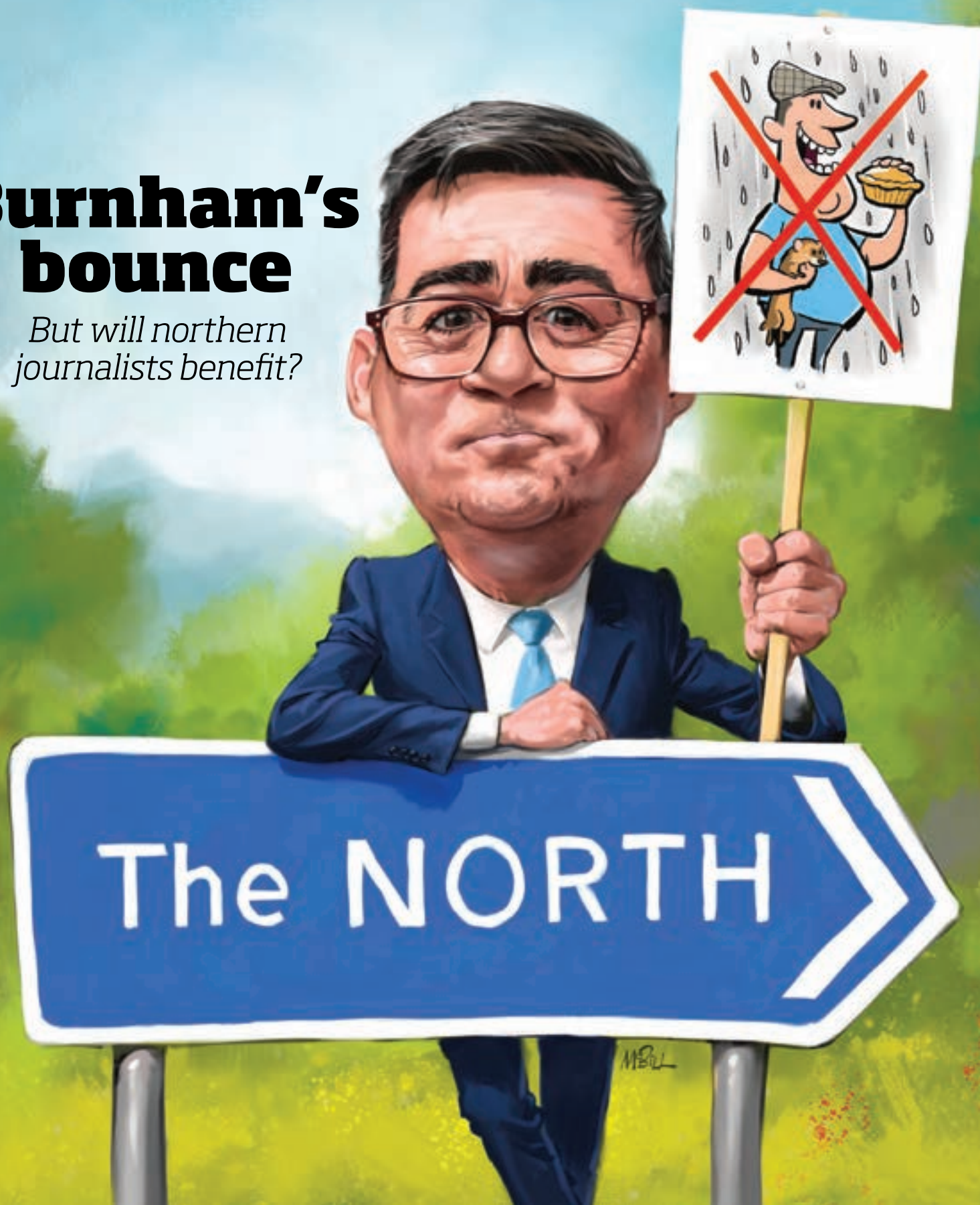


the **Journalist**

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Burnham's bounce

*But will northern
journalists benefit?*



“



It's autumn and it's back to business with a vengeance. We've had the political conference season, the return of parliament, a still-new Prime Minister Andy Burnham and the new academic year.

Andy Burnham, former mayor of Greater Manchester, has inevitably shone a light on the north and our cover feature by Bury-

based Helen Nugent looks at the perceptions of journalists and journalism north of the Watford gap.

We also visit Wales with a major NUJ conference on the future of the media in the country attended by First Minister Rhun Iwan Iorwerth, himself a former journalist.

An NUJ delegation went to the union movement's biggest annual event – the TUC Congress – winning support for our campaigns on public service broadcasting and a windfall tax on the tech giants among other issues.

In his column Ray Snoddy looks at how President Trump's attempts to block and control US journalists have finally backfired.

And with Channel crossings in small boats a constant feature of the news, Ruth Addicott talks to journalists who cover the issue in her On Our Patch series.

We also have other great features and news from your union. And for the first time in a long while – a modest letters page. Do please keep it going by contributing!

Christie

Christine Buckley
Editor

@mschrisbuckley

”

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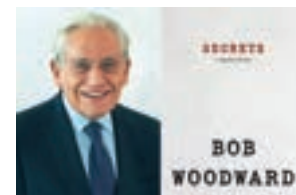
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Cover
Howard McWilliam

BBC at risk of 'doom spiral' amid new cuts

THE BBC risks becoming trapped in a 'doom spiral', harming both workers and audiences, the union has said.

The latest job cuts announced in September follow a series of similar actions throughout the year. In April, BBC management announced plans to cut between 1,800 and 2,000 jobs as part of a 10 per cent reduction to its total costs.

In June, it said it would cut 550 roles - including around 200 in BBC News and 250 in BBC Nations - plus TV and radio programmes such as Radio 4's *The World Tonight* and the World Service's *The Conversation*.

September's cuts particularly affected local and sports services and BBC Wales, putting hundreds at risk of redundancy.

In July, the NUJ urged the

BBC to reconsider its decision to cut dedicated foreign correspondents covering 14 European countries. The BBC has also



withdrawn its promise of jobs for apprentices working in BBC News - a programme designed to help increase representation and entry routes into journalism, particularly for young people from diverse working class backgrounds.

