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**Radicalism in the Ethnic Market- The Jewish Bakers
Union of Los Angeles in the 1920s**

by

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Radicalism in the Ethnic Market- The Jewish Bakers Union of Los Angeles in the 1920s

“A similar situation obtained in commerce. Newcomers could make a start in petty retailing if they drew support from their Old Countrymen by catering to their special needs. Lack of capital and ignorance of English and of business ways were less imposing obstacles if the aspiring businessmen stocked the products others did not handle and if he dealt with the immigrants in the familiar forms of the old village market. The essential problem was to establish confidence, to avoid price comparisons. The shopkeeper extended credit, on the book, to those he knew; he bargained in the old manner, dropping a few cents on one article to make them up on another. He spoke to the women in their own language, made his establishment a neighborhood meeting place where gossip and advice passed with each purchase. Against those attractions, the competition of the chain stores was irrelevant.”

Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 1951.¹

As generations of American historians dismantled the immigrant assimilation theories pioneered by Park and Burgess and echoed by Handlin, they often pointed to ethnic markets and enclave economies as sites of immigrant resistance to assimilation. Social historians seeking to better understand immigrant, working-class communities stressed the importance of ethnic small business owners in mitigating the homogenizing effects of American mass culture. Others have argued ethnic entrepreneurs helped to reinvent immigrant ethnic identities in the process of appealing to and selling to their immigrant American audiences.² Ethnic enclave economies in turn have become rich veins for cultural historians as well as sociologists and ethnographers. But while this abundant scholarship has helped to expand our understanding of ethnic enclave economies as sites of cultural innovation, scholars have focused primarily on the contributions of ethnic small business owners and their relationship to their ethnic consumers as the engines of innovation. The agency of workers and trade unionists in accounts of ethnic enclave economies has largely been in their capacity as consumers, their participation and influence gauged by what they chose to buy. Scholars have conversely emphasized the perils of immigrant workers employed by ethnic business owners, their linguistic and cultural isolation within ethnic markets making them vulnerable to exploitation.³ As a result, labor activism,

¹ Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951) 83.

² See Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, Werner Sollars *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986), Harvey Levenstein *Revolution at the Table*, Donna Gabaccia *You Are What You Eat*.

³ Middle Man minority theory and segmented labor market theory - ack.

community organizing and political behavior have been treated apart from the market-related activities of the ethnic enclave economy, the contributions of ethnic small businesses in turn separated from those who worked in them.

In this paper, I will instead show how the Jewish bakers of Los Angeles used their position in the ethnic enclave economy as a source of strength, harnessing the power of their community through consumer-oriented strategies and tactics. Two strategies in particular cultivated connections between the politics of labor and the politics of consumption within the immigrant working-class: union labels and the Cooperative bakery. Both strategies employed food as a medium of social action, “buying union” baked goods becoming synonymous with “buying Jewish,” linking consumption to the expression of Jewish identity in Los Angeles. This paper will explore the strategic-decision making of the Jewish Bakers’ Union of Los Angeles, Local 453 of the Bakery and Confectionery Workers International Union (B&C) of the American Federation of Labor in the 1920s and how their involvement in the ethnic enclave economy functioned as uniquely powerful community organizing model.

By the late 1920s, the commercial area between Brooklyn Avenue and East First Street in the northwest section of Boyle Heights had become the center of the Jewish ethnic market in Los Angeles. Brooklyn Avenue itself was home to dozens of food-related enterprises, including Jewish delicatessens and restaurants, Jewish-owned groceries, and Jewish bakeries. Another handful of businesses flanked the streetcar lines on East 1st Street, which ran parallel to Brooklyn, and dozens of others were located on the residential streets that ran between them. These businesses served a Jewish population that resided largely in the area north of 4th street and west of Evergreen cemetery, stretching north into the hills of City Terrace, known as Brooklyn Heights.⁴ While commercial thoroughfares on Central Avenue and Temple Street also housed concentrations of Jewish owned businesses, their significance in the market

