organization.”<sup>99</sup> Herbst was pelted with eggs and stones after attempting to reach out to immigrant workers—holding a meeting at the Talmud Torah and speaking in Polish, Ukrainian, and Yiddish—which quickly prompted him to change tactics.<sup>100</sup> The New York organizer approached Jacob and Steinberg of Jacob-Crowley Manufacturing and proposed a scheme to organize Winnipeg’s garment factories under the ILGWU label. After “dickering with them” and promising that no strikes would erupt, Herbst secured an agreement and took this contract to different plants throughout the city, arguing that industry-wide organization would

benefit both owners and workers.<sup>101</sup> On 1 October 1935 garment workers were greeted by signs on factory doors ordering them to register with the ILGWU at the James Street Labour Temple. Subsequently, any worker lacking a union card was barred from ILGWU factories.<sup>102</sup>

This approach to unionization—dealing with employers rather than shop floor workers—resulted in a significant decline in immigrant women workers’ access to bargaining power. The ILGWU leader’s preferred negotiating tactic of discussing industrial disputes directly with management reduced opportunities for unskilled, low-paid labourers—immigrant women—to interact with urban economic and political institutions that they had previously experienced in the IUNTW. Herbst’s bureaucratization and centralization of the once radical Jewish labour movement implied that only select representatives of the garment workers—himself—could present grievances to employers and exercise power. Throughout the years of Herbst’s reign, union executive minutes reveal a tightly controlled organization in which Herbst collaborated with garment manufacturers across the city. Although the executive board of ILGWU local no. 237 was predominantly female, “Brother Herbst” assumed control of meetings, negotiations, and decisions.<sup>103</sup> Herbst reported on factory conditions, Herbst mediated disputes, Herbst attended labour conventions across Canada and the United States, and Herbst represented the union in mainstream media publications. In case of shop floor disagreements, “the girls,” or rank-and-file factory workers, were instructed to contact the plant chairperson, who would then recruit Herbst to solve the problem.<sup>104</sup>

Evidently, unionization under Herbst had become coercive toward the ethnic female workforce. As Gladys Wandzura, an ILGWU representative visiting Winnipeg from the United States noted, “though Mr. Herbst has done some excellent work here, the majority of people have no use for him, mainly because of his dictatorial attitude.”<sup>105</sup> The union’s records betray an increasing difficulty retaining workers’ allegiance to the ILGWU. Herbst repeatedly lamented declining membership, urging “more cooperation of Union members” and reminding workers to “take their duties seriously.”<sup>106</sup> The union tsar proclaimed that any member who missed too many meetings would face “drastic steps” and implored labourers “to stand solitary with the union.”<sup>107</sup> After women in the Ladies’ Kraft manufacturing plant declined to participate in shop floor chairlady elections, “Brother Herbst then called Mr. Herman [the employer] and told him not to put the power on until the girls all came to the meeting. A meeting was then held and a chairlady elected.”<sup>108</sup> Herbst’s methods proved unsuccessful; as Wandzura reflected, “Our union is not a popular one—everything is Herbst to the people and they are afraid of him . . . we messed ourselves up and are not trusted.”<sup>109</sup> After experiencing an inability to alleviate their exploitative workplace conditions, many women apparently expressed their desire to join a different union. Herbst, they argued, was not capable of solving problems.<sup>110</sup>

Mercedes Steedman has argued that the shift from IUNTW to ILGWU unionization precipitated a significant decline in women workers’ ability to participate in radical activities in cities across Canada as the result of each union’s respective organizational structure; while the IUNTW had been supportive of shop-floor participation, the ILGWU was critical of bottom-up rank-and-file militancy.<sup>111</sup> Still, the ILGWU did launch many militant strikes in Toronto in the 1930s. Herbst-style ILGWU unionization in Winnipeg was exceptional in its conservatism. For the rest of his life,

## *Accommodating Resistance*

Winnipeg's dominant garment union organizer would boast of the total absence of strikes during his reign.

