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The East Palestine, Ohio, train wreck

Capitalist greed fuels toxic nightmare

By Stephen Millies

The profits-first safety-last Norfolk Southern railway has turned East Palestine, Ohio, into a burn pit. Like the dumps operated by the U.S. military in formerly occupied Afghanistan and still occupied Iraq, the Feb. 3 train wreck poisoned a wide area.

The deliberate ignition of five tank cars on Feb. 6 released a mushroom cloud of toxins. A temporary evacuation didn't help much. Residents are reporting health problems, including bronchitis and skin rashes, while thousands of fish have died.

"The whole sky was black," was how Darlington, Pennsylvania, resident Amanda Kemmer described conditions after the cars were blown up. Darlington is just nine miles from East Palestine.

"And then you get this chemical smell in the house," the mother of four children said. "Everyone had a headache and didn't feel well and was sick to their stomach."

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine called this disaster a "controlled release" and said he approved of it. A hole was punched into each of the tank cars so that the vinyl chloride inside could pour into a pit and be set on fire.

Used to make PVC pipe, packaging and coatings, vinyl chloride is dangerous, according to the National Cancer Institute. Exposure to it increases the risk of liver, brain and lung cancers as well as lymphoma and leukemia.

That's a reason why vinyl chloride is being phased out around the world. Germany banned dumping it in landfills in 2005. Truckloads of the burned residue are now being shipped to Indiana, Michigan and Texas.

The excuse given by both the rail-



Food stamp benefits are being reduced across the board starting March 1, with 42 million seeing cuts. Congress and President Biden cut food stamps even as food price inflation is spreading, with no sign of letup. Above, a protest in Baltimore. See page 3

SEE PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Saving money, wasting lives

Eighteen years ago a Norfolk Southern train hauling chlorine and other chemicals derailed in Graniteville, South Carolina, on Jan. 6, 2005. Poisonous chlorine gas was released, killing 10 people.

The train was operating in what railroaders call "dark territory"—a track without wayside signals. Only a small switch target warned engineer Christopher Seeling too late that the track was misaligned for a

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PEACE IN UKRAINE

SAY NO TO ENDLESS U.S. WARS

FUND PEOPLE'S NEEDS, NOT THE WAR MACHINE

SATURDAY, MARCH 10 AT THE WHITE HOUSE
ACTIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY MARCH 10-19
PROTEST ON THE 20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. INVASION OF IRAQ

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THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

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