At the TUC Congress in September, delegates passed a composited NUJ

motion instructing the TUC to press the UK government to intervene to stop cuts to public service broadcasters and to mobilise public

support for BBC workers. The NUJ has also created a template letter for members to send to their MPs, urging them to sign our Early Day Motion, and launched a joint union petition.

The cuts which have been proposed by management come at a time when BBC Charter Renewal is underway. The NUJ's Back

The BBC campaign has called for a new charter to include sufficient and secure funding and vital governance reforms, including proper representation and real independence.

Last month the NUJ also held a conference on the future of Welsh public interest journalism, where calls were made for sustainable BBC funding to ensure access to representative local reporting. At the conference, Wales First Minister Rhun ap Iorwerth said: "If we want a sustainable media, we need to invest in people. We need good jobs, proper training opportunities for young people to enter the profession, and diversity in our newsrooms."

TUC news P6-7; Wales NUJ conference P8.



If we want a sustainable media, we need to invest in people. We need good jobs, proper training for young people

**Rhun ap Iorwerth
Wales First Minister**

Reach job cuts are 'self sabotage'

THE union has condemned plans by Reach plc - the UK and Ireland's largest news publisher - to cut hundreds of jobs as an act of self-sabotage. The NUJ Reach chapel has passed a vote of no confidence in the management's editorial leadership.

The company - which publishes local and national titles including the *Mirror*, *Daily Record*, and the *Manchester Evening News* announced plans to cut 220 full-time equivalent editorial jobs, while creating 60 new roles. The result is a net reduction of around 160 jobs.

Reach has not specified where the cuts will fall and the union is seeking clarity on its plans. However, it did confirm the closure of three online titles: *AberdeenLive*, *KentLive*, and *GalwayBeo*. The company blamed wider industry decline and rapid shifts in news consumption

habits, with AI overviews and changes to Google algorithms resulting in a major loss of traffic.

The publishing group remains a profitable company, despite its £60 million-a-year pension deficit payments commitment. It has promised a £96 million

operating profit this year.

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, said:

"This is an act of self-sabotage. A sustainable business model relies on quality journalism. And quality journalism relies on having skilled journalists who can ask questions, uncover stories, verify facts, hold power to account, and reflect community voices."

Victory as Met Police delete data

THE Metropolitan Police have said that they have deleted data relating to photographers and video journalists at the centre of a long legal battle over the collection of information and use on police databases.

The confirmation follows action by the NUJ and the solicitors Bhatt Murphy referencing a European Court of Human Rights ruling in 2019 which said that the police could only retain data about journalists if it is necessary, proportionate and subject to proper safeguards.

Jason Parkinson, a video journalist, said: "In my case it was 144 separate logs spanning the first eight years of my job as a

video journalist, between 2005 to 2013, where I was labelled extreme left wing and some of the logs suggested I was also the subject of some covert surveillance. This is a win for press freedom and for all members of the press in the UK to be able to work freely without interference from the state."

Photographer David Hoffman said: "Being labelled a domestic extremist by the Met when I was simply trying to report on public events was chilling. The tiny amount of data disclosed to me under the Data Protection Act was riddled with inaccuracies. The undisclosed data was in all probability equally inaccurate."

ISTOCKPHOTO



Huws takes Eisteddfod crown for poetry

FORMER NUJ activist Martin Huws won the prestigious National Eisteddfod crown at the Welsh-language cultural festival in early August, *David Nicholson writes*.

Huws said his 'dream had come true' after being awarded the prize as well as £750.

Forty-one poets entered the competition this year and were tasked with writing a free-verse poem or collection of poems up to 250 lines on the theme of Adnabod, which means knowing or recognition.

The poems are submitted anonymously so the judges are not influenced by the reputation of the entrants.

The judges said Huws' work was: "A profoundly striking collection in terms of both its subject matter and the bold craftsmanship and creativity of its treatment."

"It addresses one of the most challenging themes imaginable: a harrowing and timeless subject, namely abuse and violation."

Huws spent much of his career in journalism, working for Welsh language news

service Golwg, the Western Mail and ITV Wales, before being appointed and spending many years as a senior journalist on BBC

Cymru's website, Cymru Fyw.

He was chair of his NUJ branch and served as Wales-wide lay health and safety officer.

Huws is originally from Cardiff, and has lived in Taff's Well, Rhondda Cynon Taf for more than 30 years. He has been retired for 10 years.

He has published two novels, two collections of short stories, a volume of poetry and a booklet on the history of Cardiff.

At the 2007 National Eisteddfod in Flintshire, his novel *Mae Heddwch yn Brifo* came second in the Daniel Owen Memorial Prize competition.

The National Eisteddfod has been held for 850 years.



Home Office criticised over poor photo advice

THE NUJ is calling on the Home Office to rectify information it has published and shared with asylum seekers on restrictions around photographing and filming people in public places.

A leaflet posted on the government website in August makes a misleading, blanket claim that people in

the UK "could be arrested by the police" if they "take pictures or videos of someone without their permission... including in public spaces, like streets or parks".

The union says that these statements misrepresent the law and risk misleading people on their rights and obligations. Taking photos

or videos of people in public without their permission is not inherently unlawful.

There are certain contexts in which photography and videos taken and shared without a person's permission are legally prohibited – for example, voyeurism and upskirting or causing harassment and distress as

per the Protection from Harassment Act. There is also a right to redress if a photo or video is taken or published of someone without permission in a private setting or where they have reasonable expectation of privacy.

These legal restrictions should be communicated with accuracy and nuance,

which the union believes are not present in the Home Office's leaflet.

NUJ members in visual journalism are already experiencing increased obstruction, hostility and routinely deal with people questioning their right to photograph in public. This can involve instances of verbal and physical abuse.

Steve Bell



First walkout in 200 years at The Lancet

NUJ members at The Lancet went on strike for a day in September over pay – the first time workers have walked out in the company’s 200-year history.

Strikers formed picket lines outside the two entrances of the Lancet Group’s London HQ holding placards demanding Fair Pay Now and Solidarity for Science.