Ethnic women garment workers, however, were not passive; they negotiated their way through the bureaucratic ILGWU machinery by taking workplace disputes upon themselves.<sup>112</sup> Throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, needle trades workers learned to adapt militant strategies to changing circumstances. Executive board minutes frequently reported how "the girls are complaining that they cannot make their wages on account of the price they're receiving" for piecework items, revealing workers' refusal to simply accept Herbst's negotiations.<sup>113</sup> Shop floor committees were elected for each manufacturing plant and, although the union dictator would have disapproved, factory chairwomen often confronted manufacturers themselves with labourers' grievances. A few chairwomen approached Moses Haid, owner of the Winsome Dress factory, complaining that other shops paid higher wages for identical work. Haid was reportedly courteous but refused to increase piecework rates; however, the event's significance lies in the ability of women workers to confront management directly, rather than through Herbst.<sup>114</sup> In March 1944 "the girls" at Jacob-Crowley walked out spontaneously after the boss refused to increase piecework rates and, although Herbst ultimately had to settle the dispute, the women took initiative in challenging their situation directly rather than contacting union authorities.<sup>115</sup>

The transformation of workers' access to power that occurred alongside the rise of the ILGWU was also accompanied by a representational shift in the ways in which immigrant women workers were perceived by the mainstream Winnipeg press. The IUNTW had functioned as a dynamic site that encouraged women to oppose societal coercion and confront capitalism by militantly picketing and collectively protesting Winnipeg's public space. Although the ILGWU attempted to restrict labourers' activism in urban sites, it was not a site of containment. Rather, women used the changing patterns of unionization to enhance their individual negotiating power and personal identities as workers, resisting Herbst's coercive organizational tactics by withholding labour and by voicing concerns over wages and conditions. The collapse of radical, militant, and collective forms of union activism, the shift of resistance tactics from public to private, and the increasing social acceptability of female industrial labourers during the Second World War enabled these women workers to occupy a more acceptable role in the public sphere, and hence Jewish needle trades workers were no longer demonized in the mainstream press.

In an effort to further integrate the ILGWU into Winnipeg's labour mainstream, Herbst purged the garment union of its Communist remnants. The union commander deliberately excluded known radicals when forming an executive board and continued to complain about Communist influences. In August 1939 the Winnipeg and District Trades and Labour Council held a meeting described by Herbst as intended to "stop the talk that this council was controlled by the Communists, because this was not true."<sup>116</sup> The resolution adopted by the council, of which Herbst was a member representing the ILGWU, was "to co-operate with all forces working for a new and higher order of social and economic life," and to promote and maintain Christian standards of thought and conduct.<sup>117</sup> The Winnipeg labour community emphatically denied that any subversive elements worked within their ranks, a claim

that became increasingly vital as the Second World War loomed. The Canadian government had outlawed the Communist Party and, as the state adopted stringent control of the national wartime economy, labour leaders such as Herbst understood that lucrative military-related contracts would certainly not be awarded to factories dominated by militant, illegal, and therefore unpatriotic unions.<sup>118</sup>

The ILGWU responded to wartime nationalism predictably by emphasizing its newly created accommodative image. In 1939 Herbst announced that the ILGWU would invest hundreds of dollars in Victory Loan bonds and encouraged garment workers producing wartime orders to work extra, uncompensated hours.<sup>119</sup> Garment union leaders embarked on other similar campaigns to bolster the organization's image in society, donating funds to city charities and participating in community events. Winnipeg's mainstream press lauded the union for its contributory civic spirit<sup>120</sup> and, in response, Herbst was careful to emphasize the ethnically diverse composition of the industry's workforce,<sup>121</sup> thus positioning immigrant women workers as accommodative members of the mainstream public sphere and indicating the ways in which labour organization could operate as an assimilative and interactive site between ethnic newcomers and Anglo-Canadian cities. Previously condemned as subversive Communist outsiders, the ethnic workers were now commended for their benevolent position in society.

Although some union leaders such as Sam Herbst sought to enforce ethnic tolerance, these efforts may have failed. The Depression-era conflict between the ILGWU and the IUNTW and the subsequent collapse of the IUNTW had given way, by the early 1940s, to an attempt by the ILGWU and the United Garment Workers (UGW), both affiliated with the craft-based American Federation of Labor (AFL), to prevent the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA)—a more militant, industrial union affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) that had split from the UGW decades earlier—from organizing garment shops in Winnipeg.<sup>122</sup> While the ILGWU and the ACW were largely Jewish-led, the UGW was not. As each union launched an organizing campaign, an American ILGWU representative visiting the city observed, "Just to remove as much racial prejudice as possible from the minds of the people here, would be a step forward. The reason for it, is that the Hebrew people who do not speak English, ask questions and make themselves understood in their own tongue, thereby giving the impression, that it's a strictly Jewish organization, as the others naturally do not understand and distrust the whole organization for that reason."<sup>123</sup>

