

**FOR LIBERTY, BREAD, AND LOVE:
ANNIE BULLER, BECKIE BUHAY, AND THE FORGING
OF COMMUNIST MILITANT FEMININITY IN CANADA,
1918 - 1939**

by

Anne Frances Toews
B.A., University of the Fraser Valley, 2005

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

In the
Department of History

© Anne Frances Toews, 2009

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2009

All rights reserved. This work may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.

APPROVAL

Name: Anne Frances Toews
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis: For Liberty, Bread, and Love: Annie Buller, Beckie Buhay, and the Forging of Communist Militant Femininity in Canada, 1918 - 1939

Examining Committee:

Chair: **Dr. Mary-Ellen Kelm**
Associate Professor of History

Dr. Elise Chenier
Senior Supervisor
Assistant Professor of History

Dr. Lara Campbell
Supervisor
Assistant Professor of Women's Studies

Dr. Joan Sangster
External Examiner
Professor of Women's Studies
Trent University

Date Defended/Approved: March 30, 2009



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Declaration of Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the "Institutional Repository" link of the SFU Library website <www.lib.sfu.ca> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada

ABSTRACT

During the interwar years, friends Annie Buller and Beckie Buhay established careers with the Communist Party of Canada and forged a uniquely Communist militant femininity that led to their eventual canonization by the Party as ideal comrades. Using a biographical approach to women's working-class history, this thesis examines these women's significant contributions to the CPC's political project as gendered work. It also demonstrates that although their representation of themselves as comrades was organized around their understanding of themselves as workers, it was shaped too by particularities of ethnicity, gender, and other factors that were all subsumed in the Party's egalitarian rhetoric. Additionally, in exploring how their lifelong friendship supported their construction of Communist militant femininity, and thus enabled their work, this thesis contributes to a developing historiography of friendship that focusses on its work rather than its nature, and that is inclusive of the friendships of working-class women.

Keywords: friendship; communist; comrade; militant; labour college; woman question

Subject terms: Communists Canada Biography; female friendship; Buller Annie 1896; Communist Party of Canada; Women in politics Canada History 20th Century; Women In the Labor Movement Canada History

For my father, Joseph F. Morris, a Leftie and a gatherer of books.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Simon Fraser University for providing financial support for this work. Practical support was provided by librarians and archivists in three provinces; Vera Yuen at SFU and Anne Dondertman and Tom Reid at the University of Toronto's Fisher Library were especially helpful. Stephen Endicott directed me to very useful sources, as did Jacqueline Parry, genealogist extraordinaire.

I am also grateful to Miguel Figueroa for granting me access to the records of the Communist Party of Canada, and Elizabeth Crowley for her assistance at the CPC office in Toronto. Jim Buller graciously consented to share his memories of his mother with me.

It was my great good fortune to have been able to complete my undergraduate studies at the University of the Fraser Valley. I am a better writer and thinker for the guidance of my instructors there, and I am particularly grateful to Jenéa Tallentire and Chris Leach for their interest in my work.

At Simon Fraser University, I benefited from having my assumptions challenged by my professors and classmates, and from participating in the Marx reading group, led by Mark Leier. Many of my fellow graduate students provided indispensable encouragement and support. I am especially grateful to those who slogged through versions of my work in progress: Sean Carleton made insightful suggestions, as did Rachel Torrie who also helped

me unravel the meaning of friendship.

I am indebted to all those who have had a hand in the production of this thesis. Lara Campbell helped to shape its direction from the beginning, and Joan Sangster made invaluable suggestions as it reached its final stage. I extend my deepest gratitude to my senior supervisor, Elise Chenier, who prompted me to ask the questions that brought me to a better understanding of my own work, and offered essential advice not only about my writing but also about navigating a passage through graduate school. I am certain that I tried her patience regularly, but she always welcomed me with a smile and reignited my enthusiasm for this project. *Merci beaucoup, Elise.*

Throughout my years at UFV and SFU, I have depended on the patience and wise counsel of friends and family members, especially Robin Toews, Doreen Morris, and Bonnie Sibley. I am more than grateful to Keith Toews, who continues to provide me with liberty, bread, and love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Workers and Comrades	30
Chapter Two: The Nature of Comradeship and Communist Militant Femininity	63
Conclusion.....	98
Bibliography	104

INTRODUCTION

Beckie Buhay and Annie Buller were role models for generations of Canadian Communist women – and men. The two women joined the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) shortly after it was founded in 1921, and remained unwaveringly committed to its vision of a socialist Canada for the rest of their lives. They travelled anywhere that the Party needed them, working as educators, union organizers, fund-raisers, administrators, leadership committee members, lecturers, and writers. Historian Joan Sangster has noted that “[n]o other women in the Party’s history occupied the strategic positions or commanded the lasting mythology that Buller and Buhay did.”¹

In their interaction with rank-and-file Party members, with the public, and with other Party workers and leaders, Buller and Buhay exemplified the revolutionary comradeship that allowed them to take up prominent positions in the very public sphere of party politics. I argue that they forged a uniquely Communist militant femininity. Their representation of themselves as comrades was organized around their understanding of themselves as workers, had its roots in their life experience, was intensified by their on-going commitment to Communist ideology, and was supported by a web of relationships within the Party, not least of which was their own life-long friendship. For these women, this was in part a deliberate creative process, and not simply a matter of placing themselves

¹ Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 67.

in opposition to others, or of transgressing existing norms.

The CPC was founded in a flurry of revolutionary fervour resulting from the apparent success of the Bolsheviks in Russia. At a secret meeting held in a barn near Guelph, Ontario, on May 23, 1921, delegates from Canada's existing socialist parties created the new CPC as an affiliate of the Communist International (CI).² The CPC adopted Russian leader V. I. Lenin's concept of the Party as a vanguard whose role was to educate the workers in socialist ideology as part of the process of transforming them into a revolutionary force.³ Labour historian Craig Heron argues that by the time of the CPC's founding in 1921 the Canadian "workers' revolt" that began under wartime conditions in 1916 and culminated in a wave of strikes across the country in 1919 was already "essentially dead."⁴ Nonetheless, the CPC eagerly took up CI advice that "[n]ow is the time to enthuse [sic] revolutionary life into the inert masses of the workers, which will be converted into revolutionary action in the days of battle with the Master Class."⁵

In the early 1920s, the CPC's immediate goal was the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. It gained support slowly through the interwar years, reaching the zenith of its

² The Third International, usually termed the Communist International or Comintern, was an organization of national parties established in 1919 and led by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). In 1923, illness forced Lenin's retirement from leadership of both bodies. His successor, Josef Stalin, claimed legitimacy for his own progressively more authoritarian rule by maintaining that his policies were derived from the teachings of the well-respected Lenin.

³ V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done: Burning Questions Of Our Movement*, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna (Marxists Internet Archive <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/index.htm>).

⁴ Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Lorimer, 1996), 55. Gregory S. Kealey locates the Canadian revolt in an "international surge of class militancy" which subsided in 1920 and was not re-awakened in Canada until the Great Depression. "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," in *Workers and Canadian History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 310, 318.

⁵ A. Kent to Presidium of the Comintern, August 16, 1922. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Communist International Fonds (hereafter CI), MG 10 K-271, file 3.

popularity with the signing of the Anglo-Soviet pact on July 12, 1941.⁶ In 1946, however, Montreal Member of Parliament Fred Rose was among those charged with passing information to Soviet spy Igor Gouzenko, marking the beginning of the Cold War in Canada, and of the CPC's slow descent into virtual oblivion.⁷ By 1969, historian and long-time Communist Stanley B. Ryerson admitted that the Party was "at best no more than a barely marginal force," but in the 1920s and 1930s the CPC had taken an active, and sometimes leading, role in the struggle for workers' rights, freedom of speech, and social welfare programs.⁸ Buhay, Buller, and their comrades were in the forefront of demands for social and political change during these decades, few of which met with unqualified success. During the interwar years, as the CPC met with repeated attempts by various levels of state agencies to suppress or eliminate it, its survival depended on the zeal and labour of a core of committed Party members, among whom Buller and Buhay were two of the most tireless.

The concept of Communist militant femininity is useful in explaining why these particular women became iconic figures in the CPC. Communist militant femininity encompassed a strong belief in socialism's promise of a future free from want and oppression, an egalitarian society in which human labour ceased to be a commodity and the planet's resources could be exploited collectively by the many rather than the few, according to their needs. To this ideology was wedded the militancy of the Communist

⁶ The CPC had 16,000 members just before World War II. John Manley, "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, the 'People' and the Popular Front, 1933-1939." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 82.

⁷ Rose was convicted of violating the Official Secrets Act. For more on how Canadian Communists were affected by what is often called the Gouzenko Affair, see Merrily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, the Spy Trials, and the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1994).

⁸ Quoted in Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 282.

who believed that it was in her power to make the socialist vision a reality through her own labour.⁹ Not simply a voluntary acceptance of ideology, Communist militant femininity also incorporated working-class identity and a commitment to participate in the class struggle, along with an explicit refusal of political action based on race or sex. Family and social networks, love, motherhood, and friendship were also important in this construction, although the forms that they took could differ substantially from those of conventional society.

This form of femininity also encompassed expressions of personal qualities that are difficult to define. These include: a practical and enthusiastic approach to work; an unshakeable optimism that carried them through the many challenges and setbacks that they faced as women and workers; leadership skills that allowed them to take up positions in the forefront of the implementation of Party policy; and a willingness to live public lives, in which they were exposed to derision and sometimes violence. The Party would later identify the ability to “stand on their own feet” as a useful quality for Party workers (or cadres); as militants, Buhay and Buller were called upon to do just that, whether by resisting hecklers from a podium, resisting arrest in a street demonstration, or resisting the forces of capitalism arrayed against them in a courtroom.¹⁰ Like American Communist

⁹ I use the word “militant” as both adjective and noun. Andrée Lévesque notes that “militant” referred to unpaid workers for the Party, as opposed to “permanent” workers like Buller and Buhay. Andrée Lévesque, *Red Travellers: Jeanne Corbin and Her Comrades*, trans. Yvonne M. Klein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 36. Because the nature of the work remained the same, the use of the word “militant,” remains appropriate in my discussion of these full-time workers. In a Party which was founded on the expectation of imminent revolution, Communists’ routine use of military language was not merely a rhetorical device. Even when revolution seemed distant, the urgency evoked by military metaphors, such as referring to organizational problems as “fortresses to be conquered,” may have been one of the means by which the CPC differentiated itself from other parties on the left, and sustained the enthusiasm of workers who had signed on as revolutionaries. “Report on Organizational Problems,” June 1935. LAC CIMG 10 K-289 file 177.

¹⁰ Harry Hunter and Stanley B. Ryerson, “Some Problems of Cadre Work,” *National Affairs Monthly*, January 1951, 36.

Grace Hutchins, who reminded herself to be “alert, brisk, confident, [and] keen,” Buhay and Buller cultivated these attributes throughout their careers, and put them to good use in their work for the CPC.¹¹

Like other Canadian Communists, Buller and Buhay considered themselves part of an international movement, and the Party and its members cannot be understood outside the context of their ties to that movement. The acute historical consciousness of Canadian Communists linked the Party’s very existence to world events that it interpreted as proof of Marxist-Leninist theory: the first World War, for example, as evidence of a crisis in the capitalist economic system which would prompt the workers of the world, under the leadership of Communist parties, to replace the capitalist system with a socialist system like the one in Russia. We cannot examine Communist militant femininity without understanding Buhay and Buller as Communists, and as part of the project of working-class internationalism.

I begin this thesis, then, by reviewing the historiography of the nature of the ties between the Canadian Party and world communism - especially Soviet communism. I then examine the literature on *Communists*, because it is in individual experience that I begin my own effort to explain how Buhay and Buller developed and expressed Communist militant femininity. While the historiography of women in the CPC is not extensive, a review of women’s left-wing activism in Canada in the early twentieth century places Buller and Buhay in the context of demands for social change in Canada at that time. And in an effort to understand how their friendship might have been a particularly significant factor in Buhay’s and Buller’s success as workers, as well as in their development of Communist

¹¹ Janet Lee, *Comrades and Partners: The Shared Lives of Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 183.

militant femininity, I conclude my review of the literature with an examination of the historiography of friendship.

Canadian historians have long questioned what went “wrong” with Canadian communism, as in the first scholarly histories of the CPC, William Rodney’s 1968 study of its first decade, *Soldiers of the International*, and Ivan Avakumovic’s more comprehensive *The Communist Party in Canada: A History*, published in 1975.¹² Rodney’s work identifies CI control as the major problem with the CPC, and the title of Avakumovic’s work alerts us to that author’s conviction that although it operated *in* Canada, the CPC was never really Canadian. Avakumovic does acknowledge that the Canadian historical context had some effect on the Party’s development:

The history of the CPC in the 1920s is that of a relatively small number of men and women busily carrying out Comintern directives and dodging the watchful eye of the security services while trying to convert their compatriots. The Communists’ problem was all the greater as the Communist International proved to be a difficult taskmaster, the RCMP a skilful enemy, and the public far more susceptible to other influences than to Communist slogans and appeals, many of which originated in Moscow.¹³

An additional problem for the CPC, according to Avakumovic, was its predominantly Eastern European membership. Despite the Party’s mostly Anglo-Celtic leadership, many of the anglophone and francophone Canadians whom the Party sought to recruit were deterred from joining an organization that they saw as little more than “an alien growth on Canadian soil.”¹⁴

Ultimately, Avakumovic and Rodney conclude that the Party’s failure was inevitable. In contrast, leftist historians such as Ian Angus and ex-Communist Norman

¹² William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968); Avakumovic, *Communist Party in Canada*.

¹³ Avakumovic, 22.

¹⁴ Avakumovic, 36, vi.

Penner emphasize the “errors” that the CPC has made and argue that the Party might have been more successful had it only followed the correct path. Penner’s and Angus’s versions of what that path would have been, and where it would have taken the CPC, differ dramatically: Penner holds out hope for a rejuvenation of socialism in Canada, while Angus dreams of what might have been had Leon Trotsky’s voice not been silenced by Josef Stalin.¹⁵

In his 1981 book *Canadian Bolsheviks*, Ian Angus re-examines the history of the Party’s first decade, emphasizing a key series of events between 1928 and 1931: the expulsion of theoretician (and Trotskyist) Maurice Spector, soon to be followed by the resignation or expulsion of all other founding members of the Party, clearing the way for Tim Buck’s accession to Party leadership. Angus argues that the CPC had indigenous roots among the Canadian socialists who came together to form the Party, and that it began its life as a Party dedicated to revolution, following the example of the Russian Bolsheviks. Far from being a problem in itself, Soviet influence was actually essential to the Party’s survival in its first two years, preventing “disastrous errors.”¹⁶ But Lenin’s illness and retirement in 1923 marked the beginnings of a counter-revolution that shifted the Party towards complete submission to the dictates of the CI and “the gangster Stalin,” who lacked Lenin’s theoretical knowledge or vision and led the USSR and the Communist parties of the world “through a series of panic-stricken turns, each one brought about by a catastrophe resulting from the previous turn.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada*, 2nd ed. (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2004); Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen, 1988).

¹⁶ Angus, 130.

¹⁷ Angus, 136.

Norman Penner's history of the CPC also places the blame for the CPC's degeneration squarely on Stalin's head. But unlike Angus, Penner maintains that the groundwork for what would become a hierarchical and undemocratic system was laid in 1921, when the newly-created CPC accepted conditions for affiliation with the CI "which made it clear that the Communist movement would be marching as a world army with its general staff in Moscow."¹⁸ Penner himself left the Party in 1956 when Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, revealed the extent of Stalin's abuse of power.¹⁹ Writing in 1988, Penner argued that until the Communist parties of the world recognized their own mistakes in adhering to the Party line through the Stalin years, they would be unable to present a convincing argument that socialism itself was not to blame for Stalin.

Since 1992, when Western historians first gained access to Russian records, the debate over the extent of CI control of the world's Communist parties has been revisited by historians of Communist parties in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.²⁰ In a recent article in *American Communist History*, Bryan D. Palmer argues that historians still fail to properly acknowledge that it was Stalinism that "hardened the arteries of the beating

¹⁸ Penner, 34.

¹⁹ At that time, a meeting of the CPC's national executive rejected Penner's proposal that the Party declare its independence from the CPSU and adopt a more democratic structure. Penner, 245.

²⁰ In 1992, after the demise of the Soviet Union, the Russian government opened its archives to foreign researchers for the first time, and copies of some material pertaining to Canada was obtained by Library and Archives Canada. For details, see George Bolotenko, "The National Archives and Left-Wing Sources from Russia: Records of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, the Communist Party of Canada, and Left-Wing Intellectuals" *Labour/Le Travail* 37 (Spring 1996): 179-203. Early historians of Canadian Communism did not have access to RCMP surveillance reports on the Party, which are now available through the Access to Information and Privacy Act, often in highly censored and fragmented forms. Additionally Rodney, Angus, Avakumovic, and to some extent Penner, were hampered by the CPC's refusal to permit access to Party records until after its own "official history" was completed in 1982 - both the book and the CPC's reluctance to make its records available can be seen as a response to the anti-Communist nature of historiography on the Party. Communist Party of Canada, *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1982). Records from the Party's first decade were seized by the office of the Attorney-General of Ontario in 1931, and have been available to researchers through the Archives of Ontario.

heart of proletarian revolution.”²¹ Palmer points out that American New Left historians have emphasized the indigenous nature of American communism, paying particular attention to memoirs, Communist culture, and the Popular Front of the later 1930s, thus claiming for American radicalism a history unstained by Stalin’s touch.²² These “revisionists” challenge “traditionalist” (anti-Communist) historians, in particular Theodore Draper and his successor Harvey Klehr, who have insisted that the CPUSA was under Soviet control from its inception.²³ Arguing from a Trotskyist perspective similar to that of Ian Angus, Palmer holds that neither camp has acknowledged that there was a profound difference between the early 1920s, when the world’s Communist parties eagerly accepted “[Comintern] advice ... developed through consultation and genuine regard for the advancement of the revolutionary forces in the West,” and the shift after 1925 to bureaucratization under Stalin’s control.²⁴

Not surprisingly, Harvey Klehr rejoices that the new archival sources confirm the traditionalist position that CI “supervision” played a large role in shaping CPUSA policy.²⁵ In the case of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), John McIlroy and Alan

²¹ Bryan D. Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 172.

²² The Popular Front period, beginning in 1935, was characterized by world Communist parties’ co-operation with other left-wing parties and union organizations. It marked a radical shift from the isolationist policy of the preceding Third Period (also known as the period of “class against class”), which in Canada lasted from 1928-1935.

²³ Palmer, “Rethinking,” 150, 164. A recent example of the former approach is Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grassroots, 1928-1935* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); the first book to provide documentary evidence the extent of Soviet involvement in the CPUSA was Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995).

²⁴ Palmer, “Rethinking,” 165.

²⁵ Harvey Klehr, “Reflections of a Traditionalist Historian,” *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 228-229.

Campbell contend that the CI began to assert control as early as 1920.²⁶ Palmer, however, insists that these kinds of arguments fail to consider the possibility that CI directives might have coincided with “what was actually the appropriate course of action.”²⁷ The extent of and the timing of CI control of national Communist parties have political ramifications for today’s socialists - and anti-socialists. Therefore, it remains the subject of (occasionally heated) historiographical debate, much of which has thus far consisted of intriguing and complex theorizing and re-theorizing of the sometimes drastic changes in the Party line which were especially evident in the 1920s and 1930s.

This debate has been less heated among historians of Communism in Canada, where there is general acknowledgement that the CPC was at least in some measure a product of its Canadian environment, although the influence of Moscow cannot be ignored. As Keith Laybourn argues in his work on the British context, “[i]ndigenous factors did not influence policy, they influenced implementation.”²⁸ John Manley has pointed out, for example, that the way in which the CPC implemented the CI’s directive to “bolshelize” the Party in the late 1920s resulted in a much less drastic reduction in Party membership in Canada than in the United States or Great Britain.²⁹ But while there was

²⁶ John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, “Nina Ponomareva’s Hats’: The New Revisionism, the Communist International, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1930,” *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring 2002): 147-188. For their review of British historiography on the extent of Soviet control in the CPBG, which also points out key differences between the British and American contexts, see John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, “A Peripheral Vision: Communist Historiography in Britain,” *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 125-157.

²⁷ Bryan D. Palmer, “Who ARE these Guys?!’ Politics, Passions, Peculiarities, and Polemics in the Historiography of British Communism,” *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 194.

²⁸ Keith Laybourn, “A Comment on the Historiography of Communism in Britain,” *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 163-166. For a Canadian example of this position, see John Manley, “Canadian Communism, Revolutionary Unionism, and the ‘Third Period’: The Workers’ Unity League, 1929-1935.” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (1994): 167-194.

²⁹ John Manley “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935,” *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 14. In Canada, bolshevization meant, primarily, the elimination of autonomy for ethnic groups within the CPC.

some room for dissent and independent action, especially in the early 1920s, Manley also maintains that CPC policy was heavily influenced by the Comintern, arguing for example that the 1935 shift to Popular Front policy “was inspired and in large part directed by Moscow, which *entirely* subordinated the needs of Canadian (and indeed international) socialism to its security requirements.”³⁰ How then could such an organization attract and retain workers as dedicated as Buhay and Buller?

Mary Davis and John Foster criticize traditionalists and revisionists alike for framing their work in national perspectives which ignore the essential dynamic between Communist internationalism and “local engagement by individual Communists.”³¹ As Davis and Foster explain, to the extent that Communists exerted any influence in local environments, they were able to do so only because the existence of the Soviet Union as a seemingly successful challenge to capitalism sustained their purposeful commitment to live “humdrum lives” as low-level functionaries in trade unions and other organizations. From these positions, Communists were well-placed to “speak in the right language” to their fellow workers in ways that “[a]pparatchiks armed with approved Moscow formulations” could never have done.³² Buller and Buhay moved from these kinds of embedded positions in the work force to various leadership positions, and while their lives may have been less “humdrum” than those of rank and file Party members, they brought to all their work that same individual sense of purposeful commitment that enabled the CPC to embark upon its collective project.

³⁰ Manley, “‘Communists Love Canada!’” 82. Emphasis Manley’s. See also John Manley, “‘Audacity, audacity, still more audacity’: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour Le Travail* 49 (Spring 2002): 9-41.

³¹ Mary Davis and John Foster, “Why Were They So Afraid of Communist Influence?” *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 170.

³² Davis and Foster, 170-171.

Faith in the future of working-class internationalism, then, is one key to explaining the attractions of communism. As Brad Gregory has pointed out in his work on the history of religion, most academic historians who write about faith - in a religious sense - do so with an unexamined “secular bias” which allows them to accept that people believe, but not to accept *what* they believe.³³ Secular bias itself rests on a belief system which denies the existence of anything that cannot be demonstrated in the natural world, and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the motivations and behaviour of individuals who do believe in such things as miracles - or, in this case, a socialist future.³⁴ The CPC itself has been acutely aware that something akin to a secular bias is often evident in academic writing about Communist parties; as one Party theorist noted, “Most hostile critics of Marxism ... start by methodologically excluding the possibility of socialism.”³⁵ Following Gregory’s suggestion, I aim to avoid secular bias in my own work. Therefore, I credit Buhay and Buller with believing what they professed to believe, and I do not write from the position that socialism was or is an impossible dream.

The unique culture of Party life is also frequently offered as at least a partial explanation for the loyalty of CPC and CPUSA members. This is particularly apparent in the recollections of former “red diaper babies” (second-generation Communists). Merrily Weisbord, for example, recalls “the warm, communal, and hopeful spirit” of Communist family life, explaining that Communists shared an alternate way of life, with its own cultural forms that expressed their deeply-felt critique of capitalism and their vision of a socialist

³³ Brad S. Gregory, “The Other Confessional History: On Secular Bias in the Study of Religion,” *History and Theory* 45, no. 4 (2006): 132.

³⁴ Gregory, 137, 147. For a rare explicit acknowledgement of this bias, see Lee, 180.

³⁵ John D. Fraser, “Intellectuals and the Canadian Experience,” *Communist Viewpoint* 4, no. 4 (1972): 32.

future.³⁶ She demonstrates that in the CPC, as in other Communist parties, ideology was not only the source of the Party's endless stream of propaganda aimed at the general public; it also "blossomed into poetry and art, reflecting and enhancing a romantic left-wing vision."³⁷

Andrée Lévesque concurs that internationalism, widespread idealism, a sense of community, and a rich culture help explain the appeal of Party life. She posits also that "ritual events" (such as the observance of the anniversary of Lenin's death), and the shared "sense of danger" generated by frequent arrests helped to "cemen[t] the bonds of universal brotherhood."³⁸ These attractions were counteracted to some degree by the demands that the CPC imposed on its members, but as Weisbord points out, all members agreed, in writing, to both discipline and Party work when they signed their membership cards.³⁹ For Buhay, Buller, and others, the CPC's high expectations were matched by their own eagerness to advance the cause of socialism and by their belief that the CPC was the best vehicle for those efforts. The agency of individual Party members at all levels, even if expressed only through continuing participation in Party work, was clearly essential to the CPC.

A close focus on the lives and experience of individual Communists is a useful method for broadening our understanding of why people submitted to the Party's seemingly invasive control of their lives. J. R. Barrett has written, in reference to

³⁶ Weisbord, 1, 81-96. See also Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

³⁷ Weisbord, 86.