⁴ Gustafson describes as an “irregular crescent” p. 94

faded as the Jewish population in Brooklyn Heights grew to encompass one third of the city's Jewish population.⁵

Boyle Heights had been sparsely populated by landholders on large estates in the 19th century, home to Los Angeles' wealthy elite. Hollenbeck Park and Evergreen Cemetery attracted visitors from other areas, but because the area was east of the LA River Boyle Heights was difficult to access and isolated from the rest of the city. A series of bridges constructed during the 1890s at Brooklyn Avenue, 1st street, 4th street, 7th street, Olympic and Washington facilitated transportation, making it easier for those who worked downtown to live in Boyle Heights. Landowners quickly subdivided their estates, opening up an increasing number of smaller holdings and rental properties. And through a series of investments on the part of the Southern Pacific Railroad, Henry Huntington, and the City of Los Angeles, five street car lines were constructed to serve the residents of Boyle Heights by 1910, including lines down east 1st, 4th and two on Brooklyn Avenue.⁶ With its ample access to jobs as well as shopping and entertainment in and around downtown, Boyle Heights quickly became a convenient place to live for working-class Angelinos by the 1920s, their migration causing a rapid demographic shift in the neighborhood.

Jewish Angelinos were among those who capitalized on the opportunity to move to Boyle Heights in the early 20th century and escape the overcrowding of working-class neighborhoods closer to downtown. New expanding districts east of the river offered working-class Angelinos a place to live that was closer to the manufacturing jobs in emerging industrial zone south of downtown. Along with Japanese and Mexican immigrants and African- Americans, Jews seized the chance to purchase cheap lots of

⁵ In their book *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, Vorspan and Gartner argued that Temple Street was the "Jewish 'main street' of the 1910s followed by Central Avenue a decade later." And yet in the previous sentence, they note that "Where some 30% of Jewish households dwelled in the downtown and wholesale neighborhood in 1910, that proportion declined to 3% sixteen years later." pp. 117-118. Temple Street in particular rivaled the centrality of Brooklyn Ave as the heart of the Jewish market, particularly for baked goods, because it housed larger wholesale facilities. The Yellow Car's Angelino Heights Line, however, ran between the two markets, connecting Temple to Brooklyn so that they almost became one long market strip as the population shifted.

⁶ YOUNGS RAILWAY DIRECTORY

land and build their own homes.⁷ The Jewish population alone increased five-fold in the 1920s to include over 30,000 Jewish residents living in an estimated 6,000 Jewish households, concentrated largely in the northwestern section (Brooklyn Heights).⁸ Brooklyn Heights straddled the area between the flats and the hills, offering residents a range of home prices (lots costing \$1000 to \$1500 rather than \$600 to \$800) and single family homes for a variety of rents (\$35 to \$40 per month as compared to \$10 and below).⁹ Older Jewish residents of L.A. were soon joined by newly arriving migrants from the East, many of them European-born immigrants who had arrived in eastern ports before making their way west. Some migrants were the American born children of immigrants, others were foreign-born, naturalized citizens, but few, particularly after the exclusions on European immigration passed in the 1924 National Origins Act, came directly to Los Angeles from Europe. The neighborhood included renters and homeowners, wage earners and business owners, blue collar as well as white collar workers. Many residents of Brooklyn Heights were of Eastern European in origin and Yiddish was the language of the public sphere, but having spent time in other cities, Jewish migrants brought with them expectations and influences from other American contexts, and often some degree of English-language fluency.¹⁰ The Jews who moved to Brooklyn Heights the neighborhood in the early 20th century were not simply motivated by necessity – either financial or linguistic.

The demographic shift in the Jewish population of the neighborhood can be best measured by the expansion its Orthodox community, Brooklyn Heights becoming home to dozens of Orthodox congregations in the 1920s. The city's first Orthodox congregation, Talmud Torah, moved from their downtown location on Rose Street to construct their first building on Breed Street in 1915. Expanded to include a school in 1923, and the Breed Street Shul and its Rabbi Solomon Neches pioneered the

⁷ Like Becky Nicolaides' study of Westgate

⁸ There's lots of pop stats to cite, this one = combo of Gustafson 1, 872 households 1920 and 10,000 by 1930. Higher estimate from Sandberg = 50,000 in 10,000. Following the lead of Wendy Elliot Scheinberg, keep to conservative Vorspan and Gartner estimate.

