Pioneers of Feminism and Unionism: Léa Roback and Madeleine Parent

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These transcriptions were extracted from footage shot during the filming of *Madeleine Parent, tisserande de solidarités* (2002), directed by Sophie Bissonnette.

STRIKES AT DOMINION TEXTILE: MONTRÉAL AND VALLEYFIELD (1946)

Factory Strikes at Dominion Textile (1946)

Judith Murray: When you obtained your collective agreement, what was the Duplessis government's attitude toward you?

Madeleine Parent: Oh! You know, we organized in Valleyfield in '43 and in Montréal . . . no, in '42, and in Montréal in '43, and except for the General Machine Shop, which had been certified in the final years of the Godbout regime . . . For the others, it took longer. So there was no collective agreement for that entire period. Which meant that we gained the majority. We went through the certification process. We became certified. The company didn't want any part of it, didn't want to negotiate, etc. And there were endless delays and technicalities. Some people became discouraged. But there was a core group of people who were committed enough to stick it out. And when we had to start over again—sometimes we had to start all over again—we had that group of committed workers. And the others got back on board. So it went up and down like that.

And when the strike took place in '46, the company thought it could break us. They made a distinction between Montréal and Valleyfield, because the people in Montréal had gone through two processes. They had gone through a wartime process under federal legislation, which had to be followed. It had come to nothing, and they had had to start all over again, mill by mill, to be certified by the province of Quebec. The people in Valleyfield said, "We won't accept this. We were certified once, and it came to nothing. What difference will it make if we do it again?" So we found ourselves with two different technical situations, legally speaking. The company took advantage of that. First of all, they kept refusing to meet with the representatives, through the minister of labour, which, in the Duplessis government in '46, was Antonio Barrette. He wasn't terribly bright . . . We were on strike, a strike that was technically legal, regardless of what they said. It was legal. But Duplessis saw fit to declare the Valleyfield strike illegal. But he was the attorney general. He didn't have the legal authority to declare a strike legal or illegal. But he didn't let that stop him. He was determined to beat us. An injunction was filed against us in Valleyfield, and people wanted to . . . It took place at the courthouse in Valleyfield. That was the only case that was heard at the courthouse in Valleyfield. Everyone was so afraid of the local population that all the others were heard in Montréal. And it was for the injunction application. So I served as a witness for the union, and I recounted all our proceedings. The room was packed with workers, strikers, and other men and women who were following the proceedings. So I told them, "You want to be here, and we want you to be here. But you had better be as

quiet as mice, because the minute anyone speaks up, they'll clear the room, and then you won't hear any of it, and that will do us a lot of harm."

So they stayed very calm. I was the first witness, and when I was sworn in, the judge . . . As soon as I was sworn in, the judge said, "You're nothing but a troublemaker." I felt everyone in the room stop breathing. I said to our lawyer, Jacques Perreault, "Mr. Perreault, did I come here to testify or to be insulted?" So he gave Judge Surveillé a long, silent, meaningful stare. Judge Surveillé didn't say anything else, and thankfully, all our members stayed perfectly quiet. So I testified about the entire process, and it was clear that the company had behaved improperly and that we had done everything over and over and over again, several times, and that they were acting in bad faith. In the afternoon, the company testified. But I could see that the company hadn't convinced the judge. He even fell asleep at one point during their testimony [laughs]. Which isn't unusual for judges, but that's because he was satisfied, and he had the evidence he needed. And he never granted the injunction.

Much later, when the strike was over and we had our collective agreement, the company lawyers went to see the judge, and said, "You never delivered a judgement." And he said, "Call the union lawyers and I'll meet you and them together." So our lawyers and the company lawyers went to meet him. And judge Fabre Surveillé said, "There won't be a judgement. And if you force me to deliver one, it will be in favour of the union." So you see, that was the way we sometimes won our battles. Nobody would say we were in the right, but they wouldn't rule against us, either. Nowadays, we would say, "But that's not satisfactory. If he knew we were in the right, he should have said so in a judgement." But in those days, it was already quite a lot. And it meant that the position the provincial police had taken, as though an injunction had been in place throughout the strike, was not as legitimate as they'd had everybody believe.