³⁸ Lévesque, *Red Travellers*, 37. See also Andrée Lévesque, "Anniversaires et manifestations des camarades: la culture internationale et l'identitaire communistes au Canada pendant l'entre-deux-guerres," *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring, 2002): 83-92.

³⁹ Weisbord, 26.

Communists in the United States: “A biographical approach makes it suitably difficult for us to see our subjects as political robots programmed to achieve particular ends....”⁴⁰

Proving Barrett’s point are recent biographies of Member of Parliament Dorise Nielsen and union leader J.B. McLachlan which provide examples that occasionally undermine the arguments made in some histories of the CPC as an institution. For instance, the importance of the local context for the recruitment of Party members is apparent in David Frank’s 1999 “social biography” of McLachlan, as it is in Faith Johnston’s 2006 examination of Nielsen’s “life and politics.”⁴¹ Frank and Johnston make it clear that these sometime Party members were radicalized through their life experience, not through the imposition of an alien ideology.⁴² The biographies also demonstrate the CPC’s tolerance of a limited amount of criticism from within, at least from those who held positions of influence, and the limits of that tolerance.⁴³ A close focus on individual lives clearly shows that political work is labour; militants are genuine workers, and not merely conduits through which propaganda flows from the Party to the working class. This focus also allows me to demonstrate that for these women, work and its effects were integrated in life rather than compartmentalized as apart from it; work was therefore central to their construction of Communist militant femininity.

Johnston’s work is the first full-length biography of a Canadian Communist woman.⁴⁴ The only other biographies of Canadian Communist women are two short

⁴⁰ James R. Barrett, “The History of American Communism and our Understanding of Stalinism,” *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 180.

⁴¹ David Frank, *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1999); Faith Johnston, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006).

⁴² Frank, 28; Johnston, 6.

⁴³ Frank 446, 418; Johnston, 210.

⁴⁴ Catharine Vance, *Not by Gods but by People: The Story of Bella Hall Gauld* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1968); Louise Watson, *She Never was Afraid: The Biography of Annie Buller* (Toronto: Progress Books,

hagiographical works published by the Party press which project an image of their subjects and the CPC through a completely uncritical lens, and which read in parts as vehicles for the reiteration of Marxist-Leninist theory. Andrée Lévesque's *Red Travellers*, centred around the life of Party worker Jeanne Corbin, was originally published as *Scènes de la Vie en Rouge: L'époque de Jeanne Corbin, 1906-1944*, a title which is more in keeping with its author's statement that she is "hesitant to term this study a biography because of the relative scarcity of personal sources."⁴⁵ This short list indicates the "resounding silence" in Canadian historiography on the subject of women's participation in Canadian socialists' critique of capitalism during the interwar years, a silence that was broken in 1989 with the publication of Joan Sangster's *Dreams of Equality*.⁴⁶ In its iteration of women's essential contributions to the development of the CPC and the CCF, *Dreams of Equality* was part of the larger project undertaken by feminist historians in Canada and elsewhere. Like other works of women's history from this period, it was to some degree recuperative, containing a good deal of narrative and biographical content intended to introduce to the Canadian historical record the previously overlooked contributions of women like Buller, Buhay, and their comrades.

Part of this effort involved disputing the received version of women's contributions to the labour movement - a movement which was a key arena for the work of Buhay and Buller. Linda Kealey and Irene Howard are among those historians who introduced arguments that, by taking up militant positions in labour and social protests during these years rather than acting in purely "auxiliary" roles, many working-class women challenged

1976). There have been many biographies and memoirs of American Communist women, and many male Party members and ex-members have also published their memoirs, but there are very few memoirs by CPC women.

⁴⁵ Andrée Lévesque, *Red Travellers*, ix.

⁴⁶ Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 7.

the prescribed gender roles of the day, as sketched by Veronica Strong-Boag, for example, in her 1988 *The New Day Recalled*.⁴⁷ The task of recovering Canadian women's role in the left history of the interwar years has not yet been abandoned: Lévesque notes that part of her purpose in writing *Red Travellers* was to "reveal" her subject. By outlining the important work performed by Buhay and Buller, this thesis continues that project.

The work of women's history has always been more than a recovery effort.⁴⁸

Dreams of Equality has remained a valuable foundational text because it presents a careful comparative analysis of women's participation in the CPC and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), including the extent to which members, male and female, recognized the gendered nature of class struggle and the ways in which the Party dealt with topics seen as "women's issues," such as birth control. The book assesses the nature and extent of feminist expression within both parties; Janice Newton conducts a similar assessment in her work on the Canadian socialist parties which preceded the CPC.⁴⁹ These works also address how the parties dealt with the "woman question." Lenin, whose influence on the CPC cannot be overstated, answered the question of the role of women in the struggle for a socialist future by declaring that "proletarian women are excellent class fighters" who should be enlisted in the service of the emerging socialist state.⁵⁰ On the equally troubling issue of women's equality, he maintained that because capitalism was to

⁴⁷ Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Irene Howard, "The Mothers' Council of Vancouver: Holding the Fort for the Unemployed, 1935-1938," *BC Studies* 69-70 (Spring-Summer 1986): 249-287; Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988).

⁴⁸ Joan Sangster, "Beyond Dichotomies: Re-Assessing Gender History and Women's History in Canada," *Left History* 3, no. 1 (1995): 121; see also Franca Iacovetta and Linda Kealey, "Women's History, Gender History and Debating Dichotomies," *Left History* 3, no. 2 (1995): 223.

⁴⁹ Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 9; Janice Newton, *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

⁵⁰ Clara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), 2.

blame for women's subordination to men, women would automatically be emancipated in a socialist society.⁵¹ German suffragist and Communist Clara Zetkin prefaced her 1920 conversations with Lenin on the subject of women's emancipation from "unsatisfactory" bourgeois marriage forms, and the role of women in society, by stating that "[s]ocial equality for women was, of course, a principle needing no discussion for Communists."⁵²

Feminist historians have been less convinced than Zetkin of the truth of that statement, and have argued that Communist Parties in Canada and the United States failed to follow through on their egalitarian rhetoric. Writing in 1993, Rosalyn Baxandall maintained that the Women's Commission of the CPUSA, founded in 1922, "was an organization in form only, without any program that was ever put into practice."⁵³ In 2001, Kate Weigand challenged this received version of Communist history in her controversial *Red Feminism*, in which she claims that the Party *did* provide a home for feminist activism by the 1940s.⁵⁴ In the debate that ensued, Bettina Aptheker, historian and ex-Communist, wrote that "Weigand wishes for more than was true about the party," and that none of the women in Weigand's book would have described themselves as feminists.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Zetkin, 4, 14.

⁵² Zetkin, 1.

⁵³ Rosalyn Baxandall, "The Question Seldom Asked: Women and the CPUSA," in *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U. S. Communism*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), 145. In an earlier argument which also fails to detect a feminist impulse among American Communists, Elsa Dixler's analysis of CPUSA women's periodicals in the 1930s concludes that they did not challenge dominant American bourgeois ideas about marriage, motherhood, and women's role in society. Elsa Jane Dixler, "The Woman Question: Women and the American Communist Party, 1929-1941," (PhD diss., Yale University, 1974).

⁵⁴ Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). Van Gosse had earlier argued that the 1930s shift in CPUSA discourse from "workerist" to more broadly working class "set the stage" for Communist women of the 1940s to "move their Party ... towards a politics of gender equality." Van Gosse, "'To Organize in Every Neighborhood, in Every Home': The Gender Politics of American Communists between the Wars," *Radical History Review* 50 (1991): 134.

⁵⁵ Bettina Aptheker, "Red Feminism: A Personal and Historical Reflection," *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003): 521. Aptheker's response was part of a *Science & Society* symposium on *Red*

Canadian historians have not engaged in the same intensity of debate on this subject, partly because Sangster's *Dreams of Equality* was sensitive to the work that the Party did on behalf of women while still declaring itself to be anti-feminist, but that does not mean that consensus has been reached.⁵⁶ Once again, biographical work can help illuminate the contradictions and accommodations between feminism and Communism as it was practiced in Canada. Faith Johnston, for example, has painted Dorise Nielsen as an advocate of equal rights for women and a bridge between Nellie McClung and second wave feminism; in contrast, Andrée Lévesque's diligent search for documentation of Corbin's life story uncovered no evidence that she was a feminist. Lévesque argues that this was typical of CPC women: "Like any Communist, Corbin was an internationalist and saw herself not primarily as a woman but as a comrade."⁵⁷ To what extent did a feminist consciousness contribute to the construction of Communist militant femininity? I explore this question in chapter two, placing their advocacy of equality for women in the context of their work for the Party.

I also identify their friendship as a key contributor to their ability to succeed as workers, and to develop their construction of Communist militant femininity. Love and friendship lie at the heart of socialism. Historian David Wootton argues that friendship is

Feminism, in which Weigand responded to her critics by clarifying that her argument was not that the CPUSA was "a model feminist organization," but that "a relatively small group of Communist and progressive women ... expanded the traditional Marxist explanation for women's oppression to address 'male supremacist' ideology." Weigand, "Reply to Critics," *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003): 527-528. Discussion of the book continued in *Science & Society* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2003-2004); see also Rebecca Hill, "Re-evaluating the CPUSA's Answer to the Woman Question," *American Communist History* 3, no. 1 (2004): 145-151.

⁵⁶ None of the American scholarship discussed here cites Sangster, who has recently noted that this reflects "a common but unfortunate practice: Canadian historians routinely engage with North American scholarship, while Americans fail to read any relevant Canadian literature." Joan Sangster, "*Robitnytsia*, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism' Debate: Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930," *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005): 54. See footnote 5.

⁵⁷ Johnston, 210, 5; Lévesque, *Red Travellers*, 127.

the true subject of Thomas More's 1515 *Utopia*, which is regarded as the "founding text of modern communism."⁵⁸ As Wootton explains, both More and his friend Erasmus "admired communism, praised equality, [and] advocated labour."⁵⁹ More and Erasmus drew on each other's work, and "friendship, which shares all things," was essential to More's vision of a community without class boundaries.⁶⁰ But as Wootton points out, equal treatment for all citizens obscures the centrality of friendship to More's ideal community, as well as to his depiction of it: "If you love your neighbour as yourself, if you treat every citizen as your friend, then love and friendship themselves become invisible because, instead of being exceptional and exclusive, they are normal and universal. ... [U]niversal friendship is incompatible with the special status attributed to a friend."⁶¹

But as Buhay, Buller, and the CPC understood it, the particular friendship between these two women was as compatible with socialism as the concept of universal friendship. This understanding is related to historical and theoretical changes in conceptions of socialism, and to the women's and the Party's expectations about the work of friendship, at the universal and particular level.⁶² While universal friendship provided the rationale for the collective undertaking of the communist project and its egalitarian

⁵⁸ David Wootton, "Friendship Portrayed: A New Account of *Utopia*," *History Workshop Journal* 45 (Spring 1998): 29.

⁵⁹ "Between friends all is common" and "Friendship is equality" are two of the proverbs explicated by Dutch theologian Erasmus in his 1500 work, *Adages*. Wootton, 34.

⁶⁰ Wootton, 39, 44, 38. Wootton characterizes *Utopia* itself as "a gift exchanged between friends."

⁶¹ Wootton, 39-40.

⁶² Early socialist theorists such as Etienne Cabet, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen, were branded as "utopian" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, for their ahistorical attempts to bring about a better world by creating socialist enclaves in an unchanged capitalist society. In contrast, twentieth-century Communist parties were more influenced by Marx's theory that socialism would result from a historical process of change, marked by revolution, and by Lenin's concept of the vanguard party. For Marx's and Engels' critique of utopian socialism, see "The Communist Manifesto," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 248-271, especially pp. 268-270, and Engels "Socialism: Scientific and Utopian," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 683-717.

rhetoric, modernity changed the nature of particular friendship in western society. Alan Bray demonstrates that in the medieval and early modern periods, friendship was a formal public relationship marked by material obligations as well as by love.⁶³ This kind of friendship *would* have threatened the socialist project in ways which modern friendship, understood as “noninstrumental [and] based in affinity,” does not.⁶⁴ It is not my purpose here to claim that the friendship between Annie Buller and Beckie Buhay was typical - of working-class people, of women, of Communists, or of activists. In this inquiry, rather, I ask how Buhay’s and Buller’s understandings of universal friendship and, more important to my argument, their practices of particular friendship, contributed to the construction of Communist militant femininity, and to their ability to succeed as workers.

The regrettable absence from history of an ideal society in which universal friendship could manifest itself means that any discussion of that subject must remain in the abstract. Until quite recently, particular friendships have been only slightly more visible to scholars than universal friendship, for various reasons. Feminist scholar Katherine Leigh Side notes that the fields of Psychology and Sociology, which concern themselves with processes such as identity formation and socialization, have tended to look primarily to family relationships rather than friendship for explanations of those processes.⁶⁵ Likewise, anthropologists Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman suggest that their discipline’s focus on

⁶³ Bray considers changes in the work of friendship, its nature, and its meaning, over the last millenium, primarily in Britain. While friendship once served some of the same functions as “other kinds of kinship formed by promise and ritual,” the modern form of private and personal friendship, which “[did] not (and should not) obtrude on a wider world of public affairs,” became common beginning in the later sixteenth century. Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 7, 25, 32, 39-41. As Bray notes, feminism posed a serious challenge to modern readings of friendship as purely personal and not political. Bray, 2.

⁶⁴ Bray, 41.

⁶⁵ Katherine Leigh Side, “In the Shadow of the Family: Women’s Friendships with Women” (PhD diss., York University, 1997), 9.

kinship “has encouraged [anthropologists] ... to neglect other forms of human association.”⁶⁶ And while historians acknowledge that friendship has a long history, the historiography of friendship does not begin until the 1970s.

This long historiographical silence is undoubtedly due in part to the difficulty of conducting research on friendship. While family ties are visible to historians through official records, such as the census and registers of birth, marriage, and death, friendship leaves fewer traces in these sources which are otherwise of great value to social historians, and historians of the family. Friendships which conformed to societal norms are equally invisible in the court records, periodicals, medical records, and scientific texts which provide rich (if negatively-framed) source material for historians of sexuality. At the same time, literary works, and less public documents such as letters and diaries, indicate that friendship has, historically, been ubiquitous; as Katherine Swett notes in her work on early-modern Britain, historians may have been deterred from work on friendship by “the very magnitude of the task of assessing it.”⁶⁷

The language of friendship poses additional problems for historians. Swett reminds us that friendship is expressed by means of a historically specific, and not always obvious, “social code” through which its forms and substance are mutually constitutive, and ever-changing.⁶⁸ An additional difficulty noted by Swett is that the word “friendship” has been applied to a broad range of relationships; both scholars and friends themselves

⁶⁶ Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman, “The Anthropology of Friendship: Enduring Themes and Future Possibilities,” in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, ed. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 5.

⁶⁷ Katherine Swett, “The Account Between Us’: Honor, Reciprocity and Companionship in Male Friendship in the Later Seventeenth Century,” *Albion* 31 (Spring 1999): 2. The study of women’s friendships, in particular, is further limited because women have, historically, left fewer written records than men.

⁶⁸ Swett, 3, 7, 8, 21, 25, 27; see also Bray 67. Note that Alan Bray, in a work that takes a broad view of friendship over the sweep of a millennium, sees friendship as changing *slowly*. Bray, 9. However, Bray, unlike Swett, is referring to fundamental change in the nature of friendship.

ascribe different meanings to the word.⁶⁹ Similarly, Side found that the interviewees in her 1997 study of contemporary women's friendships struggled with descriptions that were limited by language.⁷⁰ The English language does not offer us a rich vocabulary of friendship, and Side's subjects described their friendships with the only other available "discourse[s] of interpersonal intimacy," those of kinship and romantic love.⁷¹ Even women who are not lovers have described their friendships in the language of love and physical attraction, as Sharon Marcus noted in her study of Victorian women.⁷²

It has primarily been feminists, historians of sexuality, and women's historians who have opened academic discussion on the nature and meaning of friendship, especially friendships between women which were, in the words of Edwardian author Vera Brittain, "mocked, belittled and falsely interpreted."⁷³ Early work on women's friendship, which emerged in the 1970s from the second-wave feminist valorization of bonds between women as a challenge to patriarchy, has been characterized by Deborah Gorham as a "response to misogynist misrepresentation."⁷⁴ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's ground-breaking 1975 article, for example, made a case for the importance of a uniquely "female world of varied and yet highly structured relationships," a women's culture, that she considered "essential" to middle-class society in nineteenth-century America.⁷⁵ Writing in 1992, Gorham criticized

⁶⁹ Swett, 3. For a summary of usage of the English word "friend," which has narrowed over time but still remains ambiguous, see Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 25-26.

⁷⁰ Side, 42.

⁷¹ Side, 42.

⁷² Marcus, 54-55.

⁷³ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby* (London: Macmillan, 1940), quoted in Deborah Gorham, "The Friendships of Women': Friendship, Feminism and Achievement in Vera Brittain's Life and Work in the Interwar Decades," *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1992): 44.

⁷⁴ Gorham, 44.

⁷⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," in *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*, ed. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 312, 318.

Smith-Rosenberg's work for its insistence on "an innate womanly capacity for friendship" which helped to construct "a vision of a lost Arcadia of conflict-free sisterhood," thus obscuring the challenges inherent in friendship.⁷⁶ Gorham's own work took a different approach, highlighting how the changing historical context of the early twentieth century introduced "new definitions for female friendships" as it became more common for them to be located outside kinship networks.⁷⁷ As increasing numbers of middle-class women established professional and public careers, rejecting the prescribed Victorian-era gender roles of the previous generation, ambition, competitiveness, and the pressures of work made new demands on friendship, making it potentially more rewarding as well as more difficult to sustain.⁷⁸

But Gorham was writing in 1992, when friendship had already been established as a legitimate topic for historical study. In 1977, Blanche Wiesen Cook still felt that she had to argue to the historical profession that the "personal is the political: that networks of love and support are crucial to our ability as women to work in a hostile world where we are not in fact expected to survive."⁷⁹ Cook maintained that politically active women like Jane Addams could not have been effective without loving feminist networks which replaced the "prescribed norm of 'wife-mother in obedient service to husband-father'" that they explicitly rejected - networks which included lesbian relationships.⁸⁰ An eagerness to include the possibility of lesbian relationships as part of women's friendships was also

⁷⁶ Gorham, 63, 44-45, 62.

⁷⁷ Gorham, 45.

⁷⁸ Gorham, 45, 50, 54, 62.

⁷⁹ Blanche Wiesen Cook, "Female Support Networks and Political Activism: Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman," in *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*, ed. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 413.

⁸⁰ Cook, 415, 441. Cook's study of American political activists Lillian Wald, Jane Addams, Crystal Eastman, and Emma Goldman asserts the importance of their private lives, an area which historians had previously declared "beyond the acceptable boundaries of historical inquiry." Cook, 416.

evident in Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's work, and was a necessary political move in the lesbian feminist effort to recover lesbian history which, as Cook argued, had been not simply ignored but "erased."⁸¹

This erasure has been attributed to homophobic prejudice and heterocentric bias, which have prompted historians and biographers to misinterpret evidence and silences.⁸² Women have often kept the nature of their relationships secret, as have relatives who have been known to destroy "incriminating" documents after the death of a loved one.⁸³ It has been argued by Nancy Sahli, Lillian Faderman, and others that the perceived need to obscure the nature of loving relationships between women is a relatively recent phenomenon attributable to the pathologization of lesbian sexuality at the turn of the twentieth century.⁸⁴ However, work such as Sahli's, Smith-Rosenberg's, and particularly Faderman's 1981 book, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, has been criticized by Martha Vicinus as painting an overly "rosy picture of social acceptance;" even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Vicinus argues, "to love a woman was to risk social ostracism."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Cook, 416.

⁸² Cook, 416-18; Lillian Faderman, "Who Hid Lesbian History?" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 4, no. 3 (1979): 74-76. Adrienne Rich argued that "the rendering invisible of the lesbian possibility" in favour of what she called "compulsory heterosexuality" has been a primary means of ensuring the continuation of patriarchy as the dominant paradigm for Western society. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (1980): 632, 647.

⁸³ Faderman, "Who Hid Lesbian History?" See also Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 300, 305, 310.

⁸⁴ Nancy Ann Sahli, "Smashing: Women's Relationships Before the Fall," *Chrysalis* 8 (Summer 1979): 17-27; Lillian Faderman, "The Morbidification of Love Between Women by 19th-Century Sexologists," *Journal of Homosexuality* 4, no. 1 (1978): 73-90.

⁸⁵ Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Morrow, 1981); Martha Vicinus, "Lesbian History: All Theory and No Facts or All Facts and No Theory?" in *The Feminist History Reader*, ed. Sue Morgan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 221; Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 232. This is further complicated by historical change in the importance of sexuality to individual identity, and in women's own classification of the nature of their relationships.

Because friendship has been a good place to hide, as well as to find, sexuality, making lesbian history visible has meant first making women's friendships more visible, resulting in a history of women's friendship that has for the most part been written by historians of sexuality.⁸⁶ Some of these scholars choose to situate their work in the interdisciplinary field of Friendship Studies, which Jody Greene describes as "resolutely and carefully read[ing] the history of friendship and the history of sexuality into, through, and across each other."⁸⁷ Alan Bray was one of the founders of this field, producing seminal work in the histories of friendship and sexuality, but at the end of his career, he argued that while sexuality and friendship occupy potentially "common terrain," some scholars' "inability to conceive of relationships in other than sexual terms" blocks their ability to see the "wider frame" in which those relationships are situated.⁸⁸ Sharon Marcus has recently voiced a similar concern that treating friendships between women "as a subset of lesbianism" obscures what these relationships do *not* have in common.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ The object of their study has long been a subject of debate; Sharon Marcus points out that in the early twentieth-century, poet Edward Carpenter and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld differed on "how to conceptualize friends in relation to same-sex lovers." Marcus, 30. The discussion continues, with some scholars applying variations of the concept of a "lesbian continuum," first introduced by Adrienne Rich to describe "a range of woman-identified experience" characterized as much by "bonding against male tyranny" as by sexual practices or desire. Rich, 11. Others, concerned that Rich's continuum de-sexualizes lesbians, categorize as "nonlesbian" anything other than an "overtly erotic relationship." Gorham, 50. Sheila Jeffreys intervened by pointing out that "[t]rying to pretend that heterosexuality or homosexuality are simply, or mainly, sexual practices, is to ignore politics entirely," and worries that if we insist on evidence of genital contact "there is a serious possibility that we will end up with no lesbian history at all." Sheila Jeffreys, "Does It Matter If They Did It?" in Morgan, *Feminist Reader*, 215, 214. Among historians of sexuality, the perimeters of definitions of "lesbian," and whether such definitions are possible, or desirable, is still a matter of debate. It is clear, however, that the limited language available to discuss and describe relationships between women has had consequences for friends, lovers, and historians.

⁸⁷ Jody Greene, "Introduction: The Work of Friendship," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10, no. 3 (2004): 321.

⁸⁸ Bray, 318, 6.

⁸⁹ Marcus, 29. Bray's emphasis in *The Friend* is on "sworn friendship" which he places, along with other voluntary forms of kinship (such as marriage) within "the network of obligation and kinship that cemented the traditional society of England." Bray, 104, 105, 137. He demonstrates that sworn friendship cannot be understood without reference to its spiritual aspect: religion "create[d] kinship and friendship, confirming it in the Eucharist." Bray, 246, 297.

For Bray, the “wider frame” includes the *work* of friendship - its role in the lives of friends and its value to society. Some recent studies of women’s friendships examine how friendship has supported women’s work. In a 2006 article, for example, Megan Elias illustrates how the domestic and professional partnership of women in the Home Economics movement supported their work.⁹⁰ She argues: “What matters most here ... is not whether these partners had sex with each other but how their partnerships reflected on the work to which they dedicated their lives.”⁹¹ This is a useful approach for understanding the friendship between Buhay and Buller, women whose lives can best be described as “work-centred” rather than woman-centred, and who understood capitalism, not patriarchy, to be the ultimate source of oppression. In demonstrating how their friendship enabled Buhay’s and Buller’s work, this thesis contributes to a developing historiography of friendship that concentrates on its work rather than its nature, and that pays attention to the friendships of working-class women, and women who did *not* share a household and a life as partners. My inquiry looks at the work of friendship in these working-class lives - in constructing Communist militant femininity, maintaining Buller’s and Buhay’s commitment to socialist ideology, and enabling the workers of the Communist Party of Canada to function.

Because my purpose is to demonstrate the process of constructing Communist militant femininity, this thesis focusses primarily on Buhay’s and Buller’s formative years as Communists between 1918, when they became prominent as activists in various non-

⁹⁰ Megan Elias, “Model Mamas: The Domestic Partnership of Home Economics Pioneers Flora Rose and Martha Van Rensselaer,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 1 (2006): 65-88. Annelise Orleck’s *Common Sense and a Little Fire*, a biography of American labour activists Fannia Cohen, Rose Schneiderman, Pauline Newman, and Clara Lemlich, also pays attention to how friendships supported their work.

⁹¹ Elias, 68.