⁹ Gustafson p. 104.

¹⁰ Cite Gustafson, Commission on Immigration and Housing as examples.

development of the Orthodox community in the neighborhood. Not all congregations had financial liquidity and staying power; many gathered in homes and borrowed space rather because they were unable to afford their own synagogues. Orthodox observance gave the area a tangible and visible Jewish presence, Hassidic Jews standing out in their appearance as well as the unique rhythm of their ritual life. The Orthodox community in Brooklyn Heights participated in the ethnic enclave economy and became an important foundation of the Yiddish cultural world in Los Angeles.

Also providing a foundation for the Yiddish cultural world of the neighborhood were the community organizing efforts of the Jewish left. In the late 19th and early 20th century, Los Angeles' Jewish elites had launched several philanthropic efforts that provided services to the working-class neighborhoods in and around downtown. But as the concentration of the Jewish working-class in Brooklyn Heights increased, organizations emerged from within the neighborhood aimed at empowering workers to "uplift" themselves. The first Workmen's Circle branch in Los Angeles was founded in 1908, and by the 1920s had expanded to include 5 branches and its own *Yidish Folk Schule*. Los Angeles also had several Jewish (Yiddish) branches of AFL unions including not only the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and Amalgamated Clothing Workers, but also the Painters and Carpenters Unions. And both the Socialist Party and the Communist Party had active branches in the neighborhood that, like the unions, conducted their meetings in Yiddish. Emphasizing mutuality and a collective vision of community uplift, these organizations expanded their influence beyond the boundaries of trade unionism, constructing a cultural community through educational and social events and Yiddish language publications.¹¹ Yiddish community organizers pursued an alternative model of community development, empowering the Jews of Brooklyn Heights to remake themselves and change both the meaning of Jewish identity and American culture in the process.¹² Regardless of one's English language

¹¹ Tony Michels

¹² Tony Michels again.

fluency, using Yiddish became both a practical tool for organizing as well as the means of expressing an ideological and cultural commitment to the Jewish working class.¹³

Jewish small business owners chose to place themselves at the heart of the Yiddish cultural world to capture the Jewish ethnic market. Their locations on Brooklyn Avenue in particular gave them access to more affluent consumers in the hills, working class consumers in the flats, community activists and the Orthodox. Many were themselves members of Yiddish organizations and political parties, and encouraged customers to “buy Jewish” as a means of supporting the advancement of the community. They advertized in Yiddish, emphasizing mutuality and shared interests, sometimes offering lines of credit to their customers.¹⁴ Food-related businesses dominated the Jewish ethnic enclave economy. Jewish small business owners catered to the particularities of the laws governing the *kashrut*, as well as offering both European and American Jewish specialties.¹⁵ Bakeries in particular catered to the specific preferences of their Jewish clientele, not only offering regional favorites like hamentashen and rye bread but also structuring their business to meet the demands of Jewish ritual life – matzah for Passover, challah on Friday. Restaurants and delis offered specialties Eastern Europe as well as those that had emerged from within American Jewish populations. For Jewish bakery owners and other small businessmen, catering to ethnic consumers, particularly their food preferences, was both a survival mechanism and a source of autonomy, their involvement in the ethnic enclave economy protecting them from the competition of larger firms.¹⁶ And as a result, the ethnic enclave economy played a formative role in the Yiddish culture of the neighborhood, language and food central in creating the sounds, smells, and flavors of Brooklyn Heights’ Jewish atmosphere.

¹³ p. 71. Can site Tony Michels. Explain that Yiddish is learned alongside English. Inherently bilingual/multilingual context regardless Europe or America

¹⁴ Reference Morris Schames – copy of Der Yidisher Businessman.