JM: I think we should stop here. [End of cassette]

MP: About 50 or 55 days into the strike, the company was willing to negotiate. Not with us, because they were still trying to dismiss us, but with the higher-ups of the American union movement. But they were only willing to negotiate for the factories in Montréal, claiming that in Valleyfield we hadn't obtained our second certification from Quebec, and had settled for the initial certification from Ottawa. So we agreed that a committee would be formed, although that wasn't what we wanted. The representative from Washington, from the International Union of Textile Workers, was one [of the members]. He was later found to have committed crimes against the unions, under . . . at the time of the American Senate Committee with Bob Kennedy, when they had conducted a search and clean-up. Our American textile executives were among those who were sacked. But this man was on the committee. And two other representatives of the movement were on the committee. We didn't trust them either. But there was one honest man, Elphège Beaudoin, who at the time was president of the Provincial Workers' Federation, i.e. the International Unions. So along with those men, the company, under the watchful eye of the Quebec government, negotiated a collective agreement, but only for the factories in Montréal. But we—Montréal and Valleyfield—had gone on strike together. But it turned out that in Montréal—where there were three factories and two other units and lots of police backup and efforts by the company to recruit scab workers—there were scabs in some of the factories, so it would have been difficult for us to reject a collective agreement, which moreover included equal pay for equal work, which we had continually pushed for, among other things. It also recognized certain seniority rights, which provided some job security.

So we held a meeting with the two strike committees, the one in Valleyfield and the one in Montréal, and after much discussion, we came to the conclusion that if the Valleyfield strikers saw the report first and provided their consent, or if they released the Montréal strikers from their pledge to continue striking in solidarity, then we would submit the proposal to the strikers in Montréal. It took a lot of strength of character for the workers in Valleyfield to understand it. Some of them were quite upset. It was a very interesting meeting. Everyone was wondering whether or not we should do it. But when they realized that there were some weak points on the picket lines in Montréal and that an acceptable collective agreement would give us a foot in the door, and that they could . . . So they voted to release the Montréal workers from their promise. At that point, we were told that Blair Gordon, the president of Dominion Textile, no longer wanted to uphold his signature [of the agreement], but Elphège Beaudoin and the others told him, "Mr. Gordon, you gave your word, and you did so publicly." And in those days, that meant something. Nowadays, industry leaders break their promises all the time, and it's somehow acceptable. But in those days, it wasn't. So he had to honour his word. So the people in Montréal voted on it. And they returned to work with the first major collective agreement. Before that, there had been the General Machine Shop, but that wasn't for the majority of the workers.

So after that, things got rockier in Valleyfield. In Valleyfield, we had continually been attacked by the clergy, who were collaborating with the company. I later learned that in Valleyfield, the company provided fabrics to the churches and the local clergy, which had factored into the position they took. But that was just one aspect, because in my opinion, opposition to the International Unions was more intense in most other industrialized cities than it was in Montréal, meaning that the workers in Montréal felt a little freer. So, after two months of striking, we were only on strike in Valleyfield. And the company, along with the Church, stepped up its efforts to recruit more scab workers to the factory. A flyer was distributed, inviting people who wanted to work to go to a particular church service every day, and the flyer said, "When enough of you are at the service, the parish priest or the vicar will accompany you to the factory gates, where others will see to it that you get through." So sometime around August 11, it was the third day that the scab workers got in that way. The company had recruited private police officers from all the factories in Quebec, and there were a lot of them, who came to Valleyfield under their chief, whose name was Claude. And they hired extra people . . . people that looked like bouncers at Montréal bars, I don't know, but they were strangers to the workers. And the provincial police showed up in full force.