Communist or pre-Communist left-wing organizations in Montreal, and 1939, when threats to the Soviet Union's existence became the primary concern of Communists world-wide. I also focus on the interwar years because the development of Communist militant femininity was possible only in its historical context: the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia, Canadian workers' recognition of their own power in the years immediately after the First World War, economic depression of the early 1920s, the absorption of the Canadian suffrage movement in a social reform movement that could not be called feminist, and the increasing number of women entering public life in the early twentieth century. I draw on sources from later years to demonstrate that Buhay's and Buller's understanding of themselves as comrades remained relatively stable over the course of their lives. These later sources also establish that their example of Communist militant femininity was accepted by the Party, to the extent that it was eventually canonized.

There are a variety of ways to elucidate the construction of identity. This inquiry could, for example, be arranged around how the process was affected by the spaces that these two women inhabited - the home, a variety of CPC workplaces, and the public arena of local and national political action. It could be conducted by examining the various roles that they created, modified, or occupied unproblematically. Or it could be approached chronologically as an evolutionary process, as they came into contact with different individuals, experiences and influences that shaped their lives. Instead, in order to determine how the constitutive elements of Communist militant femininity were brought together and expressed by Buhay and Buller, I organize this thesis around these elements. I examine how work, class, ethnicity, gender, family ties, social networks, and friendship contributed to the whole, while recognizing that none of these elements exist in isolation

from the others.

Buhay and Buller were radicalized in their teenage years by their early experience as workers. By joining the CPC in its infancy, when they were in their early twenties, they matured with the Party, and formed themselves as comrades in the early 1920s - a hopeful time for revolutionaries. In their later careers, they saw the Party re-shape itself, and make changes to its political “line” but not its vision, and they remained convinced that the CPC was the best home for their own revolutionary ideals. In their labour for the Party, they relied on their own experience as well as on their understanding of the relationship between labour and capital that they had drawn from the writings of Karl Marx. In chapter one, I establish that they claimed comradeship through their work, work which was remarkable in itself and important to the CPC’s survival as well as to its history. I demonstrate that their work had far-reaching effects on their lives, by illuminating the connections between their work, family, social networks, living conditions, health, and their relationship with the state. Because their work was deeply imbricated in so many important aspects of their lives, I argue that it must be considered central to their identity, and to the construction of Communist militant femininity.

In this construction, factors other than work were assigned varying levels of significance by Buller and Buhay, as well as by the Party. In chapter two, I explain how class, ethnicity, and gender complicate our understanding of these women as workers and comrades. I argue that their expression of these factors, in relation to their identity as workers, represented a break from other forms of femininity, and that it also differed in some ways from male Communists’ expression of masculinity. I demonstrate that they established and embodied a prototype for Communist militant femininity that the Party

accepted as an ideal, even if few other women chose the same path as Buhay and Buller. Their friendship was a constant in their lives, and essential to their ability to construct new ways of being women and comrades.

This thesis sets two women's lives in the context of important questions that historians have asked and will continue to ask about the meaning of membership in world Communist parties, the gendered aspects of women's work and political activism, the relationship between experience and identity, and the significance of friendship. By bringing these questions together here, I hope to contribute to the on-going debates and shed light on the links between them. Viewing these historical subjects through the wide-angle lens of a biographical approach allows us to see them as whole human beings whose complex life stories are relevant to working-class history, Communist history, women's history and the history of friendship. Throughout this study, my focus is on Buller and Buhay as individuals, rather than the Party as an institution. I write about them as workers, as women, as Communists, and as active participants in shaping their own lives.

CHAPTER ONE: WORKERS AND COMRADES

Work was central to Annie Buller's and Beckie Buhay's identity, and to their understanding of themselves as revolutionaries, as Communists, as activists, and as comrades.¹ In this chapter, I argue that Buhay's and Buller's construction of Communist militant femininity rested on their identity as workers. I begin by presenting evidence that, from their teenage years onward, they formed a multi-layered and changing understanding of the nature of work and its place in their own lives, on three levels. First, they were working-class wage-earners themselves. Second, both sought and found answers for their questions about social inequality in the writings of Karl Marx, as interpreted by Lenin, and as presented to the workers of Canada by the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). Third, as workers for the CPC they experienced a different kind of relationship to their own labour than that which they had experienced as factory workers or store clerks. This chapter also details the various kinds of work that Buller and Buhay performed in their first years as Communists, the importance of that work to the Party, and the effects of work on other aspects of life, including family relationships, living conditions, and health.

In the CPC, a good comrade was above all a fellow worker, and Buller and Buhay defined comradeship through work. Annie Buller made this point explicit while being questioned in court in 1931:

¹ In this thesis, the "work" or labour that I refer to is Buhay's and Buller's paid and unpaid labour for the CPC, although I acknowledge that work is a more expansive concept than is indicated by this usage.

Q: I heard you refer to the term “comrade” during your evidence. ... Who is the comrade? Comrade in what?

A: Fellow workers I would call comrades. If I would address Fred Booth I would say comrade. He is a worker, he was a comrade to me.

Q: You wouldn't address me as comrade?

A: [No], you are on the opposite side.²

The women's work as Communists engaged them in class struggle in which the “sides” were very clear. But as well as being on the same side as workers, they were comrades and workers themselves. Their political activism was more than an expression of their ideological commitment to the Party; it was also a form of labour.

Buller's and Buhay's experience growing up in working-class families, and as young workers themselves, introduced them to the stratified nature of society. From an early age, they began to develop both a practical and a theoretical understanding of the role of labour in a capitalist economic system. Both were born into Jewish families that immigrated to Montreal in the 1910s. Buller was born in Chernovtsy, in what is now Ukraine, in 1895 and arrived in Canada as a child. Her father was a carpenter, but the family's precarious finances made it necessary for her to start work at age thirteen, continuing her education by studying at home at night. She earned \$3.00 per week in her first job in Grothe's tobacco factory; she then found a position as a clerk in Almy's department store, where she was well-regarded and promoted to buyer.³ Her experience of the tobacco industry's “speed-ups” and miserable conditions prompted her to “look for

² Exchange between A. Buller and H. E. Sampson, *Rex vs. Annie Buller, 1933*, 334. Saskatchewan Archives Board (hereafter SAB) R-2.792.

³ Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 64; Watson, 1-2; unspecified newspaper clipping, n.d., AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1; notes on Annie Buller, JB papers at CPC.

... explanations,” which she found in socialist literature.⁴

Buhay was born in 1896 and grew up in London’s working-class East End. Her “rather footloose” father was a painter and Boer War veteran who “wasn’t a bad sort but not much of a breadwinner.”⁵ Her mother, a hard-working seamstress, struggled to keep the family together and ensured that Beckie had a high school education.⁶ By age 11, Beckie was attending socialist Sunday school; as teenagers, she and her brother, Michael, joined the socialist movement in London as supporters of Keir Hardie’s Independent Labor Party.⁷ Beckie began speaking at outdoor meetings and studying Marxism at night school.⁸ When the family arrived in Montreal in 1913, she found work at the Rice Studio as a photo finisher, using skills which she had acquired through a trade scholarship in London.⁹ Later, she worked in a dress shop.¹⁰ Both siblings immediately involved themselves with various Montreal socialist organizations.¹¹

A wide range of left-wing political parties and labour organizations existed in Montreal in the 1910s, most of which were composed primarily of Anglo-Canadians and Jewish immigrants.¹² Buhay’s earliest allegiance was to the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC),

⁴ Annie Buller, “The Glorious Tradition of the Workers’ Press,” c. 1958. Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO) F 1405-85 (Multicultural History Society of Ontario series), JEW:0065 MFN 462 (Jim Buller papers on microfilm), reel 1.

⁵ Tom Ewen to A. Buller, August 1, 1955. University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Robert S. Kenny Collection (hereafter FLKC) box 41, folder 9.

⁶ Annie Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay,” c. 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 10.

⁷ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay.” The third Buhay sibling, Bessie, remained in London and later died in the Blitz. Alice M. Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class,” *Canadian Tribune*, June 11, 1951.

⁸ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay.”

⁹ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay”; Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class.”

¹⁰ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay.”

¹¹ Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class.”

¹² Geoffrey Ewen, “Quebec: Class and Ethnicity,” in *The Workers’ Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*, ed. Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 90. Ewen points out that francophones were more likely to belong to the Catholic Church, which actively discouraged parishioners from joining the secularist socialist parties. The Church also encouraged its members to belong to Catholic trade unions, which it aggressively promoted beginning in 1920. Ewen characterizes these unions as primarily “quiescent and

known as the “impossibilist party”¹³ for its endless discussions of the finer points of Marxist theory. An SPC lecture entitled “Final Futility of the Final Futility” finally convinced her of the futility of expending any further energy in the effort to effect change through a Party which seemed to have little practical advice for the working class.¹⁴ She then joined the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC).¹⁵ Buller was also involved with socialist and trade union groups. Like many socialists, by 1916 she was also active in Montreal’s anti-conscription movement, in which her friends the Buhays were “in the forefront.”¹⁶

In 1917, Buhay left for New York to work as an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. By 1919 she was also secretary of the Socialist Party of America (8th Assembly District, Harlem), and writing letters on its behalf in which she pledged to work towards “the establishment of a Socialist Federated Soviet Republic in America.”¹⁷ In the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution and a wave of social unrest across Europe following World War I, the United States was gripped by a “red scare.”¹⁸ Escaping arrest, Buhay returned to Montreal in 1919, where she continued to attract police attention.¹⁹

passive,” in contrast with the more militant unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, or, later, the CPC. Geoffrey Ewen, 121. As the Catholic unions increased their membership, the CPC characterized their expansion as “a menace.” Report to Presidium of Comintern, c. August 1922[?]. LAC CI MG 10 K-292 file 195. For more on CPC reaction to the extension of the influence of Catholic unions in the 1920s, see “Catholic Worker” *Worker*, July 31, 1926.

¹³ Newton, 5.

¹⁴ Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class.”

¹⁵ Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class.”

¹⁶ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay.” On socialist women’s visibility in the anti-conscription movement see Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women*, 206-210 and Newton, 157.

¹⁷ Annie Buller and Leslie Morris, notebook, “Facts Becky B.,” c. 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 9. See also T. Ewen to A. Buller, 1 Aug, 1955, FLKC box 41, folder 9; transcript of letter, B. Buhay to L. C. A. K. [Ludwig] Martens, April 21, 1919, FLKC box 41, folder 16.

¹⁸ For information on the “Palmer raids” and New York’s state investigation into radicalism, see Todd J. Pfannestiel, *Rethinking the Red Scare: The Lusk Committee and New York's Crusade Against Radicalism, 1919-1923* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁹ Albert J. Cowdron, Acting Chief Commissioner of Police, Montreal, to A. E. McLean, Comptroller of RNWP, November 12, 1919. LAC Canadian Security Intelligence Service (hereafter CSIS) RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-0012, part 1.

After the Winnipeg General Strike ended in June, 1919, Buhay was drawn to the One Big Union (OBU), which she saw as a way for the working class to challenge the “bossing class.”²⁰ She was elected as organizer at the first meeting of the OBU’s Montreal local, on November 13, 1919.²¹ Buller was named vice president and Buhay English-language recording secretary of the OBU in Montreal on July 29, 1920.²² The industrious F. W. Zaneth, who was then building his own career with the RCMP on the basis of his covert investigations of left-wing organizations in Montreal, provided richly interpretative reports of the meetings he attended, based on his confidence in his own understanding of the principles of socialism; frequently, he included disdainful adjudications of the quality of both speakers and audience. At a meeting at the Labor Temple in 1920, for example, he noted the ignorance of the “very low class” attendees, who reacted to the speaker’s comments by turning to each other with such questions as “What does he mean by Proletarian [sic] dictatorship?”²³ After a 1920 OBU meeting, Zaneth allowed that both Buller and Buhay seemed well versed in socialism, although on the same occasion he reported that Buhay made a “long senseless speech”; that neither Buhay, Buller nor anyone else at the meeting understood the OBU’s “aims and objects;” and that the newly-elected officials were certainly radical but that “they lack the knowledge to conduct a

²⁰ Beckie Buhay, “Wage Board Sets \$7 to Live On,” *Worker*, September 1, 1922. Communication difficulties, mutual distrust between Russian Jews and French-Canadians, leadership rivalries, and disagreements over ideology and tactics, which were evident within the Montreal local of the OBU, also produced a number of other sometimes co-operative, sometimes hostile, and often short-lived organizations between 1919 and 1922. RCMP reports refer to the French Socialist Party, the French Communist Party, the French Socialist Communist Party, and the Jewish Socialist Party as well as the Socialist Party of Canada, the Social Economic Labour Association and, as of late September, 1922, the Workers’ Party of Canada.

²¹ Cowdron to McLean, November 21, 1919. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

²² F. W. Zaneth, “Re: O.B.U at Montreal,” July 31, 1920. LAC RG146 Vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

²³ Zaneth, RCMP report, c. July 25, 1920. Public Safety Canada (hereafter PSC) CSIS, file 117-89-74, F. W. Zaneth.

business meeting in the proper way.”²⁴ But Buller and Buhay were already at work, building a store of practical leadership skills and theoretical knowledge that would later serve them well as effective organizers and Party workers for the CPC.

From the time of their first meeting in 1914, Buhay and Buller supported each other’s continuing efforts to deepen their understanding of the workings of capitalism. Buhay’s formal study of socialist literature had been limited to the classes that she had taken as a youngster in England, and Buller had not completed high school, but both were keen learners. Together, the two young women read and studied anything they could find that dealt with socialism and, in particular, with the promise that the Russian Revolution seemed to hold for the rest the world.²⁵ In 1919, Buller went to New York to study Marxism at the Rand School of Social Science, but Buhay did not undertake any formal studies as a young woman.²⁶ She nevertheless became one of the Party’s most respected theorists and educators, explaining in later years, “I have learned most of my Marxism by reading and teaching, and testing it in the fire of struggle.”²⁷

Their readings and their education led them to a distinctly Marxist understanding of how the capitalist system is based on the ability of some individuals to accumulate wealth through the labour of others. In the end, attempts at reform were doomed because the system itself was the problem. They believed that “the overthrow of the existing order” was both necessary and inevitable and, like many members of the SDPC and OBU, they

²⁴ Zaneth, “Re: O.B.U at Montreal,” July 31, 1920. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

²⁵ Watson, 4.

²⁶ Some historians have stated that Buhay attended the Rand School. I base my assertion that she did not on Alice Cooke’s recollection of a conversation with Buhay, and an emphatic statement from Buller. Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class”; A. Buller to Bea Ferneyhough, January 19, 1967. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1. For more on the Rand School, see Pfannestiel.

²⁷ Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class.”

gravitated towards the CPC as a more militant organization and the best hope for that change.²⁸ Buhay and Buller joined the CPC's legal "front," the Workers' Party of Canada (WPC), shortly after it was founded in 1922, and quickly became full-time workers for the Party.

At this stage in their careers, their relationship to their work underwent a qualitative change. Their paid labour for the CPC differed from previous waged work in that they no longer saw themselves as exploited by an employer who completely controlled the conditions of their labour; they worked for the Party, but they *were* the Party. They were no longer alienated from their work because they saw it as useful and social labour, willingly undertaken, the "product" of which (in Leninist terms, a working class less "inert" than they had found it) was directly related to their own well-being and survival as well as to that of humanity. Their labour for the CPC, in effect, was part of their life, rather than estranged from it.²⁹

Buller and Buhay were conscious of the relationship between satisfying work and the achievement of their full human potential. They encouraged each other to do work to which they were well-suited, and to develop skills in types of work which they found enjoyable. In a letter to her friend Jeanne Corbin, who was unhappy with her job as a teacher, Buller wrote that "[i]t must be nerve-racking to work at a trade that one is not fond of. There is some comfort for us [in] knowing that when the new day is ushered in we will all do the things we like and in that way get better results."³⁰ Buller's words of

²⁸ D. Kent to all members of Party, September 30, 1921. LAC CI MG 10 K-271 file 4.

²⁹ For Marx on the concept of alienated labour, see "On James Mill," in McLellan, 124 - 133 and "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," in McLellan, 83-121, especially 85-95.

³⁰ A. Buller to Jeanne Corbin, January 18, 1928. AO RG 4-32 (Ministry of the Attorney General, case file 3188/31, Communist Party of Canada records on microfilm), reel 4.

sympathy for Corbin are clearly written from the perspective of someone who is “fond” of her own work; as well, they indicate not only that she fully expected to live out her life in a socialist future in which all individuals would labour according to their talents and inclinations, but also that society as a whole would benefit from this approach to work.

That is not to say that the CPC did not itself exploit the labour of its workers. Though disturbing from a communist perspective, it was undoubtedly Buller’s ever-thrifty efforts to keep the *Worker* afloat financially (as well as her understanding of the capitalist system) that led her to suggest to William Sydney, who was not raising enough money to cover his expenses on a fund-raising tour for the Party newspaper, “How would you like to work on a commission basis?”³¹ This suggestion is even more alarming coming from a woman who helped organize needle trade workers, an industry notorious for its attempts to keep labour costs low through a pay system based on piece work. There is no evidence that Buller was anything other than oblivious here to the disconnect between Marxist theory and her own practice as a supervisor of Communist Party workers.

The two women held various positions within the CPC and Communist-controlled organizations that contributed to the Party’s propaganda efforts, designed to educate Canadian workers. All of the forms which this work took rested on their belief that workers would never overthrow capitalism without understanding how the system worked, and that workers’ education had to be “rescued,” as Marx had put it, from the control of the bourgeoisie.³² In a Party that understood itself to be in the vanguard of the working class, all work was seen as having an educational component. Buller’s and Buhay’s contributions were not only important but essential to the Party, especially in the areas of

³¹ A. Buller to Sydney, 1 Aug, 1928. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

³² Marx, “The Communist Manifesto,” in McLellan, 259.

education, union organizing, and the Party press.

Even before the CPC was founded, Buhay and Buller contributed to socialist educational activities through public speaking engagements and their involvement with schools and training programs which paved the way for a Communist Party. Their first major educational effort was to found and operate the Montreal Labor College (MLC), which the Party would later see as a significant milestone in its history. While in attendance at the Rand School in New York, Buller had met another socialist from Montreal, Bella Gauld, and the two discussed the possibility of opening a similar institution when they returned home: “Annie and I felt that it was very important to carry on labor educational activity in our own city. It was the largest city in Canada, the seat of finance capital for the whole country. There was nowhere in Canada where it was more important that the workers should have a knowledge of their movement and how to better their conditions.”³³ According to Buller, the two women “agreed that working-class education was needed in Montreal, that it would help the workers to understand not only the existing evils, but that there is a way out – socialism – and that socialism was a science and had to be learned.”³⁴

They enlisted the enthusiastic Buhay siblings and solicited funding from Montreal’s trade unions. The college opened in 1920, and offered a Marxist perspective on a broad range of topics to working men and women. Trade union members could attend courses free of charge.³⁵ Economics and the history of the labour movement were key subjects, often taught by Mike or Beckie Buhay, but courses and lectures in anthropology and the

³³ Bella Gauld, “One of Canada’s First Labor Colleges,” *Canadian Tribune*, July 9, 1951.

³⁴ Annie Buller, “An Example to Us All (In Memory of Bella Gauld),” *Canadian Tribune*, September 11, 1961.

³⁵ MLC, *Prospectus, Sessions 1923-1924*. LAC, James Shaver Woodsworth fonds, MG27 III C7 Vol. 27, file 32. The college opened in two rented rooms in St. Joseph’s Hall on St. Catherine Street East; the next year, organizers purchased a house nearby at 70 Jeanne Mance, a residential street in a primarily francophone district. Gauld, “One of Canada’s First Labor Colleges.”

natural sciences were also presented, usually by visiting lecturers, including Scott Nearing who had also taught at the Rand School. Labour Member of Parliament J.S. Woodsworth presented several series of lectures.³⁶ The college catered primarily to English speakers, but socialist leader Albert Saint-Martin also attracted as many as sixty students to his classes in French.³⁷ Buller remembered, “We had a real united front. All kinds of people felt that for the first time in the history of Montreal we were really serving the workers providing them with Marxist knowledge they could not get elsewhere.”³⁸ While other CPC educational efforts rented facilities for the limited duration of each program, the MLC was intended as a permanent, bricks-and-mortar institution: it boasted a labour library, served as a meeting place for socialists and trade union members, and as a venue for concerts, dances and motion pictures.³⁹

The college also provided a focal point for Zaneth’s sweeping and alarming extrapolations as to the motives and plans of socialist activists and the threat that they posed to social stability. These reports may well have accurately reflected the ambitions of the MLC’s aspiring revolutionaries: the college prospectus of 1923 proclaimed that “knowledge is a very necessary weapon” in organizing workers to bring about “a complete change in the present social order.”⁴⁰ But Zaneth’s assessments over-stated the effect of Communist activities, while also providing a rationale for his own employment. His approach was quite in keeping with the institutional climate of the RCMP during these years; the force was led by a commissioner who had, according to J.S. Woodsworth,

³⁶ MLC, Prospectus, Sessions 1923-1924.

³⁷ Gauld, “One of Canada’s First Labor Colleges.”

³⁸ Buller, “Example to Us All.”

³⁹ Zaneth, “Report of meeting at the Labor College,” May 3, 1923. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

⁴⁰ MLC, Prospectus, Sessions 1923-1924.

“peopled the Labor world with all sorts of hobgoblins. He is always successfully heading off dangers which he has conjured up. ...”⁴¹ As historian Gregory Kealey has noted, “For the RCMP the Cold War began in 1919, not in 1946.”⁴² True or not, Zaneth’s claim that “all the Radical organizations in Montreal” had something to do with the purchase of the MLC property no doubt helped to convince his superiors to approve the expense of renting a room a few doors away.⁴³ From his surveillance outpost at number 75 Jeanne Mance, Zaneth reported on the goings-on at the MLC, including “secret meetings” attended every night by the city’s radical leaders, although the CPC was well aware of Zaneth’s activities by this time.⁴⁴

As the CPC would have it, in the early 1920s the MLC was “by far the most active centre of Marxist education in Canada,” and it was through the MLC that the CPC gained a foothold in Montreal.⁴⁵ After 1922 (when the WPC was founded), a rift between Communists and more moderate labour factions at the college gradually widened, and it became impossible for it to continue to operate. But Communists were active in the MLC throughout 1924: in April, Tim Buck and Mike Buhay represented the college in a debate with McGill University, and in the fall session both Buhay siblings taught classes on trade

⁴¹ J. S. Woodsworth, “Royal Canadian Mounted Police,” *Worker*, April 15, 1922. The Dominion Police and the Royal North-West Mounted Police were amalgamated in 1920 as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Bolshevik threat was of prime concern to Canada’s secret service during this years. Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds. *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 12-14.

⁴² Gregory S. Kealey, “The RCMP, the Special Branch, and the Early Days of the Communist Party of Canada: A Documentary Article,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (1992): 171.

⁴³ Zaneth, RCMP report, “Bolshevik Movement, Montreal,” June 23, 1922. PSC CSIS, file 88-A-98, Bella Gauld.

⁴⁴ Zaneth, “Bolshevik Movement”; J. S. Woodsworth, “Royal Canadian Mounted Police,” *Worker*, April 15, 1922.

⁴⁵ “Bella Gauld” [death notice], *Canadian Tribune*, August 28, 1961.

unionism.⁴⁶ Beckie Buhay remained involved with education throughout her career, teaching various Party schools and summer camps, writing correspondence courses, and eventually becoming National Education Director for the CPC.

The second area in which Buller and Buhay made valuable contributions to the Party (and to the labour movement in general) was through their work as union organizers. As they understood it, a large component of the Party's union work was the education of workers. Buller was best remembered by the Party for her skill and energy as an organizer, especially her leadership role in building the International Union of Needle Trades Workers in Toronto in 1929. She was also a source of inspiration to the striking coal miners of southern Saskatchewan in their struggle against mine owners in 1931.⁴⁷ Buller saw the Saskatchewan strike and her subsequent trial as "a period of rapid education" for the people of the mining town of Bienfait.⁴⁸ Buhay devoted less of her career to union work, but she too was involved in organizing needle trades workers in the 1920s. Both women were well-respected in the coal-mining communities of Cape Breton, Vancouver Island, the Crow's Nest Pass and southern Alberta.

Buller and Buhay were also celebrated by the Party for their contributions to the survival of the Party newspaper, the *Worker*, and other Party publications. The CPC believed that its newspaper, in particular, had a pivotal role to play in furthering the revolutionary cause. In 1901, Lenin had insisted on the centrality of a national newspaper to the Russian party organization:

⁴⁶ "Montreal Labor College Debates McGill Varsity," *Worker*, April 26, 1924; "Labor College Starts Classes," *Worker*, October 25, 1924.

⁴⁷ In Buller's recollections of these events, she emphasizes class antagonism and collective effort rather than her own leadership. Annie Buller, "Path of Struggle: The Toronto Dressmakers," *National Affairs Monthly*, June 1951, 31; Annie Buller, "The Estevan Massacre," *National Affairs Monthly*, May 1949, 169.

⁴⁸ Buller, "Estevan Massacre," 171.