Workers at The Lancet Group, which produces 29 monthly specialty titles as well as the weekly journal, also held action short of a strike across two weeks in September.

They feel they have absorbed rising workloads, increasing expectations and sustained inflation in recent

years. This has led to a reduction in the real-terms value of their salaries, leaving many staff significantly worse off than they were five years ago despite their growing experience, expertise and responsibilities.

At least 120 members of the scientific community signed an open letter expressing their support for NUJ members in the lead-up to the action.

The union balloted members after the Lancet chapel overwhelmingly rejected the company’s pay offer following extensive negotiations. Members’ strength of feeling was reflected in the ballot results, with 94.5 per cent supporting strike action and

97.8 per cent supporting action short of a strike on a turnout of 87.5 per cent.

The Lancet has failed to offer a significant real-terms pay increase to staff despite the company which owns it,



SAM TAYLOR

Elsevier, making an adjusted operating profit of £1.035 billion in 2025, translating to a seven per cent underlying profit increase and a 38 per cent profit margin.

Speaking on the picket line, Gavin Cleaver, NUJ Lancet representative, said: “We all know in the last five years our pay has gone down massively while costs have gone up hugely.

“I want to say how proud I am of everyone organising over the past couple of years. We’ve gone from nothing to this picket line in almost no time whatsoever. It’s extraordinary and a testament to the passion and commitment of everyone.

“As long as we stick together, then we will win.”



I am proud of everyone organising. We’ve gone from nothing to this picket line in almost no time

Gavin Cleaver
NUJ Lancet
representative

Union demands raised in parliament

NUJ parliamentary group chair Rebecca Long-Bailey MP put forward the union’s calls to protect public service broadcasting and independent journalism.

In August, the union responded to the government’s consultation on plans to stop the spread

of misinformation on social media and reshape TV distribution and regulation.

Following an initial debate in July, MPs gathered in Westminster Hall in early September.

After strongly welcoming the government’s ‘intention to tackle misinformation’ in

her opening remarks, Long-Bailey said “a crucial question that follows is who will decide what is trustworthy – it cannot be ministers, and it certainly cannot be the tech giants”.

She said consideration should be given to an independent accreditation

scheme chaired by and representing journalists, the industry and civil society – similar to that of the Press Council of Ireland.

She said: “To be clear, trustworthy news has to mean more than public service broadcasting. That is a central pillar, of course,

but it must include other outlets, independent publications and freelance journalists who meet recognised standards.

“The government should support prominence for trustworthy news online, but that prominence must not become de-ranking by another name for journalists who challenge those in power.”

Vigil calls for justice for O’Hagan 25 years on

NUJ members gathered in Belfast in late September to mark the 25th anniversary of the killing of journalist Martin O’Hagan and demand justice.

O’Hagan, who was secretary of the NUJ Belfast and district branch and an investigative journalist for Sunday World, was murdered by the Loyalist Volunteer Force while walking home with his wife Marie from the pub in Lurgan on September 28 2001. No one has been convicted of his murder.

The vigil, organised by the Belfast and district branch, was held outside the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland’s office in Writer’s Square.

The union has called for the release of the Police Ombudsman’s report, commissioned in 2013, into police handling of O’Hagan’s murder, and for an independent investigation.

The vigil was led by Fran McNulty, NUJ joint president, with Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, Seamus Dooley, Irish secretary, and Martin’s daughters Niamh and Tina also in attendance.

Kevin Cooper, O’Hagan’s branch colleague, introduced proceedings, unfurling a branch banner marking the NUJ’s 25-year campaign for justice.

Davison said that NUJ would seek an urgent meeting with the Ombudsman.



KEVIN COOPER – PHOTOLINEPIC@GMAIL.COM

Minister backs global control of AI

Reports by
Barrie Clement
Images by
Jess Hurd

//

We have a duty to ensure that AI is for the benefit - not the detriment - of our society

Louise Hague
First secretary of state

THE UK is facing ‘huge risks’ to society and to national security from artificial intelligence (AI) if the ‘right guardrails’ are not in place, first secretary of state Louise Hague told congress.

“AI has enormous potential to improve lives, to transform our public services, make our businesses stronger and deliver new scientific breakthroughs. We must work to make the most of the opportunities that AI can bring,” she said.

“But I know people are also worried about what it already means for their jobs... what it means for the world their kids are growing up in and of course their safety.”

The UK should heed the warnings of those who are at the forefront of developing the technology, she said.

Haigh was making her keynote speech after three Anthropic researchers warned that AI could wipe out humanity within the decade.

“This is an issue that goes beyond our borders and we

partner, Donald Trump, had already dismissed the concerns as a ‘hoax’.

She added: “AI will reshape our lives and the lives of our children. We have a duty to mitigate the risks and ensure



are ready to work with our international partners to make sure we get this right,” she said.

Unfortunately, one potential international

that it’s for the benefit – not the detriment – of our society. It is these challenges and our collective response to them that will define the future our children inherit.”

Congress acknowledged that AI has particular implications for creative jobs.

A motion tabled by Equity, supported by the NUJ and passed by conference asserted that copyright law was inadequate in the face of wholesale theft of text, recordings and images by AI.

For the NUJ, Natasha Hirst (pictured) warned the government that new rights to address AI-generated digital replicas are urgently needed. “There are too many gaps in legislation, which fails to address the challenges that impact on livelihoods and our safety at work.”

This covered areas from traditional news publications and broadcasting, to photography and videography, PR and communications, magazines and digital media.

Farage slated over class hypocrisy

TUC leader Paul Nowak attacked Reform leader Nigel Farage in the wake of a £72 million donation to the party from two crypto billionaires in two days.

Nowak asked: “Who better to take on the establishment than a privately educated, ex-banker multi-millionaire?”

“Who better to rattle the

cages of Westminster complacency than the 30-year career politician leading a party of Tory has-beens?”

“And who better to clean up politics than the man who sips champagne and eats oysters while taking dodgy donations from foreign funders?”

He told delegates: “So

let’s be clear: Reform do not, never have and never will represent the interests of working people.”

“He added: Let no one tell you there is any similarity – any similarity – between care workers chipping in a few quid a year through their union and a party bought and paid for by billionaires.