So I . . . On that third day, which was around August 11, the women . . . Did you know that the women attended the strikers' meetings? Mothers, sisters, wives. First of all, the union had been heavily criticized, especially in the sermons of the parish priests and of Cardinal Léger, whose sermons set the tone for the other sermons. There were four parishes in Valleyfield. And they said all sorts of things about us . . . that we were this, we were that. I was accused of all sorts of things. So the women had been told, "Come to the meetings. You'll see how things work." So they went. For them it was a sacred duty. They had to go to the meetings. But they didn't go with their husbands. The women all met up, and then they entered the room together, like the female workers who were striking. And that day was to be the big day, the day the police had sworn they would break up the strike. And Chief Claude had threatened the strikers and picketers that morning. So, around 11:00 . . . The women had called each other . . . neighbours, women from other neighbourhoods, etc. When the scab workers who had gone in that morning came out for lunch—because for the company, it wasn't enough to make them go in and out twice a day; it

had to be four times, so they came out for lunch, went back in after lunch, and came out again at the end of the day, providing them with four opportunities for confrontation.

So that day, the women had all called each other and spoken to each other. We would all meet at the gate at 11:00 a.m. Between 11:00 a.m. and noon, 5,000 of us gathered at the gates of that huge factory that employed 3,300 workers. The police got the scabs out of the factory, but they were huddled near the buildings. They hadn't yet gone through the gate. At one point, the police pointed automatic weapons at the workers—the strikers—and we didn't know what they were loaded with. And at one point, they started firing on the crowd with gas, with tear gas. And so the crowd, which until then had remained calm, pelted the police officers with rocks. And later, the police fired tear gas into the crowd once again, and received another volley of rocks. Rocks were thrown at the police only after they fired first. At one point, Captain Labbé pulled out a white handkerchief to say that they would . . . that they wanted to negotiate.

But everyone told Kent not to go in alone. There was another organizer with us, who was supposed to go in with Kent, but they said no. An ad hoc organization had been formed, the "ladies' auxiliary," and they said that two of the auxiliary women would go in with them. They were both mothers. Very brave women. And they served as bodyguards for the organizers. A discussion took place. Kent said, "You've got to get the company's special police force out of town. They've threatened too many people, insulted too many people. People hate them too much. And then you have to close the gates, and we promise we'll help you get the scab workers home." No. So it wasn't . . . it wasn't resolved. So the four of them came back out again, and the police fired more tear gas, and the crowd threw more rocks. And that went on and on.

And then the white handkerchief came out again. The four of them went back in, and that time, Captain Labbé agreed. He had undoubtedly called Maurice Duplessis, or maybe Beauregard, who was still in contact with Duplessis. So then they said, "We'll pull the private police out of here. And you'll help us get the scabs home." So they pulled the company police out, under protest. "You can't do that! They're staying! They're staying!" "No! They're going." So the provincial police got them out of there. Our people escorted the scab workers to their respective homes, and Captain Labbé himself closed the gates and said, "These are going to remain closed." But he quickly forgot his promise. In any case, that was resolved. There were no more scabs. And the strike continued. A few days later, almost a week later, Kent and some other organizers were arrested. They were transported to Montréal and locked up in the jail underneath the courthouse, and they stayed there for the three remaining weeks of the strike.

JM: Why?

MP: Just so the workers wouldn't have access to them.

JM: What were they charged with?

MP: For Kent, it was incitement to riot, even though everyone knew the police had fired first. And Captain Labbé had intended to fire at them with live ammunition. But during the four-way meeting, Kent had told him, "All those people out there are hunters. If you pull out live ammunition, they'll go home and get their rifles. So think about what you're doing." So there was no live ammunition.

