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A Study of the Labor Philosophy of Jacob S. Potofsky, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America

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A STUDY OF THE LABOR PHILOSOPHY OF JACOB S. POTOFSKY
PRESIDENT OF THE AMALGAMATED CLOTHING
WORKERS OF AMERICA

by

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LIFE

Donald Michael Kilourie was born in Chicago, Illinois, on September 18, 1935.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the labor philosophy of Jacob S. Potofsky, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. It is the author's intent to explore those significant attitudes and beliefs which form the intellectual convictions of Mr. Potofsky in relation to the union movement in the United States.

This study will explore Mr. Potofsky's viewpoint on the objectives of unions, the means to obtain these objectives and other significant problems affecting the union movement.

An examination of the philosophies of the outstanding labor leaders must necessarily include the individuals concept of the social, political and economic factors which serve as the basis for their philosophies regarding labor.

This thesis is part of a joint research project undertaken by several students of the Institute of Social and Industrial Relations of Loyola University. The goal of the project is to investigate the labor movement convictions of several significant American labor leaders. Few studies have been made of the ideas of individual labor leaders, although many studies interpreted the philosophy of the American labor movement.

Mr. Potofsky was chosen as the subject for several reasons. He is
the general president of the four hundred thousand member Amalgamated Clothing
Workers of America, hereafter known as the ACW. The ACW has emerged from in-
dustrial chaos in 1914, to the present when the union is known as a model
of industry and union cooperation, with decent wages, working standards and
a comprehensive system of insurance against the hazards of illness, accident,
old age and death. The ACW has not had a strike in over thirty years,
certainly a remarkable record in the light of the unrest existing in other
industries. A tribute paid to the ACW by the Honorable Charles R. Howell
states, "one of the most advanced and successful labor-management relation-
ships in our country exists between the ACW and the Clothing Manufacturers
Association of the United States. There has been no major work stoppage in
the men's clothing industry in the past twenty-five years. Bargaining and
day-to-day situations are met with mutual respect and a determination to
work for the best interests of the country."¹

To direct this union since the death of Sidney Hillman in a manner
that both employees and other unions continue to look upon the ACW as a
model of organization, industrial peace, and honesty truly marks Potofsky as
one of the outstanding figures in American labor.

Profile²

Due to the scarcity of material on the life of Potofsky the following
biography has been obtained from the ACW.

¹U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Congressional Record, 83rd
P. A3501.

²A Biography of Jacob S. Potofsky, New York, New York.
The story of Mr. Potofsky's rise from a poor immigrant boy to the presidency of the ACW may serve as an inspiration to others, it shows the values of dedication and perseverance. Potofsky was born in Radomisl, Russia on November 10, 1894 and came to the United States in 1906. He settled in Chicago and at the age of thirteen went to work in a Chicago pants factory. There he took part in the Hart, Schaffner and Marx strike in 1910, out of which many future leaders of the Amalgamated emerged. In 1912 Potofsky was elected treasurer of Chicago Local 144, then in 1914 became secretary-treasurer of the Chicago Joint Board of the ACW. Sidney Hillman recognized the leadership potential in Potofsky and called him to New York to become the assistant secretary-treasurer of the ACW at the age of twenty-two. He served in this capacity and was instrumental in the unionization of the cotton garment workers.

In 1934 when the burdens of the presidency became increasingly heavy upon Sidney Hillman, Potofsky was named assistant president. The next promotion came in 1940 when Joseph Schossberg retired as general secretary-treasurer and Potofsky assumed the position. During World War II, Sidney Hillman took a leave of absence to serve on government boards and Potofsky was named acting president.

Potofsky was a leader in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, hereafter known as the CIO, and Potofsky was a member of its Executive Board. In addition to this he was chairman of the CIO Committee of Latin American Affairs and chairman of the CIO Committee on International Affairs, which set CIO policies in the struggle against Communism. He was also an advisor to the International Labor Organization and participated
frequently in conferences of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. When the merger between the AFL and the CIO occurred in 1955, Potofsky became a vice president and member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, also a member of the Ethical Practices Standing Committee.

In 1946 with the untimely death of Sidney Hillman, Potofsky was elected General President of the ACW, an office he has held to the present time. During Potofsky's presidency the union has secured wage increases in 1947, 1950, 1953 and 1956 plus extended vacation periods and increased health, welfare and pension plans. However, the important fact is that the same aura of industrial peace remained over the clothing industry as had prevailed during the long tenure of Sidney Hillman as president. Although Potofsky was not president during the period when the innovations and achievements of the ACW, which make it a model labor organization, were instituted, he played a large role in the charting and implementation of the policies. These policies include progressive labor management relations, impartial machinery for the settlement of disputes, cooperative housing, labor banking, unemployment insurance, life, health, accident, maternity, hospitalization and old age retirement benefits. To grasp adequately the diversified field he has been active in one can list the organizations which have recognized his many activities and presented him with awards: the Urban League, the United States Treasury Department, the Newspaper Guild of New York, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Brandeis University, the Red Cross, the Government of Israel, the Government of Italy, the USC plus many other organizations have bestowed awards upon Potofsky for his contributions to their causes.

President Potofsky played a leading role in the passage in 1956 of a
Federal Minimum Wage Law. He has been the main architect of the union label campaign, one of the largest public information programs ever undertaken by a union. As president of the Sidney Hillman Foundation, he has led in the raising of a one million dollar fund which is being used for scholarships and research grants to promote knowledge and understanding. Today the ACW is continuing to grow under the leadership of Potofsky, as it forges forward in its mission of organizing the unorganized.

Method

The method used in this research is common to all the theses in the group research project on the philosophies of the American labor leaders. The categories comprising the labor philosophy of Potofsky are as follows:
1) Potofsky's views on the objectives of labor ranging from the goals of the ACW to the national and international goals of American labor, 2) his views on the political and economic means to achieve these goals, and 3) his views on critical areas influencing industrial relations such as the role of government and management in industrial relations, his views on the ICFTU and civil rights.

found in various periodicals such as, The Nation, U.S. News and World Report, and Business Week.

Background material was found in several books: Sidney Hillman, Great American, Labor in America, and To Promote the General Welfare.
CHAPTER II

POTOFSKY'S VIEWS ON THE OBJECTIVES OF LABOR

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the long term objectives of labor as viewed by Potofsky. In order to examine properly as broad an area as this it is essential that the subject matter be broken down into the following three divisions: the objectives of the ACW, the objectives of the American labor movement affecting the nation as a whole, and the objectives of the American labor movement in the international sphere.

The long term objectives that are to be analyzed are to be considered the ends to which the cited labor organizations are dedicated.

A. The Objectives of the ACW.

Potofsky in order to further the ends of American labor considers the ACW as but one of many unions which will work together toward the goals of the American labor movement. In the period when the AFL and the CIO were considering merging, Potofsky earnestly desired unity and declared, "I am hopeful that unity will eventually be achieved and I want to assure you that we will bend every effort in that direction." After unity was achieved the ACW and the other national and international unions became the base of the labor movement.

1The Advance, XL, (June 1, 1954), 21.
The primary goal of the ACW is to "organize the unorganized," states Mr. Potofsky. Here it is seen that the ACW is but a tool in achieving the ends of American labor. However, there is one serious restriction on the ACW, and that can be seen when Potofsky states, "we are dedicated to bringing the benefits of trade unionism to every worker within our jurisdiction." The problems of jurisdiction are stressed frequently due to Potofsky's realizing the serious consequences jurisdictional disputes can bring about.

