lay membership was free to plan and organize related social activities. Their popularity was sporadic, however, and they declined, in many cases, because the clergy did not consider them a high priority. Nonetheless, Clarke concludes, "their impact should not be underestimated". Their values, "an acutely self-conscious respectability and a demonstrative identification with the Catholic Church" (p. 151), were widely shared in the transference of support to independent nationalist societies.

Through this detailed study, Clarke has opened a door on a vibrant ethno-religious community that contributed to the development of Toronto. It invites new approaches that will lead to a standard work in this field.

Murray Nicolson
Wilfrid Laurier University

Ruth A. Frager — *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900–1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. Pp. 300.

Since the publication of Ezra Mendelsohn's *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge University Press) in 1970, interest in the Jewish labour movement has spread at the historiographic crossroads of labour and ethnic studies. Studies dealing with Jewish leftists and labour activists from New York's Lower East Side to London's East End, from Paris's Pletzl to Leeds and Manchester, from Buenos Aires to Amsterdam have appeared in the last 25 years, culminating in a recent exhibit and catalogue on *Workers and Revolutionaries: The Jewish Labor Movement* at the Tel Aviv Beth Hatefutsoth Museum. *Sweatshop Strife* is a welcome and thoughtful addition to this literature, ranging from the garment boss who remembered to wake up his brother so that the latter would not be late for the picket line, to fisticuffs between women strikers and women scabs.

Much of the story is by now familiar. In many respects the similarities between Toronto and New York (which literature Ruth Frager cites) or Paris or Manchester (which she does not) are striking: immigration from Eastern Europe; the development of Jewish working-class activism from an Eastern European tradition combined with conditions in the New World; conflicts between Jewish manufacturers and Jewish workers; tensions and conflicts between Jewish and non-Jewish workers; political infighting among Jewish Bundists, Left and Right Labour Zionists, Trotskyists, Anarchists, and Communists.

What is new, however, is Frager's attention to gender. While the first generation of Jewish labour historians focused on class and community, in keeping with their historiographic times, Frager has made a salutary advance, in keeping with hers. Aside from the classic articles of Alice Kessler-Harris and more recent books by Susan Glenn and Naomi Shepherd, the place of women in the Jewish labour movement, while always noted in passing to be remarkably high, has not always received the attention it deserves.

Frager analyzes the women's roles and their limits well, but her chapter subtitles reflect her disappointment: "The Barriers to Women's Participation in the Labour Movement"; "The Dearth of Female-Oriented Strategies". On one hand, the unions, while careful to appoint equitably one Jewish and one non-Jewish or one Communist and one anti-Communist business agent, never thought to appoint a woman alongside a man, even to represent the mostly female dressmakers. On the other, the Jewish immigrant women activists themselves never insisted on equal representation and never had any significant support from the (largely non-Jewish) middle-class women's organization, such as their sisters in the United States had from the National Women's Trade Union League. Frager's informants were not interested in promoting women's issues *per se*, to her obvious regret. While trying to get her interviewees to respond to some 1980s issues, Frager found that her heroines, although proudly describing the daring roles they played on picket lines and in union halls and agreeing that recent times have brought about a better division of male-female roles, nonetheless stuck to their historical memory. As Bessie Kramer, who once hit another women who was about to hit her and cross the picket line, clearly indicated, class issues were more important than women's issues in the interwar period.

Placing Frager's book in a comparative perspective, we can ask a different question concerning specific aspects of the Toronto case with regard to the Jewish immigrant and labour story elsewhere. Three things are striking. First, there were practically no "native" Jews in Toronto; the small numbers of middle-class English Jews were quickly and massively outnumbered by the Eastern European working-class immigrants. Thus, the class and cultural conflicts between "native" and immigrant Jews that appeared in New York, Paris, or London do not seem to have played the same role in Toronto. (See, however, Gerald Tulchinsky's work on Montreal.)

Second, the needle trades (from clothes to furs to hats) upon which Frager essentially concentrates (were there no Jewish bakers' or shoemakers' unions as in Paris or London?) were "only" one-half Jewish, and anti-Semitism figures much more prominently in the Toronto story than elsewhere. Manufacturers used religion as an argument to convince workers that they should not join a Jewish union. Jewish workers and non-Jewish ones spoke different languages and were organized in different locals. As Frager points out, the Toronto unions did not do for ethnic harmony what the New York unions tried to do. (Here, too, comparison with Greg Teal and Gemma Gagnon's work on Montreal would be instructive.)

Third, a Canadian Communist garment dual union became the main representative of the dressworkers from 1928 to 1936, unlike in New York, where the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) basically purged the Communists in the 1920s, and the rival Communist Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union (NTWIU) was much less influential among the dressmakers, who, under the powerful leadership of former Communist Charles Zimmerman, returned to or remained in the fold. In the Canadian case, the Communist needle unions not only appealed to another form of militancy and worker unity, but also framed the debate, in part, as a Canadian versus American one. The men's wear Amalgamated Clothing

Workers union and the women's wear ILGWU were castigated not only as Jewish unions, but as American imports as well.

Frager's well-conceived and well-executed book thus adds the interesting Toronto case to the impressive list of Jewish labour movement studies. My favourite line is a Yiddish folk saying that needs to be updated but still rings with hope (p. 35): "If all men pulled in one direction, the world would topple over."

Nancy L. Green
École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales

Suzanne Morton — *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Pp. vii, 201.

Suzanne Morton's *Ideal Surroundings* is another attempt to incorporate gender into the historical writing of the Canadian working-class experience. Morton focuses on Richmond Heights, a working-class suburb in the north end of Halifax, which was constructed in the aftermath of the 1917 explosion. The records generated by the Halifax Relief Commission, together with a variety of other sources including newspapers and church, charity, and municipal records, provide important glimpses into the domestic life of the neighbourhood's residents and render visible the culture of working-class women. *Ideal Surroundings*, with its emphasis on how domesticity transformed working-class culture, is an important complement to previous community studies which considered transformations in the culture of male workers primarily in the workplace and trade union.

The 1920s have been viewed by historians as a period of significant transformation in working-class culture with the rise of monopoly capitalism, the emergence of mass culture, and ethnic and racial fragmentation within the working class. Morton argues that gender ideals were never universal and varied by class, region, and community. The organization of the book reflects another key aspect of Morton's argument about the diversity of gender, specifically that gender was experienced variously according to age and marital status. Separate chapters are devoted to the elderly, young single women, female-headed households, and men. Curiously, the book is organized along a "reversed life cycle", beginning with the elderly and ending with young single women. While this organization, Morton suggests, is intended to emphasize the element of change, it is inconsistent with her overall objective of illuminating the experiences of men and women (p. 13). Life is never experienced according to a "reversed life cycle".

Given the central argument about the relationship between gender and age, Morton's decision not to incorporate children into the study seems inconsistent. She writes: "Children were not active participants in the creation of gender ideology, but were often the intended subjects of socialization" (p. 14). Is it not possible that ideals of masculinity and femininity were shaped, at least in part, by boys and girls themselves, in the neighbourhood, classroom, and playground?

Thus, while Morton delves into important topics long neglected by Canadian