“So, we need a proper conversation about how we clean up our politics that doesn’t push workers to the margins but does stop the super rich corrupting our politics.

“And here’s a starting point: don’t live in Britain? Don’t pay your taxes in Britain? Then don’t meddle in British politics.”



Self-employed lack rights

THE self-employed are still without basic rights in Britain despite new employment legislation, delegates observed.

Proposing Equity’s successful resolution, the union’s president Lynda Rooke called on the TUC to campaign for stronger protection for genuinely self-employed workers.

Rook gave an example: “Once a child is born, self-employed mothers may qualify for maternity allowance, but it’s derisory and

deducted from universal credit as a benefit – and self-employed fathers get nothing.

“It happened to my husband; he had to return to work as a theatre director the day after each of our three children were born. That was 30 years ago, and nothing has changed.”

Nearly half of NUJ members are estimated to be freelance, as are the overwhelming majority of Equity’s membership.

Call for state intervention in broadcasting

AMID massive job losses at the BBC and threats of cuts elsewhere, delegates urged the government to intervene to halt the decline in public service broadcasting.

Proposing the motion, Fran McNulty, joint president of the NUJ, pointed out that delegates had expressed concern about the rise of the far right and about the damage done by 'mis- and disinformation'.

"A properly funded public service media is the antidote. If only those making the decisions realised this," he told conference.

"Sadly, the reality is that the BBC has seen its funding cut in real terms by 30 per cent in the last 15 years."

He warned that there was a prospect of at least 2,000 more job cuts at the corporation.

At ITV, the takeover by American conglomerate Comcast was also a threat, reshaping the commercial broadcasting landscape in the UK. McNulty pointed out that STV had cut jobs and

us all," said McNulty, who works for RTE, which has also suffered job losses.

Many union members earn their living in or around the BBC, he told delegates. "Every cut reduces the ability

That's just the tip of the iceberg," he said.

The BBC was not just about news, he added: "Public service broadcasters seek to inform, to entertain, to educate and to question. Delegates, imagine a world without this. The future would be much darker."

He pointed out that the current charter governing the BBC ends in December next year and that a new one would take effect from January 2028. That provided an opportunity to secure the changes urgently needed.

The NUJ, as part of its Back the BBC campaign, was joining unions in calling for the resources and reforms the BBC needs, he said. Congress backed the motion, composited with a similar proposal from the Writers' Guild of Great Britain.



Public service broadcasters inform, entertain, educate and question. Imagine a world without this

Fran McNulty
Joint president, NUJ



programmes – and Channel 4 was to axe its staff by almost a quarter.

"Each cut to public service media is a cut to our democracy, and this impacts

of actors to enchant, musicians to entertain, journalists to expose, camera operators to capture, painters to paint and carpenters to build sets.

Windfall tax: a simple step

NUJ general secretary Laura Davison urged the government to introduce a six per cent windfall tax on tech giants to be reinvested in serious journalism.

It was a 'simple, practical step' to increase public access to quality news, while retaining editorial independence. She said it

would boost ethical public service journalism and local news coverage and help media start-ups.

The fund she envisaged would also seek to protect jobs, improve conditions, promote union recognition and boost diversity.

"Tech platforms have sucked up editorial content

without making any contribution to its production," she told delegates.

She thanked other unions and TUC colleagues for their support for the NUJ's proposals: "Dare I say they will be popular? The power wielded by billionaire tech owners must be redressed."

Trusted quality news was a fundamental ingredient in a 'just, thriving, democratic society', she said.

The NUJ's resolution was merged with motions from Unison, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association, which similarly urged the government to redistribute wealth from corporations to workers.



Far right no friend to women

CONGRESS condemned what it said was the misogyny shown by the far right.

Delegates registered their strong belief that hatred of women is a 'defining feature' among reactionary pressure groups.

The motion expressed deep concern over the growing trend of blaming migrants for sexual attacks in the UK. It noted that one in three of those arrested on far-right demonstrations in August 2024 had convictions for domestic abuse.

NUJ delegate Natasha Hirst said that she was a survivor of domestic abuse and that she was 'far from alone' among delegates.

Hirst, who also has a disability, spoke in favour of a motion that registered deep concern over proposals to 'support disabled people into work'.

She pointed out that, despite the claims of right-wing politicians, there was no 'spiralling welfare bill' or overdiagnosis of disability.



Aiming to shape the media's future

Reports by
Jenny Sims
Images by
Si Jubb



Without a vibrant media sector, can we claim to be a cohesive and democratic nation?

David Nicholson
Co-chair, NUJ Welsh executive council

NEWS deserts, newspaper closures, job cuts and the shift to online are issues for journalism across the UK. But Wales has its own that are unique to the country, its language and its culture.

NUJ Wales journalists have long had a plan for the future of media in the country, likely to get more traction following a well-attended conference at Glamorgan county cricket ground in Cardiff.

Who better to speak in support of a plan needing government action than the head of that government? In Wales, that is Rhun ap Iorwerth, first minister and leader of Plaid Cymru.

Who better to rally journalists, employers, unions and politicians to work to fulfil that plan than the head of TUC Cymru general secretary Laura Doel?

Both started their working lives as journalists. Both expressed strong views on having an independent, devolved media landscape to support democracy and the public interest in Wales.



And who better to set the scene and welcome delegates at the event than the co-chair of the NUJ's Welsh executive council (WEC) David Nicholson? The WEC and NUJ

branches funded the event.

The journey to the conference started during the Covid-19 pandemic, when journalists were classified as key workers and the union issued its news

There has been a lot of analysis of the media in Wales. The NUJ persuaded the media and culture minister to set up a Public Interest Journalism Group to make recommendations to the Welsh government.

Its report, *Of and For Wales: Towards a Sustainable Future for Public Interest Journalism*, was debated at the conference. Its suggestions included setting up a public interest journalism Wales Media Institute to develop a 'diverse, resilient journalism workforce', end news deserts and improve media literacy.

Nicholson asked: "Without a vibrant media sector in Wales reporting on events, campaigns, news and culture, can we really claim to be a cohesive and democratic nation?"