¹⁵ Explain what you mean by this distinction, not all “old world”

¹⁶ USE “Family and Ethnic Bases and Immigration...” and Lizabeth Cohen and Making a New Deal ch. 3.

This Jewish ethnic enclave economy in turn served as a labor market for ethnic, immigrant workers with specialty skills, particularly those surrounding the preparation of food. Kosher butchers had a unique claim on the Jewish market for meat, as both their specialty skills and religious certification were not easily obtained. While the production of baked goods was less directly connected to the *kashrut*, Jewish bakers' skills were similarly specialized based on the goods they produced for the Jewish market, the preparation of challah, matzah, and particularly bagels requiring special techniques and recipes bakers inherited through apprenticeships. While their ability to bake bread would have helped them to find employment in non-Jewish shops, like the butchers, the Jewish bakers' specialization had little relevance to non-Jewish employers. Within the labor market of the ethnic enclave economy, however, their skill was often rewarded with higher wages and autonomy. Most Jewish bakers in Los Angeles continued to work in small retail bakeries, a few skilled bakers working alongside semi-skilled apprentices and unskilled bakery helpers. In many cases, the proprietor of the bakery would himself work in the bakery alongside of his workers and serve as foreman, salespeople, clerks and other supplementary staff positions most often filled by their children, wives and other relatives. The intimacy of the bakeshops ensured that some bakers were treated like family.

Employment in the ethnic enclave economy did not, however, guarantee the Jewish bakers protection from exploitative Jewish employers seeking to take advantage of the Jewish bakers' isolation and vulnerability. Employers demanded they work long and irregular hours and paid them for their work in lodging and food (from the bakery) rather than in wages.¹⁷ Some Jewish bakers responded by joining Los Angeles' only baking union, Local 37 of the International Bakery and Confectionery Workers Union (B&C) of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Rather than organize around shared class-based interests or jobsite, the Local 37 built their unity on their shared status as craftsmen, including both bakery workers and bakery owners among their membership.

¹⁷ Reference the bad bakeries?

Crucial to the bakers' ability to govern "their craft" was Local 37's ability to discipline its members, baking unions controlling access to their craft through apprenticeships and limited membership, and by punishing anyone who worked as a scab, often with physical violence. Baking unions aimed to control the labor market, helping their members to negotiate employment and contracts that would guarantee bakeries would be union only, or "closed," shops. The strength of Local 37 in turn relied on organizing all of the bakers in the city including immigrants, however undesirable they may have been to some members of the union. By 1918, Local 37 had a "Hebrew baking" branch with its own wage scale, and later added a "Latin" branch.¹⁸

The push for unionization among the Jewish bakers increased in 1924 when several Jewish bakery owners decided to form the Hebrew Master Bakers Association and join the Merchant and Manufacturers Association by signing on to their "American Plan."¹⁹ In the logic of Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and its Merchant and Manufacturers' Association, the union's insistence on "closed shops" denied workers of their rights, their "open shop" plan inherently American because it protected an individuals' choice to unionize. In reality, the forces of the "open shop" imposed a violently repressive anti-union regime in early 20th century Los Angeles, labor organizers and radicals under the constant supervision of the LAPD's Red Squad. By declaring their allegiance to the "open shop," the members of the Hebrew Master Bakers' Association damaged their ties of mutuality and solidarity between craftsmen. While not every Jewish bakery owner in the city signed on to the "American Plan," the episode catalyzed the Jewish bakers. Framing their need for autonomy around their desire to hold meetings and publish newsletters in Yiddish as a means of ensuring the organization of all Jewish bakers in the city, the Jewish bakers surged from within Local

¹⁸ The "Hebrew" branch appears in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Monthly Labor Review*, vol. VIII, no. 1, Jan 1919. The "Latin" branch appeared in the Bureau's Bulletin No. 871, "Union Wages and Hours in the Baking Industry, July 1st, 1945 (published from the *Monthly Labor Review*, March, 1946). More research needed to figure out more precisely when all these branches emerged.