The ACW as part of the American labor movement has a definite duty which insists, "we must continue to assist in the building and strengthening of the labor movement, to keep it clean." The personal integrity of Potofsky is clearly evidenced by his determination that the expulsion and exclusion of corrupt and racketeering elements from unions must be achieved.

What does Potofsky desire for the ACW? To understand adequately Potofsky's views on this subject it is necessary to inspect the results the ACW has achieved in its collective bargaining with management. The ACW objectives are not short run as evidenced by the following statement. "Gains to the workers are registered in terms of shorter hours, higher wages, increased job security and real industrial democracy." This is going beyond the "bread and butter" concept of trade unions which was the trademark of

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the AFL craft unions.

To digress from the economic sphere, the social uplift type of unionism that was characteristic of the CIO can be seen in Potofsky's statements. Potofsky stated "we regard the cultural and educational development of our members important for the future health and strength of our organization."6 Since he believes in improving the culture and education of the union members, Potofsky can be seen to favor the uplift type of unionism.

To understand why the ACW must go beyond economic goals it is necessary to analyze the clothing industry. The establishment of a clothing plant does not require huge expenditures of money or absolute dependence upon a certain geographical feature such as steel mills and other heavy industries require. Hence the ACW is faced with the problem of the run-a-way shop, where the owners of a clothing shop will curtail operations in one city and move to an area which is not unionized. This can be accomplished with a relatively small expenditure which can be made up with the lower cost of non-union labor. The ACW therefore has another objective that is peculiar to this industry and that can be exemplified in the following statement, "throughout our long history the Amalgamated has sought to be a stabilizing force in our industry."7 Stabilization of industry, a prime requisite for the continued success of the ACW, can be seen as an important objective of the union since it will help guarantee the availability of jobs in the future and job security at the present time.


The objectives of the ACW however, are subject to change since Potofsky considers the union to be nothing more than the collective voice of its members. The fact that the union exists for the members and is subject to their discretion is evidenced in the following: "throughout the more than forty years of our growth we have never lost sight of the fact that the union is ruled by the membership." The objectives of the union movement as viewed by Potofsky are subject to radical change contingent upon the voice of the membership.

In order to summarize the objectives of the ACW one can turn to a statement Potofsky made when he was writing a summary of the ACW, "through our union and the institutions it has built, the hundreds of thousands of workers in our industry have won dignity, independence and security and have been given the strength to play their full part in our universal search for peace and prosperity."  

B. The National Objectives of the American Labor Movement

The national objectives of the American labor movement can be broken down into two categories, those objectives affecting only labor and those objectives affecting the nation as a whole.

The objectives of the union movement affecting labor will be examined first.

Potofsky desires that the individual union members be elevated in


social status so they may partake in a full life of educational and cultural betterment. He states, "we all want a higher standard of living, full employment, greater security, and education for our children and peace." To go further, Potofsky considers labor an important segment of the community and it must take its place in that light on a national and local level. In order that labor achieve acceptance on a national level as the true force it is, there must be a recognition on the part of the community that it is a good for the entire nation not for certain minority groups nor a dissatisfied few. Potofsky feels labor should participate at the top policy making levels of government and states, "we must insist on the recognition of labor's rights not on the level of just having a few fellows getting a job here and there, but on the planning level and on the management level." This indicates a desire on the part of labor to share in the functions of government on a national level and to thus be recognized as a legitimate partner in the administration and policy making decisions of government.

Labor will in the future play a broader role in the nation. Unified labor, "will assure a greater and sounder utilisation of our great resources. It will mean greater organizing activity, give us a large voice in assuring liberal and responsive government and bring to an end jurisdictional divisions within American industry." Again labor's participation in government

10 The Advance, XXXIV, (Sept. 1, 1948), 4.


level.

Two problems which Mr. Potofsky recognizes that must be overcome, are actually objectives in themselves. He states "the cause of organized labor is faced with two great challenges. One is to organize the unorganized. The other great challenge is to preserve standards of honesty and democracy and to enforce these standards without fear or favor." The familiar theme is stressed here again, that labor must organize to the highest degree attainable and at the same time protect democracy both within its own organization and within the nation.

The second area to be discussed is the objectives of American labor which affect the nation as a whole.

One of the main objectives of the American labor movement is to raise the standard of living for all Americans, this is evidenced by Potofsky stating, "we will not give up the struggle until poverty is banished from the land." The statement clearly points out that American labor looks beyond the welfare of its own members and to the welfare of the entire nation.

To go even further Potofsky states, "we are concerned not only with the bread and butter of our members, but with the economy of the country, with politics, legislation and with the social program that must be of concern to all people and particularly the working people." Here the stress is placed upon the working people, but it is interesting to note the broad

area this statement covers as it is not limited to union members only.

During the Eisenhower administration, Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson made a very significant statement regarding the relative good of General Motors and of the United States. This particular statement was widely condemned; however, Potofsky in discussing the goals of American labor issued the following statement, "what is good for labor is good for the American people as a whole." To issue a statement of this magnitude, Potofsky must equate the objectives of both groups and consider them to be analogous, which he certainly has done in this instance.

C. The International Objectives of American Labor.

The international objectives of American labor will be viewed separately from the objectives of the ICFTU since this organization will be treated in a later chapter.

The area of international affairs is a forte of Potofsky, due to his serving on the CIO International Affairs and Latin American Affairs committees plus his interest and participation in the ICFTU.

American labor with its strong position and success has a task, "to mobilize the tools of abundance possessed by the industrially advanced nations of the world, to assure full employment security against want, old age and sickness, and to provide even richer standards of living and a richer fuller life for people everywhere." From this, one can discern that the American


17 The Advance, XXXVII, (Jan. 15, 1951), 16.
unions are to be the leaders in the spread of free trade unionism over the
globe. American labor, "must champion the aspirations of the plain people
everywhere for social and economic justice." Here again Potofsky feels
American labor is the acknowledged leader and the mainstay of hope of people
throughout the world for social and economic betterment.

To go even further Potofsky considers that there is a definite responsi-
bility on the part of American labor to use its strength, "for a world at
peace in which all nations and their peoples live in freedom and dignity." The goals of American labor in the international sphere are concerned with
the leading of other nations' trade unions to achieve the degree of prosperity,
acceptance and social betterment which the American unions have achieved.

Potofsky shows a definite interest in the South American nations due
in part to his being chairman of the CIO Committee for Latin American Affairs.
He considers Latin America to be closely tied to the United States, and hence
to our labor movement. The colonization era has ended in Latin America. Now
American labor must, "in self defense, encourage the good neighbor policy and
as we interpret it, the good neighbor policy is to have happy people decently
housed and clothed, with an opportunity to give their children an education." Potofsky is in addition a strong supporter of the trade union move-
ment in Israel and considers it as a potent force in the infant nation.