Political awareness of Wales lacking

THREE big issues were tackled in separate plenary sessions. First, is there a devolution knowledge gap? Second, how should we pay for Welsh journalism? The third examined broadcasting and a bigger vision for Wales.

A report of the coverage of Wales and Welsh politics, entitled *Reporting the 2026 UK Election*, with Wales in

Focus: TV, Online and Social Media Coverage, was given by two Cardiff University senior researchers.

Dr Keighley Perkins and Dr Maxwell Modell showed that the public have far less knowledge and awareness of what is happening in Welsh politics than they have about UK politics and political figures.

Will Hayward (pictured), an award-winning investigative journalist and author, discussed coverage of the Senedd election and explore the issues holding Welsh media back. The move to online and the value of vox pops were examined.

The case for a government contestable fund recommended in the

Of and For Wales report mentioned by earlier speakers was examined by a panel of journalists and editors as well as Helgard Krause, CEO of the Books Council of Wales.

Session chair, Richard Gurner, editor of the *Caerphilly Observer*, also supported a contestable fund.



Bilingual talks and a life member

THE bilingual conference was ambitious in content, form and language. Much of the first minister's address was in Welsh, a few panellists spoke only Welsh, as did some attendees during Q&A sessions, and a training workshops by communications expert Richard Nosworthy was delivered in Welsh.

The other workshop, on artificial intelligence (AI) and journalism, led by seasoned journalist and trainer Dan Mason, did a whistle-stop tour of AI and its capabilities.

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, in her closing address thanked Creative Wales, the Institute of Welsh Affairs

and NUJ Training Wales for partnering with the NUJ to organise the conference, and the Welsh executive council and Welsh branches for promoting and funding it.

Paying tribute to first minister Rhun ap Iorwerth, who was given life membership of the NUJ, she said: "It's encouraging to have someone with first-hand experience of being a journalist at the heart of government in Wales.

"The future of the Welsh media... will be secured by people coming together through their trade union and other groups, making the case for change."



Online propaganda gets a screen test

As US media ban is lifted, right-wing politicians set up online TV channels, says **Raymond Snoddy**

At long last, American journalists and broadcasters have refused to be cowed by the bullying of

President Donald Trump and stood together against his illegal, unconstitutional attacks on the media.

Until now, the reporting of Trump has been marred by the president of the United States insulting women journalists far more educated and intelligent than him – and it usually is women – while their male counterparts continue as if nothing untoward has happened.

Ask a perfectly legitimate question and Trump squawks ‘fake news’ like a demented parrot and there have been few consequences until now.

Trump’s decision to ban reporters from CNN, MS Now and Politico from the White House looks like an important turning point. There was an immediate lawsuit and, unsurprisingly, a judge ruled that the ban was likely to be a breach of the First Amendment protecting free speech and that it should be lifted pending a full hearing.

But what has made a difference and will continue to make a difference ahead of November’s mid-term elections is the fact that the five US networks that provide pool coverage in rotation united to withdraw their coverage.

Even more significant was the fact that the committee that organised the pool was chaired by Fox News, the Murdoch network that has done more than any other to create the phenomenon that is Trump.

Cue chaos and, for a time, there was no network coverage of President Xi of

China’s official visit to the White House, until the ban was lifted. At one stage, television pictures of Trump and Xi were being transmitted without sound.

To escape the unexpected power of the US networks, the American president immediately launched Trump TV, streaming his favourite speeches and pronouncements 24 hours a day on YouTube.

The news is greatly encouraging. After an initial very small flourish, the audience settled down at fewer than 700, as more people tuned in to squirrels eating nuts or even a blank screen.

In another sign of the times, the Trump-controlled Federal Communications Commission bullied ABC into pulling a perfectly orthodox Jimmy Kimmel interview with James Talarico, the Democratic senate candidate for Texas.

After the interview was released on YouTube, it was viewed more than five million times within 24 hours and has now been seen by more than eight million people. Talarico has a 5 per cent lead in the polls in a state that has not had a Democratic senator for 38 years.

It is easy to dismiss such events as some bizarre, American psychodrama that has little to do with us.

Not so. Nigel Farage, the Reform UK leader is, in his small, modest way, trying to ape Trump in trying to use television as a weapon to get power and he has huge financial backing.

Alan Rusbridger, the former Guardian editor, has joined up the dots and worked out that four billionaires are effectively funding ‘a right-wing media complex’ in the UK to the tune of more than £200 million.

GB News, which Rusbridger argues functions more like ‘Reform TV’ than a normal commercial channel, has already run up losses of £131 million.

For now, Farage has direct control of the £72 million from crypto billionaires being used to launch his own Reform TV channel on YouTube.

Many critics believe Ofcom has been shamelessly weak in the way it has failed to tackle GB News. Recently, Farage returned to presenting on GB News after his Clacton by-election victory over Count Binface to justify, without challenge, the £72 million payday.

But, unlike in the US, there are due impartiality rules in UK television and GB News has to operate within them. No such problems exist on YouTube.

Farage TV on YouTube will, in theory, be able to reach a vast TV audience but it is unclear how attractive unchecked right-wing political propaganda will be.

There are reasons to be cheerful about a second right-wing TV channel in the UK. They could end up competing for the same finite pool of viewers.

Nor is it clear whether the £72 million payment will be judged legal; Farage TV might not be flush with cash for long. Then there is the matter of the £5 million ‘gift’ to Farage now being investigated by the Parliamentary Committee on Standards.

It is more than possible, as Reform sinks in the polls, that Farage could once again face an exclusion from the House of Commons, long enough to trigger yet another Clacton by-election.

Meanwhile, investigative journalist John Sweeney calls Farage ‘a would-be prime minister on trial’ in his book *The Real Farage*. Sweeney acknowledges the Reform leader has charisma. But that is more than overwhelmed by what he describes as Farage’s ‘cruelty’ and the chaos he always leaves behind him.

After reading Sweeney, it will be difficult to disagree with his verdict that Nigel Farage is totally unsuited for high office of any kind.

