

UAW hires public relations firm to sell Fiat Chrysler deal

Eric London
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The United Auto Workers has hired New York City-based public relations firm BerlinRosen Public Affairs to conduct a propaganda campaign aimed at securing the passage of its new contract proposal with Fiat Chrysler. The goal of the \$115,000 campaign, complete with online graphics and Facebook postings, is to rebrand a product that has been exposed as dangerous to workers' health.

The *Detroit Free Press*, a mouthpiece for the auto bosses and the UAW, praised the move, noting that "the UAW is devoting resources to providing more details and controlling the message this time—before someone else does."

"Controlling the message" has nothing to do with telling the truth. On the contrary, it means attempting to reassert the monopoly over information by the UAW and the corporate-controlled media, which was broken when rank-and-file workers used Facebook, Twitter and other social media to exchange information from the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* and other sources to defeat the first sellout by a two-to-one margin.

BerlinRosen is made up of several former Barack Obama campaigners and administration officials and has previously worked for a host of Democratic Party campaigns, including New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. In 2014, it helped the Ford Foundation push through a union-backed "Grand Bargain" during the Detroit bankruptcy, which slashed the pensions and health benefits of thousands of retirees.

According to federal labor records, the PR firm did \$4 million in business with "labor clients," such as the Service Employees International Union and the Communication Workers of America.

The company's website boasts: "we are quick, discreet, and experienced, helping clients prepare ahead

of time for potential crises, and, when that's not an option, jumping on board in urgent situations to get the story under control with our disaster recovery specialists."

In the eyes of the UAW and the auto bosses, the resounding defeat of the sellout contract was certainly a "disaster." Now they are scrambling to provide a new spin on the deal because if workers knew the truth, they would reject this deal as they did the first. As one FCA worker at the Toledo, Ohio Jeep plant told the WSWs, "If the UAW were about protecting the workers and telling the truth, then why would they need to hire a PR firm?"

It is worth reviewing some of the lies contained in the UAW's new Madison Avenue campaign.

UAW Lie #1: "A clear path to traditional wages"

Under the proposed deal, a second-tier worker would have to wait eight years before reaching \$29 per hour, or roughly the same rate in nominal terms that a first-tier worker makes right now. By contrast, in 1970 it took a newly hired UAW worker 90 days to reach standard pay.

The aim of the company and the UAW is to set a new, permanently lower "traditional wage" after higher-paid older workers are driven out of the industry. Moreover, any promises of increases four years after the expiration of the contract are not worth the paper they are written on. This was shown by the worthless pledge by the UAW to restore caps on the percentage of second-tier workers in 2015, and countless other promises over the last four decades that were dropped due to "economic circumstances."

UAW Lie #2: "Huge progress toward eliminating the gap"

The new deal actually creates many different tiers. New hires will be brought in at \$17 per hour, reaching

just \$22.50 by the end of the contract. There will then be a different tier for each “years of service” bracket, with only those with over four years reaching the pay cap.

What’s more, according to pages 256 and 257, new Mopar hires will top out at only \$21 at the end of the contract, with axle workers reaching only \$19.86. Page 277 of the contract notes that temporary workers will max out at \$21 and new temporary hires at \$18.41 after four years.

UAW Lie #3: “Health Co-op eliminated in this tentative agreement”

The UAW took the health co-op out of the deal while promising the company it will help enforce a similar cost-cutting program after ratification. The UAW has agreed to help FCA “reduce costs” in line with the imposition of Obama’s Cadillac Tax on supposedly over-generous insurance plans.

This includes the introduction of first-ever deductibles of hundreds of dollars for workers who refuse to sign up for inferior health plans. Second-tier workers already pay high out-of-pocket costs. The deal also includes an agreement between the UAW and FCA to transfer the health care plan for workers from Blue Cross Blue Shield to some other provider, with the clear intention of reducing costs and coverage.

UAW Lie #4: “Job security is strengthened and job growth promised”

The contract explicitly sanctions the destruction of over 3,000 jobs at the Warren Truck factory in suburban Detroit and other plants. The UAW has made a big deal of FCA’s supposed agreement not to “close, nor partially or wholly sell, spin-off, split-off or consolidate or otherwise dispose in any form, any plant, asset or business unit of any time constituting a bargaining unit.”

In fact, a letter of agreement between UAW Vice President Norwood Jewell and FCA executive Glenn Shagena nullifies this, adding an escape clause (page 129) that says:

“It is understood that conditions may arise that are beyond the control of the company such as acts of God, catastrophic circumstances, market-related volume declines or significant economic decline concerning the subject. Should these conditions occur, the company will discuss conditions with the union.”

UAW Lie #5: “Moratorium on outsourcing”

On page 196, the contract gives the company the right to determine sourcing actions based on “cost, technology, timing, quality, statutory requirements, proprietary rights, overall financial stability of affected facilities...” It simply requires the company provide “written notice” to the UAW for such plans, which the UAW will keep “confidential,” i.e., secret from workers. (Page 204)

The UAW can then force workers to accept massive wage cuts to keep work at the plant. “The National Job Security, Operational Effectiveness and Sourcing Committee, comprised of Company and Union representatives will act on requests from Local Committees to waive, modify or change National Agreement provisions when such action would result in the preservation or increase of job opportunities.” (Page 197)

These passages prove that the UAW is involved in a conspiracy to lie to the workers on the company's behalf. Nothing the UAW says can be trusted, and the above list is far from exhaustive.

As one worker said on the UAW International Facebook page: "This agreement is the same as the first. People, you have been shown fancy numbers to make your mouth water. The UAW did listen to our complaints on the first tentative agreement. That's how they made the same agreement look a lot better and renamed it to the new agreement."



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