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18 CIO Convention Proceedings, XV, (Dec. 1953), 432.
19 The Advance, XL, (June 1, 1954), 22.
20 CIO Convention Proceedings, XII, (Dec. 1950), 452.
Perhaps Potofsky's views on the International objectives of American labor can best be summarized by his own statements. "We who have built powerful labor organizations ask only for the opportunity to help other workers build similar strong labor organizations for themselves,"[21] since "labor organized internationally is the greatest and most effective instrumentality for the preservation of freedom and peace."[22]

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CHAPTER III

POTOFSKY'S VIEWS REGARDING THE MEANS TO OBTAIN LABOR'S OBJECTIVES

To analyze the means advocated by Potofsky to be utilized by labor in the struggle for its final objectives, it is necessary to subdivide the topic into two major categories. The first is the economic means to be used and the second is the political means to be utilized. The economic methods will be examined first.

A. Economic Means

1. Organization

Potofsky has very definite opinions regarding the organization of workers. The organization of the unorganized is the main objective of the ACW. Very much credence is placed on organizing, for in numbers there is strength and economic power. Labor has according to Potofsky held its own in the past few years "because of its economic power."

The economic power of labor is dependent upon successful organization.

Today the ACW is waging a huge organizational campaign in the South due to the fact that many of the clothing manufacturers have left the

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1 The Advance, XLII, (Sept. 1, 1956), 6.
unionized sections of the nation and have begun operations in this area due to the lower labor cost, which can be partly attributed to the lack of organization of the workers. The ACW in order to counteract this situation has thrown its main organizational resources into this area. Potofsky in referring to the organization campaign in the South stated, "the South is on the march. We are there as citizens concerned with organizing union shops and creating decent living standards for all working men and women. We are not carpet baggers. What we will accomplish will truly benefit the people." He refers to the South as being on the march, which indicates that the benefits of trade unionism are recognized in this area and that the ACW is merely the instrument to achieve these natural objectives of increased standards of living.

Organization furnishes not only economic power but political as well, however political power will be discussed under the topic of political means to achieve the objectives of labor.

Potofsky might appear to be incorrect in his forecast that, "by 1965 we will have thirty eight million workers organized." This figure of course does not refer to the ACW alone, but to all the American labor unions. This statement was made at a very optimistic time due to the merger of the AFL-CIO which occurred in late 1955. It does not appear that this astronomical figure will be reached by 1965, however, the future growth of unions as viewed by Potofsky is clearly evidenced by this statement.

According to Potofsky, organizing is definitely not limited to the United States, but should be conducted on a world wide basis, as was outlined in the chapter dealing with the international objectives of American labor.

One statement appears periodically in the writings and speeches of Potofsky and this is the basic reason for the very existence of the ACW.

Potofsky continually stresses the following, "we still must not forget that organizing the unorganized is still our most important objective." For the ACW, organization is both an end and a means.

2. Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is a technique "consisting of negotiation between a collective body of employees and an individual employer, several employers, or a collective body of employers, for the purpose of coming to an understanding." In the clothing industry the degree of union management co-operation which exists is the backbone of the successful collective bargaining which characterizes the industry. Collective bargaining must be conducted in a spirit which is exemplified by the following, "so long as a union has not won complete acceptance by management, so long as it has cause to fear that management still seeks to destroy it, so long will it lack the strength and security required to make the collective bargaining process a success." The degree of acceptance of the union by management which Potofsky considers to be necessary for true collective bargaining is aptly described in that

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Potofsky realizes that collective bargaining needs even more than cooperation and good faith in order to be completely successful: "collective bargaining can only be effective if it remains free, only in that way can we develop responsible attitudes on the part of both labor and management, attitudes which will not only take into account their own self interest, but the interest of the public as well." The role of government in collective bargaining is considered to be very negligible. Potofsky feels that with the true spirit of trust on the part of both parties, there will be no need for government interference, since the good of the public and the parties involved will always remain paramount. On even more specific terms Potofsky states, "collective bargaining, free of government interference works best for the industry, the worker and the public." From this statement the degree of trust Potofsky places in collective bargaining is clearly evident.

In 1933 the ACW and the Clothing Manufacturers of the United States signed a so-called master agreement, which became a guide for the local unions and companies in their negotiations, from which they may not basically depart from nor conflict with in their individual contracts. This master agreement is renegotiated at the end of every agreement period by the ACW and the Clothing Manufacturers of the United States. However, there is adequate tolerance in the master agreement for the bargaining parties to negotiate a local agreement based on their particular problems.

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7 The Advance, XXXIX, (April 15, 1953), 3.
8 Ibid., 3.
Potofsky has great faith in the collective bargaining process and states, "were it not for the effectiveness of the collective bargaining process, our wage level today would be far lower and the degree of exploitation in American industry far more serious." In this statement Potofsky directly attributes a large part of the economic betterment of the American people to the collective bargaining process.

In 1951 at the dedication of the Philadelphia Health Center of the AGW, Potofsky again revealed the deep trust he has in cooperating with management in bargaining. In his address he stated, "in dedicating this building we pay tribute to cooperation and collective bargaining. It is a living testimonial of sound and constructive progress in industrial and human relations." To him collective bargaining is therefore considered absolutely essential to successful industrial relations since it lies at the very heart of cooperation and mutual trust between unions and managements.

The enlightened labor relations which are exhibited in the clothing industry can be directly attributed to the success of the collective bargaining process.

3. Strikes

Inasmuch as no major strikes have occurred in the men's clothing industry in over thirty years, it would be like fencing with a shadow to discuss the settlement of strikes in this industry.


Potofsky, however, has some very definite concepts regarding strikes. He is very proud of the record of the ACW in this respect and points with pride to the benefits the union has achieved through peaceful means. The ACW by peaceful contract negotiations has been able to secure substantial wage and benefit increases. President Potofsky was able to go before the 1956 ACW Convention and state that in the, "Last ten years there have been five wage increases for our members in our various industries. All these increases have been won peacefully."\(^ {11}\) It is very significant to note that the period Potofsky referred to (1946-1956) was a period when many strikes occurred and industrial unrest was prevalent.

Potofsky, however, does not abhor the strike as a weapon of labor, as can easily be demonstrated by recalling his early days on the picket lines in Chicago and later in New York City. It is very difficult to view his feelings regarding a weapon he does not prefer to use, however, "the right to strike must remain unfettered if collective bargaining is to operate successfully. It is the existence of the strike power which creates the conditions necessary for the give and take which characterize good faith collective bargaining."\(^ {12}\) The language of this statement recalls the advice of Teddy Roosevelt when he promulgated the philosophy of speaking softly, but at the same time carrying a big stick. Potofsky speaks softly but at the same time demands that his big stick, the strike, be available for use if the need arises.

\(^ {11}\) ACW Convention Proceedings, XX, (May 1956), 169.

\(^ {12}\) The Advance, XXXV, (April 1, 1949), 3.
In industries where the enlightened state of industrial peace does not exist, Potofsky justifies the use of the strike as the final weapon used by labor.

During the steel strike in 1948 he issued the following statement, "our members are ready to share their bread with the striking steelworkers on the picket lines, and my General Executive Board has authorized financial support to the steelworkers organization." The offer of financial assistance is going beyond the tacit approval stage of support. For an individual who does not use the strike as a major weapon, it can be seen that should the need arise in other industries, aid will be given and if the need arises in his own industry for a major strike, it will be used.