¹⁹ "Jewish Bakery History, Los Angeles, 1849- 1926," Herman Robbins pp. 127-128.

37 to form their own independent union, Jewish Bakers Union Local 453, the second baking union in Los Angeles.²⁰

Having their own autonomous union allowed the Jewish bakers to fuse the strategies of Local 37 with community organizing tactics of the Jewish left, and position themselves within a broad coalition of interests. Local 453 aimed to remake the ethnic enclave economy, forging a new power dynamics dynamic between bakery owners, their workers, and consumers based on principles of mutuality and social justice of Yiddish community organizing. Their activism harnessed the “purchasing power” of non-working women and community members outside of trade unions and political parties giving powerful roles in the movement by affirming the importance of “buying union.”²¹ Two strategies in particular cultivated connections between the politics of labor and the politics of consumption within the immigrant working-class: union labels and the Cooperative bakery. Both strategies combined the AFL’s emphasis on “buying union” with Jewish small business owners’ emphasis on “buying Jewish,” linking consumption to the expression of Jewish identity in Los Angeles. And both strategies employed food as a medium of social action.

Along with strikes, boycotts, and protests, union labels had long been a popular strategy among AFL unions. The B&C, like many unions in the building trades, was composed largely of men until the late 1930s, and yet could not be successful without involving women. To do so, they sought to discipline both the labor of their members and the “labor” of housewives using union seals as a means of identifying union-made products. While women may have been excluded from membership in AFL unions, they were encouraged to participate in a complementary role as consumers, even though many of them may have worked themselves. By translating the larger version their label into Yiddish, Local 453 fused the union label technique with their ethnic

²⁰ Cite Paul Brenner here, note that have only suggesting that was the case but union’s history from 1939 Jubilee confirms??

²¹ Dana Frank has similarly emphasized forms of consumer-oriented activism in her book, Dana Frank, Purchasing Power : Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929 (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Other works on consumer activism and the labor movement include Lizabeth Cohen’s *Making a New Deal*, Margaret Jacob’s *Pocketbook Politics* and Glickman’s *Buying Power*.

community identification. The labels came in several varieties of sizes, and the image of the union seal, like a trademark logo, appeared alongside the union's name in their advertisements, on their letterhead, in their greetings in anniversary booklets, and their event promotions. Union label campaigns became a focal point of Local 453's activism and their most enduring and effective strategy. "Koifn broit bloiz mitn ee-union laybel fun di beker" ("Buy bread exclusively with the union label from your baker") became the calling card for the union and a means to teach consumers how to shop wisely.

Buying union label bread became a simple, low-risk way for community members to participate in the Yiddish community organizing while going about their everyday lives. And as the Jewish community in Boyle Heights expanded dramatically in the 1930s, union labels became a means of integrating new arrivals into community activism and the Yiddish cultural world. The union promoted an alternative relationship between consumers and producers in which they participated, in complementary roles, in a struggle for fair prices, buying union a means of supporting the renewal of the Jewish community. In grocery stores and markets, union labeled goods appeared alongside the name-brand products of corporate baking firms giving consumers an opportunity to support the bakers even if they didn't buy from the retail bakeries on Brooklyn Avenue. By the 1940s, Local 453 ranked 15th among B&C unions in sales of union label goods, having sold over 29 million breadstuffs with union labels between 1941 and 1946, despite being significantly smaller than both their parent union and larger industrial baking unions in eastern cities.²²

Local 453's union label campaigns also helped them to build organizational connections to other groups working in community, particularly the Women's Consumer's League. The League had emerged from within the Los Angeles Central Labor Council as a proto-women's auxiliary responsible for coordinating union label

²² Official Report and Proceedings of the 23rd Convention of the Bakery and Confectionery Workers International Union of America, Sept. 16th-23rd, 1946, p. 24.