This newspaper would become part of an enormous pair of smith's bellows that would fan every spark of the class struggle and of popular indignation into a general conflagration.... [W]ork of political agitation ... is unthinkable ... without an all-Russia newspaper, issued very frequently. The organisation, which will form round this newspaper ... will be ready for everything, from upholding the honour, the prestige, and the continuity of the Party in periods of acute revolutionary "depression" to preparing for, appointing the time for, and carrying out the nation-wide armed uprising.⁴⁹

Lenin's position was echoed by the Comintern and by the CPC.⁵⁰ In the CPC's first monthly bulletin issued after its founding convention in May, 1921, the first accomplishment listed was the production of "the first number of our official organ," and the Party's first financial report noted that "[i]n the main," membership dues were used to support the press.⁵¹ Thus, from the beginning, a Party organ was considered by the CPC to be absolutely essential to its growth and its very survival, and to the success of the working class movement which it planned to lead. By 1930, the CPC reported fourteen Party papers, with a combined circulation of 59,200.⁵² It is not surprising then that Buhay's and Buller's commitment to the Party was reflected in the importance that they placed on their work for its press.

Buller served as business manager of the *Worker* for several years in the 1920s, and both Buller and Buhay undertook tours as sales representatives for the newspaper. Both also contributed articles to Party publications, and Buhay in particular became a prolific writer. Although Buller was employed as business manager, most of the time she had no one to manage but herself. She was responsible for maintaining subscription lists,

⁴⁹ Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*

⁵⁰ Secretariat of the Executive [of the CI] to CPC, December 28, 1921. LAC CI MG 10 K-271, file 2.

⁵¹ "C.P. of C. Monthly Bulletin," June 30, 1921, and "The Financial Condition of the [CPC and the WPC]." LAC CI MG 10 K-271, file 4.

⁵² The list included the papers of CPC-controlled organizations, published in English, French, Yiddish, Hungarian, Finnish, and Ukrainian. The highest circulation (15,000) was credited to the monthly *Lumber Worker*, listed as the "Finnish organ of Lumber Workers Industrial Union"; it was claimed that the *Worker's* weekly circulation was 5,500. "Party Papers in Canada," 1930. LAC CI MG 10 K-280, file 106.

sending out receipts to new subscribers, reconciling the accounts of sales agents, processing innumerable changes of address, writing letters to request financial support from individuals and organizations, preparing reports for the Party, planning subscription drives twice a year, and paying the paper's accounts – which usually involved juggling funds so that there was enough money to pay the printer each week. At the same time, Buller was responsible for the purchase, sale, and delivery of Party books and pamphlets; interference on the part of the post office and customs agents sometimes prevented materials from reaching their intended recipients, and led to an increased workload of correspondence, investigating and responding to complaints from customers.⁵³

Buhay made two tours of western Canada as a travelling representative for the *Worker*. Depending on the extent of the support that she received from local units of the Party, her work might involve distributing handbills to promote her own speaking engagements, organizing local members to conduct door-to-door sales drives, offering sample copies at factory gates, and following up on expired subscriptions. She also identified and appointed local agents for the paper, and trained them to carry on the work that she had started. Buhay even organized some fund-raising dances on Vancouver Island as a benefit for the paper. While some local Party units were generally co-operative with travelling representatives of the *Worker*, others saw their arrival as simply an occasion for an unwelcome increase in their Party work.⁵⁴

Due to the *Worker's* ever-perilous financial state, both women took it as a point of

⁵³ *Worker Correspondence* files detail the work expected of the paper's business managers. AO RG 4-32, reels 4 and 5.

⁵⁴ On the 1927 tour, Buhay noted that she had "absolutely no cooperation" in Winnipeg, for example. B. Buhay to A. Buller, c. February 27, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4. The next year, she pointed out that "a state of apathy prevailed" in Vancouver. "Report of Beckie Buhay's Western Tour for the 'Worker,' Sept 7th to Jan.10th 1928." AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

pride not only to raise money for the paper, but to save money wherever possible. Buller was very much what is now known as a “micro-manager,” anxious to hear every detail of how the paper’s representatives were doing on the road, instructing one of them to “write me as often as you can.”⁵⁵ She demanded to know why another representative was paying \$7.00 a week for a room in Timmins when on her own visit there she had paid just \$4.00.⁵⁶ Buhay was equally thrifty. Arriving sick and exhausted in Winnipeg at the end of a 1927 tour, she wrote to Buller:

I'll try and see if I can get a little dough here. [I]f not I'll let the week go as a vacation for me without pay for I hate like hell to see the heavy expense account mount up though I've tried to keep it down as low as I could. [T]he only sleeper I took up till now was from Edmonton to Regina [and that was] because it was a physical impossibility for me not to.⁵⁷

Working for the CPC required extraordinary effort. The extent of the women’s involvement with their work went well beyond what might be expected by other employers, in other types of work. Jobs and positions were often “assigned” by the Party, rather than allowing individual members to choose their own type of work. In general, workers were often appointed to positions that suited their capabilities, and this often meant that individuals held multiple positions simultaneously. It was said of Annie Buller that “[s]he remained loyal [to] her class in good times when things were easy. She remained loyal to her class and to her Party when times were difficult, when sacrifice was required.”⁵⁸ In fact, it would be difficult to point to an “easy” period for a Party worker.

The Party had high expectations for all its members - there was an enormous quantity of work to be done, and never enough people to do it. One of the CPC’s

⁵⁵ A. Buller to Bill Pierce, February 10, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

⁵⁶ A. Buller to L.R. Menzies, July 2, 1928. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

⁵⁷ B. Buhay to A. Buller, February 16, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

⁵⁸ “In Memoriam: Annie Buller,” *Canadian Tribune*, January 24, 1973.

founding members, Maurice Spector, made this clear in the first issue of the *Worker*: “No dead wood! ... Every man a job. A large portion of the membership should as far as possible be assigned to do Party work.”⁵⁹ An RCMP spy recorded one “tongue lashing” delivered by Buhay to a less than energetic group: “In the future there will be no evasion of Party tasks, every member will carry out instructions given him or her and failure to do so will mean they are no longer members.”⁶⁰ Throughout its history, the CPC insisted on the importance of work. All Party members were expected to do their share, and, as a directive to members of the Young Communist League indicates, no allowances were made for youth: “We cannot allow organisational slovenliness to imbue our organisation.”⁶¹

If these were the kinds of expectations that were demanded of unpaid workers, it follows that expectations were even higher for full-time workers. Buller and Buhay always endeavoured to meet the Party’s multiple demands, and considered those who devoted less time or energy to the Party to be lazy or lacking in commitment.⁶² The bulletins and letters that they sent out to the districts to advise of various campaigns indicated that assigned work must be done enthusiastically and “immediately.”⁶³ Disappointed by the results from *Worker* representative William Sydney’s two-month tour to Montreal and Nova Scotia (which resulted in an overall deficit of \$5.85), Buller assigned part of the blame to “lack of interest” on Sydney’s part, although she tempered this by telling him, “I have given you

⁵⁹ “The Organization of the Party,” *Worker*, March 15, 1922.

⁶⁰ RCMP report, “Re : Communist Party of Canada - Edmonton, Alberta,” July 23, 1929. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 2.

⁶¹ William Kashtan to members of the Toronto Young Communist League, April 2, 1930. AO RG 4-32, reel 1.

⁶² Jeanne Corbin, report, “Sudbury,” July 1, 1930. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

⁶³ The word “immediately” is ubiquitous in CPC communications.

credit when you did good work, and that you know.”⁶⁴ Buller considered lack of discipline to be even worse than lack of interest, and she was particularly upset that Sydney had taken a week off without first consulting her: “I personally feel that Comrades holding responsible positions should not fly off and do what they like....[I]t hurts me to think that we place confidence in our Comrades and then they go ahead and act like Anarchists.”⁶⁵ Generally, if a job was not completed successfully, the fault was with the worker; there is no record that Buller and Buhay ever believed that the Party was unrealistic in its expectations. The solution to failure was more work: “Good things do not happen. We have to work and work hard. There is great joy in working hard for the things that matter.”⁶⁶

Party work could also be hazardous, demanding a certain amount of courage. As speakers, Buhay and Buller were used to being heckled, and even pelted by various comestibles, such as eggs or rotten tomatoes.⁶⁷ As organizer for the Party during the 1922 miners’ strike in Alberta, in weather twenty degrees below zero, Buhay was driven along the frozen Red Deer River for twenty miles en route from Big Valley to Wayne, where she browbeat the reluctant manager of the local hall into opening it for a meeting.⁶⁸ In her New York days, mob violence to “terrorize socialists and progressives” was tolerated by city officials and, according to Alice Cooke, “Beckie felt the full force of their batons and was a target of their attack.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Sydney, “Worker Tour Nova Scotia & Montreal June 11 - August 9th,” c. August 1, 1928; A. Buller to Sydney, August 4, 1928. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

⁶⁵ A. Buller to Sydney, August 4, 1928. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

⁶⁶ A. Buller to J. Buller, March 2, 1941, JB papers at CPC.

⁶⁷ RCMP report, “Re: United Front Election Campaign,” December 31, 1932, PSC CSIS, file 117-92-53, Annie Buller; RCMP report, “Re: May Day Demonstration Timmins,” May 28, 1931. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 3; Watson, 69.

⁶⁸ E.R. Fay, “Becky Buhay in Alberta,” c. December, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 9; “Beckie Buhay Speaks to Big Crowd in Wayne,” *Worker*, February 19, 1927.

⁶⁹ Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class.”

Annie Buller's work earned her two jail sentences: in 1933, she was sentenced to a year in Saskatchewan's North Battleford women's prison for inciting a riot and unlawful assembly during the miners strike in the Bienfait-Estevan coal fields; in 1941 she served eighteen months of a two-year sentence in Portage La Prairie resulting from her work with the Party press in Winnipeg. Beckie Buhay served no prison time, but she too exhibited no fear in her encounters with the police. At a 1929 public meeting organized by the CPC as part of its "free speech" campaign, intended to defy Toronto Police Chief Draper's anti-Communist initiative, Buhay resisted police attempts to break up the meeting.⁷⁰ According to a police report, as speaker Philip Halpern was arrested Buhay "forced her way on the stage" by crawling through the already-lowered curtain, and treated the audience to a comparison between Draper's men and the "Czar's henchmen."⁷¹ Even a tear gas bomb tossed onto the stage, presumably by a police officer, slowed her down only "for a few seconds" and she followed up by shouting, "Long live the Revolutionary working class" as the theatre emptied.⁷²

Hard work, and plenty of it, was at the centre of Party culture. This is nowhere more apparent than in the way that Party members dealt with downturns and sorrowful events, including death. The standard way of memorializing departed comrades was through the dedication of more work in their honour. Beckie Buhay's death in 1953

⁷⁰ For more on the free speech campaign see Betcherman, Lita-Rose. *The Little Band: The Clashes Between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishments in Canada, 1928-1932*. Ottawa: Deneau, 1982.

⁷¹ "Toronto Lenin Meeting Defends Movement from Police Attacks," *Worker*, February 2, 1929; RCMP report, January 24, 1929. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 2.

⁷² Excerpt from unspecified RCMP report, January 24, 1929. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 2. Many versions of this story exist. I rely on a contemporary RCMP report and *Worker* article, rather than later accounts, such as Tim Buck's memoirs, which portray him as the hero of the occasion. Tim Buck, *Yours In the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck*, eds. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke (Toronto: NC Press, 1977), 152-153.

triggered an avalanche of condolence letters and telegrams which typically promised that the sender and his or her comrades would “work that much harder in her memory.”⁷³ A telegram from the Ottawa club indicated that the loss of one worker meant that others would have to redouble their efforts: “All here resolved to work harder to try fill gap.”⁷⁴ This attitude was not restricted to Canadian Communists. A letter of condolence from the Communist Party of Great Britain expressed the same sentiment: “[W]e shall, in honour of her memory, intensify our efforts in the cause to which she devoted her life.”⁷⁵ Annie Buller’s words at Buhay’s funeral followed the same theme: “We will do a little more of the work you talked about that was unfinished. We owe that to you.”⁷⁶ This kind of rhetoric is in some ways empty, because for many CPC members there was very little time in which they were not already engaged in intense effort on behalf of the Party. At the same time it is symbolic of their understanding of the importance of Party work: work itself was the most fitting memorial to a worker.⁷⁷

Their commitment to Party work required accommodation in many areas of Buhay’s and Buller’s personal lives, including marriage and motherhood. The amount of time that both women dedicated to their work, including travel on behalf of the Party, would have placed a strain on any marriage, and it thus limited their choice of spouse to like-minded Party members whose depth of ideological commitment to the importance of

⁷³ Harvey J. Murphy, “Tribute to Beckie Buhay,” *Canadian Tribune*, 11 Jan, 1954. Similar sentiments were expressed on the death of Buller and Guralnick. “Harry Guralnick, A Tribute to An Exemplary Communist,” *Canadian Tribune*, February 16, 1972; Mark Frank, address at funeral of Annie Buller, January 21, 1973, AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1.

⁷⁴ Telegram, F. D. Prior to Tim Buck, December 28, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 14.

⁷⁵ George Matthews to Tim Buck, December 30, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 10.

⁷⁶ “Death of Beckie Buhay mourned by thousands,” *Pacific Tribune*, August 8, 1954.

⁷⁷ Buhay herself would no doubt have approved of this dedication of work in her honour; Alice Cooke recalled that Buhay “always [said] she wish[ed] she were doing ten times the work. Cooke, “Heroine of the Working Class.”

Party work matched their own. Annie Buller advised young Communist women to make sure that their husbands belonged to the Party: “Make sure, and don’t become a ‘hausfrau.’”⁷⁸ Buller herself married Harry Guralnick in Montreal on November 9, 1924, and the two built a life-long relationship around their work and their common goals. A note from Guralnick to Buller on the occasion of their twentieth wedding anniversary opens with his single-sentence “expression (very inadequate) of love [and] comradeship for the first, but the not the last, twenty years of married life.”⁷⁹ In the rest of the letter, Guralnick reflects on their “small” contribution to “the struggle of all progressive mankind” and expresses his certainty that the two of them would live to see “complete liberation.” He closes with his hope for their future: “The high ideals of our movement and the struggle for their realization, give us courage and vitality to live, to work and to go forward.”

Beckie Buhay married Tom Ewen in Buffalo, New York, on July 16, 1931.⁸⁰ Like Guralnick, Ewen was a committed Communist, but while Guralnick was not a full-time Party worker during the 1920s and 1930s, Ewen, like Buller and Buhay, was among what could be considered the Party’s elite.⁸¹ The marriage lasted only five years, despite their mutual dedication to the Party. As Ewen wrote after Buhay’s death, “It is one of those

⁷⁸ Buller’s advice was provided to young women at a Young Communist League meeting in Winnipeg in 1925, as remembered by Bertha Guberman. Watson, 16.

⁷⁹ Harry Guralnick to A. Buller, November 4, 1944, JB papers at CPC.

⁸⁰ Most historians, and many RCMP reports, indicate that Buhay and Ewen had a common-law relationship, but a passport was issued to her in the name of Rebecca Ewen in February 1935 by a passport officer who indicated that he had seen a copy of her marriage certificate. J.J. Connolly to Department of External Affairs, February 20, 1935. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 4. See also Jean Ewen, “To Beckie with Love,” c. 1955, FLKC box 41, folder 9.

⁸¹ Ewen (he used both his mother’s and his father’s surnames of Ewen and McEwen) was a blacksmith by trade, who became a union organizer for the CPC in western Canada in the 1920s. He headed the Workers Unity League for the Party, which organized thousands of employed and unemployed workers in the depression years 1929 – 1935. He was one of the “Kingston Eight” who were arrested along with Tim Buck in 1931, and convicted of sedition. Ewen served a total of 9 years in prison over his lifetime. Tom McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1974).

tragedies of life that two people with a common ideal find life incompatible in other things.”⁸² Ewen’s daughter Jean tried to console Beckie when the two parted ways by telling her “that there wasn’t any man living that was worth the salt of her [tears].”⁸³ Buhay tearfully responded, “But Jean, I love him.”⁸⁴ Tom Ewen speculated that after their break-up, Buhay “sought relief from her grief by more intensive work in the movement – if that was possible.”⁸⁵ There is no record of Buhay’s involvement in any subsequent romantic relationship.

Party work also limited the amount of time and energy that elite Party women could devote to child-rearing. As Joan Sangster notes, few women in leadership positions had children.⁸⁶ While some women may have consciously chosen to remain child-free, stories abound of Buhay’s “deep love of little children,” and having none of her own seems to have been a genuine sacrifice for her.⁸⁷ She went out of her way to find alternative ways of mothering “every child, near and far,” including a fund-raising campaign for children affected by the Spanish Civil War.⁸⁸ One friend recalled Buhay’s excitement when his wife gave birth during Buhay’s visit:

She came bouncing out of the bedroom shouting ‘It’s a boy, it’s a boy’ until I ... asked her who in hell had the boy, the wife or she. Next morning ... Beckie left the house and was gone all day and well into the evening, until we were worried stiff. Then she arrived, mission accomplished. She had a whole outfit for the boy, booties, woolen suit and bonnet.⁸⁹

She also sent hand-made gifts to the children of other Party members; Buller’s son was a

⁸² T. Ewen to A. Buller, August 1, 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

⁸³ Jean [Ewen] Kovich to A. Buller, December 20, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

⁸⁴ Kovich to A. Buller, December 20, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

⁸⁵ T. Ewen to A. Buller, August 1, 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

⁸⁶ Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 158.

⁸⁷ Gui Caron, notes from speech at Beckie Buhay’s graveside, December, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

⁸⁸ Notes headed “rebecca buhay, heroine of the canadian working class,” c. 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 10.

⁸⁹ George MacEachern to A. Buller, August 9, 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

particular favourite.

Although Buhay's marriage to Tom Ewen was short-lived, she maintained a loving relationship with Ewen's children to the end of her life. Jean Ewen recalled that "[i]t seems that all the nice things that happened to me thru my barren childhood [were] in some way connected with Becky."⁹⁰ Before he met Buhay, parenthood was as complicated for widower Tom Ewen as it would have been for women comrades. Ewen knew that "in making my decision to become a 'professional revolutionary' I had placed the probabilities of neglect, sacrifice, and often extreme hardship upon my [four] young children."⁹¹ His six-year-old daughter took on the maternal role in the family for four years before Buhay entered their lives.⁹² After that, things were less complicated for Ewen, and more so for Buhay, who took over primary responsibility for the children's care while still keeping up her Party responsibilities.

Buller and Guralnick had one child, a son, Jimmy (named for Nova Scotia coal-miners union leader J.B. McLachlan), born in 1926. While some women prioritized their own family's well-being over the Party's, Buller and Buhay seem to have refused to make that choice. It is likely that their status within the Party as full-time workers made it easier for Buhay and Buller to negotiate the contradictions of life as a female Communist – they had access to Party educational materials that pointed out the importance of working to change the system, and they did not have to labour at an additional wage-earning job as well as for the Party. Buller also had practical support in the form of a "good comrade" to whom she entrusted the care of her newborn son, so that she could return to work a few

⁹⁰ Kovich to B. Buhay, October 9 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 12.

⁹¹ McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red*, 126.

⁹² McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red*, 79.

days after giving birth.⁹³ Nonetheless, it must have been extraordinarily difficult for Buller to be separated from her seven-year-old son while she served her sentence in North Battleford jail.

Buller and Buhay may have had difficulty accepting that other women made choices that were sometimes more indicative of a focus on the present than on the utopian future. In 1931, a Cape Breton miner's wife recently returned from a Party-sponsored trip to the Soviet Union was unapologetic about her tardiness in writing a promised article for the worker: "[R]eally all my time goes in making overcoats ... for the kids out of old things that really should have been burned years ago, of course Beckie will say that is all the more reason why I should write and try to do more, but we must do [and] think of today as well as the future."⁹⁴ In a memorial tribute to Buller in the Party press, her ability to complete a long list of tasks was noted with approval: "Annie was able to ... place the revolutionary movement ahead of everything else, and at the same time bring up her family as part of the progressive forces of our country."⁹⁵ In reality, they could only do this by working what has become known as a "second shift."⁹⁶ Perhaps, for some women, being a "hausfrau" seemed like a better alternative after all.

Other family relationships could also be difficult to sustain. Buhay remained close to her mother and brother, who were both committed socialists, but other Party members sometimes simply dropped out of the lives of families who did not share their ideals.

⁹³ Watson, 16. Watson states that Buller phoned from work every hour to see how Jimmy was doing. Tom Ewen remembered that Buller and Guralnick "used to fret and worry" about baby Jimmy. T. Ewen to Lily Greene, February 9, 1972. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1.

⁹⁴ Anne Whitfield to M. Shur, November 1, 1931. AO RG 4-32, reel 1.

⁹⁵ "In Memoriam: Annie Buller," *Canadian Tribune*, January 24, 1973.

⁹⁶ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking, 1989). Hochschild applied the term "second shift" to the household work done by women who were also employed outside the home.

Buller and Guralnick did not maintain as close a relationship with their extended families, and other Party members often became distant from their families, perhaps because they chose to do so, or perhaps because they became the “black sheep” of their families after being arrested or otherwise drawing unfavourable attention to themselves.⁹⁷ This was more likely to have been the case for militants who were also women, as it could have been seen as more disgraceful to have a daughter in jail than a son.⁹⁸

Relationships within the Party often took the place of estranged family members, although this is rarely stated explicitly. A friend of Buhay’s once wrote that “Beckie was like a sister to both [my husband] and me,” but this is an unusual description of the relationship between Party workers during the 1920s and 1930s, and Buhay and Buller did not liken their own friendship to sisterhood.⁹⁹ Relationships were more likely to have been described in terms of comradeship or friendship, perhaps because CPC members who had read Party-approved texts like Engels’ *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* understood the nuclear family itself as a bourgeois institution whose purpose was simply to transfer capital from one generation to the next.¹⁰⁰ Communists existed in a social network of their own, and Party work was inseparable from these relationships.

In none of the work that they did can Buhay or Buller simply be considered puppets of either the CPC or Stalin. Choosing to become Communist militants, comrades

⁹⁷ The Canadian Buhays did maintain loose contact with relatives in England. See, for example, Buhay to Buller, April 17, 1953, FLKC box 41, folder 11; B. Buhay to A. Buller, May 5, 1953, FLKC box 41, folder 11; Michael Nightingale to B. Buhay, September 10, 1952, LAC CPC MG28.IV.4 H-1604 vol. 39, file 2.

⁹⁸ Jeanne Corbin, for example, was completely estranged from her father, her only surviving family member, at the time of her death. Jeanne Corbin to Helen Burpee, April 11, 1944. LAC CPC MG28.IV.4 H-1606 vol. 41, file 1. Helen Burpee to Jean Corbin [Jeanne’s father], May 9, 1944. LAC CPC MG28.IV.4 H-1606 vol. 41, file 2.

⁹⁹ Bea Meyer to A. Buller, August 2, 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

¹⁰⁰ Engels, “The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 734-759.

in a revolutionary Party, was not a decision that could be made and then forgotten. One writer made it clear that “[e]very Communist has a man-sized fight on his or her hands, every minute of the day: a concrete struggle to grow, to make a greater contribution to the Party; and in the course of it to overcome ‘personal’ weaknesses which in fact are the evil products of capitalism.”¹⁰¹ This level of commitment was difficult to sustain, and after the initial burst of revolutionary enthusiasm had faded, some CPC members broke with the Party or simply drifted away.¹⁰² Those comrades who stayed on provided each other with a social network, material support, and reassurance that their on-going decision to apply their energies to the socialist cause was the right decision.

While comrades formed close and lasting bonds, these bonds could be severed completely if an individual left the Party, especially if the split was a result of ideological differences leading to expulsion. In the latter case, ex-comrades were often subject to vicious verbal abuse from remaining Party members, who reiterated their own loyalty to the Party through a willingness to detach themselves from discredited former comrades. Party leader Tim Buck wrote admiringly of Buhay that “[s]he was a woman of high principle, who did not hesitate to break with friends if their opinions were harmful to the cause of Socialism.”¹⁰³ When Michael Buhay withdrew from the Party for ideological reasons in June, 1929, Beckie was not supportive of her brother, although she welcomed his return to

¹⁰¹ While this statement appeared in a CPC magazine in 1951, it is equally reflective of the Party’s earlier years. Hunter and Ryerson, “Some Problems of Cadre Work,” *National Affairs Monthly*, January 1951, 36.

¹⁰² Membership turnover was a perennial problem for world Communist parties. Andrée Lévesque, “The Weakest Link: French Canadian Communists before 1940” (Robert S. Kenny Prize Lecture, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, May, 8 2008 <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/kenny-prize/>), 6. See also Storch, 36-39; Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 91-92.

¹⁰³ “Beckie Buhay – A Heavy Loss to our Party and to Canada, Message of the National Executive Committee, Labor-Progressive Party,” December 17, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

the Party in 1930.¹⁰⁴ Buller was equally “principled.” For years, she worked closely with Maurice Spector in the *Worker* office, but when he was expelled as a Trotskyist in 1928, she immediately joined the rest of the Party in vilifying him as “a deliberate liar, coward and traitor, without principles or honour.”¹⁰⁵

The salaries that they earned as Party workers also imposed constraints on their living conditions. They were not well paid, and in the first years of the Party, there were times when no workers were paid at all. In a request to the Comintern for financial assistance, the CPC reported in the summer of 1922 that “[s]ince September of last year practically every official worked without salary.”¹⁰⁶ In the 1920s, Buhay and her male counterparts earned \$25.00 per week as sales representatives for the *Worker*; Buller, as business manager, earned about \$27.00 per week.¹⁰⁷ At times, Buller and Buhay went unpaid – the printer’s bill took priority over staff salaries.¹⁰⁸

The correspondence between Buller and Buhay makes it clear that it was often quite difficult for them to make ends meet.¹⁰⁹ Buhay coped by intermittently sharing

¹⁰⁴ Rodney, 155.