4. Arbitration

The clothing industry pioneered in the use of arbitration as a means of settling disputes and Potofsky points with pride to the "role the ACW played in establishing firm industrial relations by instituting arbitration as the method of settling differences of opinion between labor and management."

However with the passing of time and the increased cooperation between union and management in this industry the need for arbitration has decreased. In fact the number of arbitration cases has decreased but at the same time there has been "a greater decline in awards than in applications for

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This is due in part to the tendency within the industry to settle disputes by agreement even after they were submitted to the arbitrator. The ACW which was a pioneer in the field of arbitration now draws away from the settlement of disputes in this manner.

Potofsky in his writings and speeches over the ten year period covered does not refer to the settlement of disputes by arbitration, hence it can be seen that the importance of arbitration in this industry is diminishing.

B. Political Means

Potofsky attaches great importance to the role unions play in the political area. It must be remembered that Potofsky was a firm supporter of the American Labor Party, until it was seen that the organization did not possess the depth and appeal to operate successfully on a national level.

To analyze the political means advocated by Potofsky it is necessary to subdivide the topic into three categories, political education, political activity and the third party.

1. Political Education

In order that union members may fully utilize the tremendous political power which they possess through use of the franchise, the author feels it is necessary to educate them as to the importance of voting and to the importance of the issues involved in a political campaign.

Why should union members be politically conscious? This question can be answered by the following, "we have seen in the past twenty years, the close

inter-relationship between social and economic legislation and labor's own economic power and political activity. In this statement the implication is, that when labor uses its power in a manner that resounds in Washington, the legislator pay close attention to the multitude of potential votes united under one banner. However, one of the major drawbacks is the inability of American labor to marshal its vote, due to the political independence of the individual union members. This indicates a very definite need for political education of the union members, since it is in this manner that the union members learn the issues.

In order to show the importance of political education and why the members should and must understand the issues, Potofsky states, "the political situation is very important because it affects our standard of living. We learned from the New Deal the meaning of favorable labor legislation, which gave organized labor a status in the nation for the first time in history." The significance of this statement is that, when labor votes for individuals friendly to labor, the result is favorable labor legislation.

Once the members are motivated to vote, the next hurdle to surmount is the attempt to solidify the voters in a manner most beneficial to labor. The type of individual to be given this support is typified by the following, "elect to Congress men and women dedicated to the principle of an economy of abundance, who believe in labor's intrinsic right to organize and bargain collectively, who believe in the preservation of our natural resources for


all the people, who believe that tax benefits should go in the first instance to the wage earner. We must and we will elect to office men and women who have a program for putting the country back to full production, full employment and prosperity." To elect men and women with the platform described would certainly justify the educational program of the unions.

In the period when the ACW was a member of the CIO, the educational media was the Political Action Committee. Potofsky was and is a firm supporter of PAC and its successor the Committee on Political Education.

Potofsky viewed PAC as, "a non-partisan educational instrumentality that has for its aim the recognition of the acts of Congress and the Senate and the preservation of the New Deal and the education of the American people as to their rights and responsibilities as citizens." PAC was therefore recognized not only as an educational vehicle for union members, but for the American people as a whole. This was a long range and far-reaching attempt on the part of the CIO to enlighten the voter as to the major campaign issues.

Since the AFL-CIO merged, the present educational vehicle is COPE. This organization has a similar purpose as to what PAC had, but the emphasis is placed on the education of the union members. Potofsky feels, through the use of COPE and its reward your friends and punish your enemies philosophy that, "organized labor can make an increasingly important contribution to the security and well being of our nation and to the cause of peace." The

18 The Advance, XL, (June 1, 1954), 22.


20 ACW Convention Proceedings, XX, (May 1956), 177.
political education of the union members is certainly a basic tenet of Potofsky.

2. Political Activity

Political activity within this text encompasses the following areas: registration, voting, financed contributions and active support of a candidate or candidates.

In the field of political activity, which occurs after the education of the members, Potofsky speaks quite candidly. Political activity is considered by Potofsky to be as important as economic activity. In the struggle for the common good the ACW was forced to organize politically in the same manner it organized industrially. "We do not want to battle for the common good with one hand tied," stated Potofsky as he referred to the use of both economic and political means to attain his objectives.

In order that labor can achieve political objectives, Potofsky desires that, "labor must intensify its political activity. Political activity must begin at the grass roots level as well as on a state and national level. Registration and voting are the peoples greatest duties today, because whom they elect to office and the programs they support will very well determine their fate and that of their children forever." The grass roots political activity Potofsky speaks of, necessitates the ringing of doorbells and participating in political activities on a word and precinct level and on a county and state level.


22 The Advance, XXXVII, (Sept. 1, 1951), 1.
The actual type of grass roots political activity that is advocated by Potofsky can be demonstrated by his congratulating the members of his union on their political support for the passage of the 1956 Federal Minimum Wage Law. Potofsky with deep satisfaction and pride stated, "our members responded with whole heart to the legislative campaign. They wrote letters by the thousands. They enlisted support from local political leaders. They visited their Congressmen at home; hundreds of members made the trip to Washington to talk to their representatives. Members testified at Congressional hearings."

To speak and advocate grass roots political activity on the part of the union and then be able to point to the actual accomplishments which the members carried out, demonstrated the reason Potofsky pointed with pride to the passing of the one dollar an hour federal minimum wage law.

Up to the time of Taft Hartley, the ACW contributed to the political campaigns of those it backed for office, but Taft Hartley outlawed the contributing by unions to political campaigns. Potofsky felt exceptionally bitter about the outlawing of political contributions by unions to deserving candidates. He stated, "the latest effort to assure a reactionary majority is to fight against ... workers political contributions." Potofsky was extremely bitter since management groups were not hampered in the same manner by the law. In the future he feels that big business will embark on an orgy of spending on political campaigns, in relation to what business has spent in the past and what unions have spent.


To summarize, the philosophy of Potofsky regarding political activity is basically the reward your friends punish your enemies concept, which has long been American Labor's method of action. Potofsky, however, advocates the grass-roots type of campaigning on the part of the ACW and its sister unions.

3. Third Party

Potofsky was active in the affairs of the American Labor Party, but withdrew his support when it appeared that the organization would not succeed on a national level. Also bear in mind the fact that the liberals were fighting among themselves when a Democratic or Republican liberal and a member of the American Labor Party were in the same political race. The result was that the conservative opposition sometimes triumphed when their defeat would otherwise have been certain had there been but one organization garnering the liberal votes. Potofsky is explicit in this area, as in 1948 when the idea of initiating a new American Labor Party was being suggested. He stated, "a third party to be successful must be based on organized labor and labor in 1948 is definitely not ready for a third party because it will jeopardize its own cause and that of other progressives when it puts up opposition candidates for Congress." 23 It is important to note that in 1948 the third party concept is rejected. This leaves a question as to whether or not should the occasion arise would Potofsky support a labor party on a national level. At a later date the third party issue again arose and Potofsky stated, "it is obvious that we cannot go along with the Republican party and it is just as

obvious we cannot go along with the third party.” At last a definite statement without qualifications appears that indicates a surrendering of the third party concept on his part.

It is significant to note that with the passing of the Taft Hartley Amendment of the National Labor Relations Act, Potofsky attempted to secure relief for the unions by political action through the present two party system, not through the formation of a labor party. This tends to further indicate that the third party concept is being relegated further and further to the back of Potofsky’s mind.

