Rail Workers United

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The Rank & File in Action!

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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Rail Workers’ Group Opposes Sale of Cincinnati Southern to Private Rail Giant NS

Sale would mean the end of the nation's only municipally owned railroad

Railroad Workers United opposes the sale of the Cincinnati Southern, the only municipally owned - and one of the nation's few publicly held pieces of rail infrastructure - to the Class One rail giant Norfolk Southern. The group is urging all citizens of Cincinnati who are eligible voters to vote NO in the referendum to be held in November.

On July 13th, the railway’s Board of Directors voted to place the proposed sale on the ballot this Fall. Per the railroad's bylaws, the citizens of the City will get the final say. Should they approve the plan, the nation's only municipally owned interstate rail line - from Cincinnati to Chattanooga - would then be purchased for a paltry $1.62 billion by the private Class One rail carrier.

According to RWU General Secretary Jason Doering, "Given the profiteering and irresponsibility of the Class One rail carriers in recent decades, the citizens of Cincinnati would do well to take this vote seriously. RWU urges the people of the Queen City to keep their rail infrastructure in public hands, and to vote NO on November 7th." In June, RWU adopted a Resolution in Support of Continued Public Ownership of the Cincinnati Southern Railway.

Emily Spring, a Cincinnati resident, local activist and community organizer believes that, "Selling the CSR to Norfolk Southern would not only hurt the railroad's workers and surrounding communities - neighborhoods historically affected by unfair economic and political practices - it would give the power that we have as Cincinnatians to yet another billionaire corporation that continues to put profits over people. I, along with others in my community, am prepared to block this sale and fight to keep our railroad in the hands of Cincinnatians." According to Spring, "For Cincinnati, for our environment, for rail workers, and for our communities, it's time to Derail this Sale!"
The large rail systems in the United States - which includes Norfolk Southern and five others - have become more and more concentrated in recent decades, while running roughshod over rail workers, passengers, shippers and communities along their routes. "In recent years shippers have complained about the decline in freight service prompting federal Surface and Transportation Board hearings," according to locomotive engineer and RWU Co-Chair Ross Grooters. "Passenger and commuter service has likewise suffered while trackside communities like East Palestine Ohio have felt firsthand the dangerous cutbacks in rail employment and rail safety."

Yet, while these massive corporations moved 21% less freight last year than they did collectively in 2006, their profits and stock prices reached all-time highs last year. "The rail industry is basically a monopoly, and has come to serve one dictate - that of Wall Street," according to RWU Steering Committee member Paul Lindsey. "The vast majority of Class One income has gone to stock buybacks, not expansion and development."

Because of these and other failures of the rail industry, Railroad Workers United is pushing a Campaign in Support of Public Ownership of the Railroads. Matt Weaver, Maintenance-of-Way Worker and RWU Steering Committee member, notes that, "The rail industry has robbed the American people blind for 150 years now. Millions of acres of land and massive subsidies were given to the "Robber Barons" of old. Today's rail industry is the same, indifferent to the needs and concerns of their own workers and customers, let alone the nation. The citizens of Cincinnati would be wise to hold onto their railroad infrastructure as their forefathers understood the perils of private rail ownership. They would not be well served by this sale."

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