¹⁰⁵ RCMP report, “Meeting held on the 23rd of November 1928 re the expulsion of Maurice Spector from the Communist Party,” December 14, 1928. PSC CSIS, file 117.92.53, Annie Buller.

¹⁰⁶ “Report to Presidium of Comintern,” c. August, 1922. LAC CI MG 10 K-292 Reel file 195.

¹⁰⁷ “Financial Statement – Beckie Buhay Western trip for ‘Worker’ Oct 11th 1926 – March 14th 27,” AO RG 4-32, reel 4; “Statement of Receipts and Disbursements. W.J. Pierce.” c. April 3, 1927. AO, CPC fonds, Reel 4, 7-B-1464; “Budget for year from August 1, 1921 to August 13, 1922,” July 16, 1921, LAC CI MG 10 K-271 file 4. J. S. Woodsworth, citing an investigation by the Committee on Industrial Relations, reported that “a decent standard of living for a moderate family would ... require a little over \$40 a week.” J. S. Woodsworth, “The Minimum Wage for Women,” *Worker* June 12, 1926. But the women earned more as workers for the CPC than they might have as factory workers. According to the *Worker*, women in the Ontario textile industry were paid up to \$12.50 per week in large cities like Toronto. Rates were lower in smaller Ontario towns and in Quebec and New Brunswick, and the entry level wage for a girl under eighteen was \$6 per week. “Quebec and the Minimum Wage for Women” *Worker*, January 30, 1926; “Wages and Protection in the Textile Trade,” *Worker*, February 13, 1926.

¹⁰⁸ In 1927, for example, Buller wrote to inform Buhay, then touring Western Canada for the *Worker*, “I can’t mail you a cheque to-day, as we have not a cent. I did not get my own wages last week.” A. Buller to B. Buhay, October 28, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹⁰⁹ See for example A. Buller to B. Buhay, September 21, 1927; B. Buhay to A. Buller, October 28, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

accommodation with other Party members, but Buller and Guralnick struggled too, especially after baby Jimmy's arrival necessitated a move to warmer and more expensive lodgings.¹¹⁰ Buller's anxiety about Guralnick's precarious employment status during the late 1920s is evident in a letter to her friend: "Harry is still at Eatons and we hope it will be O.K. [H]e gets pay tomorrow so we will see how much he makes. If only it will last."¹¹¹ Nor was she any more secure in her own employment with the *Worker*, noting in 1927 that "we do not know how long any of us will be on the job."¹¹²

The intensity as well as the sheer volume of their work may also have affected the health of CPC cadres. Buller and Buhay were usually filling multiple roles, often working into the evening to ensure that their tasks were completed.¹¹³ Even Buller, who was known for her strength and tirelessness, occasionally confessed that her workload was overwhelming - although she made no plans to change that.¹¹⁴ When in "the centre" (Toronto), they attended numerous meetings, especially in times of crisis.¹¹⁵ Both women also undertook long and exhausting cross-country journeys, usually by rail, with hectic speaking schedules.¹¹⁶ During and after these tours, Buhay was regularly prevented from

¹¹⁰ A. Buller to B. Buhay, September 26, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹¹ A. Buller to B. Buhay, August 26, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹² A. Buller to Pierce, February 16, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4. See also A. Buller to B. Buhay, October 28, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹³ As manager for the *Worker*, for example, Buller frequently worked at home in the evenings. A. Buller to B. Buhay, September 26, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹⁴ "Things are very hard for me more and more work all the time. Oh well so be it." A. Buller to B. Buhay, October 31, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹⁵ Crises were a regular feature of organizational life. During a particularly tumultuous period in May and June 1930, Buhay attended fifteen meetings of the Political Committee - sometimes two in one day. "Minutes of Polcom meetings, 1930." LAC CI MG 10 K-279 file 98.

¹¹⁶ During a 1932 winter tour of Western Canada on behalf of the Canadian Labor Defense League (CLDL), Buller spoke in fourteen towns and cities in twenty-five days. RCMP report, "Re: Canadian Labor Defense League," January 28, 1932. PSC CSIS, file 117-92-53, Annie Buller. In 1939, Buhay and William Kardash made twenty-five stops on their two-month tour to raise funds for Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War. Kardash later recalled the demands of that work: "In larger cities the list of activities included one or more public meetings, a committee meeting, a luncheon or banquet meeting, speaking at meetings of other organizations, such as trade union locals ... , visiting the mayors, church dignitaries ... and other prominent

working for a few days due to a variety of illnesses, including neuritis, stomach trouble, and other unspecified ailments.¹¹⁷ While Buller was less prone to illness than Buhay, she did take to her bed for a day after having three teeth extracted.¹¹⁸ And in 1928, she wrote to an Alberta comrade, “I am sorry that I delayed in answering your letter, but I lost three and a half days last week as I was laid up with heart attack, and the result is that I am a little behind, but hope to put in a few nights this week and clean up my work.”¹¹⁹

The CPC was slow to recognize that the health of cadres could be affected by their work, although it did make much of the connection between capitalism and the health of workers. The pages of the *Worker* reflected an appreciation of Karl Marx’s assertion in *Capital* that capitalism used up the bodies and energies of individual workers without regard to their health; as long as the labour force itself survived, the system would continue to function.¹²⁰ The worker’s body could be “destroyed” in so-called industrial “accidents” that, the newspaper explained, were the result of the drive for ever-greater profit: the killing or maiming of individual labourers incurred a lower cost than the slow-down in production that might result from safer working practices.¹²¹ The newspaper’s reports on the effects of

citizens.... Press interviews and radio talks [were] a common feature....” W. Kardash to A. Buller, October 7, 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, B. Buhay to A. Buller, January 24, 1927, AO RG 4-32, reel 5; B. Buhay to A. Buller c. March 7, 1927 and B. Buhay to A. Buller c. September 7, 1927, AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹⁸ A. Buller to B. Buhay, March 8, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹⁹ A. Buller to Kid Burns, March 13, 1928. AO RG 4-32, reel 4. This may not have been a heart attack as we might find it diagnosed today; Jim Buller does not remember his mother having a heart condition. Interview with Jim Buller, September 19, 2008.

¹²⁰ Marx demonstrated that the bodies of workers who were neither killed, maimed nor diseased by the direct effects of their work could still be stunted and malformed as a result of poor nutrition, overwork, and lack of rest. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 355-356, 364-367. While the effects of this human degeneration would undoubtedly one day be catastrophic, Marx wrote that “*Après moi le déluge!*” is the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation.” Marx, *Capital*, 381.

¹²¹ In a particularly gruesome item, an incident in which a woman’s arm was caught in a die press feeder at the Hamilton Paper Box Company was blamed specifically on “the speed-up in Canadian industry, where the lives and bodies of the workers count as naught.” “Blood Stains on Bosses’ Profits,” *Worker*, February 1, 1930.

capitalism on toilers' bodies also included more insidious work-related disease - metal miners dying from silicosis, or watch factory workers contracting radium poisoning while painting luminous dials.¹²² Death and illness were attributed directly to capitalism itself. After an explosion at a Drumheller mine, for example, the *Worker* reported that “[t]hree more miners have been sacrificed on the altar ... of capitalist industry, ... their flesh, bone and blood are ground into dust by the industrial machine.”¹²³

Communism was seen as the antidote to capitalist greed. CPC sojourners in the Soviet Union regularly reported that working conditions were safer, and living conditions healthier, than in Canada. Buller, for example, noted that in the USSR “people work like human beings” and “[h]ealth comes first.”¹²⁴ Buhay gushed over reductions in the incidence of heart disease and tuberculosis in the USSR, which she attributed to “the complete absence of tensions, pressure and hysteria” there.¹²⁵ In 1953, she spent several months in a sanatorium in Georgia, where she was advised against returning to Canada before she was completely well. Doctors there told her, “While we’re changing the environment for the better here every day, we cannot export it to Canada.”¹²⁶

Buhay’s predilection for seemingly endless descriptions of her medical problems and the treatments thereof might in itself be described as pathological, were it not for her relentlessly optimistic (and ultimately incorrect) belief that she was on the mend, and the

¹²² “Silicosis - Scourge of the Metal Miner,” *Worker*, July 2, 1927; Workers Dying a Painful Death from Radium Poison,” *Worker*, May 26, 1928.

¹²³ “Three More Miners Sacrificed,” *Worker*, November 28, 1925. Mining was a particularly dangerous occupation. The *Worker* reported four such fatal “accidents” over a five-day period in a single Nova Scotia coal mine. “Five Days in a Besco Slaughter House,” *Worker*, November 20, 1926.

¹²⁴ Watson, 99.

¹²⁵ John Stewart, “Complete Health Care Services Available to Everyone,” *Pacific Tribune*, July 17, 1953. The article consists of Stewart’s interview with Buhay, and he noted that she was “the picture of health,” although she died a few months later.

¹²⁶ John Stewart, “Complete Health Care Services Available to Everyone,” *Pacific Tribune*, July 17, 1953.

equal concern that she showed for Buller's health.¹²⁷ The two friends occasionally attributed health problems to their work, but it was not until three young comrades died in 1935 that the Party officially recognized "the problem of preserving the health and lives of our cadres."¹²⁸ At that time, all Party workers were advised to take better care of themselves and of each other:

The attitude, that it is not important to see to it that comrades have enough to eat, that they are dressed properly, that they are not overworked, is ... a criminal destruction of cadres it took us years to promote and develop. ... A little more attention to the health of the comrades, before they collapse, will save us cadres, and if we want to be callous, will save us money.¹²⁹

Buhay expressed her own concern for the health of her friend and co-worker in a final letter to the Party's leaders from her hospital bed in 1953: "Words cannot describe my love for [Buller], or her devotion to me as a friend and a Communist. Annie is the spirit of our Party, in the flesh. We must guard her health."¹³⁰

An omnipresent and menacing factor in the lives of all Communist workers was the frequent and unwelcome intrusion of the state, particularly evident during times of repression, when the Party noted that it "more and more openly proclaim[ed] itself as the unmasked executive of the interests of an unscrupulous ruling class."¹³¹ Party workers were under police surveillance throughout their careers, and under threat of deportation at various times. They went about their work knowing always that "the enemy is watching;"

¹²⁷ See, for example, B. Buhay to A. Buller, c. January 8, 1953, FLKC box 41, folder 20; B. Buhay to A. Buller, March 26, 1953, FLKC box 41, folder 11, and most other letters in folder 11.

¹²⁸ Buller wrote to Buhay in 1927, "I am not rid of my cold as yet but hope to feel better soon. I am working far too hard." A. Buller to B. Buhay, January 2, 1927, AO RG 4-32, reel 4. Buhay reported feeling "run down" at the end of her 1927 tour of Western Canada. B. Buhay to A. Buller, February 28, 1927, AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹²⁹ "Report on Organizational Problems," June 1935. LAC CI MG 10 K-289 file 177.

¹³⁰ B. Buhay to the National Committee Meeting, September 20, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 12.

¹³¹ *Not Guilty! The Verdict of the Workers' Jury* (Toronto: CLDL, 1931), 4. AO, pamphlet 1931, no. 4. The quotation is adapted from Marx. See "The Communist Manifesto," in McLellan, 247.

Annie Buller once told an audience that it was only on a trip to Russia that she had the pleasure of knowing that she was not being followed.¹³² When Buhay travelled to Russia in 1933 as a Canadian delegate from the Canadian Labor Defense League (CLDL), the RCMP did its best to find a way to keep her out of the country, perhaps acting on a report that she might be returning to Canada with “a huge sum of money.”¹³³ In correspondence with the Department of Immigration and Colonization, Deputy RCMP Commissioner J. W. Spalding described her as “a competent and dangerous agitator.”¹³⁴ Fortunately for Buhay, she had done nothing to “divest[] herself of any domiciliary rights which she had acquired in [the] Dominion.”¹³⁵ This was a disappointment for RCMP Commissioner J.H. MacBrien, who reported that he had been assured by the Commissioner of Immigration that “his officers would watch out for her at the ports of entry and arrange to have her cross-examined thoroughly to see if there were any means by which she could be kept out

¹³² “Report on Organizational Problems.” June 1935. LAC-CI, K-289, file 177, leaf 4; RCMP report, January 29, 1930. PSC CSIS, file 117-92-53, Annie Buller.

¹³³ C. H. King, “Report Re: Becky Buhay,” October 25, 1932. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 3. Fear that “Moscow gold” was being used to fund subversive activity in Canada was a long-standing theme in police reports and the capitalist press, and was not altogether unfounded. In 1921, the newly-formed CPC certainly expected financial support from the Comintern, requesting first a \$50,000 “subsidy” for its work in Canada, and then a reduced sum of \$1000.00 per month. “Budget for year from August 1, 1921 to August 13, 1922,” July 16, 1921. LAC CI MG 10 K- 271 file 4; A. Kent to Presidium of the Comintern, August 15., 1922. LAC CI MG 10 K- 271 file 3. But by August 1921 the Party reported to its members that “owing to the international situation, outside support of all parties will be stopped and we should make our Party self-supporting.” “CP of C Bulletin 2,” August 31, 1921. LAC CI MG 10 K- 271 file 4. The absence of Moscow gold was a running joke within the Party: “... [W]ouldn’t it be fine if we could get our hands on a bunch of this Moscow gold of which we see so much in the daily press? I wonder where they hide it...[?]” Geo. H. Kohls to the *Worker*, c. June, 1930. AO RG 4-32, reel 1. Rank and file members may not have been informed that the CPC continued its matter-of-fact requests for funds; in 1930 it expected “a grant of 1,000 dollars for the plenum [of the Central Executive], 150 dollars per month for six months for the French paper, and 1,000 dollars for the National Party school.” Stewart Smith to Political Secretariat CI, September 20, 1930. LAC CI MG 10 K-279, file 97. However, the receipt of grants for specific purposes does not mean that the Party’s coffers were overflowing. Buhay was probably not speaking altogether disingenuously when she explained to a newspaper reporter that there would be no advertisements during her 1929 campaign for municipal office in Hamilton because “if we had the money to pay for them we would not be communists.” “Cannot Afford Ads,” *Toronto Daily Star*, October 26, 1929. For specific evidence of the flow of Moscow gold to world Communist parties, see Klehr et al, *The Secret World of American Communism*, 21-26.

¹³⁴ Spalding to A. L. Jolliffe, Commissioner, Depart. of Immigration and Colonization, January 13, 1933. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 3.

¹³⁵ Jolliffe to Spalding, January 28, 1933. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 3.

of the country. Apparently they found none.”¹³⁶

The way in which Communists were treated by state agencies and officials varied according to gender. For example, Buller’s husband was interned during World War II along with other male Communists, while women were generally spared this treatment.¹³⁷ But as Linda Kealey has noted, women who stepped outside prescribed gender roles by taking militant action were not assured leniency in the courts.¹³⁸ At Buller’s 1932 trial, the judge instructed the jury, “[Y]ou must not allow sentimental considerations to affect your judgment because the accused is a woman.”¹³⁹ Similarly, in her 1933 re-trial, the jury was told to “forget” that Buller was a woman, and to “try her as if she were a ... man.”¹⁴⁰

As the CPC moved further from its revolutionary intentions of the early 1920s, its canonization of outstanding individuals like Buhay and Buller and its celebration of iconic events like the MLC’s role in introducing communism to Montreal became means of reinforcing members’ connection with the Party’s history and reminding them of its mission for the future. Buhay and Buller were exemplary workers for the CPC, making invaluable contributions to the Party’s efforts to “imbue” working-class men and women with a consciousness of their role in the progress towards socialism. Having experienced the harm that capitalism caused workers, they fully understood the importance of their own

¹³⁶ MacBrien to [recipient name obscured], February 9, 1933. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 3.

¹³⁷ Sangster notes that this provided a “temporary opportunity to alter political roles” for some women, as they became involved in campaigns to free their husbands and other political prisoners. Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 166-169. Michael Martin identifies Gladys McDonald as the only Communist women internee. Michael Martin, *The Red Patch: Political Imprisonment in Hull, Quebec during World War II* (Socialist History Project, 2007), 122, <http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/History/RedPatch.pdf>. Buhay stayed out of the public eye and avoided arrest; Buller was jailed under the Defense of Canada regulations for an anti-war article published in the *Mid-West Clarion*.

¹³⁸ Kealey, *Enlisting Women*, 219, 228.

¹³⁹ Justice Macdonald, *Rex vs. Annie Buller, 1932*, 418. SAB R-2.914.

¹⁴⁰ Justice Embury, *Rex vs. Buller, 1933*, 358, 376.

work, and were firmly committed to the ideology that inspired it. For this reason alone, work can be seen as central to Communist militant femininity.

Recognizing Buhay's and Buller's politically-motivated work as actual *work*, rather than focussing only on the results of that work as the implementation of Party policy, provides additional insight into why these women identified themselves so clearly as workers. All wage work affects the lives of workers in many ways that extend well beyond the workplace, producing both positive and negative effects on workers' health and living conditions, for example. But few other kinds of work would also produce its own narrow social network, require such a level of sacrifice from the worker and the worker's family, be monitored so closely by the state, and result in arrest or incarceration, while at the same time providing the workers with the sense that their work was meaningful and essential. For Buhay and Buller, work was life. It lay at the centre of their understanding of who they were, as workers and comrades in a Party of workers and comrades.

CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF COMRADESHIP AND COMMUNIST MILITANT FEMININITY

As Annie Buller so clearly explained, comrades were workers, workers were comrades, and the word “comrade” could be applied to anyone who was on the right side in the class struggle. Yet on another level, among CPC cadres in the Party’s inner circle, the word had connotations derived from its military origins. As these would-be revolutionaries understood it, their work for the Party placed them in the front lines of the coming conflict. Cadres as comrades were not only workers, but officers and strategists. The notion of comradeship, then, had meanings that went beyond the use of the word as a form of address; it was a particular construct in which differences such as gender and ethnicity were subsumed in an ostensibly egalitarian working-class solidarity which precluded other kinds of identity politics.

Buhay and Buller’s construction of Communist militant femininity gave legitimacy to their claims to comradeship, in both senses of the word - as workers and as revolutionaries. This was, at least in part, an active and deliberate process for these women; it was neither a matter of simply following in the footsteps of others nor of placing themselves in opposition to other identities, such as those of other working-class or middle-class women or of their male comrades. While work was at the centre of Buller’s and Buhay’s’ identity, and thus to their claims to comradeship, a number of other factors, inextricably linked with each other and with their identity as workers, complicate our

understanding of these women as comrades, and as full-time agitators, or militants.

The CPC understood itself as the vanguard of the working class, leading the critical struggle against capitalism, and Buller's and Buhay's friendship was essential to their ability to engage in that struggle. This chapter therefore begins with a recognition of the immeasurable importance that both women placed on their lifelong friendship. I demonstrate how it sustained them through the 1920s while they established their careers with the Party, and into the 1930s when they became two of its most important workers, later canonized by the Party as role models for women's participation in class struggle. Buller's and Buhay's positioning of class and ethnicity differentiated their representation and practice of Communist militant femininity from other contemporary forms of femininity. An unchanging consciousness of their membership in the working class was paramount to their work and sense of identity, and incorporated in that consciousness was a construction of respectability appropriate to the militant nature of their work. While Buller and Buhay stressed class as a point of commonality between workers, they did not publicly stress that their socialist roots were in Montreal's Jewish community, although this background undoubtedly shaped their lives in many ways.

Gender was an additional key component of Communist militant femininity, and Buller and Buhay negotiated sometimes difficult terrain as they asserted claims to a comradeship which was more easily assumed by men than by women. Gendered assumptions about the nature of comradeship permeated Party members' understanding of who could be comrades and how comrades should behave. Comrades would not, for example, behave like "bourgeois" feminists, whose demands for women's rights were perceived as a threat to the unity of the working class. Therefore, I also examine how the

CPC's gendered understanding of comradeship, closely tied to its positions on the "woman question" and feminism, affected the work that Buhay and Buller undertook for the Party.

The two women met in Montreal in 1914, when they were both in their late teens and Buller attended a lecture by Buhay, an analysis of the woman question based on Ibsen's play, *The Doll's House*.¹ Their mutual enthusiasm for socialism drew them together, and Joan Sangster has suggested that a common experience of anti-Semitism may also have been a factor in their friendship.² Buller, recalling the early days of their friendship, noted that they recognized gender as another important common bond: "[T]he fair sex in those days was not very conspicuous in ... socialist group[s]."³ The two women supported each other's efforts in the predominantly male environment of Montreal's pre-Communist left, and continued to do so in their careers with the CPC.

The women were also drawn together because they admired and complemented each other's strengths. Buller always thought of herself as intellectually weaker than Buhay; both women were confident and effective orators, but in smaller group discussions with other Party members, Buller was "prone to sit on the fence," rather than choosing a

¹ Buller, "In Memory of Beckie Buhay."

² Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 66. There is no specific reference to personal experience with anti-Semitism in any of Buhay's or Buller's writings. However, Ruth Frager has noted the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in Canada at that time in her study of Toronto, and Dave Kashtan recalls anti-Semitic incidents from his childhood in Montreal in the 1910s and 1920s. Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 12-13, 43-44, 65; Kirk Niegarth, "'Fight for Life': Dave Kashtan's Memories of Depression-Era Youth Work, *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 208. Jim Buller concurs that his mother's friendship with Buhay could have been, at least in part and initially, a response to anti-Semitism. Interview with Jim Buller.

³ Buller, "In Memory of Beckie Buhay." For estimations of women's involvement in Canadian socialist parties at this time, including ethnic variations in participation, see Newton, 14-16 and Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women*, 111-114.

position and arguing for it.⁴ Buller particularly admired Buhay's ability to recognize and argue against the dangers of "false theories."⁵ Buhay also commented on Buller's strengths, and the value of her friendship, in a 1919 note:

I am of the type who cannot make friends easily. I am not easily understood - but you understood! ... the gifts you gave me - courage and strength - you made me believe more in myself. I was starving for love and understanding and a little appreciation and you fed me! I thank you for these gifts you gave me! I know that you will always succeed in whatever you undertake. ... Given the opportunity you will *dare* and *do*. You are ... definite in your purpose, and once convinced, prepared to go the limit to carry your convictions into effect. ... I am confident you will be of great use to the cause we both love so well.⁶

They were kindred spirits, embarking on a lifelong commitment to the same cause.

The women maintained their friendship over time and distance, often through lengthy letters. This may have been because the friendship was so important to them that they did not allow the work that claimed so much of their time and energy to infringe on it; conversely, their friendship may well have provided them with support that enabled them to transcend the difficulties of their work. In 1927, for example, while Buhay was on a tour of Western Canada for the *Worker*, Buller was writing to her two or three times a week. Buller kept writing, although she claimed to have run out of things to say, perhaps understanding the importance of these letters to their intended recipient at the periphery of the Party's world.⁷

Their friendship provided them an opportunity to reinforce their image of themselves as ideal comrades. Their criticism of other Party members who failed to live up

⁴ LAC CPC MG28.IV.4 H-1605 vol. 39, file 10. Although these comments are in an undated notebook of "self-criticism," c. 1947, it seems likely that if Buller felt this area to be a weakness then, she would have felt even more so as a young woman before she had any formal training in Marxism.

⁵ Buller, "In Memory of Beckie Buhay."

⁶ The note was inscribed in a book given to Buller by Buhay when the former left Montreal for New York's Rand School of Social Science. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1. (Also reprinted in Watson, 4-5). As her biographer notes, Buller kept this book for the rest of her life. Watson, 5.