What will the future hold? It is extremely difficult to determine but turn to the year 1956 and it becomes apparent in the following statement that Potofsky again permits the third party concept to permeate his mind. Potofsky stated, “maybe the day will come, when the organized labor movement in this country will see fit to organize a labor party modeled on the British Labour Party. For the present, I must say that it does not appear realistic in this country.”

The founding of a third party in the United States in the eyes of Potofsky must be relegated to the background, barring an unforeseen economic or social upheaval. However, with an economic upheaval of the magnitude of the Great Depression recurring in the future, it is foreseeable that Potofsky might seek a Labor Party as the means to give labor its place in the sun.

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26 The Advance, XXXIV, (Sept. 15, 1948), 11.

27 ACW Convention Proceedings, XX, (May 1956), 222.
CHAPTER IV

THE VIEWS OF POTOFSKY ON THE RELATIONSHIP
OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT TO CRITICAL
AREAS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

In order to completely examine the labor philosophy of Potosky, it is necessary to analyze his views regarding critical areas in Industrial Relations. The analyzing of his views in these areas give a more complete picture of his labor philosophy.

The critical issues to be analyzed are the following: the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the role of government in industrial relations, the role of management in industrial relations, and the civil rights issue.

The cited areas to be analyzed in this chapter are not the only critical areas in industrial relations, but they are the basis upon which a clear understanding of Potosky's labor philosophy can be based.

The author treats of the topics in a systematic manner, whereby there is a proceeding from the most generalized topic, the ICFTU, to the most specific, civil rights.

A. The ICFTU

Potosky, due to the nationality blocs within his union, has had to pay close attention to foreign affairs. The two great nationality blocs within
the ACW are the Jews and the Italians. Potofsky has received awards from the governments of both Israel and Italy due to his efforts in the field of labor organization in the respective countries.

The ICFTU is the main basis upon which Potofsky believes world peace can be maintained. He looks upon the ICFTU in the following manner, "we of the CIO regard the ICFTU as the best hope for peace, democracy and security the world over."¹ He is convinced that the cause of peace is best expounded by the ordinary citizens of the nations of the world, since they bear the brunt of suffering resulting from war. War to Potofsky is the means by which man will destroy himself.

The free trade union movement is the strongest bond and the strongest factor for the preservation of our democratic institutions and our way of life. As stated in the objectives of American labor in the international area, the American unions due to their strong position are the ones on whom the mantle of leadership in the spread of free trade unionism must fall. He is very explicit in this regard when he states, "we who have built powerful labor organizations ask only for the opportunity to help other workers build similar strong labor organizations for themselves."² There appears to be a touch of paternalism in Potofsky's attitude regarding the organization of foreign unions, but there is no indication that the American labor unions are attempting to be the dominating factor.

International Communism is recognized as the greatest threat to our free way of life. What role does Potosky consider the ICFTU should take in the international area? The role of the ICFTU is outlined very clearly by the following, "the trade unions in the free countries of the world acting through the ICFTU will continue to combat communism, strive for higher wages, better working conditions and greater security for the working people. That is why international labor unity is a potent force for peace and democracy."3 The ICFTU in this respect must be likened to the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO is made up of autonomous nationals and internationalists in which the true power resides, with the federation as a figurehead which is given no more authority than the member unions see fit. This is very similar to the ICFTU which is the directing organization for the various national labor groups within the organization.

The ICFTU has certain long range objectives in the opinion of Potosky. He feels, "when we sit together in the ICFTU we sit as brothers united and dedicated to help mankind achieve the aims which have created the trade union movement in the twentieth century."4 The objectives of the ICFTU are of the uplift variety on an international level, to bring the benefits of trade unionism to all nations of the world.

Potosky considers it essential, that in order to preserve the present freedom and economic stability on a world wide basis the assistance of free democratic trade unions is required.


The summation of the purpose of international unionism, in the eyes of Potofsky, is the following, "the free workers of the world are pledged to build a better world and a peaceful world." The means to achieve this ideal is found in one organization—the ICFTU.

B. The Economic System of the US

Potofsky views the present economic system as basic to the American way of life. He has accepted the present economic system. He states, "there is almost nothing within reason that our American economy cannot accomplish if only we work together to develop the resources and the skills of all the people." This is certainly a strong endorsement for the present economic system and a statement with such optimistic tones would tend to indicate the complete acceptance of the economic system. This is true basically, however, there are certain modifications which Potofsky feels should be carried out, but within the present system.

Potofsky is an ardent supporter of a high minimum wage and in support of this he stated, "the proposed increase would help promote the healthy competition which is vital to the free enterprise system, but competition based on substandard wages is not healthy. It threatens not only our standard of living, but our national welfare." Potofsky as evidenced by this statement is a firm disciple of the purchasing power theory. Competition is considered

5Ibid., 9.


vital to capitalism, but laissez-faire capitalism is opposed by Potofsky, since the low income groups would suffer from the effects of such a system. Potofsky believes that a substantial increase in the Minimum Wage Law will expand purchasing power where it is most needed and thus strengthen consumer demand.

In the area of economic stability, Potofsky feels there are certain forces which threaten. He states that, "the steady rise in living costs has made demands for wage increases inevitable. Unbridled profits, the weight of taxes upon those least able to pay them, the lack of economic planning, all threaten our economic stability." In this instance, Potofsky is not advocating serious changes in our economic system, but merely the implementation of certain features which will have a stabilizing effect on the economy.

Potofsky is very adamant in his defense of the economic system from the attacks by the so called prophets of doom who assert, that our economy can only survive if geared to a war economy. He states, "our American system can withstand without severe dislocation or depression a changeover from a defense to a peace economy, should the international situation permit." To make a statement of this extent indicates that Potofsky has the utmost confidence in our economic system. It should be noted that this changeover from a war economy to a peace economy should only be affected if the international situation permits. Here Potofsky is relegating the economic system to a place of secondary importance as compared to international affairs.

8 *ACW Convention Proceedings*, XVIII, (May 1952), 130.

9 *The Advance*, XXXIX, (May 1, 1953), 8.
Although Potofsky accepts our economic system, he also recognizes the shortcomings. He is concerned especially with three major shortcomings which are 1) fluctuations, 2) unemployment, and 3) inflation.

His views regarding sudden downturns in the economy, culminating in serious depression or recession are explicit. The present economic system will have periodic booms followed by slumps, however, it is the function of the government to prevent the downturns from becoming too serious.

There are individuals who subscribe to the theory that violent fluctuations in our economy are inevitable under the free enterprise system. Potofsky, however, has different feelings as evidenced by the following, "we cannot subscribe to the notion that our free way of life must have periodic slumps and wide spread misery and suffering."\(^\text{10}\) If the contrary were true it is conceivable that Potofsky would abandon his position supporting the capitalistic system and turn to a different system to raise and maintain the standards of living of the union members and the nation as a whole.

Unemployment is viewed very gravely by Potofsky, this can in part be attributed to the experiences of the AGW in the clothing industry, which operates on a seasonal basis causing periodic unemployment.

There are many problem areas in our economy however, "the greatest challenge is whether our economy can be so planned that there will be no unemployment in the richest country in the world."\(^\text{11}\) By the term 'no unemplo-

\(^{10}\) The Advance, XLIV, (June 1, 1958), 3.

