**Weaponized Social Media and the Threat to Organized Labor**

**Seven Minute presentation.**

Most Americans Suffer from a screen addiction, whether their drug of choice is a smart phone, a computer screen or a more traditional TV screen, usually linked to the internet and functioning like a computer.

The addiction is psychological and Physical and the effects of withdrawal are real.

The DSM-5 lists screen addiction in the appendix for further review. It will likely join Compulsive Gaming Disorder, which the World Health Organization now classifies as a diagnosable condition included in its International Classification of Diseases.

The Chinese Health Organization (CHO) designated Internet Addiction Disorder as one of the leading medical problems facing the country.

South Korea has 400+ rehab centers for screen-addicted children (mostly gamers). This is a global problem.

We now know that screens are dopaminergic – meaning their use stimulates the brain to produce dopamine, which stimulates the opioid receptors in the brain.

Social media platforms, by design, are particularly dopaminergic. With Facebook’s Like Button emerging as the game changer that led to the site’s near dominance of social media, and hence, American and global eyeballs.

Like Google, Facebook is primarily an advertising and data analytics company

Whereas Google gets data by monitoring activity through things like mapping and shopping apps, and mining your Gmail messages for keywords, Facebook gets it by monitoring your social life.

Facebook is where users, including our fellow union members, go to bear their souls in the largest focus group ever monitored.

Google seduces us with convenience, luring us to turn over incredible amounts of our personal data as we shop, travel, and surf the web.

These two companies, crunching tens of thousands of data points about each of us, creates algorithmic profiles of us, understanding how we tick on an intimate level

These same data points, what we’ve liked, what words we’ve used in Gmail messages, what we search about and read, allow us to be microtargeted for custom tailored ads and disinformation.

For example, Pro-publica, the non-profit investigative news organization, in an investigation of Facebook, posed as an ad buyer and, for $30, got to promote a message to 2,274 hard core anti-Semites who had expressed an interest in the phrases, “Jew Hater,” and “How to Burn Jews” or listed the Nazi Party as their employer.

An advertiser, such as the union-busting Mackinac Center for Public Policy, can now micro-direct disinformation memes and ads directly to your members, microtargeting their vulnerabilities, fears, prejudices or fantasies.

One company, Cambridge Analytica, supplied the Trump campaign over 5,000 data points on each of 220 million Americans, allowing the campaign to, as a Cambridge Analytica whistle-blower states, to “target their inner demons.”

Most of our union members are among these 220 million people.

The Trump campaign used Artificial Intelligence to mine this data and create micro-ads targeted specifically to audiences as small as one. In 2016, they remixed one base ad into approximately 200,000 variations.

Our labor organizations can also be targeted by viral fake news campaigns. One MIT study found that fake news stories spread six times faster than reality-based news from bona fide news organizations.

Governments have deployed military units to fight full time creating agitative propaganda which they spread using armies of trolls, sock puppets (people pretending to be other people), bots, as in robots, and bot-nets.

While running for president, Trump quoted at least 150 bots. Russian bots alone, posing as live American humans, retweeted Trump at least 469,000 times, mostly trying to discredit investigations into online Russian interference in the US election.

Twitter estimated that their network was compromised and delivered Russian propaganda 457.7 million times.

Fake stories attacking the veracity of real stories exposing fake news often get more shares and reads than the real exposés exposing them.

The virality of a story is determined by its ability to amuse, shock and outrage. Anger is the most likely emotion to drive virality.

What we have now is perpetual warfare playing out on the internet.

It started as people vs. state in the Arab spring – and everyone got hopeful.

But repressive states quickly figured out the formula. Dmitry Peskov, Putin’s media adviser, took some of his inspiration from Kim Kardasian, who pulled off her info-operation “with no intelligence, no interior ministry, no defense ministry, no KGB.”

The warfare was state to state, as in Russia vs. the US, Israel vs. Palestine, India vs. Pakistan and so on. And it was state vs. people, as in Myanmar vs. the Rohingya. Or terrorists like ISIS taking aim at Iraq. But it’s proven its most powerful in the rise of fascism in places like Brazil, Hungary and the US.

Fascism’s biggest target is quantifiable reality as the reality of repression is never desirable. That’s why the very notion of truth become to target in coordinated viral disinformation campaigns.

We in the union movement have the makings of a prime target. Our weapon of choice, truth and quantifiable reality are under assault. Anti-union forces, empowered by Supreme Court decisions such as Citizen’s United and Janus are sure to wage an internet war against us.

We can fend it off but we need to fully understand how weaponized social media and meme wars work, and ultimately, how to rally our supporters to defend their unions in this new global battlefield.