⁷ A. Buller to B. Buhay, August 16, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

to their own high standards served the same purpose. In their letters, they commend each other for their strong work ethic, their loyalty to the Party, and their attempts to conserve its always limited financial resources. Their friendship was also a safe haven in which they could complain - surprisingly infrequently - about the hardships of their work, or the ineffectiveness or futility of certain Party policies, without fear of being accused of a lack of enthusiasm. When Buhay was sending back rather gloomy results from the early stages of a fund-raising tour for the newspaper, Buller wrote back, "Do not take things to heart, all will work out well."⁸ Buller had walked in Buhay's shoes herself, as sales representative for the newspaper, so she knew the difficulties of the job. Buller tried to raise her friend's spirits when she reported being "all in and in consequence blue;" she responded with praise for Buhay's fund-raising work, and advised her to book a sleeper for long train trips, to preserve her always-fragile health.⁹ During Buhay's 1927 tour for the *Worker*, Buller loaned her friend a portable typewriter, and when the weather turned cold she bundled Buhay's winter coat and sent it to her.¹⁰ Buhay, who seems to have taken little notice of repeated advice to rest when possible, sent Buller the occasional "brain wave" in the form of ideas for a flyer to promote the *Worker*, or an embroidered cushion cover.¹¹

They trusted each other enough to be completely frank, and to criticize each other when that seemed warranted; neither woman was offended by plain speaking on the part of the other. When Buhay ordered "a few" copies of books to sell during one *Worker* tour, Buller made the most of the sales opportunity. But Buhay set her straight: "Really Annie

⁸ A. Buller to B. Buhay, Jan 2, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

⁹ B. Buhay to A. Buller, January 11, 1927, and A. Buller to B. Buhay, January 13, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4. Buhay rarely took a because she "hate[d] like hell to see the heavy expense account mount up." B. Buhay to A. Buller, February 16, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹⁰ A. Buller to B. Buhay, September 26, 1927, and B. Buhay to A. Buller, October 4, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹¹ B. Buhay to A. Buller, January 11, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

do you think I'm an express wagon? When I ask for some particular books you load me up with tons of God knows what. ... Well don't blame me if I leave them somewhere in disgust because I'm not a walking express train!"¹² Buhay was unable to carry all the books with her; she pointed out to Buller that her action had incurred an unnecessary expense to the Party of \$1.35 to post them to her next stop. But she still signed her letter, "Love, Beckie."¹³ And Annie took no offence; she matter-of-factly explained why she had sent so many books, apologized, and told Buhay to sell them at a reduced price to get them off her hands.¹⁴

There were also some material advantages to their friendship, for both women. As previously mentioned, Buhay lived with Buller and her family for a time in 1926 when she was "broke" - a common predicament for Buhay, who was fond of spending money and generous with gifts to friends and their children.¹⁵ Buhay later began paying Buller back in \$5.00 instalments, despite Buller's telling her that she was always a welcome guest, and that the "so-called debt need not worry you as I never think about it, so you had best forget it."¹⁶ Still, with Guralnick somewhat irregularly employed in the needle trades during this period, and with the *Worker* occasionally unable to pay Buller, the money from Buhay was put to good use. Buhay was undoubtedly pleased when her friend reported that she had used one instalment to buy clothing and a blanket for Jimmy.¹⁷

Defining themselves as workers at a time when women's work outside the home

¹² B. Buhay to A. Buller, January 10, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹³ B. Buhay to A. Buller, January 10, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹⁴ A. Buller to B. Buhay, January 14, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹⁵ George MacEachern to A. Buller, August 9, 1955; B. Meyer to A. Buller, August 2, 1955; Kate Bader to A. Buller, c1955. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

¹⁶ B. Buhay to A. Buller, c. September 16, 1927, and A. Buller to B. Buhay, October 21, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹⁷ A. Buller to B. Buhay, September 26, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

was expected to be only temporary, and spending a great deal of time travelling on behalf of various CPC causes, Buhay and Buller took on the full responsibilities of committed revolutionaries. Their friendship was an antidote to the potentially isolating effects of work that took them to places where there were, in their earliest years with the Party, few other women - union halls, picket lines, factory gates, speaker's platforms, and Party meetings at the political "centre" and at the periphery. While women were not absent from these sites, the priority that Buhay and Buller assigned to their public roles as Party workers set them apart from most other women. And their experience as women differed from that of male comrades who did not, for example, have to think twice about how appropriate it was to spend a Saturday night "struggling among a bunch of [d]runks" in a mining-town bar in order to sell copies of the *Worker*.¹⁸ It was only within their particular friendship that they could expect the encouragement, support, and understanding that came with a shared background, commitment, and experience.

Blanche Wiesen Cook has argued that it is "a myth ... that women who are political activists working with men can function effectively without a support network of women."¹⁹ For the "effective," mostly middle-class, American social activists identified by Cook, these networks were feminist, woman-oriented, and often lesbian. Buhay's and Buller's friendship took a different form from the domestic arrangements and life partnerships of the middle-class settlement house workers and literary figures who have been so well-studied, but like these other friendships it was centred around their work. And like the friendships studied by Cook and others, it did much of the same work in these working-class women's lives, helping them to claim a place in an environment already structured

¹⁸ Kid Burns to A. Buller, October 1, 1928. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

¹⁹ Cook, 441.

around unstated and taken-for-granted relationships between men. Women entering public spaces had to carefully form relationships that were outside the usual relationships between the sexes, such as family relationships, or relationships between a male employer and female workers. Buhay's and Buller's friendship gave them an initial safe point of contact within the Party, and a model for constructing broader working relationships and networks of comradeship within the Party's leadership.

While the women worked together only infrequently, they remained close, and always looked forward to times when they could, as Buller put it, "chat away for all [w]e are worth."²⁰ They spent time together whenever it was possible, throughout their often hectic lives. Buller was at Buhay's bedside "night and day" during her final illness, when Buhay found her to be "a rock of strength."²¹ After Buhay's death, Buller nurtured her friend's legacy. In the cold winter of 1927, when Buhay was struggling to promote the *Worker* in Alberta, Buller had tried to cheer her with a joke: "I thoroughly appreciate the troubles you are having ... and when the history of our movement will be written let me comfort you that you will be right there in big type. We will give several chapters to our star [subscription] getter."²² When Buhay died in 1953, Buller gladly accepted the assignment of ensuring that her friend's achievements were, indeed, written in big type.

Buller served on a successful committee to raise funds for "fitting memorials" for Buhay and A.E. Smith (with Buhay, joint leader of the CLDL), so that "Canadian democracy shall know where its heroes rest."²³ The monument to Buhay, in Toronto's

²⁰ A. Buller to B. Buhay, February 21, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4..

²¹ B. Buhay, message to National Committee Meeting, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 12.

²² A. Buller to B. Buhay, December 10, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

²³ Tim Buck, circular letter "National Committee to erect memorials to the great defenders A. E. Smith and Beckie Buhay," January 10, 1955. FLKC box 26, folder 2.

Dawes Road cemetery, was unveiled in August, 1955, timed to coincide with a national committee meeting so that Party representatives from all across Canada could attend.²⁴ On behalf of the Party, Buller also contacted Buhay's friends and comrades, asking them to submit reminiscences; Buller compiled the material for a booklet about Buhay's life.²⁵ Buller's attention to her friend's legacy demonstrates a historical consciousness common to Communists, and to Communist parties, drawn from their study of Marx. Furthermore, her efforts were a continuation of the friendship itself, and typical of Buller's optimistic outlook on work and life, in that they represented, primarily, a forward-looking celebration of Buhay's contributions as part of an on-going commitment to the future and to a continuation of their joint work, rather than a statement of her own, or the CPC's, loss.²⁶

The resulting brief biographical tribute to Buhay can also be seen as an explicit articulation of Buller's and the Party's ideal of Communist militant femininity. Drawing on the recollections of other Party members, Buller touches on Buhay's outstanding personal qualities - her intelligence, courage, generosity, kindness, sincerity, and determination, and her abilities as a speaker and organizer. Her enthusiasm for socialism and her optimism for its future are also mentioned.²⁷ But Buller's overall emphasis is on Buhay's role as part of the CPC's collective effort; she makes much of Buhay's "purposeful life" of hard work and loyalty to the Party.²⁸ Buhay appears as a Communist and a militant, "not afraid to fight for things that were not popular the time," and always willing to engage in class

²⁴ Sam Lipshitz, "Tim Buck Unveils Monuments to A.E. Smith, Beckie Buhay," *Pacific Tribune*, September 9, 1955.

²⁵ FLKC box 41, folders 9 and 10.

²⁶ Jody Greene elaborates on the tendency of "memorialization to collapse into ... pathological narcissism," and alternatives to that tendency. Greene, 323, 325-327.

²⁷ Levesque notes that optimism was a useful trait for militants. *Red Travellers*, 47.

²⁸ Buller, "In Memory of Beckie Buhay."

struggle, whatever that might entail.²⁹

Buller also depicts Buhay as a warm and motherly figure within the Party, a nurturer of young people. Placing Buhay's work among women in the context of the Party's position on the "woman question," Buller never indicates that Buhay's own experience as a comrade was in any way limited by her gender. Nor does she mention Buhay's Jewish ethnicity, her marital status, or any other particularities of identity. The tribute reads as a paean to the Party itself as much as to Buhay, and within it Buhay appears as a worker, and a member of the working class, above all. This is echoed in public tributes to Buller, written by other CPC members, in which many of the same attributes and actions are emphasized, as an expression of the Party's ideals.³⁰

Buller's focus on work and class is typical of the over-riding importance of class to Communists' understandings of the formation of identity. As American Communist Vivian Gornick wrote (with a certain amount of artistic license), "Before I knew that I was Jewish or a girl I knew that I was a member of the working class."³¹ This was more likely to be true for Gornick, who was a second-generation Communist, than for Buhay or Buller, but their self-identification as workers certainly placed them solidly in the working class. So did their belief that their membership in that class both produced and demanded bonds of loyalty. Working-class identity legitimized their claims of solidarity with the workers that they sought to organize, entitling them to call on those workers to support CPC union

²⁹ Buller, "In Memory of Beckie Buhay."

³⁰ See, for example, John Weir, "From Glace Bay to Nanaimo She's Known and Loved," *Canadian Tribune*, December 12, 1955 and W. Kashtan, "Annie Buller Guralnick," *Canadian Tribune*, January 24, 1973.

³¹ Gornick, 1.

initiatives.³²

The women's class loyalty was sometimes expressed in an almost religiously fervid way, as historian Stephen Endicott has suggested.³³ This was especially true of Buller, as is evident in this letter to her fifteen-year-old son written from jail in Winnipeg in 1941: "Some day we will all be united, and share in the true love of a class-conscious family. Yes dear Jimmie, that's not a dream. That will come true, and when that day comes, others like us will also be united with their dear ones. It will be a great day."³⁴ Buller remembered her involvement with the 1931 strikes of Saskatchewan coal miners and Toronto dressmakers as vivid examples of class struggle.³⁵ At her 1933 re-trial for allegedly inciting a riot in Estevan, Buller declared, "[I]t is not Annie Buller who is on trial here. It is the great class of producers that stands in the prisoners' dock."³⁶ She commended the men and women who, despite threats of deportation, refused to "betray their class" by giving false testimony against her then.³⁷ Jim Buller noted in an address at his mother's funeral that one of her key principles was, "Always remain loyal and devoted to the needs of the working class."³⁸ Buhay was also remembered for her "deep human love of ... the class from which she

³² Buhay commonly addressed her audiences as "fellow workers." See, for example, RCMP report, "Workers' Party of Canada ... Edmonton," December 5, 1922. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

³³ Stephen Endicott, *Bienfait: The Saskatchewan Miners' Struggle of '31*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 119.

³⁴ At a time when Communists across the country were either in hiding, in jail, or in internment camps, this letter informed Jim Buller that both his parents had been arrested under the Defence of Canada regulations. A. Buller to Jim Buller, March 2, 1941, JB papers at CPC.

³⁵ Buller "Estevan Massacre," 169; Buller, "Path of Struggle," 32, 33.

³⁶ Annie Buller, quoted in *Workers' Self-Defense in the Courts* (CLDL: Toronto, c. 1933), 34. SAB R95-284. Buller's position reflected that of the Party: "When a worker is arrested in the course of fighting for his class, the class struggle becomes automatically transferred to the courtroom." *Worker's Self-Defense*, 3.

³⁷ Buller "Estevan Massacre," 172.

³⁸ Jim Buller, "Annie Buller's Legacy," January 21, 1973. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1. (Also reprinted in Watson, 103-105.)

arose and to which she belonged.”³⁹ Buller wrote that Buhay’s “whole life was dedicated to the cause of the working class,” of which she was a “staunch and devoted member.”⁴⁰

Buhay and Buller worked with other, older, socialist women in their early years in the Party, including Florence Custance and Isabella Hall Gauld (known as Bella), and it might have been natural to look upon these women as role models. But Buller and Buhay looked instead to their own background as members of Canada’s industrial proletariat as the starting point for their claims to comradeship. Custance and Gauld had more privileged backgrounds, and Gauld in particular derived her understanding of what it meant to be part of the working class more from observation and theory than from first-hand experience as did Buller and Buhay.

Gauld, whom they first met in their pre-Communist days in Montreal, was a friend to both Buhay and Buller, as well as a co-founder of the Montreal Labor College (MLC), and its “organizing genius.”⁴¹ A fourth-generation Canadian, Gauld followed a completely different path to communism from the one taken by Buller and Buhay. Born to a middle-class Ontario family in 1878, and benefiting from an elite education, Gauld’s life “could have been a bed of roses,” as her husband, Alex, put it.⁴² Her family moved to Manitoba, where Gauld worked with J.S. Woodsworth’s All People’s Mission in Winnipeg. In 1915, Woodsworth convinced her to take up the position of director at University Settlement of Montreal, a refuge for single working women.⁴³ While attending New York’s Rand School of Social Science with Buller in 1919, Gauld began to reassess the value of her Settlement

³⁹ W. Kardash to A. Buller, October 7, 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 10.

⁴⁰ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay.”

⁴¹ Vance, 27.

⁴² Alex Gauld, “Envoi,” in Vance, 6. Gauld attended high school in Brandon, and qualified for a teaching certificate at normal school in Winnipeg, before studying music in Berlin and Vienna. Vance, 16.

⁴³ Vance, 21, 23; Buller, “Example to Us All.”

work, and came to the conclusion that only “political activity” could bring about the “fundamental” change that she saw as necessary.⁴⁴ A woman of some independent means, she was as generous with her limited funds, and with her personal hospitality, as she was with the time that she devoted to the Party and its causes.⁴⁵ Gauld remained loyal to the CPC until her death in 1961.⁴⁶

The CPC also inherited the energies and the revolutionary intentions of experienced members of the various socialist parties who attended the Party’s 1921 founding convention. Florence Custance, a former school teacher from England, was the most prominent woman among these veterans of the Canadian left, some of whom were quite well-educated, and well-read in socialism, and many of whom had middle-class backgrounds.⁴⁷ Custance’s husband was variously described as a carpenter or a contractor, but Florence herself does not seem to have worked for wages in Canada, other than for the CPC.⁴⁸ In April, 1922, she took on the responsibility for recruiting women to the CPC, and she also held a number of other leadership positions.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Gauld, “One of Canada’s First Labor Colleges.” For an explanation of how “altruistic commitment and dedication to the cause” might readily be transferred from the Christian social reform movement to communism, see Lee, 153-157. See also A. E. Smith, *All My Life*, (Toronto: Progress Books, 1949), 45-46, 60, 221-224.

⁴⁵ Gauld’s generosity is evident in a \$20.00 donation to the *Worker* in 1927. Pierce to A. Buller, October 29, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4. See also Buller, “Example to Us All.”

⁴⁶ Gauld served in a variety of capacities for the Montreal branches of the CPC, the CLDL, the Friends of the Soviet Union, and the Canadian Housewives League (CHL), but never held a leadership position outside that city. She was an MLC teacher and administrator, and frequent speaker at Party events, and an effective fundraiser. PSC CSIS, file 88-A-98, Bella Gauld; Buller, “Example to Us All.”

⁴⁷ Janice Newton notes that middle-class women and men were prominent in the pre-Communist Canadian left. Newton, 38.

⁴⁸ Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 28; Rodney, 164.

⁴⁹ Rodney, 165. One of Custance’s most important projects for the Women’s Department was to draw the Women’s Labor Leagues (WLLs) into the Communist fold. For more on Custance and the WLLs see Margaret Hobbs and Joan Sangster, eds., *The Woman Worker, 1926-1929* (St. John’s, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1999). Custance also led a campaign for the Friends of Soviet Russia which raised \$25,000 for famine relief. “Local Woman With Soviets,” *Globe* (Toronto), July 5, 1922. She preceded Buhay as secretary of the Canadian Labour Defense League, and the *Globe* identified her as “the foremost

Their working-class background having deprived Buller and Buhay of easy access to the advanced education and the more refined social skills that resulted from the middle-class upbringing that characterized Gauld, Custance and many of the men who had founded the CPC, the younger women were at something of a disadvantage in their early work for the Party.⁵⁰ This was less problematic for Buhay, whose oratorical talents and ability to think on her feet served her well in the organizational and public-speaking work that she did as she matured as a Party worker in the mid-1920s, than it was for Buller who in the 1920s spent four years managing the *Worker* office. Although Buller brought to that work the “hustle” and organizational skills that she had previously displayed as a department store buyer, the skills that she would require to conduct business with people in all walks of life would largely be acquired on the job.⁵¹ She was, however, a quick study, and she learned to mirror the writing style of her correspondents, with somewhat uneven results at first. In response to elegantly-worded letters from well-to-do renegade American bishop and Party supporter William Montgomery Brown, Buller’s letters were initially quite matter-of-fact. Her blunt request that Brown consider a speaking tour to raise funds for the CPC stressed that this should be arranged “the sooner the better for us as we need every cent” - but she did end the letter with best wishes, not a common sentiment in her business letters.⁵² As their correspondence progressed, Buller noted that Brown always signed off on behalf of his wife as well as himself, and she began concluding her letters with

labor worker in the city” when she died unexpectedly in 1929, at the age of 47. “Mrs. Florence Custance,” *Globe* (Toronto), July 15, 1929.

⁵⁰ For brief biographies of early CPC leaders, see “Appendix A” in Rodney, 161-170.

⁵¹ Unspecified newspaper clipping, n.d., AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1. Even ex-Communists frequently credit the Party with helping them to hone “organizational and analytical skills.” Gornick, 31.

⁵² A. Buller to Bishop William Montgomery Brown, January 3, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

best wishes for the good health of both Browns on behalf of Harry as well as herself.⁵³ Still, her obvious attempts at social niceties occasionally produced incongruous combinations, as in a letter discussing customs duty which ended rather abruptly with, “We are having very hot weather in Toronto at this time.”⁵⁴

On another occasion, a correspondent from the *Canadian Unionist*, who was an acquaintance of *Worker* editor Maurice Spector, mentioned his dismay that Spector had “forsak[en] the Oxford dictionary,” by which he meant that the *Worker* was now spelling “labour” without a “u.”⁵⁵ Buller demonstrated her inability to recognize sarcasm (and some confusion over the difference between the Oxford Dictionary and Oxford University) in her reaction to this perceived slight to her comrade: “... Maurice Spector is of greater value to the labor movement than he would be were he teaching at a capitalist university that enslaves the minds of the workers. ... [P]ersonally I think that the workers will have to have their own educational institutions before they can think and act as workers.”⁵⁶ Buller’s tone here also indicates that when Communist principles were at stake, she was less concerned with retaining the good will of a potential source of advertising revenue than she was with attempting to increase his class consciousness - not the most practical operating principle for the business manager of a newspaper which was always in dire financial straits.

When Buhay and Buller first arrived in Toronto after having spent their formative years as militants in Montreal, they had already established their own agitational style which contrasted with that of the more reserved Custance, who was already based in “the

⁵³ A. Buller to W. M. Brown, May 10, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

⁵⁴ A. Buller to Ella Brown, July 27, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

⁵⁵ W. T. Burford to A. Buller, December 6, 1927, and W. T. Burford to A. Buller, December 9, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

⁵⁶ A. Buller to W. T. Burford, December 8, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

Centre.”⁵⁷ The difference was partly a generational one, and a glimpse of that is apparent in a group photograph in which Custance stands with her hands crossed before her, neat and “respectable” in a suit with a string of beads at her neck; Buller and Buhay, fourteen years younger, look much less prim, with their relaxed posture, open-necked smocks, and ready smiles.⁵⁸ This was more than a difference of personal style; Custance demonstrated her attention to prevailing norms of respectability in other ways. In an article for her “Women’s Section” column in the *Worker*, Custance reported an inquest’s determination that the death of “hard-working and respectable” Ellen Kenealey, a 40-year-old single Toronto woman, resulted from poison, “self-administered ... while suffering from acute despondency on her inability to secure employment.”⁵⁹ The moral of this story, and of most of Custance’s pieces for the *Worker* during this period, was that women workers could escape Kenealey’s fate by joining a union.⁶⁰ Enthusiastic union organizers themselves, Buhay and Buller would surely have agreed whole-heartedly with that sentiment, but not with the implication that Kenealey’s “respectability, industriousness, and good breeding” made her death any more tragic than that of any other victim of capitalism, an implication that was, perhaps, invisible to Custance due to her own adherence to a particular form of respectability.

Notions of respectability are shaped by class and ethnicity as well as by gender, as Julie Guard has argued, and to some extent the younger women’s more confrontational

⁵⁷ Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 28. William Rodney’s biographical sketch of Custance describes her as, “[a] rather prim woman, puritan in her habits” - but also as an “outspoken energetic militant.” Rodney, 164-165.

⁵⁸ University of Toronto, Fisher Library, Kenny Collection, Box 63B, folder 1. c. 1926.

⁵⁹ Florence Custance, “The Story of Ellen Kenealey,” *Worker*, May 8, 1926.

⁶⁰ Custance, “Ellen Kenealey.”

agitational style can be linked to these factors.⁶¹ While Joan Sangster notes in *Earning Respect* that “a good upbringing, a respect for authority, ... and good manners” were important values among working-class women, even across some religious and ethnic lines, Custance, sharing the British background of most of Sangster’s subjects, was more likely to have been constrained by these prescriptions, and by Victorian ideals of domesticity, than Buller.⁶² Ruth Frager has demonstrated that gender roles formed in the Jewish villages of Eastern Europe favoured women’s involvement in what we think of as the “public sphere.”⁶³ This culture, in which Jewish women had traditionally been expected to make economic contributions to the family in a context where it was an advantage to be “outspoken and assertive,” was not transferred intact to Canada, but it continued to influence Jewish immigrant communities, and helped prepare Buller and Buhay for their work as militants.⁶⁴

But Buller’s and Buhay’s understandings of respectability were also shaped by their socialist vision. For Buller, at times a self-described “political prisoner,” it was more respectable to be arrested or jailed than to give up on the class struggle.⁶⁵ Her family’s defiant pride in Annie’s role in that struggle is apparent in Jim Buller’s preservation and

⁶¹ 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 (2004): 118.

⁶² Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 35. Sangster’s study reflected Peterborough’s ethnic make-up in that it included mostly British Protestant families, but she noted that Italian Roman Catholic families held similar values.

⁶³ Frager explains that gender roles formed in small Eastern European Jewish communities (*shtetl*) were strongly influenced by Orthodox Judaism which recognized men more for their abilities as religious scholars than as breadwinners. Women were not defined as “passive, fragile, house-bound beings.” Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 149-154. Nevertheless, Jewish left-wing women’s activism in Canada often differed from men’s, reflecting an extension of women’s roles within the family. Frager, “Politicized Housewives in the Jewish Communist Movement of Toronto, 1923-1933,” in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, eds. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989): 269.

⁶⁴ Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 152, 154, 150.

⁶⁵ Annie Buller, “High Schools Turned [into] Jails,” extract from *Der Kampf*, c. November, 1933. PSC CSIS, file 117-92-53, Annie Buller.

repetition, throughout his life, of an anecdote about his own response to inquiries about his mother's incarceration. "Yes," seven-year-old Jimmy would answer, his mother was in jail, "but not for stealing."⁶⁶ Buhay, too, was more concerned with making the class struggle visible than with keeping herself out of jail. When she was arrested during the Toronto free speech campaign of 1929, she resisted "a bit," so that the arresting sergeant called for a second officer to assist him; a detective later testified that when he asked her why she didn't just move along, she replied, "It's against my principles."⁶⁷ Subscribing to what Julie Guard describes as "a more expansive concept of female responsibility than that held by middle-class women," one which extended beyond the confines of their own families and homes, Buhay, Buller, and the younger women who followed them asserted understandings of working-class respectability that did not preclude making themselves heard and seen in militant public action.⁶⁸ Expanding this concept by linking their action to class struggle, and presenting themselves as visible examples of capitalist oppression, Buhay and Buller liberated themselves from the constraints of middle-class respectability that inhibited some women from participating fully in Party work alongside their male comrades.

Buhay and Buller understood themselves to be proletarian women, then, in ways that Custance, who would later be accused of "social democratic" (meaning reformist, rather than revolutionary) tendencies, and Gauld, with her middle-class upbringing, did not.⁶⁹ Their role as full-time workers for the Party also differentiated them from other

⁶⁶ Interview with Jim Buller.

⁶⁷ "Becky Buhay Fined Disorderly Charge," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 13, 1929. Buhay's conviction was later overturned. "Becky Buhay Conviction Quashed by Judge," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 19, 1929.

⁶⁸ Guard, 118.

⁶⁹ "Minutes of Pol Com meeting, February 25, 1930, 'Statement of the Woman's Director, National Woman's Department on the Anti-Party Actions of our Finnish Members in the Sudbury District Executive of the Women's Labor Leagues,'" LAC CI MG 10 K-280 file 107; "Statement of Jack Macdonald," c. March 27, 1929, AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

Party women: the “housewives” who involved themselves with the Party through the Women’s Labor Leagues; women workers and union activists; Party members who, like Annie Whitfield, did what they could for the Party while still focussing their attention on their own families; and the enthusiastic young women workers of the Young Communist League, some of whom, like Jeanne Corbin, would later take up work as militants themselves.

Buller’s and Buhay’s status as wage-earners was not, however, particularly unusual for young women in the interwar years. Veronica Strong-Boag has shown that work outside the home was a respectable option for unmarried middle-class women; for many working-class families, sending their daughters out to work was a necessary survival strategy.⁷⁰ In Montreal, where Buhay and Buller began their lives as wage workers, this was increasingly true after World War 1, even for working-class French-Canadian girls who were typically trained from an early age to become “mother-wives.”⁷¹ For none of these groups was it expected that women would work outside the home after marriage, although a lifelong career was an increasingly common option for the well-educated middle-class women who were entering professional fields in greater numbers after World War I.