\(^{11}\) The Advance, XLIV, (May 1, 1958), 3.
ment; it must be understood that what Potofsky is referring to, is that there should be no large scale unemployment of individuals who are ready, willing and able to work.

Although he looks upon the American economy in a respectful manner, he sees that the economy by itself cannot cure the unemployment ills. There must be a strong force to plan for the future so that unemployment is held to a bare minimum. Potofsky feels that the government should assume the task of planning and directing. This he feels is necessary to keep the economy of the nation strong.

The other important problem in our economy is that of inflation. Potofsky vehemently denies that the increases in wages which labor has received are the primary causes of inflation. He feels that, "it is folly to charge labor's so-called unreasonable demands for this situation."12 The situation he refers to is the continued rising consumer price index. In rebuttal to those charging labor with the responsibility for inflation, Potofsky asserts, "if they want the real answer to the inflationary trend they don't have to look any further than the current profit statements of big business."13

Inflation is seen as a menace to all, but the solution to the problem is complicated. Potofsky is not an economist and does not prescribe a cure-all for the inflationary disease. However, he attributes the blame to big business, hence his partial solution is that, "if the banking and business community were interested in curbing inflation, it would have put the brake on rising

prices and not have been so greedy as to pile up additional profits upon
profits already inordinate."

This shows that Potofsky and his union are aware of and seeking to
answer this very serious problem of inflation.

Potofsky, although he feels there are certain problems and deficiencies
in our present economic system feels that the future of our economy is indeed
bright. The following statement indicates the confidence he has in the future,
"we are a rich country, a growing country. Our population is increasing, our
know how, our technological skill, our productivity, are increasing. I have
confidence in our people and in our future."15

C. The Role of Government

In Potofsky's eyes the role that government plays in the field of in-
dustrial relations is indeed great.

Beginning with the New Deal era the scope of governmental activities
has increased tremendously in all facets of life. The same is true for the
role government plays in the field of industrial relations. The New Deal
legislation is looked upon by Potofsky as the perfect example of the manner
in which government should operate.

To fully understand the significant role that government should play,
it is necessary to examine the program that Potofsky proposed. He suggested
government action in the following areas, "tax reduction, improvement in
Social Security, greater unemployment insurance benefits, and increase in

and extension of the federal minimum wage, reduction in the standard work week, greater expenditures for schools, for health facilities, more housing and the clearing up of slums and blighted areas. In order to have governmental action in the slated areas it is evident that the scope of governmental responsibilities is indeed great.

In the area of unemployment, Potofsky is adamant in his proposals as to the role that government should play in alleviating this situation. During the recession in 1954, Potofsky was extremely critical of the role government played in the situation. He criticized the administration by stating, "although the signs were clear and there was time to halt the decline, the present administration in Washington did practically nothing to meet these threats to our economy." Here again the role of government is stressed in rather forceful terms. Potofsky proposes solutions to the problem of unemployment, but he feels the government is the organization having ultimate responsibility in the area. The importance here is not what made up the program. The importance is who was ultimately responsible and who could relieve the situation.

In the area of unemployment benefits he states, "real changes in unemployment compensation must come from federal action, but all we get is words. How different from the New Deal and Fair Deal Days." Here again criticism is leveled at the so-called do nothing policies of the government due to its failure to act to relieve unemployment.

16 *The Advance*, XLIV, (June 1, 1958), 3.
17 *The Advance*, XL, (June 1, 1954), 20.
18 Ibid., 40.
In addition to unemployment compensation benefits, Potofsky feels the federal government should take steps to reduce the number of unemployed. There are many courses of action available, that will reduce unemployment, but paramount among them are the letting of government contracts for services and projects. In this area he feels, "contracts should be awarded to fill the valleys of underproduction and underemployment."¹⁹ The government in this instance is to use the pump priming technique to assist the economy through a difficult period.

Potofsky, however, is not looking for government hand outs, instead, "all we are asking is a fair distribution of the work to be done."²⁰ In this particular instance he can be seen as an individual who does no look upon government as being paternalistic, but instead sees its functions being to help people to help themselves.

For the future the main function of government as seen by Potofsky is to design and enact legislation that will provide medical care for those who are unable to afford it. Potofsky stated, "our nation can afford good medical care for every one of its citizens if the government will take the necessary steps to insure it."²¹ Here the basis is laid for a government sponsored national medical care program. But how should this be accomplished? The method he advocates is that, "Congress will enact health program on the same

¹⁹ACW Convention Proceedings, XVIII, (May 1956), 129.
²⁰The Advance, XXXVIII, (March 15, 1952), 4.
basis as our social security program."22 Today the pending Forard bill appears as a partial fulfillment of Potofsky's wishes.

It is extremely interesting to view Potofsky's feelings in regard to government supervision of union welfare funds. Potofsky is such a believer in government control that he stated, "we will support such legislation that we will protect the funds for the security of the union members."23 He is willing to allow the government to use its legislative power in arriving at a means of protecting the health, welfare and pension plan funds of unions.

The next topic to be examined is the area where Potofsky considers government interference is unwarranted. He feels the role of government is very broad, however there is one specific area in which Potofsky feels that the government role is limited and this is in collective bargaining. This topic was adequately surveyed in an earlier chapter, but mention of this fact was again repeated to demonstrate that there is at least one area in which Potofsky feels government should not participate.

Potofsky considers the Taft Hartley Amendment an infringement upon the traditional rights of American labor. This law he states, "interferes with free collective bargaining by imposing technical and rigid restrictions upon bargaining with respect to health and welfare funds and pensions."24 Taft Hartley is therefore an infringement upon collective bargaining the one area of industrial relations, which Potofsky feels should be kept free from

government interference. In addition Taft Hartley destroys the impressive gains American labor has won and "returns us to the law of the jungle."25 This area appears to be the only area cited by Potofsky that government intervention is definitely not wanted.

Potofsky lays emphasis upon the role the Supreme Court has played in the industrial relations area. He views it as a stabilizing influence upon the nation. He attributes some of the progress labor has made to the role the Court has played. "The gains that we in labor have achieved during the past two decades were possible because of the new political and economic climate, inspired partly by the decisions of the Supreme Court."26 The new role the Supreme Court has played according to Potofsky, is certainly different from the conservative and reactionary decisions of the Court in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

To summarize the role of government in industrial relations as viewed by Potofsky, the author has chosen to review Potofsky's views on the necessary characteristics and traits the ideal Congressman should possess. The man is Oscar E. Borg (D. N.Y.) and the occasion was the presentation of the Sidney Hillman Award in 1954. Potofsky at the time stated, "he has fought for civil rights, fair employment practices, opposed discrimination, fought for an adequate housing program, and federal aid to education. He has opposed the Taft Hartley, he is a fearless crusader for the common man and moved to effect

D. The Role of Management

The role of management in the field of industrial relations as viewed by Potofsky consists of cooperation with the unions for the mutual betterment of employers and employees. The cooperation he refers to goes beyond a mere token of cooperation. It implies the concept of trust and understanding on both sides.