After a small flourish, Trump TV’s audience settled down at fewer than 700, as more people tuned in to watch squirrels

Stronger

Joining forces can boost both skills and income, says **Linda Harrison**



When Lily Canter was approached by a publisher to write a textbook on freelance journalism, there was one person she wanted to bring in to help: her friend, fellow journalist Emma Wilkinson.

It was the start of a successful collaboration that would take their careers in a new direction. They now run Freelancing for Journalists, which helps others to build their careers.

Canter says: "We started collaborating in 2018. Emma had far more experience of freelancing than me so I really wanted her expertise. We'd known each other since 2000 when we met on our journalism master's course. It felt like a natural fit."

They decided to do a podcast series of six episodes to promote the book, launching it just as the pandemic struck.

"Suddenly, there was huge demand for this kind of advice," says Canter. "We realised we needed to keep the podcast going. From there, things grew quite organically. Journalism.co.uk approached me to ask if I could run a freelance journalism course and I again asked Emma to help."

They started running online webinars, set up a Substack and launched a remote work experience scheme to help people who could not get into newsrooms during the pandemic. It snowballed and the business has developed further. Canter and Wilkinson have added a premium Substack – now their largest revenue stream – and started the Freelance Journalism Awards. They also wrote the award-winning Ultra Women book and are working on their third book.

"The benefit of working together, particularly when writing a book, is that it's such a huge task and being able to break it down and share the load is really useful," adds Canter. "It also

Admin and tax

Clare Marsh has some advice:

- Be clear in writing about the nature of any collaboration. What it is, what it isn't, how income and expenses are handled and – crucially – if you are each operating as separate businesses.

- VAT registered? Factor that in before you agree terms.

- If a collaboration is becoming something more regular and structured, take advice before it takes on a life of its own.

helps to have someone to brainstorm and fact-check with, and edit your copy.

"We share everything 50/50, and also have a Facebook community of around 8,000 members. We've made sure we assign different roles so we each have different responsibilities but we can also step into each other's roles when we need to."

Trust your gut

Freelance journalist Helen Nugent is another collaboration convert. She started offering media training around 2008, including talks and workshops with PR contacts. Over time, Helen says, companies increasingly wanted more mock interviews and video playback, something she could not do on her own.

"As luck would have it, I met a marketer and social media expert in Manchester through another project," she says. "We hit it off and soon realised that, with my journalism and media training skills and his videographer and social media skills as well as his marketing background, combining forces would be a great business idea. In February 2024, James Richardson and I set up Gatto Nero Media. As business partners, we offer a number of things as a company but media training remains our primary focus."

In terms of choosing who to team up with, Helen says: "I'm a big believer in going with your gut. I view potential business partners the same way I see friends; it's all about the personal connection and how you feel in that individual's company."

A successful collaboration can also help make work more sociable and enjoyable.

The lowdown on tax

Clare Marsh, founder of Her Business Counts, an accountancy practice focused on helping women business owners, warns of tax implications.

She says: "A partnership can exist without anyone intending to create one. Under the Partnership Act 1890, a partnership exists when two or more people are 'carrying on a business in common with a view to

profit'. There's no paperwork required. No registration. No formal agreement.

"HMRC looks at what's happening, not what the parties call it. Things that can tip a collaboration into partnership territory include regularly sharing clients or referrals, splitting income or costs, presenting yourselves jointly to the market, sharing a brand, website or social media presence or making

decisions about the work together. One of these may not be enough, but a combination, particularly over a sustained period, can look very much like a business carried on in common.

"Once HMRC considers a partnership to exist, there are consequences; a partnership tax return is required, and both people become jointly liable for the business's tax

obligations. For sole traders, there's a VAT risk. HMRC has the power to aggregate the turnovers of businesses it considers to be operating together. Two people each

under the £90,000 VAT threshold could find themselves over it on a combined basis, with VAT potentially owed on their entire income backdated to when HMRC considers the arrangement began."



CLARE MARSH

together

Katrina Lobley started the Art of Travel Writing newsletter in 2024 with fellow Sydney journalist Catherine Marshall to build interest in their new online masterclass.

Lobley explains: “It started with me wanting to know more about how Catherine weaves so much imagination into her travel journalism; I’m still learning to loosen up after my years in a newsroom. We talked for a year about creating something together before going all-in. There are lots of beginners’ courses out there but hardly any resources for mid-career writers looking to improve their craft. Few editors have time to help contributors with this – our masterclass fills that gap.”

They’ve since launched a second course, with more in the pipeline.

Lobley says: “It surprises us how much we enjoy making the newsletter together. As we all know, the media business is brutal. It’s comforting to be growing a side business in these unpredictable times.”

Her advice for finding a great partner? “You must be a genuine fan of the other person and their work,” she says. “It’s about recognising and respecting each other’s skills and how you complement each other.”

Be clear about your roles

Journalist Fiona Scott has collaborated to run multiple workshops, including work with influencers, fellow journalists and PR experts. She says equal division of labour is important.

“The key thing is to nail the role each person will play to prevent crossover and to ensure everyone knows what they will be paid if payment is relevant,” explains Scott, who is also the founder of Scott Media.

“Overall, collaboration needs to be thought about, planned and discussed so that there can be no grey areas, and follow this up in writing. Also, it’s important to have a feedback session around what did and didn’t work if you’re going to do it again. This irons out little grumbles, which could become bigger if left unchecked.”

Lobley adds that if you are embarking on a long-term project, you need to be able to pull each other through any low times.

She says: “You’re in a two-person cheer squad, so you must recognise when it’s your turn to shake the pom-poms and keep up the positive energy.”



Partners in their prime:
left: Emma Wilkinson
and Lily Canter with
their award-winning book;
middle: Helen Nugent;
below: Katrina Lobley and
Catherine Marshall



LEFT: CREDIT, GATTO NERO MEDIA



Barrie Clement recalls the momentous launch of The Independent

First days at a pioneer paper

It was a bizarre start for what became a groundbreaking and politically independent newspaper. All three founders had been senior Telegraph journalists, two of them leader writers, on a paper that suffered from sclerotic conservatism.

