

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 *A Vision in the Darkness* (1991), directed by Sophie Bissonnette.

Joining the Communist Party in Berlin (1932)

Sophie Bissonnette: How did you go about joining the Communist Party, and what made you decide to join it?

Léa Roback: Well, I wanted to do something. I don't know . . . It bothers me when things seem unfair. And when we would discuss things at university . . . There was already a group of them there, from different faculties. And so . . . when I arrived at university, I immediately joined the Communist Party, because that's where the action was. The other groups held a lot of meetings, held *Sozialdemokraten* and *Sozialisten*. It was all very intellectual, and I had had it up to here with all that. So I joined the communists.

SB: Were there a lot of women in the party?

LR: Yes! Indeed! There were a lot, a good number. They wore the uniform: the red leather—or imitation leather—jacket, the beret, the flat shoes. And then there was me, Léa Roback. They didn't accept me right away. Oh no! Why not? Because I wore a fur coat—real fur, beige fox fur— and a cloche hat, which we wore in those days, and my hair was cut short. And I wore high-heeled shoes. I'll never forget the first time I showed up. Never, ever! Because they figured I was either an informant or a loose woman. And so they put me through all sorts of things. But in the end, they accepted me. They knew I really *wanted* to join, that I really wanted to get involved. And I felt very good with my comrades. And then in '32, at the end of '32, the leader told me, "Go home. You need to get out of here right away." Because they were rounding people up. So many people, like Tucholsky . . . He was a man, an author I used to read, I think I have one of his books. They caught him that way. They were able to round everybody up because they were all in the map room. Everyone was in the map room.