Ethnic antagonism within individual plants existed, and some union leaders capitalized on existing prejudice in their organizational drives. Emily Ross, an international organizer for the UGW, reportedly discouraged needle trades workers from joining the ILGWU by advising them "to not listen to the Jew"—Herbst—after which "the gentiles all signed" union agreements with the UGW.<sup>124</sup> Despite internal ethnic friction, however, Jewish garment workers' unions increasingly amalgamated into Winnipeg society and, despite some union leaders' efforts to foment anti-Semitism, Jewish workers later recalled that Jews and Gentiles had cooperated rather well in the workplace.<sup>125</sup>

Tom Kosatsky argues that the integration of Jewish radicals within the mainstream labour movement toward the end of the 1930s and throughout the 1940s facilitated immigrants' broader acculturation into

Canadian society. The garment industry had produced workers' organizations that assisted newcomers in Winnipeg, while the economic opportunities of garment manufacturing had enabled Jewish employers to build capital and rise into prominence within the Winnipeg business community, forging a space for ethnic capitalists within the city's elite spheres.<sup>126</sup> But labour leaders' efforts to construct garment workers' public image as ethnically harmonious and societally accommodative may not have reflected the realities of rank-and-file labourers' lives nor benefited their workplace experience, since the tactics employed by union organizers such as the UGWA's Emily Ross constitute an ultimate rejection of radical activists' previous attempts, whether successful or not, to integrate ethnically diverse labourers within a united working-class front. Rather, infighting between unions for control of the industry resulted in ethnically divisive and anti-Semitic efforts to gain followers.

Whereas the IUNTW had mediated garment workers' engagement with society by encouraging active, public resistance to the exploitative features of social institutions, the ILGWU sought to alleviate workers' unrest through state intervention. When Herbst arrived in Winnipeg, cap-makers at the Dobbs Cap Factory were involved in a dispute over minimum wage violations. Herbst promptly requested that the provincial labour minister A. MacNamara mediate and, after the strike failed, "expressed appreciation to Mr. MacNamara for his aid in bringing the settlement."<sup>127</sup> Seeking third-party state intervention indicated that power was no longer grounded in the ability of workers' united front to force capitalists into collective bargaining. Rather, decisions were made between politicians and ILGWU bureaucrats; unionization was no longer a means of resistance but an instrument of the state to secure compliance among the immigrant workforce.<sup>128</sup> Herbst, however, preferred to impose consent rather than orchestrate agreement. As one worker recalled, "'He thought he was the little king of the needle trades in Winnipeg.'"<sup>129</sup> The union leader became a prominent member of Winnipeg's elite and swiftly imposed measures that crushed workers' aspirations. One of his first moves had been to place workers into piecework systems, a scheme that benefited bosses to the detriment of labourers. Communist-organized industrial unions had launched multiple strikes to combat piecework in garment factories; this battle was quickly lost under Herbst.<sup>130</sup>

The appeal to state arbitration on behalf of the Winnipeg ILGWU was part of a national trend in labour organization. Conservative craft-based unions capitalized on the disruption of industrial production provoked by the Second World War and, through their eagerness to seek federal intervention in manufacturing processes, earned the legal recognition of employers, a feat that Communist unions had been unable to accomplish. Prime Minister Mackenzie King also introduced progressive social legislation to undermine the leftist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation's appeal among working classes. In 1944 the federal government adopted Order-in-Council PC 1003, a statute that sanctioned collective bargaining as a legal right of workers and that legitimized labour organization.<sup>131</sup> As labourers began to benefit from wartime and postwar prosperity—rising living standards and increased wages—they became increasingly distracted from their earlier goal of destroying capitalism.

The story of Winnipeg's needle trades organization, therefore, was one told by many players: female and male Jewish immigrant workers, who rooted garment industry activism in leftist cultural traditions; non-Jewish

immigrant and Anglo-Canadian workers, who also participated in workplace revolt; Soviet-influenced Communists, who directed the IUNTW; Winnipeg press reporters, who either vilified or sanctified workers' actions; Anglo-Canadian and Jewish capitalists, who sought to pacify shop floor agitators; New York union bureaucrats, who steered needle trades organization away from radicalism; municipal, provincial, and national government officials, who established labour legislation; and, of course, Sam Herbst, who sought control over all industrial relations. The story was also one shaped by evolving economic conditions—from Depression-era hardship to wartime prosperity—and by struggles between mainstream and left-wing presses over representational images of immigrant workers.