Management functions for the purpose of providing profit to stockholders or individual owners. Potofsky acknowledges this fact, but the amount of profit is of vital concern to him. He stated, "the industry has learned that a fair share of its profit must be distributed to its workers if it is to be assured maximum efficiency of production and a market for its goods." This fair share is not defined, but from his previously stated objectives, it must consist of an amount sufficient to provide a modest standard of living and allow the union member to share in the cultural and educational aspect of the community as a first class citizen. During the steel strike in 1948, Potofsky stated, "industry has an obligation to the workers who produce the steel and make it possible for them to make their huge profits." To summarize Potofsky's views, this obligation goes beyond mere wage increases, it includes pensions, insurance, vacations and job security. The workers are not

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to be treated as machines, to be used while they are productive and then discarded. They must be respected and treated as human beings and as associates in the enterprise.

Potofsky feels that true cooperation between unions and management cannot be affected until, "the acceptance by the employers of collective bargaining as normal, desirable as a permanent feature of their relationship with labor." According to Potofsky management must accept the union as a permanent force and deal with it in this fashion, for the good of both. An example of harmonious relations is found in the Clothing Industry which was formerly a strike torn industry, but with the acceptance by management of the union, industrial peace has replaced strikes and violence. When and only when management accepts the union then and only then can the two work jointly for the good of the nation.

There are many firms, however, which resent the union and what it stands for. Potofsky has a criterion for judging the degree of acceptance by management of a union and this is stated, "it has been our experience that opposition to the union shop and the check off system is the last refuge of an employer who has not yet reconciled himself to a permanent and continuous ... relationship with the union." According to this statement this last refuge must be overcome before the true relationship of trust and cooperation can be achieved. Management cannot look upon the union as a temporary factor to be contended with until the opportunity avails itself whereby the union can be

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30 *The Advance*, XXXIII, (March 1, 1947), 3.

crushed. Instead the idea that the union is a permanent factor and must be treated as such, must be the attitude management must adopt.

Potofsky considers the relationship between the ACW and the Clothing Manufacturers Association of the United States to be an example to other industries. He stated, "if the steel industry had taken a leaf from the book of the Clothing industry, there would have been no need for seizures of the plant by the government." Potofsky had reference here to the seizure of the steel mills by President Truman in 1951. Potofsky considers that the seizure could have been averted had the steel industry negotiated with the steelworkers in a true spirit of collective bargaining.

There is one specific problem area in which Potofsky feels management has a definite responsibility. The problem is the so-called run-away plant, whereby a manufacturer will close a plant in one area and open in a different locality due to a lower labor cost and the lack of unionization. This practice leads to a high degree of unemployment in the area vacated by the industry. Potofsky feels that management has a definite responsibility to both the employees and the community to alleviate the situation by either remaining in business or curtailing operations piecemeal.

On the whole Potofsky supports the role management has played in the clothing industry. This can be seen when he stated, "the employers in our industry have joined hands with the union." This has resulted in the

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32 ACW Convention Proceedings, XVIII, (May 1952), 130.

33 The Advance, XLIV, (June 1, 1958), 12.

34 CIO News, XVIII, (Feb. 21, 1955), 5.
present state of successful labor relations which prevail in this industry.

E. Civil Rights

In the area of Civil Rights Potofsky is an outspoken advocate of equal opportunity for all regardless of race or religion. For the purpose of this section the term civil rights will be limited to the discrimination against Negroes and Potofsky's views regarding this subject.

In the first place Potofsky views discrimination against Negroes as a cancer eating the vitals of our democracy and states, "there can be no room in a democracy for superior and inferior classes of people." Potofsky views the economic discrimination and lack of opportunity in our industrial system as barbarous forms of discrimination against the Negro.

Acts of violence against Negroes according to Potofsky, "constitute a duplicate of Nazi hooliganism and must be curbed by prompt energetic federal intervention." The acts of violence he refers to are aimed specifically at lynchings. The federal government is the only entity with the power and authority to counteract these acts of violence and hence must be the one to act.

Potofsky urges that the fight against discrimination be continued, "until discrimination in all its forms is completely abolished, we have an obligation to re-dedicate ourselves to a continuance of the fight ... I am convinced that our efforts will be crowned with success." Potofsky's


optimism regarding the future demise of discrimination is evident. However, he sees a troubled path to reach this objective.

Potofsky considers that the labor movement has an obligation to the Negroes and the nation as a whole to help eradicate discrimination. He stated, "it has been our joint mission to obtain general acceptance of the Negro within the economic fabric of our lives, as an equal, to create job opportunities for him, to upgrade his skills and to raise steadily his living standards." To dedicate the labor movement to a task of this enormity shows the emphasis which Potofsky places upon the subject, for to him discrimination should not exist within a democracy.

The main approach to be used by labor in its campaign to erase prejudice from the minds of the members is to, "assume the task of educating its members, eradicating prejudice from its ranks." Potofsky knows that prejudice and discrimination exist in certain unions, however, the ACW is one union in which they do not exist. This in part can be attributed to the union's educational campaign and also the feeling of solidarity which exists in the ACW.

The eradication of discrimination is an objective for which the nation "should not rest until we get absolute freedom, unabridged freedom and dequality of opportunity for all races and creeds in this country and abroad."

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37Ibid., 5.


Discrimination in the opinion of the author is not peculiar to the American scene, however, before attempting to reform the world, it is a good idea to look in our back yard and tidy this before grandiose schemes are initiated.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to evaluate and critically analyze the labor philosophy of Jacob S. Potofsky as viewed subjectively by the author.

All the facets of Potofsky's life which make up his labor philosophy were not examined due to the impossibility of doing so, however, the basic tenets and beliefs have been examined in a systematic manner. And it is thought that the factors examined will portray a true picture of Potofsky's views.

Potofsky is a true liberal and arch enemy of conservatism. His attitudes on the civil rights issue, the role of government and the role of management indicate this fact.

The philosophy of Potofsky in the sphere of industrial relations does not appear to be an individual undertaking in the true sense of the word. He appears to echo not only the thoughts but even the words of Sidney Hillman, as he constantly quotes Hillman and states, this is what Hillman would do if he were here. The ideas of Hillman are considered to be infallible by Potofsky, who does not deviate from these concepts. The only new idea that the author could find and attribute to Potofsky as an individual was the establishment of the Sidney Hillman Foundation. The remainder of Potofsky's
basic tenets appear to be the simple carrying out and implementing of the wishes of Hillman. This is not a criticism of Potosky's philosophy but simply an evaluation of the men's individual innovations and contribution to the area of industrial relations.

Hence in the opinion of the author the basic tenets of Potosky are simply the teachings of Sidney Hillman being put into present day use with suitable adjustments tailored to the present day situations.

In order to critically evaluate Potosky's philosophy it will be necessary to examine each of the subjects treated in this work on an individual basis.

In Potosky's eyes the objectives of the ACW are not true long range objectives, but merely the utilization of the resources and organization of the union to be but one of the bases upon which the American labor movement will expand. Potosky does not envision the entrance of the ACW into any industries other than the needle trades. Jurisdiction of the union and of its counterparts is respected highly by Potosky. This is in direct opposition to men like John L. Lewis and James Hoffa who organized wherever the opportunity presented itself. Hence, the ACW will never become a union with a large membership such as the Teamsters. Potosky states the organizing of the unorganized is the prime mission, but it is evident that this must be qualified to read that the unorganized within the jurisdiction of the international must be organized if it is good for the labor movement as a whole.

