This book originated as my doctoral dissertation, which I completed in the Graduate Program in History at York University. While my status as a part-time student at York meant that I was always on the periphery of the stimulating and dynamic atmosphere of that program, I was fortunate to have benefited from crucial intellectual links with a small group of fellow Canadian history students and with other members of the Toronto Labour Studies Group. I am particularly grateful for my connection with Jenny Carson, Cindy Loch-Drake, Todd Stubbs, Susana Miranda, and Nathan Smith. Over the past eight years, we have all either moved through our dissertation research or into the academy as faculty, and I have been inspired by their dedication and support. I was also fortunate to have had supportive colleagues beyond the Canadian labour history community. I particularly wish to acknowledge my colleagues at Empire State College, who have helped ease me into life as a full-time faculty member, with special thanks to Roger Keeran, my MA supervisor, who has become a very supportive colleague.

I also wish to thank the members of my dissertation committee. Kathryn McPherson and Paul Craven provided excellent guidance and were unfailingly patient from the moment I first approached them. I am grateful as well to Carolyn Podruchny, Sam Gindin, Peter McInnis, and Mark Thomas, who also sat on my examining committee. Above all, without Craig Heron, my dissertation supervisor, none of this would have been possible. I owe him intellectual debts that cannot be repaid. He has been a great mentor.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to the past and present members of UAW/CAW Local 27, especially all those who agreed to interviews. The memories and insights of activists like Julie White, Roland Parris, Hector McLellan,
Bob Nickerson, and Al Seymour, among others, enabled me to add nuance and depth to my analysis. Roland was always an enthusiastic supporter of my work, and I only wish he’d lived to see this book published. I am especially grateful to Tim Carrie and Jim Wilkes, who provided much-needed help with accessing Local 27’s records, as well as to the staff of the Archive of Labour and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University, the Archives of Ontario, the Archives and Research Collection Centre at the University of Western Ontario, and Library and Archives Canada. In particular, I thank Kathy Bennett, at the CAW national office, for helping me locate CAW archival documents at Library and Archives Canada. I am grateful to Alvin Finkel, a friend and colleague at Athabasca University, both for his encouragement and for his valuable comments on my work, and to Walter Hildebrandt, Pamela MacFarland Holway, and all the staff at Athabasca University Press.

My grandparents — George Alexander (Alec) Russell, Norma Russell, William Dalton (Mike) Rapsey, and Muriel Rapsey — were often in my thoughts as I researched and wrote this book. Alec and Norma raised five children, and Alec often worked two jobs, despite suffering from poor health. Mike was a long-time member of the United Auto Workers. He and Muriel had two children and understood very well the impact that a local union had on their lives. Alec and Mike were also steadfast social democrats. Both of my grandfathers served in the Canadian Army in World War II, and Muriel was an English war bride. Alec died at a relatively young age, but Norma is still with us. Mike and Muriel passed away after years of hard work and a peaceful retirement. My grandparents worked extremely hard to provide for their children and grandchildren. I think they would be gratified to know how much their lives inspired me to learn more about what a local union did for its workers. I also wish to thank my parents, Tom Russell and Trudy Warren, who have been unfailingly supportive of my academic work. So has Laura Liepins, my wife. Even in moments when I despaired of ever completing my PhD, Laura always believed in me. Finally, I thank my son, Thomas Russell, who is always my greatest inspiration. This book is ultimately for him. Alec, Norma, Mike, and Muriel would have wanted it that way.