Both the IUNTW and the ILGWU functioned as mediators between Jewish immigrant workers and their adopted community by facilitating simultaneous resistance against North American capitalist institutions and assimilative pressures and accommodation to Canadian culture and society. While these concepts appear contradictory, historians including Ruth Frager, José Moya, Joan Sangster, and Elisabetta Vezzosi have demonstrated that revolt and adaptation have often operated as parallel processes of immigrant acculturation.<sup>132</sup> In the garment industry, militant striking and unionization enabled immigrant labourers to resist the exploitative features of Canada's capitalist political and economic structures; still, these radical activities also subjected workers to the disciplinary norms and regulatory apparatuses of mainstream society. After 1935, the Soviet Union's prescription of anti-fascist Popular Front unionization tactics, the arrival of Sam Herbst in Winnipeg, and the ability of women to exercise individual rather than collective negotiating power facilitated Jewish workers' integration. Second World War nationalism also shaped immigrants' assimilation. Public rituals such as charity donations signified accommodation, though garment workers continued to engage in transnational activities, assisting Jewish refugees and Soviet soldiers, which protected their Jewish culture and represented cultural and political resistance. Although the ILGWU attempted to transform garment workers' public identity into that of accommodating and benevolent members of Winnipeg society, then, the de-radicalization and conservatization of union organization did not guarantee complete assimilation of migrant workers.

But by 1950, garment unions were no longer a symbol of radical Jewish culture or working-class solidarity. Jewish workers increasingly emigrated into the wider community and, as second- and third-generation immigrants climbed the economic ladder, they left industrial garment production behind.<sup>133</sup> Union leadership remained in the hands of Jewish organizers, but by 1960 the workforce of Jewish women had been replaced with newcomers from Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and rural Aboriginal communities.<sup>134</sup> Although the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textiles Workers' Union lingered, rank-and-file workers lost the connection to unionization as a means of radically exercising power.