campaigns.²³ The union's second strategy, [cooperative production in the form of] the Cooperative Bakery, grew out of those organizational relationships. In 1925, the bakery was formed from a tenuous coalition: as part of initial negotiations, the board of directors that controlled the Cooperative had been set to include seven seats for "Progressive Organizations" including the Women's Consumers League, the Workmen's Circle and the Socialist Party, as well as 5 members of the Worker's (Communist) Party. Union workers, then members of Local 37, in turn supplied the labor, sharing work at the Cooperative to aid their underemployed brothers.²⁴ After gaining their own union, members of Local 453 joined with members of the Communist Party to push for increased worker control of the bakery including seats on the Board of Directors for union members. The following year, with an investment of \$55, they expanded the bakery into a Cooperative Center at 2708 Brooklyn Avenue, housing a retail bakery and a restaurant, as well as the headquarters of Jewish subdistrict of the Communist Party and several affiliated organizations.²⁵ Although moving into the Cooperative Center may have sealed the bakery's ties to the Party, it also positioned the bakers at the center of the Jewish ethnic enclave economy. Their clientele included around 150 shareholders in addition to those using the meeting hall and offices in the building above and, like the other bakeries, people coming to and from work and riding the streetcar.

While consumer organizing in the form of union labels and boycotts incorporated consumers into union activism by capitalizing on and disciplining the "labor" of housewives, cooperatives encouraged an entire restructuring of the economics of consumption, offering an alternative model of the process through which goods and services were distributed, and uniting the interests of men and women,

²³ Cite Francis Noel

²⁴ Herman Robbins??

²⁵ CPUSA FILES

producers and consumers.²⁶ The bakery aimed to reconfigure both labor relations and the ethnic enclave economy around an enhanced mutuality based on use-motives, and in doing so to remake the market for Jewish baked goods in Los Angeles. And the bakery was a success, growing from an estimated \$50,000 a year of business in 1925 \$108,000 a year by 1932.²⁷ Like the union label, buying from the Cooperative bakery became a simple, low-risk way to participate in a part of Jewish community organizing that was increasingly high risk and dangerous in the 1930s. Because food was their medium of social action, the bakery largely avoided alienating non-communists in both the union and the community despite long-standing antagonism toward the Communist Party. Not all of the 150 shareholders were card-carrying CP members, but the vast majority sided with the CP and union members in their push to expand the Bakery in 1926.²⁸ Nor did all members of Local 453 participate in or work at the Cooperative, and yet the Cooperative bakery became a crucial source of union power. The Cooperative Center served as a hub of Jewish community organizing and attracted other famous community organizers and radicals working in Southern California [including Upton Sinclair].²⁹

The very idea of anti-capitalism activists running a successful small business seems paradoxical. Indeed the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party disparaged the Jewish subdistrict's involvement in small business enterprises, insisting that the "petit bourgeoisie" composition of the subdistrict weakened the Party in L.A.³⁰ The bakers union similarly included employers and employees and the union wage

²⁶ Dana Frank noted this distinction between the two types of consumer organizing in her book *Purchasing Power*, p. 6-10 and Shuldiner's work further confirms the dual origins of the bakery in both Local 453 and the Women's Consumers' League.

²⁷ The \$50,000 estimate is based on figures from an article entitled "Cooperative Bakeries in the United States" published in the Bureau of Labor Statistics *Monthly Labor Review* vol. XXI (Sept., 1925). The \$108,000 estimate was extrapolated from a \$9000 per month estimated given as part of a 1932 injunction directed against the LAPD's Red Squad on the part of the Cooperative Center, claiming their constant raids and harassment constituted an infringement on their property rights. The Cooperative claimed that their business had dropped from \$9,000 a month to \$5,000 a month due to LAPD interference. The statistic may therefore be an overestimate designed to Upton Sinclair cosigned the injunction claiming he had been deprived of his property because he was prevented from attending an event at the center for which he has purchased a ticket. The injunction appears in the CPUSA Records, Roll 225 Delo 2917. Compare to other bakeries at the time?

²⁸ CPUSA records – explain conflict (even CP doesn't like it!) but shareholders did.

