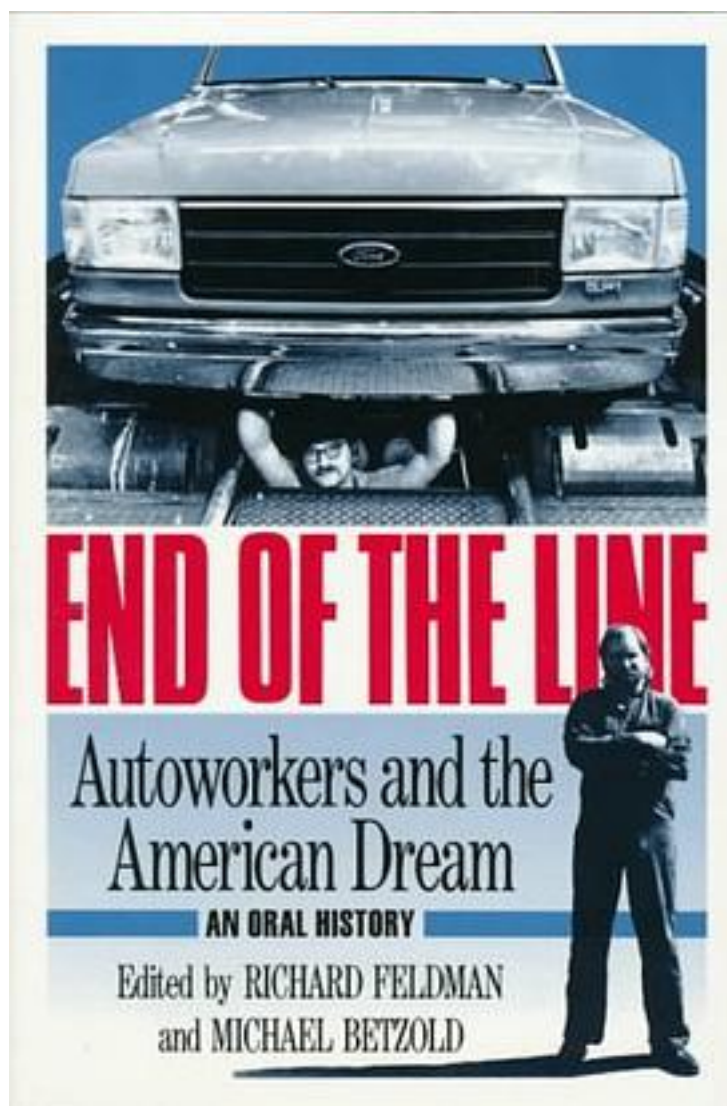


End of the Line



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Amtrak - once called a "national experiment" - is a failure, In End of the Line, the first comprehensive analysis of the railroad's performance since the Amtrak Reform Act became law in 1997, Joseph Vranich shows that it is time to replace Amtrak with private operators in order to save rail passenger service in America. Contrary to the public perception that Amtrak is on its way to becoming profitable, Vranich - who helped create and expand Amtrak - depicts a passenger rail service that is increasingly unprofitable, inefficient, and even reckless when it comes to basic passenger safety measures. The railroad fails America by overspending on lightly used routes while shortchanging the heavily trafficked routes that require capital improvements or costly security arrangements in an age of terrorism. Moreover, Amtrak officials repeatedly threaten to shut down rail service - including busy commuter lines that use its tracks - if they do not get ever-increasing subsidies to cover losses resulting from its poor management. Among Amtrak's egregious betrayals of passengers and American taxpayers, Vranich cites: the scandalous neglect of New York's railroad tunnels, which are not adequately protected against a fire, let alone terrorism; the many delays associated with the high-speed Acela Express; how a \$2.1 billion IRS "tax refund" to Amtrak (which has never paid any federal income taxes) was wasted; and; how Congress diluted the impact of the Amtrak Reform Council's recommendations to restructure Amtrak. Vranich offers successful case studies for state and local agencies looking for alternatives to Amtrak. He describes Boston's MBTA commuter rail system (formerly Amtrak's single biggest customer), which has already succeeded in replacing Amtrak with a private operator. In addition, he shows that fifty-five other nations are privatizing, franchising or devolving their national railroads - resulting in lower taxpayer subsidies and increased passenger traffic.

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