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news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PBS Western Reserve to Present TV Premiere of UNDER FIRE, UNDER SIEGE: STRIKEBREAKERS IN KENT, OHIO

Documentary tells of historic 1936 union conflict

KENT, OH — Thursday, Dec. 17, 2020 — UNDER FIRE, UNDER SIEGE: STRIKEBREAKERS IN KENT, OHIO, a new documentary about an intense 1936 union conflict, will premiere on PBS Western Reserve (WNEO 45.1 / WEAO 49.1) on Monday, Jan. 11, at 9 PM. The production is the work of veteran journalist and filmmaker Fred Endres, of Hudson, Ohio. For additional air dates and free viewing on demand following the premiere, visit PBSWesternReserve.org.

In June 1936, two truckloads of Cleveland strikebreakers crashed through a peaceful picket line in Kent, Ohio. They fired sawed-off shotguns and tear gas in an attempt to intimidate the workers and break a six-week-old strike at the Black & Decker Co. They not only failed to end the strike, but the strikebreakers had the tables reversed on them. They ended up under siege in the plant, with more than 100 strikers and sympathizers firing high-powered rifles at them for six hours.

“The strikebreakers were surprised and shocked when the union workers fought back,” Endres said. “For some reason, they apparently expected the pickets to just give up and probably end the strike. That had been their experience in earlier attacks.” This time was different, however. Union members stood their ground, and the strikebreakers panicked and ran into the Black & Decker plant for protection. Within an hour, thousands of angry workers and sympathizers surrounded the plant, threatening to charge the building and pull out the strikebreakers. “The strikebreakers suddenly realized that they were in serious danger,” Endres explained. “Several of them already had been wounded, and they had no way out.”

The program examines how the terrified strikebreakers eventually were led to safety through the huge crowd and stuffed into the tiny Kent city jail. They were charged with shooting with intent to wound and bound

over to a September grand jury. “In the end,” Endres noted, “it is really odd that not one person suffered any legal consequences—not the strikebreakers who violently attacked the picket line, and not the union members who shot at them and seriously damaged the Black & Decker plant.”

Writer/producer Endres has had three other documentaries appear on PBS Western Reserve: “The ‘Sojer Boys’ of Portage County,” “Seances & Slot Machines: The Story of Brady Lake Park” and “46 Days to Justice: The Confession(s) of Ned Kellogg.” He is a professor emeritus in the School of Media & Journalism at Kent State University. Narration for UNDER FIRE, UNDER SIEGE was done by veteran broadcast journalist and educator John Butte. Students from Kent State University recorded some voice-overs.

About PBS Western Reserve

PBS Western Reserve is the brand name of Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

A trusted community resource, PBS Western Reserve uses the power of commercial-free television and related services to enrich the lives of people through high-quality programming and educational services that teach, illuminate and inspire. It serves the largest population of Ohio’s eight PBS member stations.

PBS Western Reserve (WNEO 45.1 / WEAO 49.1), a service of the organization, is the only broadcast television service that reaches all of Northeast Ohio. It is available to 4.9 million people in the Cleveland and Youngstown designated market areas. In an average month, more than 1 million people tune in. The organization also operates two standard definition channels: Fusion (WNEO 45.2 / WEAO 49.2) and FNX (WNEO 45.3 / WEAO 49.3).

For more information about the organization, visit www.PBSWesternReserve.org or call 1-800-554-4549.

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