Nevertheless, the privately educated Oxford graduates Andreas Whittam Smith, Stephen Glover and Matthew Symonds (whose daughter married Boris Johnson by the way), became the unlikely troika who established The Independent 40 years ago. It became a highly successful publication; leader columns were by reputation right of centre on economics but liberal when addressing social issues. I never read them. The paper's journalists were largely on the left, but there was a sprinkling of Tories and one right-wing anarchist, who was, it has to be said, slightly bonkers.

It was the first newspaper I'd worked on where I genuinely felt no pressure whatsoever to toe any political line. To be fair, The Times, the establishment's favoured newspaper at the time, came close to that. But there was always proprietor Rupert Murdoch lurking in the background.

The launch of The Indie was greatly helped by the fact that it came at the tail end of the Wapping dispute during which Murdoch forcibly introduced new technology on his

papers, which also included the Sunday Times, The Sun and the now-defunct News of the World. He did it by switching production of the titles from central London to Wapping and sacking 6,000 employees who were seeking to negotiate the introduction of the new techniques. It meant The Independent could use new technology but this came at a great human cost.

Nevertheless, The Independent was printed and distributed by unionised workers. And, by then, the whole of Fleet Street was introducing the technology.

The atmosphere at The Indie was so positive that one former Times sub-editor thought himself in journalistic nirvana and that we didn't need an NUJ chapel. Overwhelmingly, he was considered naive and ignored.

The Wapping dispute also helped with recruitment. A significant number of journalists working on The Times and The Sunday Times wanted to escape Fortress Wapping. So it attracted a ready-made coterie of experienced journalists more than happy to transfer to a serious, liberal-minded paper.

As I walked into the newsroom in 40 City Road on my first day, there were a lot of familiar faces – more than one-third of them were ex-Murdoch employees.

Some six months earlier, my first meeting with Whittam Smith had left me with the impression that I was dealing



ED BUZIAK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Political bias rejected in aim for the centre

The Independent first saw the light of day on October 7 1986. It was the first wholly new upmarket national newspaper in more than a century (The Telegraph had launched a Sunday edition in 1961).

The three founders, all Telegraph journalists, sought to place the new paper in the centre of British politics, taking readers from The Guardian on the left and The Times and The Telegraph on the right. It also aimed to draw in readers who may have become disenchanted with the other titles and wanted a paper that did not favour one side or the other.

It began as a broadsheet and changed to compact or tabloid format in 2003 – a change

subsequently adopted by The Times and, later, by The Guardian.

The Independent hit a circulation of more than 400,000 by 1989; The Independent on Sunday was started in 1990.

That decade saw the Murdoch titles cut their cover prices to see off its rival. It was an approach that presented financial problems for the new title and meant new investors were needed. However, the policy failed to see it off.

The paper survived in printed format until Saturday March 26 2016, leaving only the online edition. The i, launched in 2010, was originally a sister paper, but eventually went its separate way.





SHUTTERSTOCK EDITORIAL.

Andreas Whittam Smith, surrounded by editorial staff, holds a copy of the first issue of *The Independent*; the paper used desktop publishing technology from the outset

with an inspired amateur rather than a hard-bitten professional. For instance, he didn't really see the point of employing sub-editors.

On the paper he envisaged, writers and reporters would sub-edit their own copy and write their own headlines. I indicated my disagreement with such a course of action. I suggested that everybody's copy benefited from a once-over by someone else, that a grid system of layout with predetermined story lengths would not look great and that there was a 'knack' to writing headlines. Far more influential journalists than I finally persuaded him to abandon the idea.

There was a radical side to Whittam Smith's nature. He would not countenance anyone on the staff, including himself, earning more than 10 times the lowest paid employee. Apparently, he was paid £130,000 a year, while the lowest paid received £13,000. Elon Musk take note.

And, to prevent the emergence of a Murdoch Mark Two, no Independent investor was allowed to hold more than a 10th of the equity. Inevitably, those strictures did not survive subsequent investments from more conventional newspaper groups.

Whittam Smith insisted we become the only paper with a presence in parliament to opt out of the lobby system, a move fully endorsed by political editor Tony Bevins, a free spirit and refugee from *The Times*. This slightly grubby, quasi-masonic system was (and still is) used by MPs in general and ministers in particular to brief signed-up lobby journalists on an anonymous basis. As part of his new-broom approach, the editor also insisted journalists should not take freebies.

On the minus side, Whittam Smith sometimes found it difficult to cope with the idea that people with working class accents – and whose personal contact with Oxford was perhaps limited to a day trip – could possibly have the intellect

and judgement to take on senior roles at the paper. He always insisted on being styled Whittam Smith even though the family name was the perfectly adequate Smith.

His secretary at *The Telegraph*, Linda Tanner, who became publicity officer at *The Indie*, was very protective of the great man. She was not desperately keen on the lower orders referring to him as Andy Smith, Andy Pandy or Squitters.

Belying any impression of amateurism, Whittam Smith presided over an intensely complicated gestation period for the paper. He had to: attract an initial £18 million in investment; undertake extensive market research; predict likely advertising revenue; find suitable premises; choose printing companies in various parts of the UK; and make sure distribution was fast and efficient. Starting a new newspaper is a huge undertaking.

The Independent was born at a time when a huge chunk of the population got their news from papers and the internet was embryonic. It was a great time to be a journalist on a quality paper. In its heyday, *The Independent* was a great paper to work on. As William Wordsworth said:

'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive.
But to be young was very heaven!'

That sounds a bit over the top in this context but we had the time and resources to pursue stories, there was no pressure to remain tied to a desk and management did not adhere to the psychopathic management techniques of the Mail. The only imperative was that we had to keep producing stories that other papers didn't have and that each story should have a unique Independent twist – an unfathomable concept demonstrated by Whittam Smith thrusting his hand in the air and twisting an imaginary knob.

Thankfully, the destructive and dispiriting era of clickbait was decades into the future. One can only hope that it is a passing phase.



Whittam Smith insisted we opted out of parliament's quasi-masonic lobby system



Northern frights

Gritty, distant and full of people who wouldn't watch Newsnight.
Helen Nugent looks at some blinkered views of the north

It's been 10 years since a Sunday Times writer declared they were 'more nervous about going to Leeds than a war zone' despite their desire to 'wear a flat cap, eat chips with gravy and race a whippet'. Four years ago, a Times journalist opined that 'to northern cuisine such as bread and dripping and chips and curry sauce can now be added raw venison in coal oil and seaweed custard'. Oh, and only this summer, The Independent declared that 'we are all performative northerners now'.