The type of work that Buhay and Buller did was also unusual for working-class women.⁷² Linda Kealey points out that in the early 1910s, when Buhay and Buller were becoming politically active in Montreal, “class conflict and class solidarity were considered masculine traits”; Andrée Lévesque notes that it violated prevailing norms for women to

⁷⁰ Strong-Boag, 42; see also Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 32.

⁷¹ Andrée Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939*, trans. Yvonne M. Klein (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), 20-21, 48-49.

⁷² Strong-Boag, 42-43; Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 32.

“be at the forefront of class politics.”⁷³ In choosing not only wage work, but political work - and political work as Communists - Buller and Buhay were just the sort of women that the CPC wanted, and needed. Their working-class background gave them additional valuable credentials when the Party decided in 1929 that “new proletarian elements have to take the place of the out going [sic] leadership.”⁷⁴

Buhay and Buller were much more explicit about their claims to comradeship as members of the working class than they were about the regional and ethnic aspects of their identity. After 1924, when the CPC parted ways with the MLC and the socialist and trade union groups which cooperated in running that institution, Quebec, and especially the francophone community, were not the focus of Party initiatives again until the 1930s.⁷⁵ While there is no indication that Buller or Buhay deliberately avoided assignments in Montreal (and Buhay did return to Montreal in the mid-1920s to organize women in the needle trades), neither did they organize their careers around work in a city which had become a backwater for the Party. An observer noted in 1927 that “Jewish comrades are the only active ones” in Montreal, and in 1928, Buller berated the Montreal comrades for their apathy towards the CPC’s newly-launched *Canadian Labour Monthly* magazine: “Montreal is the only city that has always ignored communications from this office.”⁷⁶ In 1929, the CI identified Quebec as one of the Canadian Party’s main “organizational problems,” and the CPC dispatched French-speaking Jeanne Corbin to Montreal as an

⁷³ Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women*, 219-221; Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 12, 48-50.

⁷⁴ “Statement by Comrade [Philip] Halpern,” in *Report of the Sixth National Convention of the Communist Party of Canada*, June, 1929. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

⁷⁵ The popularity of the more moderate socialist movement headed by Albert Saint-Martin, and the continued influence of Catholic trade unions contributed to the Party’s lack of success among francophones who, by 1930, still accounted for only .05 per cent of the Party’s national membership. Andrée Lévesque, *Red Travellers*, 34, 51-53.

⁷⁶ Pierce to A. Buller, April 4, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4; A. Buller to Montreal City Central Committee, March 12, 1928. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

organizer. But through most of the 1930s, the Party was hindered in its work by its own Third Period “class against class” rhetoric, which alienated many workers and potential allies; by the provincial government’s “storm of terror” against the Quebec left; and by seeming lack of interest on the part of both members and leadership, including Beckie Buhay’s brother, Michael, who was one of those singled out for “laziness.”⁷⁷ It seemed that Buhay and Buller had nothing to gain by identifying themselves as “Quebec comrades” during the interwar years.

Nor did they have anything to gain by publicly identifying themselves as Jewish comrades. On a more private level, Buller and her husband enjoyed Jewish cultural activities and were involved with several “progressive” (meaning secular and left-wing) Jewish cultural organizations. Buller appreciated Jewish literature and was a lifelong member of the United Jewish Peoples Order (UJPO), a social and cultural organization which later named one of its lodges after her.⁷⁸ Guralnick was a writer or editor for several Jewish publications, including the Party’s *Der Kampf* (later, *Vochebnblatt*), and was at one time cultural director of the UJPO.⁷⁹ Jim Buller also remembers his father’s involvement with the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir.⁸⁰ Buhay’s often-transient lifestyle likely meant that her ties to Jewish culture were quite tenuous, although she was close to her mother and brother, who retained some connection to Montreal’s Jewish community.

But declaring themselves publicly as Jewish comrades would have been of no

⁷⁷ Bella Gordon, circular “to all workers of Canada,” c. July, 1931, AO RG 4-32, reel 8; “Organizational Report Dist. #2,” c. 1930, AO RG 4-32, reel 5. Michael Buhay had been identified as “lazy” as early as 1922. RCMP report, “[R]e Communist Party of Canada - Montreal, Quebec. General Discontent,” August 5, 1922. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

⁷⁸ Watson, 15, 102, 103.

⁷⁹ “Harry Guralnick” [death notice], *The Jewish Standard* [Toronto], February 15, 1972 and [Bella Gauld?] “Comrade Annie Buller,” c. 1948. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1.

⁸⁰ Interview with Jim Buller.

particular benefit to themselves or the Party. Throughout the 1920s, 90% of the Party's 2,500 - 5,000 members were Ukrainians, Finns, or, especially in Montreal and Toronto, Eastern European Jews.⁸¹ In order to lessen the public perception that the typical Party member was an Eastern European immigrant, the CPC was always keen for more recruits who were what it called "Anglo-Saxons." In 1929, the Party was also advised by the Comintern to "improve its composition" in this respect, but it was not particularly successful in this effort.⁸² Throughout the 1930s, then, as the Party tried to revise its public image, comrades acting as public representatives of the CPC, and especially comrades in national leadership positions, would find it prudent to avoid drawing attention to their ethnicity, if that was anything other than British or French-Canadian.

Buller's and Buhay's Jewish immigrant background did not position them well to fit the Party's ideal of an Anglo-Celtic comrade, although Buhay's English accent undoubtedly served her well in this regard. While they were often identified in RCMP reports as "Jewesses," they did not publicly represent themselves as such when they spoke on behalf of the Party, and they never aligned themselves with the Jewish "faction" within the Party. Their identity as Jewish women was not explicitly mentioned, or exploited by the Party during the 1920s and 1930s.⁸³ Buller was, however, known to be Jewish: the prosecution in her 1931 trial suggested that their shared ethnicity had caused a witness to lie in order to provide Buller with an alibi, and a telegram from the Jewish Weekly when she was released from prison in 1942 stated that "Jewish workers are proud of you as a great Canadian an

⁸¹ Avakumovic, 35.

⁸² "Resolution of C.I. on the Question of Communist Work in the Ukrainian Workers' Organizations in Canada," c. March 1929. LAC CPC fonds, 8-C-1058.

⁸³ In the 1957 federal election, Buller's ethnicity was undoubtedly seen as a benefit to the Party when it named her as its candidate in the Toronto riding of Spadina, which included a large number of Jewish voters. One of the Party's campaign leaflets was printed in English and Yiddish, and was addressed to the "Jewish Voters of Spadina Riding." FLKC box 41, folder 18.

uncompromising anti fascist and inspiring patriotic Jewess.”⁸⁴ And Buller’s and Buhay’s Jewish background may have contributed to their loyalty to the Party. Vivian Gornick suggests that many of the Jewish Communists she herself grew up with derived a new sense of “connectedness” from Communism, after “nothing in the cultures which they had left, or the one to which they had come, had given them anything but a humiliating sense of outsideness.”⁸⁵

As Ruth Frager has shown, some Jews were drawn to communism specifically because they saw the Party and the Soviet Union as bulwarks against anti-Semitism.⁸⁶ While anti-Semitic attitudes were pervasive in Canada at this time, even among some individuals in the CPC, Party policy and rhetoric was, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, always egalitarian.⁸⁷ Emphasizing the unity of the working class, CPC newspapers and educational efforts pointed out the economic aspects of oppression that, on the surface, appeared to be based on race or gender. According to the CPC, any worker who exhibited “race-hatred” of any kind was “a traitor to his class;” it was the bourgeoisie that the Party found guilty of “Ku Klux Klannery.”⁸⁸ The impulse towards equality and “working-class internationalism” is clearly evident in Buhay’s “elated” 1927 letters describing her enthusiastic reception by Edmonton Kuomintang members who were grateful that “‘enemy’ whites ... were with them in their struggle for freedom.”⁸⁹ This was “a great sign of the times,” Buhay wrote, sure of Buller’s agreement.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ *Rex vs. Buller, 1933*, 226; Telegram, editorial board *Canadian Jewish Weekly* to A. Buller, October 25, 1942. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1.

⁸⁵ Gornick, 8.

⁸⁶ Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 161.

⁸⁷ Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 13.

⁸⁸ “Ku Klux Klannery in Ontario,” *Worker*, May 5, 1926.

⁸⁹ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay”; B. Buhay to A. Buller, c. February 10, 1927, AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

⁹⁰ B. Buhay to A. Buller, c. February 10, 1927. AO RG 4-32, reel 4.

But the Party's position on what it would call the "Jewish Question" became quite complicated after Khrushchev's 1956 revelations, which opened the way for some Jewish comrades in Canada to make public their long-held suspicions about the suppression of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union, and Stalin's purges, deportations, and mass killings. Buhay was in Russia when "the genius Stalin" died in 1953, and was "proud and honoured to have been given the privilege of laying a wreath" at his funeral, as official representative of the CPC.⁹¹ Her own death at the end of that year meant that she did not have to reassess what it meant to be both a Jew and a Communist after 1956.⁹² Buller and Guralnick did make that reassessment in 1958, choosing to retain both their ties to Jewish cultural organizations and their commitment to the working class, internationalism, socialism, and the Party.⁹³ Loyalty to the Party and to class-based organizing at times when class solidarity seemed threatened with cleavage along ethnic or racial lines was a key to Buller's and Buhay's later canonization by the Party.

So too was their refusal to allow gender to undermine class solidarity. Along with class and ethnicity, gender was an obvious factor in Buhay's and Buller's construction of Communist militant femininity, and in their claims to comradeship, but as Elizabeth Wood has pointed out, the term "comrade" was not gender-neutral.⁹⁴ Wood explains that, as

⁹¹ "Review by Beckie Buhay: Stalin: The Lenin of Today," FLKC box 41, folder 15; B. Buhay to A. Buller, March 12, 1953, FLKC box 41, folder 11.

⁹² For a detailed account of the CPC and the "Jewish Question," see Gerald Tulchinsky, "Family Quarrel: Joe Salsberg, the 'Jewish' Question, and Canadian Communism," *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 149-173.

⁹³ In 1958, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the CPC, then known as the Labor-Progressive Party (LPP), proposed and circulated a resolution on how to counter those who were trying to "whip up hysteria against the party and against the Soviet Union." NEC of LPP, "Party Policy in the Jewish Field," May 9, 1958. LAC CPC MG28.IV.4 reel H-1582, vol. 9. Buller and Guralnick were among those Party members who wrote letters supporting the resolution's aims, and its stress on international socialist solidarity. A. Buller to NEC of LPP, June 2, 1958, and Guralnick to NEC of LPP, c. June 3, 1958. LAC CPC MG28.IV.4 reel H-1582, vol. 9.

⁹⁴ Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 218.

used by the Russian Bolsheviks, it represented the ideal of an ideologically enlightened individual, loyal to the Party, facing towards the future, and ready to participate in the transformation of society.⁹⁵ This description did not seem applicable to the majority of Russian women, whom the Bolsheviks considered backward, superstitious, narrow-minded, and in need of education so that they could be relied upon to further the revolutionary cause rather than to sabotage it.⁹⁶

In Canada, too, Communist leaders harboured suspicions throughout the 1920s and 1930s that women might be less than trustworthy as revolutionaries, or even as supporters of their trade unionist husbands.⁹⁷ Custance, for example, cautioned Canadian working-class women to educate themselves about “the meaning of the Class Struggle, otherwise ... they may become ... unconscious traitors to the cause of their own class,” as had the women who participated in Britain’s 1926 “Strike Against Strikes.”⁹⁸ As Custance described that event, the wives and daughters of coal miners had been “duped by the British aristocracy” into demonstrating against their own class interests. Allowing themselves to be led through the streets of London behind presumably well-to-do members of the Waddon Hunt Club, twenty thousand women, most of them working-class, presented a clear “warning to the miners” that they could not count on their families’ support in case of a strike.⁹⁹

The CI advised the CPC that in Canada, as in Russia, “the political backwardness

⁹⁵ Elizabeth A. Wood, 5, 1, 15.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth A. Wood, 15, 38, 69.

⁹⁷ Concerns that women might undermine the gains that could be made through revolution were also evident in post-revolutionary South America and revolutionary France. See Sarah C. Chambers, “Republican Friendship: Manuela Sáenz Writes Women into the Nation, 1835-1856,” *Hispanic American Review* 81, no. 2 (2002): 247-248.

⁹⁸ Custance, “Women’s Section,” *Worker*, May 1, 1926. See also “Working Women and the Anti-Strike Movement,” *The Woman Worker*, July, 1926, reprinted in Hobbs and Sangster, 24-25.

⁹⁹ Custance, “Women’s Section,” *Worker*, May 1, 1926.

of a large proportion of our women members” could not be denied, although it recognized that Canada’s female population was more diverse than Russia’s.¹⁰⁰ Joan Sangster notes, for example, that Ukrainian women in Canada were subject to “political scapegoating:” when the CPC criticized the Ukrainian “language group” for its insular focus on cultural activities, women were identified as being particularly prone to this anti-revolutionary tendency.¹⁰¹ While Finnish or Jewish women might therefore be seen by CPC leaders as more suitable than Ukrainian women for transformation into comrades, all women would benefit from Party education. Women in the Party should be provided with “special help, thus fitting them to advance to responsible posts, side by side with men comrades.”¹⁰²

Buhay and Buller came to the Party already “transformed” into comrades as a result of their previous experience in the Montreal socialist milieu, their own efforts to acquire an understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory, and their choice to dedicate themselves to the coming revolution. They accepted the Party’s basic premise that women’s class consciousness, and their participation in class struggle, could only come through wage labour.¹⁰³ But they were comrades in a Party that maintained, at least on the rhetorical level, that woman was the equal of man and essential to the proletarian revolution, while at the same time it suspected that the vast majority of women were a threat to that same revolution. Buhay and Buller never seem to have presented the Party with any indication that they were less than ideal comrades, even though women militants

¹⁰⁰ CI to Central Executive Committee of CPC, April 19, 1929. LAC CI MG 10 K-276, file 70. This nine-page document itemized the work to be done among various categories of Canadian women.

¹⁰¹ Sangster, “Robitnytsia,” 57, 85. Sangster argues, however, that many Ukrainian women demonstrated a “robust identification with class politics” despite high illiteracy rates and other significant impediments. Sangster, *Robitnytsia*,” 85-86.

¹⁰² CI to Central Executive Committee of CPC, April 19, 1929. LAC CI MG 10 K-276, file 70.

¹⁰³ See, for example, B. Buhay, “Communist Party of Canada. National Woman’s Department. Bulletin #19. Party Recruiting Campaign,” June 14, 1930. LAC CI MG 10 K-280, file 107.

could be expected to be under scrutiny for signs that they had not been fully transformed into comrades after all; men in the same position might require some training, but they were not assumed to begin from the same “backward” position as women.

Higher-level leadership positions in the CPC were almost always held by men, and successful leadership was associated with unstated but understood “manly” qualities – even if the leader in question was a woman. In a 1955 tribute to Buller on her sixtieth birthday, long-time comrade John Weir wrote: “Let the young people, entering the revolutionary movement today, model themselves on Annie Buller. ... Let our lads know that when an oldtimer says that they should be ‘half the man that Annie Buller is’ he is wishing them very well.”¹⁰⁴ Likewise, the Party saw nothing incongruous about a CLDL instructional booklet, *Workers’ Self-Defense in the Courts*, whose cover portrayed the titular worker as a gigantic, physically-threatening, male figure while half its content consisted of excerpts from transcripts of Annie Buller’s 1933 trial, at which she conducted herself in a manner that even a hostile judge found to be “very creditable.”¹⁰⁵ Women comrades could be seen as role models only to the extent that they were outstanding examples of standards already established by their male counterparts.

State officials, too, were affected by pre-conceived ideas about the ways in which women and men acted, and ought to act, and seemed uncertain about what to emphasize in their descriptions of militant women. Reporting on events at which Buhay and Buller spoke, male police officers offered an often contradictory combination of grudging

¹⁰⁴ Weir, “Glace Bay to Nanaimo.”

¹⁰⁵ CLDL, *Worker’s Self-Defense; Rex vs. Buller, 1933*, 359. For discussions of gendered aspects of representations of class struggle, see Gosse, and Elizabeth Faue, “Gender, Language, and the Meaning of Class Struggle, 1929-1949,” in *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 69-99.

admiration and condescending amusement at the somewhat unusual sight of a woman at the podium. While both women were frequently described as excellent speakers and well-liked by their audiences, Buller was also categorized as incoherent and comical, a “little spitfire” who was given to “raving at the top of her voice, fast as a gramophone.”¹⁰⁶ Buhay reportedly created a “bad impression” at the 1920 OBU convention: she was “long-winded and incoherent, and ... elicited some very uncerimonious [sic] reprimands.”¹⁰⁷ Observers sometimes seemed confused about whether to write about them as women, and presumably harmless, or as Communists whose “fatal gift of eloquence” posed a threat to the stability of the nation and who should therefore be branded “dangerous.”¹⁰⁸

There is also something of a contradiction between the implication that successful class fighters were in some way masculine, and Party members’ frequent iteration of Buhay’s and Buller’s other more “womanly” qualities. Gendered assumptions about the nature of comradeship meant that the attributes of the ideal woman comrade – and Buller and Buhay certainly qualified in this regard – differed in some ways from those of the ideal universal comrade. Women comrades were commended not only for their work, but for their modesty about their accomplishments.¹⁰⁹ Buller was praised for being “beautiful in all ways;” Buhay was remembered for her “womanliness” and her sweet singing voice.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ RCMP report, “Mass meeting of the Toronto Anti-War Committee held in Toronto on the 11-11-33,” 13 Nov, 1933; RCMP report, “Communist Party of Canada – Winnipeg,” March 17, 1936.

¹⁰⁷ “Notes of the Work of the C.I.B. Division for the Week Ending 14th October,” October 14, 1920, in Kealey and Whitaker, 213.

¹⁰⁸ Justice Macdonald, *Rex vs. Buller*, 1932, 422, SAB R-2.914. In his verdict, Macdonald noted that Buller was “more guilty than any of those who used physical violence.”

¹⁰⁹ Tim Buck describes Buhay as modest in his address at her funeral, which was also published in the Party press. FLKC box 41, folder 9. Alice Cooke notes Buhay’s modesty in “Heroine of the Working Class.” Buller describes Gauld, too, as modest in “A Tribute to Bella Gauld, Pioneer Communist,” *Canadian Tribune*, March 24, 1952. In a Party which valued collective action over individual heroism, male comrades, like Harry Guralnick and even the self-aggrandizing Tim Buck, were also on occasion described as modest. But the invocation of this attribute is noticeably more prevalent in descriptions of women.

¹¹⁰ Weir, “Glance Bay to Nanaimo”; Cooke to A. Buller, October 10, 1955, FLKC box 41, folder 10.

These kinds of comments, common in descriptions of Buhay and Buller, reassured both Party members and outsiders that communism is compatible with dominant norms of ideal femininity: a female comrade wrote that “Beckie’s personality disproves the opinion of some people that politics tend to make women ‘hard-boiled.’... She did not need that tawdry unfeminine gimmick.”¹¹¹

In actuality, Buller was certainly more “hard-boiled” than the sentimental Buhay, who was “prone to excitement” and tears.¹¹² But while many of the reminiscences sent to Buller after Buhay’s death mentioned “womanly” qualities, Buller barely mentioned them in her tribute to Buhay, an indication that traditionally feminine attributes were not particularly important to her understanding of Communist militant femininity. Buller came to wonder if the emphasis on modesty, for example, distorted the image of Communist women. In a letter to Bella Gauld’s biographer, Buller agrees that “Bella was a very modest human being. Her [modesty] was her strength.” But Buller goes on to say that “a constant repetition of it weakens our image of Bella.”¹¹³ From the beginning of their friendship, it was Buller’s courage, strength, and confidence that Buhay admired in her friend, and attributes like these, more likely to be associated with men, were undoubtedly more useful to Buller and Buhay in the leadership roles that they held than were modesty, sentimentality, and vague notions of “womanliness.”¹¹⁴

While there was some ambiguity, then, over the attributes that might be compatible with Communist militant femininity, it was absolutely clear to Buhay and Buller that a

¹¹¹ Florence Theodore to A. Buller, July 28, 1955. FLKC box 41, folder 10.

¹¹² T. Ewen to Jeanne Corbin, March 20, 1931. AO RG 4-32, reel 2.

¹¹³ A. Buller to B. Fernyhough, January 19, 1967. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1.

¹¹⁴ B. Buhay to A. Buller, book inscription, 1919. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1.

feminist consciousness was not one of them.¹¹⁵ The Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy to which Buller and Buhay subscribed led them to focus their effort on changing the power relationships between economic classes by overthrowing capitalism. While this is often interpreted as meaning that women's specific concerns should wait until "after the revolution," for Communists the question was not *when* to struggle for women's equality, but *how* to do so. Choosing class struggle as the most appropriate method of action set them apart from women activists who sought greater equality for women within the existing economic system, such as the largely middle-class National Council of Women of Canada, or even Progressive MP Agnes Macphail, who was generally supportive of labour issues.¹¹⁶ Buhay articulated a strictly class-based analysis of power relations, beginning with her early speeches on behalf of the OBU.¹¹⁷ Buller retained an orthodox Marxist reading of class conflict throughout her life, and in 1967 pointed out another writer's error in using the term "working classes" when "[t]here is only one working class and one capitalist class."¹¹⁸ Only a united working class could be induced by the Party to take up the battle against capitalism, and so it was with admiration that Party leader William Kashtan commended Annie Buller for having "fought ... against feminist views which made man the enemy rather than capitalism, the enemy of both working men and women."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ I use Ruth Frager's "working definition" of feminism as "the explicit conviction that women ... are fundamentally subordinated to men, *combined with* an explicit commitment to oppose this subordination." Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 5. Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁶ Hobbs and Sangster, 105.

¹¹⁷ RCMP "Personal History File Re: Rebecca Buhay," April 21, 1921. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

¹¹⁸ A. Buller to B. Ferneyhough, January 19, 1967. AO 1405-85 JEW:0065 cont. MFN 462, reel 1.

¹¹⁹ W. Kashtan in Watson, xv. As Ruth Frager points out, there is an inconsistency apparent in the actions of Jewish Communist men, who found part of their solidarity through their oppression as Jews and who committed themselves to battling anti-Semitism (even if this occasionally meant aligning themselves with Jewish employers), and yet at the same time insisted that women submerge any particular issues of their own in the common fight with men against capitalism. Ruth Frager, "Class and Ethnic Barriers to Feminist Perspectives in Toronto's Jewish Labour Movement, 1919-1939," in *Canadian Working Class History*:

But women and the “woman question” were not ignored by the CPC. The Party advocated equal rights for women and declared unequivocally that it “consistently fights all discrimination against women. We stand for absolute equality.”¹²⁰ The CPC’s Women’s Department, based on the Soviet Union’s model and headed by Florence Custance until her death, was not intended to be a woman’s auxiliary, but an organization dedicated to work among women, with the goal of “enrol[ing] great numbers of Canadian women under the banner of the revolution.”¹²¹ The work that Buller and Buhay did for the Party was not designated as “woman’s work,” and this was not only true for elite women, but for other Party workers too. As Kashtan put it, “Buller ... fought those tendencies in the working class movement, and even in the revolutionary movement that tended to relegate women’s participation in the working class struggle to one of merely ‘helping out,’ rather than being an equal partner in a great undertaking.”¹²²

Nevertheless, the CPC’s egalitarian position was in many ways more rhetorical than real. Work among women was not a top priority for the CPC during the 1920s; the Comintern noted that the very language of Party discussion of this work tended to marginalize it, and recommended change:

The expression ‘support of work among women’ ... indicate[s] that this work is not conceived as an integral part of Party work. ... W]hen we turn to ... important branches of Party work, ...[we] find not a [word] upon the need for special attention to women. ...[I]n many places ... documents are phrased in general terms which can be applied to both sexes. But because of the long under-estimation of work among women (in consequence of which such phraseology calls to mind men

Selected Readings, eds. Laurel Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 1992), 517. An additional inconsistency lies in the emphasis that the CPC placed on organizing workers into unions, which also undermined the solidarity of the working class by privileging unionized workers over their non-unionized fellows. Ruth Frager, “Labour History and Interlocking Hierarchies,” *International Review of Social History* 44 (1999): 223.

¹²⁰ “Memorandum on Women’s Work,” 1936. LAC CI MG 10 K-290 file 183A.

¹²¹ Custance, “Work Among Women,” April 19, 1929. LAC CI K-276 file 72.

¹²² W. Kashtan in Watson, xv.

workers only), it is necessary to draw attention ... to the fact that women constitute an important part of the workers and farmers whom the Party has in mind.¹²³

Still, even with the energetic Buhay running the Women's Department after Custance's death, it was no easy task to motivate Party units at the local level to respond enthusiastically to national campaigns to recruit more women. Buhay noted that "while the importance of work among women has been accepted by our Party in theory, very little has been carried on in practise."¹²⁴ A report from Montreal, for example, confessed that that city's Women's Department "did not carry on much work, merely met for the sake of meeting, [with] very little co-operation from comrades."¹²⁵ Buhay castigated the districts for their "sneering attitude" to a 1931 campaign, even resorting to capitalization lest anyone miss the point: "IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE BUREAUS LOOK UPON WORK AMONG WOMEN AND THE RECRUITING OF WOMEN MEMBERS TO THE PARTY AS PART OF THEIR REGULAR ACTIVITY."¹²⁶

In reality, it was difficult for even the director of the CPC's Women's Department to give her full attention to this work. Buhay was at that time also running the organizing department of the Canadian Labor Defense League (CLDL) and the Workers International Relief (IWL).¹²⁷ While Buhay and Buller were both active recruiters, even acting as mentors for younger women, organizational problems continued to plague the Women's Department. In 1935, women were still identified as being "the weakest link" in the recruitment of new cadres for the CPC, and the Party acknowledged that it needed to

¹²³ CI to Central Executive Committee of CPC, April 19, 1929. LAC CI MG 10 K-276, file 70.