Strike Settlement in Valleyfield (1946)

Madeleine Parent: In any case, it went on for three weeks, while Kent was in prison. I took over and after three weeks, we finally received an offer via telegram. It wasn't a very good offer, but given our strength, we decided we could accept it. And so on Sunday morning, the deputy minister of labour called me, or I called him, and I went to the office in Montréal. He had Blair Gordon on the other end of the line, who was in St. Andrews by-the-Sea, New Brunswick. He talked to each of us in turn. And we discussed the type of offer that the strike committee would deem acceptable. And at one point during that long conversation, the line went dead. Maher had done it on a whim, but I acted as if nothing had happened. I called back and said, "Bad connection." So we started again, and he started again with Mr. Gordon. And that went on for a couple of hours. Then I had to leave for Valleyfield because our meetings were held on Sunday evenings, and I had to meet the strike committee beforehand. Until the third week, we had . . . we had recommended that it be rejected because it didn't go far enough, but it was as far as Gordon was willing to go, and it was up to the workers. So at the general meeting, the strike committee told the members, "Here it is"—and I read the telegram—"we recommend that you reject it." So they voted to reject it.

Finally, we received an offer that was pretty similar to the one in Montréal. Not in every way, but it contained some reasonable elements. So I left. I met with the strike committee . . . they were already together and waiting. And I told them, "Listen, it's too complex. It's not perfect, but I propose that we push the meeting back by twenty-four hours, and that will give us all night to discuss whether we recommend it or not." So we went into the room and that's what we told the members, and they said, "Okay, we'll come back tomorrow." Some people were unnerved by that. Not our people, but the government, the authorities. "What does this mean?" But it was because we couldn't accept something without making sure the strike committee was convinced it was reasonable. And then it was up to the members to decide. So after an all-night discussion—that's about how long it took—we said, "Yes, let's take a chance." One of the biggest problems was that in the meantime, the scabs had formed a company union committee under . . . with Cardinal Léger, and we had to submit to a secret government vote with that organization, which the government had certified without a hearing, without anything, just to provide them with status. Would the vote be stolen from us? So we accepted the risk. So everybody went back to work, and we had badges made up within twenty-four hours, that just read "Victory," along with the union's acronym. The opposition said, "They're nuts, they're crying 'victory' when they don't even have a collective agreement." But that's how much faith we had in our members.

A few days later, maybe a week later, the government representative came to discuss how the vote would take place. But there was now a warrant out for my arrest as of that morning, or that evening. Kent had been released from jail, on the condition that he didn't go to Valleyfield. So it was clear that Duplessis planned to steal the vote. Our committee met with the government representative, but it was not at all satisfactory. Meanwhile, I was hiding in a worker's house. And the police were all over Valleyfield, going from door to door, searching people's houses to try to find me. And our lawyers were at the courthouse in Montréal to negotiate what my bail would be once I was brought in. If I went in. So an amount was agreed upon and bail was set by the sitting judge, and I received a message telling me the lawyers were expecting me. A trustworthy taxi driver came to get me, and I left town, but we had to cross the bridge. At the time, we had to cross the Mercier bridge, and the police were searching for me all over. My mother was on the south shore of Lac Saint-Louis, and she heard on the radio that "Madeleine Parent was wanted." So I said, "Would you cross the bridge with me? I'll come pick you up."

"Yes!" So there was my mother, in her gloves and hat, in the taxi with me, and I was hiding at her feet, and we crossed the bridge and made it to the courthouse. And the lawyers got me released. There was a meeting that night, and I managed to make it to the meeting before it ended. And I announced to the police, over the loudspeakers, that I had been released on bail and that they could stop looking for me!

Once the meeting was over, you can imagine that everyone was up in arms because they knew I had been arrested simply so the vote could be stolen and our reputation damaged. So the committee met right away and I was told that the government representative, along with ten or twelve government scrutineers, had retired to a particular hotel. So I called him. Our meeting room was packed, of course, and no one wanted to leave. So I called him and told him—this was after the meeting—that I was coming to meet him with two of our representatives. "Ah! Madame, I'm already in bed." So I said, "You had better go down to the lobby, because we're on our way. The terms of tomorrow's vote have to be renegotiated." "Oh!" So I arrived there with one of the members of the strike committee, and all these men were sitting in the lobby, a certain distance away, and he was in front. I explained that things had been set up so that we would lose, so that the vote could be stolen, because the company had a scrutineer, the company union had a scrutineer, and the government had a scrutineer, three all together, and we only had one. One scrutineer for a voting process that would last from 5:00 or 5:30 in the morning until 7:00 at night. So the minute one of our people left, the boxes would be stuffed with false votes. No question about it. They had gone through all that trouble just to steal it from us.