²⁹ Sinclair even offered his name to an injunction filed by the Cooperative against the LAPD's Red Squad due to their persistent harassment of the Bakery in 1931-1932. CPUSA records.

³⁰ CPUSA Records list 1926 then "this has been a consistent problem in the subdistrict"

scale was high enough to allow many bakers to buy their own homes, Local 453's composition defying some definitions of "working-class."³¹ These paradoxes may have given the bakers' union dynamic energy and allowed it to build such a broad-based coalition just as their involvement in food production tied their efforts to consumers. At their 15th anniversary celebration, representatives from the AFL, the Workmen's Circle and Socialist Party as well as the International Workers Order and the Jewish Peoples' Fraternal Order affiliated with the Communist Party, despite the groups' increasing hostility in the 1930s, showing that the Jewish bakers successfully navigated factionalism and rivalries to play central roles in both Yiddish community organizing and the ethnic enclave economy of Jewish Boyle Heights.

And because their two most effective strategies focused on tying the consumption of their baked goods to supporting the union, the spirit of Yiddish community organizing was embedded in the breads and pastries they produced. Simply put, their food made the ideology of the movement edible.³² Whether from the Cooperative, a grocer, a restaurant or bakery, buying union label Jewish baked goods became a ritual among the Jewish population of L.A. Not all consumed in active solidarity with the politics of the left, nor did all who lived in Brooklyn Heights support the Yiddish community activism in the neighborhood. Some lived and shopped in the neighborhood because the price was right and the food was delicious. Buying, eating, sharing, and selling food became transcendent elements of Jewish culture in Brooklyn Heights, baked goods and those that made them central in cultivating the Jewish atmosphere of the neighborhood. While historians of American Jewish foodways have often emphasized the role of small business owners and entrepreneurs, the history of Jewish baking unions like Local 453 shows that food culture was also deeply connected

³¹ Hoffman estimated Jewish bakers were paid between \$25 and \$40 for a 48 hour work week in the 1920s. Frances Noel and advocates of the Living Wage argued wages were as low as \$2 to \$4 a week for other Angelino workers. Bureau of Labor Statistics for wage scales - 1931 estimated LA wages were \$23.61 per week for bakers. Reference City Directories – point out that only know in a few cases for sure but inferred.

³² This phrasing is borrowed from ed. LeBesco and Naccarato, Edible Ideologies : Representing Food and Meaning.

to the workers in the ethnic enclave economy and their unions.³³ Through their role in Jewish food culture, the Jewish bakers of Local 453 participated in the construction of Yiddish-based cultural community and the emergence of an alternative form of ethnic identity in Los Angeles.³⁴

Both the Cooperative and union labels fused market-related behavior and consumption with the socio-political activism, creating a tradition of buying within the Jewish ethnic community that was influenced by workers in the ethnic enclave economy acting as and in tandem with small business owners. The strategies employed by the Jewish bakers of Los Angeles effectively united the interests of workers, consumers, and small business owners, their movement transcending the boundaries of trade unionism. By adding consumer-oriented activism to their craft unionism, Local 453 developed a tripartite organizing style that gave community organizing among the Jewish community of Boyle Heights a unique flavor.

³³ Jewish baking unions in New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Boston, Philadelphia, etc. 1925 Jewish run Cooperatives included nine in Massachusetts, 6 in New York, 2 in new Jersey, Cleveland, Michigan, Wisconsin, and of course, Los Angeles. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review* vol. XXI, Sept. 1925.

³⁴I borrow the term *Yidische Kultur* from Tony Michels' book. Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts : Yiddish Socialists in New York*. Other authors who have explored the Jewish Labor Movement through a cultural lens include David Philip Shuldiner, *Of Moses and Marx : Folk Ideology and Folk History in the Jewish Labor Movement* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 1999), Paul Buhle, "The Cultures of Socialism in the United States," *Monthly review*, 54.3 (2002), Irving Howe and Kenneth Libo, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Galahad Books, 1994).