¹²⁴ Beckie Buhay, "Communist Party of Canada. National Woman's Department. Bulletin #19. Party Recruiting Campaign," June 14, 1930. LAC CI MG 10 K-280, file 107.

¹²⁵ "Minutes of Org. conference of C.P. Dist. No. 2," May 16-17, 1930. AO RG 4-32, reel 5.

¹²⁶ B. Buhay, "Communist Party of Canada. National Woman's Department. Bulletin #19. Party Recruiting Campaign," June 14, 1930. LAC CI MG 10 K-280, file 107.

¹²⁷ B. Buhay to CI Women's Secretariat, "Party Work Among Women (Canada)," c. July, 1930. LAC CI MG 10 K-280, file 107.

work on “promotion of women comrades to responsible positions, a higher percentage of women comrades on leading committees, [and] more women in Party schools.”¹²⁸ And twenty-two years after Buhay’s first recruiting campaign, Buller recited a similar litany of concerns: the Party was still in need of “a bold and conscious policy and plan of how to train and develop women cadres, to promote them to positions, to run more women candidates for public office.”¹²⁹

Essentially, Buhay and Buller understood the socialist future as one of equality for all - women and working-class people of all races would share in the resources that were currently under the exclusive control of the male “boss class,” the capitalists and “fat-bellied politicians.”¹³⁰ While that future would never be reached without class struggle, socialism itself would mean not only the end of struggle, but also freedom from exploitation, poverty, and ill feelings towards other human beings. Before the CPC even existed, Buhay declared that she “was not ashamed to be called [a Bolshevist], if Bolsheviki meant liberty, bread and love.”¹³¹ Love of humankind was an essential component of socialism, to the extent that in itself it constituted a valid reason for joining the socialist movement. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Communists declared goals like “the liberation of humanity” to be among their reasons for joining the Party. “It was what I wanted devote my life to,” remembered one eighteen-year-old who joined in 1938. “It was a wonderful, happy reason for living.”¹³² Buhay would be remembered for her “warm smile, filled with the love of

¹²⁸ “Report on Organizational Problems,” June, 1935. LAC CI K-289, file 177.

¹²⁹ A. Buller, “Build the Party Among Women,” *Party Woman*, vol. 1, no. 2 (January 1952): 2, in LAC CPC MG28.IV.4 H-1582, vol. 9.

¹³⁰ B. Buhay, letter to the editor, *Western Labor News*, October 25, 1919. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

¹³¹ Excerpt from unspecified RCMP report, c. September, 1920. LAC CSIS RG146 vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, part 1.

¹³² “Gilles [pseudonym],” qtd. in Weisbord, 78.

humanity,” and she wrote that Buller, too, had “a heart full of love for mankind.”¹³³

A heart full of love was of exponentially greater value to the Party when it was yoked to a lifetime of commitment. In the interwar years, with revolution seemingly waiting in the wings, the Party asked women to take on additional work and new roles. If women were reluctant to step into these roles, it could be because most women, even Communist women, were not willing to make the same kinds of choices that Buller and Buhay made. In the CPC’s blueprint for equality, women were largely responsible for their own transformation into comrades, through wage labour and class struggle. Although Communist women made significant contributions to the Party and its work, few of them proved willing to follow Buhay’s and Buller’s lead in defining themselves as workers *first*, and organizing around class struggle *first*. Both men and women chose to make sacrifices in order to take up full-time Party work, but the choices were different for women, and women proved less likely to sacrifice today in the expectation of liberty, bread, and love in a socialist tomorrow.

As modelled by Buller and Buhay, Communist militant femininity was instrumental to their own, and the Party’s success. For the two women to succeed as Party workers in this “Party of a new type,” it was essential that they forge new ways of being Communists and women that legitimized their claims to comradeship in the CPC as its policies changed to call for proletarian and Anglo-Celtic leadership. Work remained at the centre of their lives, but class, ethnicity, and gender all played a role in their construction of Communist militant femininity. Throughout their lives, the friendship between the two women reinforced their understanding of what a Communist cadre should be.

¹³³ Gui Caron, notes from speech at B. Buhay’s graveside, December, 1953, FLKC box 41, folder 9; B. Buhay, message to National Committee Meeting, Sept 25-27, 1953. FLKC box 41, folder 9.

The concept of Communist militant femininity was also instrumental to the CPC: Buhay and Buller were highly visible examples of equality, in a Party that officially proclaimed the equality of women. Additionally, Communist militant femininity was an embodiment of an ideal - of what woman would be when she had transformed herself into a comrade and an equal. As the Party would have it, this ideal was achievable for all women. Buller and Buhay were, like the other workers that they sought to organize, working-class women and respectable on their own terms - on working-class terms derived from the socialist belief in liberty, bread, and love for all. Their own extraordinary qualities and abilities aside, Buller and Buhay were canonized because they met the Party's purpose of demonstrating, through the example of their own lives, that any woman could adopt Communist militant femininity and move "forward" with the CPC in its relentless progress towards a better future.

CONCLUSION

Buller and Buhay chose to declare themselves Communists; they situated their efforts to hasten the arrival of socialism within the context of the CPC's very specific project. Their work and their choices cannot be distanced from the Party's support for a man who proved to be a vicious dictator, its disdain for "bourgeois feminism," and its sudden and drastic policy shifts that deprived union organizing efforts of momentum. But their work must also be situated within the CPC's positive legacy for the Canadian Left, including its efforts to engage more working-class women in political work, and its insistence on the principles of racial and gender equality. So while we can remember that the CPC refused, during the interwar years, to assign priority to combating women's particular oppression within the family, we should also remember that the Party did acknowledge and condemn that oppression. And while the CPC cannot itself be viewed as a model of democracy in action, Party members like Buhay and Buller were active agents in what Harvey Kaye has noted as being a largely working-class effort to ensure that "the making of capitalism was, as much as possible, accompanied by the making of democracy."¹ Buhay's leadership role in the Toronto "free speech fights" and the CLLDL were important elements of that struggle, as was Buller's fight for workers' rights in her union organizing efforts. Their work mattered, and it led to some successes in these areas.

¹ Harvey J. Kaye, "Marxian Questions, Working-Class Struggles, Socialist Aspirations," *Critical Sociology* 25, no. 1 (1999): 23-24. See also Dominique Clement, "Spies, Lies, and a Commission: A Case Study in the Mobilization of the Canadian Civil Liberties Movement," *Left History* 7, no. 2 (2000): 62-63.

When they chose to join the Party in the early 1920s, Buhay and Buller had identified capitalism as the underlying cause of social problems, revolution as the most effective method of replacing capitalism with socialism, and the CPC as the organization most likely to generate this change. As Communists, they accepted the overthrow of capitalism as their ultimate goal and, believing that there was always one “correct line” for achieving that goal, they deployed their efforts in the service of whatever that line might be. While the line shifted, perhaps at times more drastically than that of other political parties, they remained convinced that their initial decision was correct: it was as Communists that they could best bring about positive change. Their construction of Communist militant femininity was built on that initial decision to join the Party.

Communist militant femininity was always rooted in these women’s own experience as workers and members of the working class. For Communists, collective effort was not only a means to arrive at socialism, but also an expression of egalitarian principle - the women saw their own careers as part of the immense project of the working people of the world. In referring to workers as “the masses,” the CPC’s egalitarian policies and rhetoric did not so much ignore difference as suppress it. While workers were never understood as a completely undifferentiated mass, Buhay and Buller chose to highlight points of commonality with other workers, rather than points of difference. The role of the vanguard Party was to organize the masses, and what the masses had in common was their identity as members of the working class. In their construction of Communist militant femininity, class was the basis of solidarity between Buhay and Buller and other members of the working class, just as it was between the Party itself and the masses.

For Communists, wage labour was a condition for developing revolutionary

consciousness. The workplace was the nexus of oppression where individuals confronted exploitation, and it was only through their experience in the workplace that workers could be made to understand the importance of changing the relationship between themselves and the “boss class.” Work was also central to Communists’ identity because it was the common experience that tied them to other comrades not only in common purpose but also in a sense of community; it was impossible to be a Communist without being a worker. For Buhay and Buller, work also became central to identity because it had significant effects in most areas of their lives, including areas which Communist men could keep separate from work, such as marriage and parenthood. Working-class experience, melded with ideological commitment, made work and class powerful components of Communist militant femininity.

Claiming legitimacy for their position as comrades through work was particularly important for Buhay and Buller because, as women who were actively engaged in class struggle, they personified the Party’s answer to the “woman question.” While the CPC was, nominally at least, an organization that provided equal opportunities to men and women who were equally willing to devote their energies to Party work, its failure to attract large numbers of women cadres demonstrates its refusal to acknowledge that even in many Communist families, practical barriers such as women’s work in the home limited their ability to engage in organized political work.² Buhay’s and Buller’s construction of Communist militant femininity was a way for them to claim full citizenship as CPC comrades, without acknowledging that their ability to do so was a denial of the obstacles that most women would face in choosing to follow a similar path. This would become

² Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 37.

more significant in the 1960s, when the resurgence of the women's movement and discussions of men's role in women's oppression made clear the relationship between ideals of femininity and masculinity. Communist militant femininity could not initiate change for legions of women who would live as Buller and Buhay did, unless it was accompanied by new understandings of masculinity. The ways in which gender shaped the lives of most working-class women was not a point of commonality between themselves and the masses, because their own experience was so exceptional. Despite Buhay's and Buller's status as iconic figures, the Party could not simply will Communist militant femininity to replicate itself in the bodies of other women.

A new form of femininity was necessary to Buhay's and Buller's personal success as comrades, although the construction of Communist militant femininity should not be understood simply as a calculating effort to build political careers. It represented, rather, the convergence of a number of historically-specific factors: their position as working-class women in Jewish immigrant families; the lively socialist context of their early years as activists in Montreal; and, at the time that they took up full-time work with the CPC, their youth and lack of marital or maternal attachments. These factors combined with Buller's and Buhay's own remarkable personal qualities in complicated ways. Their persistent optimism, for example, was more than a personality trait: it was bolstered by their understanding of Marxist theory, and it meshed perfectly with Party policy. Optimism, and other attributes like courage, determination, and willingness to learn and to work, made the Party a good fit for these women, and a place for them to develop.

Ellen Meiksins Wood has argued that, for some, "it is as if the only struggle that

matters is the last one.”³ Socialism has failed, in other words, because the working class failed to make the most of its historical moment, whether that moment was 1919 or 1968. For Buhay and Buller, however, a steadfast belief that revolution would some day bring an end to capitalism did not obviate the need to participate in the lesser struggles that could make an immediate difference to the daily lives of the Canadian working class. Knowing “that each separate struggle brought the reality nearer,” small successes, partial successes, and temporary successes fuelled the optimism that permeated all their Party work.⁴

Additionally, their relationships within the Party help to explain their long commitment as Party workers, providing them with material and emotional support from others who understood the element of sacrifice that their politically active lives entailed. Their friendship, in particular, reinforced their ability to succeed as women and comrades by presenting them with an image of the ideal comrade embodied in another woman. Their shared background, and their mutual emphasis on work and class over gender and ethnicity meant that the image was also a reflection of their own construction of Communist militant femininity. The success of the friend validated their own choices.

Ultimately, their success as workers also depended on their willingness to engage in Party work. There were always choices to be made, not least of which was the on-going decision to remain a Communist in the face of changing circumstances which were often well beyond the control of the CPC and its members. The decision to engage themselves in Party work throughout their lives was an expression of their belief that communism was founded on “the glowing dream of socialism as a liberating force for mankind” and “the

³ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New “True” Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986), 10.

⁴ Nora Rodd, “Beckie Buhay - In Remembrance.” FLKC box 41, folder 9.

right of the working people to bread and jobs.”⁵ Their important and successful contributions to the survival of the *Worker*, to labour education, and to the trade union movement were an expression of these same principles, and of love – for each other, for their families and comrades, for the Party, and for the working class.

⁵ Buller, “In Memory of Beckie Buhay.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archives

Archives of Ontario, Toronto

Ministry of the Attorney General records RG 4-32

Case file 3188/31, Communist Party of Canada

Multicultural History Society of Ontario collection F 1405-85

Jim Buller papers JEW:0065

Not Guilty! The Verdict of the Workers' Jury (pamphlet)

Communist Party of Canada Central Office, Toronto

Jim Buller, personal papers

Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa

Canadian Security Intelligence Service fonds RG 146

Becky Buhay and J. B. MacLaughlin [sic] Vol. 10, File 92-A-0012

Communist International fonds MG 10

Communist Party of Canada fonds MG 28 IV 4

James Shaver Woodsworth fonds MG 27 II C7

Public Safety Canada, Ottawa

Canadian Security and Intelligence Service

A. Buller 117-92-53

B. Gauld 88-A-98

F. Zaneth 117-89-74

Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina

Rex vs. Annie Buller, 1932 R-2.914

Rex vs. Annie Buller, 1933 R-2.792

Workers' Self-Defense in the Courts (pamphlet)

University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

Robert S. Kenny Collection MS 00179

Interview

Jim Buller, 19 September, 2008

Periodicals

Canadian Tribune

Communist Viewpoint

Globe [Toronto]

National Affairs Monthly

Pacific Tribune

Toronto Daily Star

Worker

Other Published Sources

Angus, Ian. *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada*. 2nd ed. Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2004.

Aptheker, Bettina. "Red Feminism: A Personal and Historical Reflection." *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003): 519-526.

Avakumovic, Ivan. *The Communist Party in Canada: A History*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975. 20

Barrett, James R. "The History of American Communism and our Understanding of Stalinism." *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 175-182.

- Baxandall, Rosalyn. "The Question Seldom Asked: Women and the CPUSA." In *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U. S. Communism*, edited by Michael E. Brown, Randy Martin, Frank Rosengarten, and George Snedeker. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993, 141.
- Bell, Sandra, and Simon Coleman. "The Anthropology of Friendship: Enduring Themes and Future Possibilities." In *The Anthropology of Friendship*, edited by Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman, 1-19. Oxford: Berg, 1999.
- Betcherman, Lita-Rose. *The Little Band: The Clashes Between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishments in Canada, 1928-1932*. Ottawa: Deneau, 1982.
- Bolotenko, George. "The National Archives and Left-Wing Sources from Russia: Records of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, the Communist Party of Canada, and Left-Wing Intellectuals." *Labour/Le Travail* 37 (Spring 1996): 179-203.
- Bray, Alan. *The Friend*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Buck, Tim. *Thirty Years, 1922-1952: The Story of the Communist Movement in Canada*. Toronto: Progress Books, 1952.
- _____. *Yours In the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck*. Edited by William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke. Toronto: NC Press, 1977.
- Chambers, Sarah C. "Republican Friendship: Manuela Sáenz Writes Women into the Nation, 1835-1856." *Hispanic American Review* 81, no. 2 (2002): 225-257.
- Clement, Dominique. "Spies, Lies, and a Commission: A Case Study in the Mobilization of the Canadian Civil Liberties Movement." *Left History* 7, no. 2 (2000): 53-79.
- Communist Party of Canada. *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976*. Toronto: Progress Books, 1982.
- Cook, Blanche Wiesen. "Female Support Networks and Political Activism: Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman." In *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*. Edited by Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, 412-444. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.
- Davis, Mary, and John Foster. "Why Were They So Afraid of Communist Influence?" *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 167-173.
- Dixler, Elsa. "The Woman Question: Women and the American Communist Party, 1929-1941." PhD diss., Yale University, 1974.
- Elias, Megan. "Model Mamas: The Domestic Partnership of Home Economics Pioneers Flora Rose and Martha Van Rensselaer." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 1 (2006): 65-88.
- Endicott, Stephen Lyon. *Bienfait: The Saskatchewan Miners' Struggle of '31*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

- Engels, Friedrich. "The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978. 734-759.
- _____. "Socialism: Scientific and Utopian." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978. 683-717.
- Ewen, Geoffrey. "Quebec: Class and Ethnicity." In *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*, ed. Craig Heron. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Faderman, Lillian. "The Morbidification of Love Between Women by 19th- Century Sexologists." *Journal of Homosexuality* 4, no. 1 (1978): 73-90.
- _____. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. New York: Morrow, 1981.
- _____. "Who Hid Lesbian History?" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, 4, no. 3 (1979): 74-76
- Faue, Elizabeth. "Gender, Language, and the Meaning of Class Struggle, 1929-1949." Chap. 3 in *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- Fournier, Marcel. *Communisme et anticommunisme au Québec: 1920-1950*. Laval: Éditions Coopératives Albert Saint-Martin, 1979.
- Fragar, Ruth. "Class and Ethnic Barriers to Feminist Perspectives in Toronto's Jewish Labour Movement, 1919-1939." In *Canadian Working Class History: Selected Readings*, edited by Laurel Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1992.
- _____. "Labour History and the Interlocking Hierarchies of Class, Ethnicity, and Gender: A Canadian Perspective." *International Review of Social History* 44 (1999): 217- 247.
- _____. "Politicized Housewives in the Jewish Communist Movement of Toronto, 1923-1933." In *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, edited by Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
- _____. *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.
- Frank, David. *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography*. Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1999.
- Gorham, Deborah. "'The Friendships of Women': Friendship, Feminism and Achievement in Vera Brittain's Life and Work in the Interwar Decades." *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1992): 44-69.
- Gornick, Vivian. *The Romance of American Communism*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.

- Gosse, Van. "‘To Organize in Every Neighborhood, in Every Home’: The Gender Politics of American Communists between the Wars." *Radical History Review* 50 (1991): 108-141.
- Greene, Jody. "Introduction: The Work of Friendship." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10, no. 3 (2004): 319-337.
- Gregory, Brad S. "The Other Confessional History: On Secular Bias in the Study of Religion." *History and Theory* 45, no. 4 (2006): 132-149.
- Guard, Julie. "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 (2004): 117-140.
- Heron, Craig. *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. Toronto: Lorimer, 1996.
- Hewitt, Steve. "Royal Canadian Mounted Spy: The Secret Life of John Leopold/Jack Esselwein." *Intelligence and National Security* 15 no. 1 (2000): 144.
- Hill, Rebecca. "Re-evaluating the CPUSA’s Answer to the Woman Question." *American Communist History* 3, no. 1 (2004): 145.
- Hobbs, Margaret, and Joan Sangster, eds. *The Woman Worker, 1926-1929*. St. John's, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1999.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Viking, 1989.
- Howard, Irene. "The Mothers' Council of Vancouver: Holding the Fort for the Unemployed, 1935-1938." *BC Studies* 69-70 (Spring-Summer 1986): 249-287.
- Jeffreys, Sheila. "Does It Matter If They Did It?" In *The Feminist History Reader*. Edited by Sue Morgan, 212-218. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Johnston, Faith. *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006.
- Iacovetta, Franca and Linda Kealey. "Women’s History, Gender History and Debating Dichotomies." *Left History* 3, no. 2 (1995): 221-237.
- Kaye, Harvey J. "Marxian Questions, Working-Class Struggles, Socialist Aspirations." *Critical Sociology* 25, no. 1 (1999): 16-29.
- Kealey, Gregory S. "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt." Chap. 9 in *Workers and Canadian History*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995.
- _____. "The RCMP, the Special Branch, and the Early Days of the Communist Party of Canada: A Documentary Article." *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (1992): 169-177.
- Kealey, Gregory S. and Reg Whitaker, eds. *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*. St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994.

- Kealey, Linda. *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Klehr, Harvey. *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.
- _____. "Reflections of a Traditionalist Historian." *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 225-232.
- Klehr, Harvey, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov. *The Secret World of American Communism*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995.
- Laybourn, Keith. "A Comment on the Historiography of Communism in Britain." *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 159-166.
- Lee, Janet. *Comrades and Partners: The Shared Lives of Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich. *What Is To Be Done: Burning Questions Of Our Movement*. Translated by Joe Fineberg and George Hanna. Marxists Internet Archive <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/index.htm>. Originally published 1902.
- Lévesque, Andrée. "Anniversaires et manifestations des camarades: la culture internationale et l'identitaire communistes au Canada pendant l'entre-deux-guerres." *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring, 2002): 83-92.
- _____. *Making and Breaking the Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939*. Translated by Yvonne M. Klein. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994. Originally published as *La Norme et les déviantes* (Montreal: Éditions du remue-ménage, 1999).
- _____. *Red Travellers: Jeanne Corbin and Her Comrades*. Translated by Yvonne M. Klein. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. Originally published as *Scènes de la vie en rouge* (Montreal: Éditions du remue-ménage, 1999).
- _____. "The Weakest Link: French Canadian Communists before 1940." Robert S. Kenny Prize Lecture, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, 8 May, 2008. <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/kenny-prize/>.
- Manley, John. "'Audacity, audacity, still more audacity': Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939." *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring 2002): 9-41.
- _____. "Canadian Communism, Revolutionary Unionism, and the 'Third Period': The Workers' Unity League, 1929-1935." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 5 (1994): 167-194.
- _____. "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, the 'People' and the Popular Front, 1933-1939." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 59-86.

- ____. "Moscow Rules? 'Red' Unionism and 'Class Against Class' in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935." *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 9-50.
- Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Martin, Michael. *The Red Patch: Political Imprisonment in Hull, Quebec during World War II*. Socialist History Project, 2007. <http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/History/RedPatch.pdf>.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. New York: Vintage Books, 1977.
- ____. *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- McEwen, Tom. *The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary*. Toronto: Progress Books, 1974.
- McIlroy, John. "Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism: A Comment." *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 195-202.
- McIlroy, John, and Alan Campbell. "'Nina Ponomareva's Hats': The New Revisionism, the Communist International, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1930." *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring 2002): 147-188.
- ____. "A Peripheral Vision: Communist Historiography in Britain." *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 125-157.
- ____. "Some Problems of Communist History." *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 199-214.
- Newton, Janice. *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.
- Niergarth, Kirk. "'Fight for Life': Dave Kashtan's Memories of Depression-Era Youth Work." *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 199-236.
- Orleck, Annelise. *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Palmer, Bryan D. "Communist History: Seeing it Whole. A Reply to Critics." *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 203-214.
- ____. "Maurice Spector, James P. Cannon, and the Origins of Canadian Trotskyism." *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall, 2005): 91-148.
- ____. "Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism." *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 139-173.

- _____. "Who ARE these Guys?! Politics, Passions, Peculiarities, and Polemics in the Historiography of British Communism." *American Communist History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 187-197.
- Penner, Norman. *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond*. Toronto: Methuen, 1988.
- Pfannestiel, Todd J. *Rethinking the Red Scare: The Lusk Committee and New York's Crusade Against Radicalism, 1919-1923*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631-660.
- Rodney, William. *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968.
- Sahli, Nancy Ann. "Smashing: Women's Relationships Before the Fall." *Chrysalis* 8 (Summer 1979): 17-27.
- Sangster, Joan. "Beyond Dichotomies: Re-Assessing Gender History and Women's History in Canada." *Left History* 3, no. 1 (1995): 109-121.
- _____. *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left 1920-1950*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989.
- _____. *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.
- _____. "Robitnytsia, Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism' Debate: Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930." *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 51-89.
- Side, Katherine Leigh. "In the Shadow of the Family: Women's Friendships with Women." PhD diss., York University, 1997.
- Smith, A. E. *All My Life*. Toronto: Progress Books, 1949.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America." In *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*. Edited by Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, 311-342. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.
- Storch, Randi. *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grassroots, 1928-35*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
- Strong-Boag, Veronica. *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988.
- Swett, Katherine. "'The Account Between Us': Honor, Reciprocity and Companionship in Male Friendship in the Later Seventeenth Century." *Albion* 31 (Spring 1999): 1-30.

- Tulchinsky, Gerald. "Family Quarrel: Joe Salsberg, the 'Jewish' Question, and Canadian Communism." *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 149-173.
- Vance, Catharine. *Not by Gods but by People: The Story of Bella Hall Gaudl*. Toronto: Progress Books, 1968.
- Vicinus, Martha. *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- _____. "Lesbian History: All Theory and No Facts or All Facts and No Theory?" In *The Feminist History Reader*. Edited by Sue Morgan, 219-231. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Watson, Louise. *She Never was Afraid: The Biography of Annie Buller*. Toronto: Progress Books, 1976.
- Weigand, Kate. *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- _____. "Reply to Critics." *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (2002): 527-535.
- Weisbord, Merrily. *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, the Spy Trials, and the Cold War*, 2nd ed. Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1994.
- Wood, Elizabeth A. *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. *The Retreat from Class: A New "True" Socialism*. London: Verso, 1986.
- Wootton, David. "Friendship Portrayed: A New Account of Utopia." *History Workshop Journal* 45 (Spring 1998): 29-47.
- Zetkin, Clara. *Lenin on the Women's Question*. New York: International Publishers, 1934.