But they said, "Oh, we can't change it, we can't change it." But suddenly, I heard voices coming from the . . . from further away. A team of about 200 women was approaching the hotel, yelling, "Stop right there! Stop right there!" And they "serenaded" us through the hotel windows, so he agreed and we got our scrutineers. And the next morning, our people were there. You can imagine that no one trusted them. And after 7:00 p.m., the scrutineers brought the ballot boxes to the courthouse to count the votes. I was in a car in front of the door, watching them come out, and for each ballot box, our scrutineer was beside the box. And the others, they . . . The guy from the government brought out one box, and the others squeezed into a car together as best they could. And a crowd was gathering—our office was in the market square, so a crowd was gathering. I received a call from the mayor of Valleyfield, who said, "Mrs. Parent, I need your help." "What is it?" He said, "There are fifteen hundred bicycles around the courthouse, and the government representative won't come out." "Oh!" I said, "Well, he should have done things properly from the start." "Yes, but something has to be done." So I said, "If you give me your word—and I have people here with me, the room is full—once you have the exact results, call me, and we'll see if there's anything we can do." So he called me later and gave me the tally. We had won. So a couple of our people went outside and said to the cyclists, "Come to the union meeting. Let them go." They knew what that meant. So then we announced the results. It took at least two months before the contract was signed. But this time, the contract had been negotiated by Kent and the local committee, Trefflé Leduc and the others, not by third parties, and that was very important.

Judith Murray: How old were you at the time?

MP: I was 28 years old. But it was the people who had gone on strike. And they had lost so many strikes. But now, they knew it had been done cleanly, that it was going to be fair, that we wouldn't allow anything untoward to take place. And they were very, very motivated. And their wives, who visited the farmers, for example, on market days, had the farmers give them

whatever they could to help the strikers. The women made soup at the strike canteen, and families came sometimes, when they had nothing to eat at home. The women would visit landlords who were demanding rent and plead for the families. And when they didn't succeed, they would say, "We'll remember you once we've won the strike, you know." The same went for the grocer and others. They was a lot of support. Especially the women, who acted as ambassadors for the strikers. And that showed the Church—the parish priests and Cardinal Léger—that despite all their sermonizing, they knew what they wanted, and they were willing to support the cause. And on Sunday evenings, at the general meetings, Trefflé Leduc retorted to Cardinal Léger's sermons from that morning, and to all the churches.

JM: What was that like for you personally? There must have been some difficult times.

MP: Well, we were never alone. It was hard, but there was so much solidarity that . . . we were all in it together. And the people were so determined, and it was so clear that this was the moment in history when we had to go all the way, because during the economic crisis, when the attempt had been made in previous years, it had been even harder. And now, the women were actively involved in the strike, on equal footing with the men, which hadn't been the case before. Sacrifices were required of them, demands were made of them, but this time they were part of the strike, as participants. They could be scary sometimes. There was this one union leader who came to a meeting. We sometimes invited union leaders to speak at our meetings. And this guy, he was a good guy, but he was accustomed to bureaucracy. Once we had introduced him, and he was standing was at the microphone, one of the women stood up. She was a very tall, very imposing woman, about 50 years old. And she said, loudly, "That guy . . . "—complete silence—"is no sellout!" Afterwards, he told me he'd thought he was going to have a heart attack. "I had no idea what she was going to say. I've never experienced anything like that." But there was this . . . a sort of rising of power. And that was very, very encouraging. It had to happen. We had to win.

JM: To understand the Duplessis government's reaction a little better—not to justify its actions, but just to provide some context about that era. The war had just ended, and there was a new global threat: communism. How did that affect his actions and his dealings?