### **Acknowledgements**

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### Notes

1. Doug Smith, *Let Us Rise! An Illustrated History of the Manitoba Labour Movement* (Winnipeg: Public Press, 1985): 82–85; Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1996), 62.
2. James Barrett, “Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880–1930,” *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (1992): 996–1020.
3. Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 14.
4. *Ibid.*, 21.
5. Gerry Berkowski, “The Winnipeg Garment Industry, 1900–1955,” 1–12, City of Winnipeg archives; Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 15.
6. “Cloakmakers Choose Busy Time to Tie Up Industry Here, Investigator Finds,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 18 July 1934.
7. Berkowski, “Winnipeg Garment Industry,” 47.
8. Ruth Frager, “Reflections on Jewish Identity, Class Politics & Gender Dynamics among Jewish Activists,” in *Jewish Radicalism in Winnipeg, 1905–1960*, ed. Daniel Stone, vol. 8 of *Jewish Life and Times* (Winnipeg: Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2003), 92.
9. “Cloakmakers Choose Busy Time.”
10. Berkowski, “Winnipeg Garment Industry,” 34–37.
11. Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour before the Law: The Regulation of Workers’ Collective Action in Canada, 1900–1948* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2001); Ruth A. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Jennifer Guglielmo, “Italian Women’s Proletarian Feminism in the New York City Garment Trades, 1890s–1940s,” in *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World*, ed. Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, 247–298 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Mercedes Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace: Women and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890–1940* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1997).
12. Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800–1991*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 259.
13. John Hample, “Workplace Conflict in Winnipeg’s Custom Tailoring Trade, c. 1887–1921,” *Manitoba History* 22 (Autumn 1991) [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/22/workplaceconflict.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/22/workplaceconflict.shtml).
14. *Ibid.*; Tom Kosatsky, “Jews in the Clothing Industry in Winnipeg,” in *Jewish Life and Times: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, 1983), 41–42.
15. Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 61.
16. James Mochoruk and Donna Webber, “Women in the Winnipeg Garment Trade, 1929–1945,” in *First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear, 135–145 (Regina: University Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1987).
17. Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace*.
18. Mercedes Steedman, “The Promise: Communist Organizing in the Needle Trades, the Dressmakers’ Campaign, 1928–1937,” *Labour / Le Travail* 34 (Fall 1994): 37–73.
19. *Ibid.*, 68.
20. Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 11–12, 117–118.
21. Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Robert Ventresca, “Cowering Women, Combative Men? Femininity, Masculinity and Ethnicity on Strike in Two Southern Ontario Towns, 1964–1966,” *Labour / Le Travail* 39 (Spring 1997): 125–158. Robert Ventresca writes that Italian women were expected to uphold a “pure” code of appropriately feminine behaviour that dismissed acts of militancy and public resistance; however, when faced with striking co-workers, such constructs of womanly respectability did not deter Italians from joining public acts of protest.
22. Donna Gabaccia, Franca Iacovetta, and Fraser Ottanelli, “Laboring across National Borders: Class, Gender, and Militancy in the Proletarian Mass Migrations,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 66 (2004): 71; Franca Iacovetta, “Feminist Transnational History and Rethinking Women’s Activism and Female Militancy in Canadian Contexts: Lessons from an International(ist) Project,” paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, 5 June 2004; Julie Guard, “Authenticity on the Line: Women Workers, Native ‘Scabs,’ and the Multi-Ethnic Politics of Identity in a Left-Led Strike in Cold War Canada,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 117–142.
23. Frager, “Reflections on Jewish Identity,” 92–94; Roz Usiskin, “Winnipeg’s Jewish Women of the Left: Traditional and Radical,” in *Jewish Radicalism in Winnipeg, 1905–1960*, ed. Daniel Stone, vol. 8 of *Jewish Life and Times* (Winnipeg: Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2003), 107.
24. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*; Esther Reiter has made similar arguments regarding the ways in which women strikers defied normative standards of femininity. See Esther Reiter, “First-Class Workers Don’t Want Second-Class Wages: The Lanark Strike in Dunnville,” in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945–1980*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995): 170–171. Nan Enstad’s work on women workers and militants has also sought to identify stereotypical renderings of female labourers and attempted to enlarge the scope of customary characterizations of working women. See Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
25. Guglielmo, “Italian Women’s Proletarian Feminism,” 248–298.
26. Barrett, “Americanization from the Bottom Up,” 1008–1009.
27. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 182; Steedman, “Promise,” 52.
28. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 229.
29. Heron, *Canadian Labour Movement*, 59–75; Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 76.
30. Frager and Patrias, *Discounted Labour*, 82–84; Katrina Srigley, “In case you hadn’t noticed!: Race, Ethnicity, and Women’s Wage-Earning in a Depression-Era City,” *Labour / Le Travail* 55 (Spring 2005): 73–74.
31. Fudge and Tucker, *Labour before the Law*, 153–156.
32. Strike file report. Canada Department of Labour Strikes and Lockouts Files (hereafter SLF), no. 31 (6), T2760, Archives of Manitoba (hereafter AM).
33. “The Recent Strike,” *Winnipeg One Big Union Bulletin*, 12 March 1931. In this quote, the “girls” in parentheses was part of the original article.
34. “Employers and Strikers Fail at Conference,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 14 February 1931; “Winnipeg Strike Worries Police,” *London Advertiser*, 19 February 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2760, AM.
35. “Effort to End Cloak Strike Planned Today,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 19 February 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2760, AM.
36. “Employers and Strikers Fail.”
37. “The Needle Trades Workers’ Strike,” *Winnipeg One Big Union Bulletin*, 19 February 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2760, AM. The One Big Union (OBU) had been formed in 1919 when labour leaders in western Canada merged individual unions in order to present a greater challenge to employers across different industries. The OBU virtually collapsed in the 1920s when the craft-based Trades and Labour Congress—which opposed industry-wide organization such as the OBU advocated—took over labour organization. Since the TLC was more conservative, employers preferred to negotiate with

