

East Palestine, Ohio and the Oligarchy

A freight train derailment brought environmental catastrophe to a small Ohio town. While the circumstances are somewhat unique, events followed a predictable pattern in a country run by and for the ruling class.

By [Margaret Kimberley](#)

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The U.S. is an oligarchy. Stating this fact explains events that may seem mysterious if this simple truth is not spelled out. The ruling class are fully in control and ensure that their needs are met. They disregard the public good and any claims of democracy are easily exposed as a cruel hoax. Americans have no representation in congress or the white house and the corporate media are also part of the oligarchic class. They expose nothing that their partners in crime want to hide. Governmental action and inaction in the wake of a freight train derailment exemplify all of these dynamics.

On February 3, 2023 a 150-car Norfolk Southern freight train derailed in East Palestine, Ohio near the Pennsylvania border. Twenty of those cars were carrying [chemicals](#) such as vinyl chloride, butyl acrylate, ethylene glycol, isobutylene, and ethylhexyl acrylate. One doesn't need to be a scientist to figure out that none of these should be in the air or water.

Despite photographic and video evidence of an environmental catastrophe, the accident initially received little media attention. Nothing is covered unless the Biden administration wants it to be and East Palestine didn't make the cut when there was war propaganda about Ukraine to stir up. In addition, Biden had already made clear that the railroads are in the class of corporate untouchables who are to be placated. They are among those who were promised that "nothing would fundamentally change" and he kept his promise to them by giving the derailment little attention. However he did give these corporations all the attention they demanded.

When [railroad unions](#) rejected a contract that didn't include paid sick leave provisions the Biden administration forbade them to strike. There was a phony show among "progressives" about having made a good deal but they were lying. Barack Obama excluded the railroads from a requirement that federal contractors provide paid sick leave. Biden could have issued an executive order changing that policy. But he had no intention of doing anything that

might upset the oligarchs, and the Democratic Party succeeded in presenting a false narrative.

Pete Buttigieg is Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT), and is responsible for overseeing railroad safety. But he has made it clear that he follows his boss's dictate to change nothing that would upset their oligarchic bosses.

As DOT Secretary, Buttigieg has the ability to regulate corporations such as airlines in regard to their public service. When a series of Southwest airlines snafus left thousands of passengers stranded during the holiday season, Buttigieg made a great show of saying his hands were tied. Of course he is the one person who can direct the airlines or levy large fines. Buttigieg was a no-show when the people needed him to act.

It took Buttigieg three weeks to show up in East Palestine and he only did so after Donald Trump visited. The town residents may have been better off without him. When he arrived he [whined](#) about railroad companies, "fighting us every time we try to do a regulation." It is hard to believe that Buttigieg makes any effort to fight back when corporate chieftains tell him what to do.

The duopoly worked together to cover up their mess. Ohio's republican governor Mike DeWine and Biden's EPA Administrator Michael Regan took a page out of Barack Obama's Flint, Michigan book by dramatically [drinking East Palestine water](#). Fortunately the U.S. still has plenty of lawyers, and one of many [lawsuits](#) filed in recent days specifically names the stunt as having made a "mockery of Ohio citizens."

The back and forth over freight train regulations isn't complicated. Trump undid regulations that Obama enacted but Biden didn't undo what Trump had done. But even worse, regulations currently on the books allowed Norfolk Souther to get away with not labeling the train as carrying hazardous materials because it also carried wheat and vegetables. All over the country trains go through residential areas carrying hazardous materials but the law doesn't require anyone to be informed of the dangers. And yes, the oligarchs like it that way.

The Biden administration is siding with Norfolk Southern in [a case before the Supreme Court](#). A worker claims to have developed cancer as a result of exposure to carcinogens without having had the proper protective equipment. Norfolk Southern wants to restrict plaintiffs from choosing the venue in which they file suits, a practice known as forum shopping. Corporations are the biggest proponents of forum shopping, for themselves, but want to restrict where they can be sued. The Biden administration filed a brief in favor of Norfolk Southern. It doesn't matter if the presidents are democrats or republicans, at the end of the day they end up doing what the oligarchs want.

Next year in 2024 the people will be subjected to the quadrennial political hoax, i.e., a presidential election. Let's tell the truth before the theater begins anew. The power doesn't rest with the presidency. It rests with the people who do the presidential hiring, and they don't care about railroad workers or any other workers or people who have hazardous chemicals traveling through their communities. Should an accident happen, their hirelings will just drink water for the camera.

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Margaret Kimberley is the author of [Prejudential: Black America and the Presidents](#). You can support her work on [Patreon](#) and also find it on the [Twitter](#) and [Telegram](#) platforms. She can be reached via email at [margaret.kimberley\(at\)blackagendareport.com](mailto:margaret.kimberley(at)blackagendareport.com).

Featured image: Contractors removing the burnt wagons, East Palestine, Ohio. (Facebook via [Free West Media](#))

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