MP: Duplessis made ample use of communism to justify his attacks. To him, we were all communists, nothing else. He had no proof, nothing. But when you accused someone of being a communist, it made people uneasy and scared them off. But with the way the people felt about the strike, which had been four years coming and had required a lot of discipline from the workers, who had pushed and pushed and pushed until finally it could take place and they could win, in the two locations, together, that didn't happen. To the point that after the strike, sometime in September, when it came time for the parish visits, the women had secretly gotten the "Ladies' Auxiliary" to print two photos: one of Kent and one of me. And for my parish visit, many of them had placed the two photos next to the crucifix or the statue where they were going to be blessed by the parish priest or the vicar. So when they arrived in those houses and stood in front of the crucifix to perform the blessing, it was, "Oh! I can't bless you in these conditions." "Okay then, we don't need to be blessed, and you won't be receiving the tithe, either." So in most cases, they performed the blessing anyway. But that was the women's response to all the red-baiting. It was entirely their initiative.

JM: Just to understand the context a little better, from today's point of view, was it really so bad to be a communist? Was it illegal?

MP: If I remember correctly, after the war, at a particular point in time, it wasn't illegal. It was simply a sort of bogeyman that was dangled in front of the population. And both the clergy and the Duplessis government took full advantage of that, as they had since before the Padlock Act, and their goal was to frighten people. But when people who knew about the attacks went to see and judge for themselves, then they understood, and they realized that it was only a bogeyman, a spectre.

JM: Wasn't there a rumour, maybe it came later, saying that the Russians had brought you over on a submarine, and that you had disembarked on the shores of the Saint Lawrence River? Did that come later?

MP: Yes. Oh, no, no. That was in Valleyfield, and much earlier. The rumour didn't make it all the way to Montréal, and I had the impression that was because the Duplessis government already understood that the union workers in Montréal wouldn't fall for those types of stories so easily. But in Valleyfield, there had been a rumour that I was a Russian who had arrived on the coast of Gaspésie in a Russian submarine, and that that's how I had come to be here. It's funny when you look back on it, but when people actually believed it, it wasn't quite so funny. That's why I always insist on saying when and where I was born, so that if that story is still floating around, people will know it's not true. But what I found interesting was that they made me out to be—I'm referring to the people who surrounded Cardinal Léger, who were, well, who were our enemies, who sided with the company, especially in Valleyfield—they accused me of being a prostitute, a lesbian, of engaging in bestiality . . . that one was harder to take. I didn't get over that for several days. But for the others, I was constantly having to explain, "No, I'm not a lesbian, but I have nothing against lesbians. They have the right. And as for Russians, Russian women, I have nothing against them either, but I'm not one myself!" I always had to qualify it. I couldn't say, "How awful! I'm not a Russian," as if Russians were terrible people. It was always a bit complicated.

JM: But you were also labelled a communist. In fact, I have a question. Why weren't you a communist?

MP: Well, first of all, I wasn't a communist. But many communists were labourers who worked honestly and hard to unionize people, so I didn't bash them. And when some of them tried to help us, I didn't refuse their help. But for everybody to be happy, I would have had to be an active anti-communist. It wasn't enough just to not be a communist. It's important to remember that during the McCarthy era in the US, they used witch hunts to get rid of a lot of activist workers in the unions, by calling them communists. And unfortunately, some union bureaucrats, who wanted to remain in management and who didn't want to hear any criticism from their members, supported McCarthy's stance. That's just how things were.

The Valleyfield Strike Trials (1946)

Madeleine Parent: Kent was tried in Montréal, not in Valleyfield, for inciting a riot in the '46 strike, with Judge Lazure presiding. He was sentenced to six months in prison at Bordeaux. Six months that he served. And that was just to punish him. And as I mentioned earlier, I too had been arrested, on charges of "attempting to tamper with a witness." And that had come out on the evening before the vote. What had happened was that at a hearing in Kent's trial, I had seen these three young guys from Hochelaga who were being guarded by a police officer at the courthouse. I thought to myself, "Those guys are being paid to testify against Kent." And I immediately thought of Chief Claude of the company police. So I wanted a chance to talk to

them. At one point, the police officer who was with them was occupied elsewhere. The youngest of the three saw me and ran over to me, along with the other two. They were kids from the neighbourhood, in the Hochelaga area, who had followed the strikers. It was fun for them. They would visit the canteen, and Mrs. Provost would give them soup. And that day, they had heard in Hochelaga that there was going to be action in Valleyfield