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- its unions rather than OBU organizations. The OBU, however, did retain a small sphere of influence in Winnipeg's garment industry, although its influence was limited and soon gave way to the IUNTW and later the ILGWU. See Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 82.
38. M. B. Crawford to M. R. Ward, 16 August 1933, SLF, no. 33 (67), T2766, AM.
39. "Hurtig Strike Solid with Mass Support of Workers," *Toronto Worker*, 26 August 1933, SLF, no. 33 (67), T2766, AM.
40. Quoted in Sharon Chisvin, ed., *Women's Voices: Personal Recollections*, vol. 7 of *Jewish Life and Times* (Winnipeg: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, 1998): 27; Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace*, 131.
41. Bertha Dolgov, interviewed by Pat Forkin, "Hurtig Strike: A Victory for Industrial Unionism," *Toronto Worker*, 16 September 1933, SLF, no. 33 (67), T2766, AM.
42. Elisabetta Vezzosi, "Radical Ethnic Brokers: Immigrant Socialist Leaders in the United States between Ethnic Community and the Larger Society," in *Italian Workers of the World: Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States*, ed. Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser Ottanelli (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 121.
43. Usiskin, "Winnipeg's Jewish Women," 118.
44. Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 40.
45. Ibid., 41.
46. Lena Kussin, interviewed by Arona Binder, 1979. Held at the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada (hereafter JHCWC).
47. Ibid.; Abe Handelman, interviewed by Arona Binder, 1979. Held at the JHCWC.
48. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 151.
49. Mercedes Steedman argues that women were considered deviant through mere participation in any sort of labour organization. See Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace*, 259.
50. "Arrest 10 after Riot by Girls on Strike," *Toronto Star*, 16 January 1931, SLF, T2758, AM.
51. Ibid.
52. Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920–1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995): 176; Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*, chap. 5; Dana Frank, "Girl Strikers Occupy Chain Store, Win Big: The Detroit Woolworth's Strike of 1937," in *Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century*, ed. Howard Zinn, Dana Frank, and Robin D. G. Kelley, 90–99 (Boston: Beacon, 2001).
53. "Workers at Fur Shop Tell Court of Intimidation," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 September 1933, SLF, no. 33 (67), T2766, AM.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. "Girl Striker Gets 6 Months on 9 Charges," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 12 January 1934, SLF, no. 33 (67), T2766, AM.
58. "Woman Strike Agitator Goes to Jail," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 January 1934, SLF, no. 33 (67), T2766, AM.
59. "Crown Evidence Ends in Strike Riot Case," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 January 1934, SLF, no. 33 (67), T2766, AM.
60. "Woman Strike Agitator," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 12 January 1934. Coodin's punishment reflected the ways in which Canadian government and legal institutions responded to Depression-era labour unrest with higher levels of repression. When militant workers were immigrants, moreover, the threat of deportation was always near. For a discussion of workers' legal experiences of regulation, see Fudge and Tucker, *Labour before the Law*.
61. Allan Levine, *Coming of Age: A History of the Jewish People of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2009): 269–271; Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 84.
62. Jewish Cemetery Burial List for Manitoba, photograph of Freda Coodin's tombstone, JHCWC.
63. Lena Kussin, interviewed by Arona Binder; Murray Golden, interviewed by Arona Binder, 1979, JHCWC.
64. "Serious Strike Clash Smothered by Police," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 February 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2758, AM.
65. Ibid.
66. "Alleged Strike Pickets Will Face Charges," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 February 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2758, AM.
67. "Reds Foment Strike, Claims Mayor Webb," *Toronto Globe*, 16 February 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2758, AM.
68. "The Needle Trade Workers' Strike," *Winnipeg One Big Union Bulletin*, 19 February 1931, SLF, no. 31(6), T2758, AM.
69. "End of Garment Workers' Strike in Sight," *Manitoba Free Press*, 16 February 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2758, AM.
70. "Cloak Strikers Standing Firm: Twenty Arrested; Financial Aid Is Needed," *Toronto Worker*, 13 August 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2758, AM; "Statement of D.E.C. No. 7 on Arbitration," *Toronto Worker*, 4 April 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2758, AM.
71. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 207.
72. Ibid., 181.
73. Roz Usiskin, "The Winnipeg Jewish Radical Community: Its Early Formation, 1905–1918." In *Jewish Life and Times: A Collection of Essays*, 156–158 (Winnipeg: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, 1983).
74. "The Recent Strike in the Needle Trade," *Winnipeg One Big Union Bulletin*, 12 March 1931, SLF, no. 31 (6), T2758, AM.
75. Ibid.
76. D. I. Victor, "Radical Jewish Education & Its Educational Institutions in Winnipeg, 1914–1983," in *Jewish Radicalism in Winnipeg, 1905–1960*, ed. Daniel Stone, vol. 8 of *Jewish Life & Times* (Winnipeg: The Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2003): 80.
77. Usiskin, "Winnipeg Jewish Radical Community," 155.
78. Ibid.
79. Irving Abella, ed., "Portrait of a Jewish Professional Revolutionary: The Recollections of Joshua Gershman," *Labour / Le Travail* 2 (1977): 186.
80. "Striking Cloakmakers to Hold Mass Demonstration on Market Square Today," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 25 July 1934; "Strikers Stage Demonstration at City Hall," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 July 1934, SLF, no. 34 (154), T2973, AM.
81. See Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, trans. Rosi Braidotti, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 87–104 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1985); Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003).
82. "Cloakmakers Choose Busy Time to Tie Up Industry Here, Investigator Finds," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 18 July 1934, SLF, no. 34 (154), T2973, AM.
83. "Strikers Given Wage Increase, Return to Work," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 26 July 1934, SLF, no. 34 (154), T2937, AM.
84. "Mayor Accuses Communists of Cruel Tactics," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 9 August 1934, SLF, no. 34 (154), T2937, AM.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.

