

## Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare



# Lefties and laborites

**MICHAEL MUNK'S** book about Rose City radicals and their right-wing antagonists includes some widely-known people who spent time tilling Portland's grass-roots. The just-published book, a decade in the researching and writing, went on sale this week.

"The Portland Red Guide: Sites & Stories from Our Radical Past" reached the shelves of The Great Northwest Bookstore on May 1 — May Day. The store's corner, 3314 SW First Ave., at Gibbs St., was the scene of a May Day evening program featuring comments by Munk and music by General Strike, a band made up of members and retirees of various unions who perform at strike rallies and other union events.



**MICHAEL MUNK**

Portland State University's Ooligan Press published the book. The illustrated book runs to 256 pages and sells for \$16.95. Author Munk is a retired political science professor who returned to Portland after a career on the faculty at New Jersey's Rutgers University. Upon his graduation from Portland's Lincoln High School in 1952, Munk won a scholarship from the Oregon State Federation of Labor, which later became the Oregon AFL-CIO. He attended Reed College in Southeast Portland, where his father, Dr. Frank

Munk, was a faculty member. Mike served in the U.S. Army before beginning his career in the East.

**OF JOE HILL**, who became known worldwide as a labor troubadour and martyr, Munk's book reported: "In late 1910, the Wobbly organizer and songwriter Joe Hill wrote a letter to The Industrial Worker, the IWW newspaper, identifying himself as a member of the Portland Local, signing the first documented use of his name ... which would later become known throughout the world. He mentioned traveling through Pendleton, and denounced Portland police attacks on Wobblies and other workers in the Portland area. Hill rose in the IWW organization and traveled widely, organizing workers under the IWW banner, writing political songs and satirical poems, and making speeches until he was murdered by the State of Utah in 1915. One of his best-known songs, 'The Preacher and the Slave,' was first introduced in Portland shortly after his letter was published in 1910."

Munk's research in putting Hill in Portland coincides with much earlier research by Chicago labor historian William Adelman, who wrote that Hill joined the Industrial Workers of the World in Portland in 1910. Other accounts of Hill's life claim that he joined the IWW in 1910 in the waterfront town of San Pedro, near Los Angeles. This column has long ago said Hill might have joined in both places, that he could have lost his San Pedro membership card in his boxcar travels and joined again in Portland to get a new card. He probably was in the audience in Portland on Oct. 23, 1910 when Wobbly co-founder Eugene Victor Debs of Indiana made a stirring two-hour speech. Before using the Joe Hill name, the Wobbly organizer was known as Joseph Hillstrom, but he was born in Sweden as Joel Hagglund in 1879. Hillstrom and Hill were names he used to thwart employer blacklists of the militant IWW's members.

**ANOTHER NAME** in Munk's book, U.S. Army Colonel Charles Erskine Scott Wood, better known as C.E.S. Wood, bears mentioning now because he also probably was in the Portland audience to hear Debs speak. A multi-faceted man, Wood was a soldier, lawyer, poet, artist and writer.

**ALTHOUGH A LEADER** in Portland's civic scene, Wood also had a radical side. He lawyered for the Wobblies and other unions and was a lawyer and occasional editorial writer for this newspaper, the Labor Press, back in the days when it was the Portland Labor Press and later the Oregon Labor Press. It became the Northwest Labor Press two decades ago.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, to whom Joe Hill dedicated "The Rebel Girl," written

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# Freightliner cutbacks have ripple effects at several local manufacturing suppliers

With Freightliner shifting truck production to Mexico, the company's workers aren't the only ones affected.

In Saltillo, Mexico, where Freightliner is spending \$300 million to build a new truck plant, the company expects to hire 1,600 workers. Companies that supply Freightliner are also putting \$125 million of new investment into Saltillo, and it's expected 1,100 workers will be employed indirectly when production begins in 2009.

On this side of the border, when Freightliner sent 802 Portland union workers packing March 30, hundreds of workers at other companies also felt the sting.

Consolidated Metco, Inc., which supplies aluminum castings used in truck hubs, laid off 24 members of Machinists Lodge 1432 at its North Portland plant — about two-fifths of its workforce there. Late last year the company also laid off 17 union members at its Clackamas, Oregon, plant, which makes aluminum die cast products.

Auto Truck Transport, which ships

finished trucks, laid off about 50 Machinist Lodge 63 -represented drivers and shop crew simultaneous to the Freightliner layoffs at Swan Island. About 75 workers remain.

Molded Fiber Glass, a 28-employee nonunion Stevenson, Wash., manufacturer, made hoods and roof caps for Freightliner sleeper cabs. Company officials wouldn't comment on the lost business, but the Daily Columbian reported that it depended on Freightliner for a large share of its sales.

Other affected nonunion businesses include Trim Systems, a subsidiary of Commercial Vehicle Group, which makes upholstery and plastic trim at a Vancouver, Washington facility; and WW Metal Fab in Milwaukie, Oregon, which makes bumpers and grilles and zinc phosphate coatings for Freightliner military vehicles. WW bought its machines from Freightliner when the truck maker closed its parts plant.

Several local Freightliner suppliers may weather the lost business. Non-union Paramount Mattress Company in Tualatin, Oregon, made mattresses for the Freightliner sleeper cabs.

Though its business with Freightliner will drop by 60 percent, company president Nels Lewis said they haven't had to lay off any employees because they saw it coming and diversified with other business in the last two years. Service Steel, which makes parts for Freightliner, also said it won't be negatively impacted by the shift in production, because it will ship the parts it makes to Mexico.

The ripple effect also extends to companies outside manufacturing. The 7-11, Subway and McDonalds down the street from the Swan Island plant saw a drop in sales. The vending machine supplier at the company cafeteria, who works on commission, lost business, as did the food carts that set up outside the plant gate. Kaiser Permanente, Cigna and Blue Cross, which provided health coverage, will lose business.

While it may be impossible to quantify, the ripples are real.

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