And so the story is, I don't really know, maybe it was the company police that brought them, but the story was that they had hitchhiked to Valleyfield. And Claude, who had found them again later, brought them to his house and talked to them about testifying against Kent, suggesting they say that during the riot in Valleyfield, they had been given drugs or something in a bottle of Coke, and that it had made them hyper. The idea was to imply that the union had distributed [those substances] to the demonstrators. So all I said to them—because I knew I only had a few seconds with them—was, "You know that if you make a false statement, you can go to jail?" And Jean-David, the youngest one, said, "But we already made a false statement. Do we have to do it again?" I said, "It's more serious when you do it in front of a judge." And then I left. The police officer was on his way back. So they accused me of trying to dissuade them from testifying honestly, as they should. And because it was three young boys, it was a big deal. "Now she's trying to corrupt children." But that didn't cause us to lose the vote. The three boys testified before the judge at my trial, and I was sentenced to six months in prison. Even though there was proof. Young David admitted everything I just told you. It's just that the judge got his orders from Duplessis. And there was another witness, a guy who was maybe two years older than those kids from Hochelaga and who worked at the factory, who saw them around the neighbourhood one night through the window of a pool hall. He went inside to see them and play a game of pool with them. And they told him all about how they had been to Claude's house, that Claude's daughter was pretty, that the oldest of the three of them would have a job at the company soon, and that whenever they needed money, they just had to go see the chief of the Hochelaga factory police, and he would give them money. He testified as well, and no one was able to refute his statement. But despite all that, I was sentenced to a month. I appealed, and the Court of Appeal acquitted me. It was finally over. And we won. None of it had worked.

But that's how it was. As attorney general, Duplessis succeeded in appointing judges who would follow his orders in judging us. But at the Court of Appeal, it was a bit more complicated. I came to the conclusion that he didn't control the Court of Appeal. Which is understandable, since it seemed to be out of the reach of his powers. And besides, it was three judges, not just one. As for Kent, following lost appeals and proceedings, he had to serve his six months during the Lachute strike the following year.

Judith Murray: So we talked about this a bit while the camera wasn't rolling, but how did you manage to keep your cool with all those false accusations?

MP: Well, when we saw the working conditions in the factories and the exploitation of the workers, we were ready for anything, because it was the employers, as well as those who served them, in the government and elsewhere, who were responsible for that exploitation. They didn't care about people's working conditions, despite what they may have said. So we weren't surprised.

JM: How did your family take it? Your parents?

MP: They found it difficult because they hadn't wanted me to get involved in unionism, especially my mother. But I had made my choice. So when she and my dad heard about me

during the strikes, in the newspapers and on the radio and all that, it bothered them a lot. My father had a sense of justice. And later, my mother followed my trial for seditious conspiracy quite closely. But my father only came for the judge's instructions to the jury, I think. He was outraged, outraged. He couldn't accept it. And a journalist from La Presse asked him, "What do you think of all this, Mr. Parent?" He said, "I don't agree with my daughter's ideas, but I know she's honest, and that what she does, she does out of conviction. What's being done to her is unfair." One day, some business acquaintances invited him to have lunch at the Ritz-Carlton. So he was sitting at a table with his colleagues, and Duplessis was at another table, and [Duplessis] had a waiter bring [my father] a note inviting him to join him at his table. But he absolutely refused to go speak to him. He was angry about everything Duplessis had done to us. But I understood that Duplessis was trying to appeal to my father as though to make him believe that he had a responsibility in this, since I was doing things that Duplessis claimed were illegal, it was his duty as a father to keep me at home. But he never succeeded in using my father. On the contrary. My father paid one of the $2,000 bail bonds.