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87. Dolgoy, interview.
88. Usiskin, "Winnipeg Jewish Radical Community," 167.
89. This concern relates to a larger debate in North American labour historiography. Whereas some scholars have argued that ethnic divisions undermined labour radicalism by preventing unified class solidarity, others have suggested that socialist movements in North America were bolstered by the more stringent radical ideologies and the higher levels of experience in socialist organization that ethnically diverse European immigrants transported across the Atlantic.
90. Dolgoy, interview.
91. "The Picket Line Keeps Marching," *Toronto Worker*, November 1935, SLF, no. 35 (164), T2981, AM.
92. "Dressmakers Urged to Ignore Communist Strike Agitators," *Toronto Mail and Empire*, 14 January 1930, SLF, T2758, AM.
93. "Company Union Tries to Terrorize Dressmakers," *Toronto Worker*, 20 December 1930, SLF, T2758, AM.
94. Untitled article, *Toronto Worker*, 17 January 1931, SLF, T2758, AM.
95. "To All Needle Trades Workers in Canada," *Toronto Worker*, 24 January 1931, SLF, T2758, AM.
96. Heron, *Canadian Labour Movement*, 63; Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 83.
97. Louis Vassil, strike file form, SLF, no. 34 (154), T2937, AM.
98. Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 82. Doug Smith writes that some Winnipeggers believe that Dubinsky found Herbst annoying and sent him to Winnipeg, fabricating the story about Montreal ILGWU members as an excuse to rid the New York organization of Herbst's presence.
99. Sam Herbst, "A Report to Members of the Cloakmakers' Union on the Occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary of Cloakmakers' Local 216, I.L.G.W.U., in 1935–1950 *ILGWU Winnipeg: 15 Years of Progress*, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, Local no. 286 Fonds (hereafter ILGWU fonds), P285, AM.
100. Berkowski, "Winnipeg Garment Industry," 106.
101. Herbst, "Report to Members."
102. Unsigned document, 5 October 1935, SLF, T2981, AM.
103. ILGWU Local no. 237 Executive Board Minutes, 24 April 1940, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
104. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, 8 April 1942, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
105. Gladys Wandzura to Meyer Perlstein, 13 March 1945, ILGWU fonds, P285, AM.
106. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, 12 February 1941, 1 April 1942 ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
107. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, 22 July 1942, 2 February 1944, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
108. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, 17 April 1946, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
109. Gladys Wandzura to Meyer Perlstein, 29 March 1945, ILGWU fonds, P285, AM.
110. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, 27 October 1947, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
111. Steedman, "Promise," 37–73.
112. Mochoruk and Webber, "Women in the Winnipeg Garment Trade," 145.
113. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, January 1945, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
114. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, 27 October 1947, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
115. ILGWU Local no. 237 minutes, 8 March 1944, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
116. "Labor Council Acts to Kill Suspicion Talk," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 August 1939, ILGWU fonds, P271, AM.
117. Ibid.
118. Heron, *Canadian Labour Movement*, 68–70.
119. "Unions Buying War Certificates," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 24 June 1940, ILGWU fonds, P271, AM. The union's financial records during the Second World War reveal that the organization purchased \$100 of war bonds in 1940 and nothing further during the war, yet its image had already been strengthened in the public's eye through increased positive media publicity. See also ILGWU Local no. 237 finance and receipt records, 1939–1945, ILGWU fonds, P286, AM.
120. "Rekindling Hope: Cheer Fund Assures Help for Thousands," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 November 1938, ILGWU fonds, P271, AM.
121. Ibid.