In the area of the national objectives of American labor movement, Potosky views the purpose of the union movement to be an uplift type of unionism, with the resultant elevating of the individual member's social,
economic, educational and cultural status. This is a very idealistic view for Potofsky to take since the average union member appears interested in the bread and butter type of unionism. Potofsky holds views similar to Reuther in this respect, however, Potofsky’s analysis is not as penetrating or far reaching as Reuther’s. Potofsky believes in the concept, what is good for labor is good for America as a whole. This is because he envisions organized labor as the protector and spokesman for the man in the street.

Potofsky is respected as an unimpeachable individual and his union is conducted in a scrupulously honest manner. There have never been attacks by even the arch conservatives upon the integrity of Potofsky and the ACW. This is a tribute to the man and the organization he leads.

The international objectives of American labor as viewed by Potofsky are very idealistic. He envisions in an idealistic manner that American labor will serve as a leader in the organization of labor unions throughout the world. American labor has not shown a keen desire backed up by actions to accomplish this purpose.

At this time it appears that American labor does not possess the maturity to look upon this task as its responsibility. In the future with a continued growth of maturity American labor leaders might realize this responsibility and assume it, but at the present it appears Potofsky overestimates the attitudes of the labor leaders in this respect.

Potofsky views organization as the means whereby labor can assert its power and achieve its place in the sun. Potofsky as a leader of a large union cannot dedicate himself to organization exclusively, however, Potofsky considers the organizing of the unorganized as the primary task of the ACW.
In the area of collective bargaining, Potofsky demonstrates a great deal of understanding. He considers collective bargaining as the highest degree of cooperation and mutual trust and understanding between unions and management. The degree of trust he places in collective bargaining is tremendous. If all industries would engage in collective bargaining with the cooperation and trust which Potofsky believes should be shared by both parties, then in the opinion of the author there would be industrial peace in the United States. In addition, the role of the government would decrease appreciably due to both parties having the good of the nation as a whole, paramount in their minds.

This is a very excellent suggestion on Potofsky's part, but it must be remembered that industrial relations is basically human relations and in any area dealing specifically with people there is bound to be greed, avarice and other vices displayed due to human nature being what it is.

Potofsky looks upon strikes as the ultimate weapon to be used by labor if and only if collective bargaining is not successful. However, there is one other area in which Potofsky justifies strikes and this is in the organization of plants. His attitudes regarding strikes reflect a maturity reflected in few contemporary labor leaders. Potofsky is able to maintain his position regarding strikes because of the cedence he has in good faith collective bargaining. It is self evident that when union and management accept each other as Potofsky desires, then the resorting to violence is seen as a rather slim possibility in this industry.

The topic of arbitration is not discussed to any degree in Potofsky's writings and speeches. He favors arbitration as a means of averting strikes,
but no substantiating arguments are proposed either pro or con concerning this method of settling disputes. This is due in part to the growing decline of the use of arbitration in the clothing industry.

In the area of political means to be used by unions in obtaining their objectives, Potofsky devotes much attention. His concepts regarding participation in politics range from political education of the members to partisan political activity. He is an advocate of the grass roots type of political activity to get the people out to vote and to leave their Congressional representatives their feelings on vital issues.

Potofsky is dogmatic according to labor standards of the idea of back your friends and defeat your enemies at the polls. However Potofsky has a definite tendency to look to the future when an American Labor Party might be formed. Potofsky has never completely abandoned his contentions regarding a third party. Potofsky should have learned his lesson in his dealings with the ill-fated American Labor Party but apparently he still relishes the idea of a third party. Barring unforeseen economic upheaval the author disagrees with this concept of Potofsky due to the traditional two party system, the relative captivity of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party by labor, and the inability of American Labor to have the individual union members vote primarily as union members and not as Republicans or Democrats.

Potofsky considers the ICFTU to be the main weapon used by labor in the international struggle against Communism. Communism to Potofsky is the greatest threat to world peace and our democratic system. Potofsky in this specific area demonstrates more understanding and awareness of international relations than most labor leaders of comparable positions. Potofsky may be short-
sighted in his views regarding the ultimate objectives of the ACW and the American labor movement but his views on the international sphere appear to the author to be prophetic. Free labor with its resultant increased standards of living for people throughout the world appears to be the best demonstration of how democracy can eradicate human misery and suffering, through the leadership of labor. Labor, if it continues to organize on an international level, could very well become the bond of brotherhood and strength for the people of the world, as envisioned by Potofsky.

Potofsky views our present economic system as having an unlimited potential, however, there are some improvements that he would like to be effected, among them a higher minimum wage, lower unemployment and the halting of inflation. Potofsky is no economist, but he has an adequate knowledge of economics to realize that the problems which exist are very difficult to overcome but are not unsurmountable. The changes he advocates are the changes that would benefit not only his vested interest, but the people as a whole. Potofsky must be classified as a humanitarian with a deep sense of social justice and charity.

He considers the government to have ultimate responsibility in promoting the general welfare and maintaining an adequate standard of living for the citizens. Potofsky's concept regarding government is that the government should help people to help themselves. This would indicate he is not in favor of the welfare state, but at the same time he advocates a national health insurance program conducted by the government. His views in this respect are quite similar to the views of Leo XIII as expressed in Rerum Novarum. Government exists for the benefit of the people and it must function in this manner if it does not government is not fulfilling its duty.
Managements' role in industrial relation to Potofsky is to treat the union as a partner in the enterprise since it represents the human beings who enable management to make a profit. The dignity of the human being is held in high esteem by Potofsky. He does not delve deeply into the role management should play except to insist that management should deal with unions in a state of deep trust and understanding. Potofsky offers no solutions for the present conflict between union and management, this can be attributed to the high degree of understanding which exists in the clothing industry between the AGW and management.

In the area of civil rights Potofsky assumes the strongest position, that the author has seen him take. Potofsky is opposed to discrimination in all its forms and considers it to have evil effects socially, politically and economically. His attitude on discrimination should be adopted universally not only by American labor but by the nation as a whole.

It is interesting to note that Potofsky in his writings over the past ten years has made no reference to the problem of technological change in industry. This is not due to the short-sightedness of Potofsky but to the acceptance by the clothing unions of technological changes. This acceptance is contingent upon one conditions however, that the changes must not—at least in the long run—impair employment and earning capacity of the union members.

In summation, it can be stated that Potofsky is the living embodiment of the philosophy of Sidney Hillman.

Potofsky does not possess the insight into economic and political problems which Bauther possesses, nor the fierce driving personality of McDonald, nor the intellectual capacity of Carey, but he does personify the incorruptible
labor leader who continually strives for the betterment of his union and the labor movement as a whole. Potosky is not an outstanding leader, but instead typifies the leader who does a creditable job—not outstanding nor deficient, but above average.

Potosky does not possess all the outstanding traits of leadership to be a great leader, but he does lead the union forward in its task of organizing the unorganized. Sidney Hillman would be proud to see his philosophy carried out by his protégé—Jacob S. Potosky.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES


II. SECONDARY SOURCES


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Donald Michael Kilourie has been read and approved by three members of the faculty of the Institute of Social and Industrial Relations.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social and Industrial Relations.

June 1, 1960

Date

Signature of Advisor