

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

## 120th ANNIVERSARY LABOR DAY Special Edition

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# Labor Press celebrates 120th Anniversary

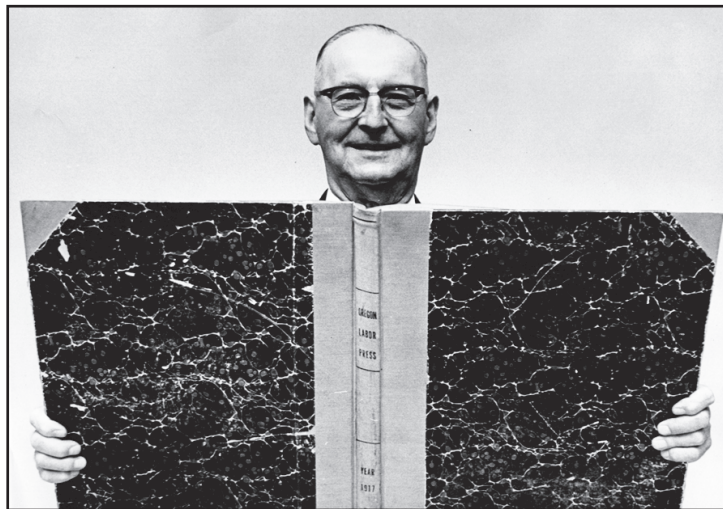
Portland unions in 1900 started the Labor Press because of the lack of coverage of labor activities by the commercial press. The Portland Federated Trades Assembly, the city's labor council of that era, announced in the new newspaper—the Portland Labor Press—that “the trade unions of this city have organized the Portland Labor Press Publishing Association ... in order to educate the wage-workers upon the various phases of the modern labor movement, as well as to strengthen, protect, and promote their interests. Its object is to publish a weekly paper ... and to give to the wage-workers, as well as the general public of this city and state, reliable information concerning the local as well as international labor movement.”

Today—two decades into its second century—the Labor Press pursues those same objectives.

The Labor Press printed weekly for its first 81 years. In 1915 the newspaper's name was changed to Oregon Labor Press at the request of the Oregon State Federation of Labor. It was forced to go to twice-a-month frequency in 1982 to cope with a doubling of postage rates. In 1986 the logo was given the transitional name of Oregon/Washington Labor Press, and a year after that came the changeover to Northwest Labor Press—to reflect the newspaper's role as the only surviving provider of general labor news in the Pacific Northwest. It continues to publish semi-monthly on the first and third Fridays.

In the early days, Labor Press circulation hovered around 10,000. By age 50 it had broadened its reach to 25,000 households, with circulation peaking in 1975 at 69,000. Average circulation today is 55,000, although some issues (such as this anniversary edition) go to more than 70,000 households because of specialized local union newsletters that are attached to the newspaper. Articles are also published on line at [nwlaborpess.org](http://nwlaborpess.org).

Throughout its lifetime, the La-



Otto R. Hartwig, president of the Oregon Federation of Labor from 1916 to 1924, looks at the 1917 bound volume of the Labor Press.



Zoe Wilson, chair of the Portland women's division of Labor's League for Political Education, works a dial phone while reading her Labor Press in 1955.

bor Press has been delivered by the all-union United States Postal Service as Second Class or periodical (time certain) mail.

Since its founding, the Labor Press has changed editors 13 times, but has had only five editors since 1914.

The first editor was H.B. Metcalf, who held the job just two years. His union affiliation isn't known. Printer H.G. Kundret of Multnomah Typographical Union No. 58 came next. He left after three years because he'd been elected secretary-treasurer of the Oregon State Federation of Labor, which had been formed in 1902. Another printer, R.A. Harris, followed in the editor's chair, but his

occupancy was short-lived because he supported Democrat William Jennings Bryan for president in 1908 in opposition to the labor council's choice—Republican William Howard Taft, who won.

Then came H. J. Parkison, a lawyer-carpenter who'd moved to Portland from California in 1905. He practiced law from an office in the Labor Temple and also was business manager of the Labor Press while Harris was editor. Parkison belonged to Carpenters Local 808, which later lost its identity in mergers. Parkison once disguised himself as a hobo and succeeded in getting himself arrested for vagrancy in order to get

an account of the conditions in the city jail. After three years as editor, Parkison left the paper for other pursuits.

Clarence Mortimer Rynerson, another printer-editor member of Typographical No. 58, succeeded Parkison early in 1911, but ill health caused him to leave after only three months. However, he was to be heard from later.

William A. Marshall, another printer, was the next editor. It was common in bygone decades for printers to also possess editorial skills. In fact, the International Typographical Union claimed organizing jurisdiction nationwide as being the logical union to represent the staffs of labor newspapers.

Editor Marshall was given the appellation “godfather of the state's workmens' compensation law” in recognition of his leadership in the initiative petition campaign that led to a ballot measure, approved by voters, establishing an insurance system to provide financial benefits to injured workers and to the dependents of workers killed on the job. In 1912, Gov. Oswald West, known for saving Oregon's ocean beaches for the public, appointed Marshall to the first State Industrial Accident Commission to administer the new workers' compensation insurance system.

Another printer, Arthur Lawrence, became interim editor in 1912 while doubling as secretary pro tem of the Portland Central Labor Council. He also represented the printing trades unions on the Labor Press board of directors. Lawrence ran the paper briefly until A.H. Harris was appointed Marshall's successor. There is no indication that he was related to the earlier editor with the same last name. But Harris, a printer-editor, moved on in 1914 after only a two-year stint.

It was commonplace for earlier generations of printers, reporters and editors to move from city to city, working on one newspaper after another, as though they regarded life as one long job hunt.

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## Unions blast USPS changes

Trump's newly appointed postmaster is removing sorting machines and slowing the mail

By Mark Gruenberg

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI)—The National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) has filed a national grievance against Postmaster General Louis DeJoy. DeJoy became postmaster general June 15 and promptly fired or reassigned two dozen top post office executives and imposed an overtime ban that slows the mail down. Since then, USPS has been removing mail sorting machines from facilities around the country without any official explanation or reason given.

DeJoy is a prominent supporter of President Trump who has given almost \$1 million to

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## Labor Day union picnics canceled

This year's Labor Day picnics in Oregon and Southwest Washington have been canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic concerns. Large gatherings are banned by governors orders until there's a reliable treatment or vaccine for the coronavirus.

It will be the first time since 1985 that Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC) hasn't held a picnic on Labor Day. NOLC hosts one of the largest Labor Day events west of the Mississippi at Oaks Park in Southeast Portland, attracting 18,000 people.

Picnics traditionally have also been hosted by Lane County, Central Oregon, Southern Oregon, and Marion-Polk-Yamhill labor chapters; all are cancelled.

Southwest Washington and Cowlitz-Wahkiakum central labor councils also canceled their joint picnic at Haydu Park in Kalama. Last year was their inaugural event.