122. This conflict between the three unions pitted the AFL-affiliated ILGWU and the UGWA against the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO)—a more radical American labour group—which was affiliated with the ACTWU. The ILGWU attempted to take over the UGWA, arguing that the AFL unions should present a united front against the ACTWU. The UGWA and the ACTWU resented Herbst's announcement that the ILGWU would take over the city's entire industry. From New York, David Dubinsky, president of the ILGWU, ordered Herbst to let the ACTWU and the UGWA retain its shops, but Herbst decided to ignore this. See "Says AF of L Authority Not Menaced," "Needle Union's Plan 'No Threat,'" "Herbst Says He'll Carry On," "Needle Trades Unions Fight for Control of Industry," unidentified newspaper clipping in the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union Local no. 239 fonds, P5560, AM. The UGWA had maintained a presence in Winnipeg's needle trades since 1899, but for much of the 1930s had very little influence. During the 1930s and 1940s the union attempted to revive its share of garment industry organization. The ACTWU was a late arrival upon Winnipeg's labour scene, beginning to organize in 1944. More so than the UGWA, the ACTWU was a serious rival to the ILGWU in the later years of the 1940s. See Debra Lindsay, *The Clothes off Our Back: A History of ACTWU* 459, Manitoba Labour History Series (Winnipeg: Manitoba Labour Education Centre, 1995): 3–7; Smith, *Let Us Rise*, 82–83.
123. Gladys Wandzura to Meyer Perlstein, 13 March 1945.
124. Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (ACTWU) Local no. 349 Executive Board Minutes, 18 February 1945, ACTWU fonds, P5556, AM.
125. Murray Golden, interviewed by Arona Binder; Percy Silverman, interviewed by Arona Binder; Abe Handelman, interviewed by Arona Binder; Irvin Gale, interviewed by Arona Binder, 1979, JHCWC.
126. Kosatsky, "Jews in the Clothing Industry," 49.
127. "Settlement Reached in Cap Factory Strike," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 3 November 1935, SLF, no. 35 (164), T2981, AM.
128. Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace*, 190.
129. Quoted in Lindsay, *The Clothes off Our Back*, 5.
130. Piecework paid workers per garment rather than per hour. This meant that they often had to work twice as hard to earn what they had under time-work systems, because bosses could escape minimum wage laws by paying out dismally low rates per garment, arguing that workers could just work faster and earn more. As one worker claimed in a 1929 glove factory strike against piecework, "We had been working on time work and the company put us on piece work. Then we tried one week and we found we couldn't make a living out of piece work, as they paid us \$26.00 per week on time work and we could only make about \$17, \$18, \$19 at the piece work. The firm gave us a week's notice and told us if we did not want piece work we could get out. Then we went on strike." See "Western Glove Workers' Strike, Winnipeg, Man," *Winnipeg One Big Union Bulletin*, 30 May 1929, SLF, no. 29 (57), T2755 , AM.
131. Heron, *Canadian Labour Movement*, 72–75.
132. Ruth Frager, "Labour History and the Interlocking Hierarchies of Class, Ethnicity, and Gender: A Canadian Perspective," *International Review*

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- of *Social History* 44 (1999): 221; José Moya, "Italians in Buenos Aires's Anarchist Movement: Gender Ideology and Women's Participation, 1890–1910," in *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World*, ed. Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, 189–216 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 167–168; Vezzosi, "Radical Ethnic Brokers," 121–122.
133. Alvin Finkel, "The Decline of Jewish Radicalism in Winnipeg after 1945," in *Jewish Radicalism in Winnipeg, 1905–1960*, ed. Daniel Stone, vol. 8 of *Jewish Life & Times* (Winnipeg: Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2003), 192. Ruth Frager writes that Jewish women did not address women's issues until well into the 1960s. These women continued to identify with the working class and the Jewish culture and, even as they embraced middle-class identities throughout the 1950s, women's rights and women's groups were not important. As Frager concludes, "Women were just not considered equal at that time . . . human rights activists apparently believed that women were so fundamentally different from men that issues of sex discrimination could be dismissed on that basis." See Frager, "Reflections on Jewish Identity," 95.
134. Annalee Lepp, David Millar, and Barbara Roberts, "Women in the Winnipeg Garment Industry, 1950s–1970s," in *First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear (Regina: University Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1987), 157–159.