The national press school of 'it's grim up north' journalism is alive and well, galvanized by the appointment of a new prime minister who, if you believe The Independent, has ridden a wave of northern clichés all the way to the top job and is responsible for 'performative northernness' entering the mainstream, whatever that means.

Surely it's the London-based journalists who are riding the cliché crest by looking to score a cheap laugh? Whatever your opinion, there's a serious side to this nonsense, not least acute cultural and economic consequences, and its roots date back decades.

News retreats south

"When I was a boy, several national newspapers had substantial reporting, subbing and printing operations in the north," says Richard Dixon, former chief revise editor at The Times, now semi-retired. "One of my uncles was a sub on the Daily Express in Manchester. That physical presence shapes and encourages a journalistic, political and cultural landscape. And its absence diminishes it."

"The advent of Andy Burnham as prime minister and his stated intention to relocate some national governance and decision-making to his Manchester base has, I think, frightened the political and media horses in London. It is somewhat ironic that The Guardian – formerly

The Manchester Guardian – felt obliged to carry a story in early August from points north headlined 'Labour minister denies Burnham too blokey'."

According to Dixon, the UK's national media has been retreating south for some considerable time, an assertion backed up by numerous other personal accounts and analysis. For example, when Up North Runway, an organisation that provides opportunities for budding northern designers, scrutinised its newly acquired Roxhill Media database (touted as the most comprehensive list of UK journalists and outlets), it found the results 'startling'. It said that, while there were thousands of entries, the newsroom power map was overwhelmingly London-centric, saying that 'the database does not lie; it reflects a structural truth about the industry's geography'.

Dixon says: "I think the increasing concentration of editors, their commissioning lieutenants and production journalists in the capital has reduced the credibility of the national press, and affected what happens politically. I have no doubt that The Sun's vile editorial line on the Hillsborough disaster and the consequent plummeting of its circulation and revenues, particularly in Merseyside, would not have happened had the red top kept a serious regional presence. And I am convinced that the bonkers decision to prioritise HS2 rather than west-east rail links from Liverpool to Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, York and Newcastle was made not least because of the absence of credible press scrutiny north of Birmingham."

Meanwhile, Lynne Bateson is fed up with the northern jokes surrounding Burnham's role. As someone who began her career on northern local papers and ended up as a senior executive on nationals, she recalls being new to London.

"I raised my hand to ask a question in a large press conference. The speaker, who had briefly met me before, said, 'I'll take a question from the lady who says oop'."

Today, Bateson says, the national press's coverage of the north of England is 'backwards and blinkered'. She believes that the situation was better when journalists reached London via regional papers'.

"There used to be well-trodden routes for working-class journalists to get on to nationals from the regions. These days, journalism has become more of an upper middle-class job, especially since you increasingly need well-off parents to support you while doing unpaid internships in cash-strapped legacy media. And there are so many more youngsters who get a start because their families know someone. I remember chatting with a working-class colleague on the Sunday Express about this. We looked around the busy newsroom and couldn't identify anyone else who was either northern or working class."

Distortion and stereotypes

Dawn-Maria France is editor-in-chief of Yorkshire Women's Life magazine. She says: "The narratives about the north are often distorted, seen mainly through a London-centric lens. This can lead to both underrepresentation and stereotypes that don't truly reflect the vibrant diversity of northern culture. Having reported from both areas, I've felt the impact of this first hand."

"Recently, labelling figures like Andy Burnham as a 'performative northerner' has highlighted a bigger issue around the authenticity of representation. There's a real frustration among many of us when northern identities are superficially engaged with, especially by major media outlets that often favour southern stories."

A freelance journalist and copywriter in





Cockermouth, Cumbria, Suzanne Elsworth agrees the north can be ignored by the national press, partly owing to ‘geographical inconvenience’; in particular, people see the Lake District as “somewhere people go on so think it’s a long way away”.

She says: “With regard to politics, Workington Man [the archetypal swing voter] became a thing ahead of the 2019 general election, so suddenly West Cumbria attracted some attention, though it was packed with stereotypes and narrow views. I think most places between Manchester and Scotland often don’t figure on the political map – just look at our transport links and the fact we have to travel out of the county for a lot of specialist healthcare.”

She continues: “The north isn’t just gritty industry or pretty holiday backdrops with nothing in between – it’s a living, breathing, working place with world-class expertise. Just look at the nuclear sector. Sellafield hits the headlines as a dark, scary place yet the brilliance in its supply chain is astounding. Most of the 2026 World Cup pitches used turf technology made in Maryport, a tiny town on the coast. The paper used in your bank notes is made in Wigton. The paper for your Remembrance Day poppies is made near Kendal. The ‘pips’ heard on the BBC are broadcast from the Solway Coast.”

For journalists who have moved north from the south, the change in location and perspective has been palpable. Until

Investigative journalism and television are among the worst genres if you have a regional accent

2023, Olivia Greenway lived in the home counties and worked in London. However, her husband comes from Manchester and, when covid happened, the couple decided to move north. Today, she lives in south Manchester.

“I had a few friends from Manchester and they always used to moan about PRs not coming north and no one being interested,” she says. “I’m a travel writer and I thought they were exaggerating. They weren’t.”

Cut off

A freelance travel and lifestyle writer, Greenway recalls that, when she worked in London, she was invited to events all the time. While those events still appear in her inbox, they are impossible to attend. Only a handful of companies seem to venture beyond the M25. Furthermore, when Greenway writes travel articles for different publications, they want it from a London perspective.

“The travel editors are all based in London, and that’s where the PRs are based too. It’s very, very London-centric because that’s where they are. If they want to go on the trip that you’ve just written about, they want to go from London. So that perpetuates it... I find it very frustrating.”

Even more disconcerting is how northern journalists in London are sometimes treated by colleagues. Lucinda Borrell, a senior investigations journalist, lived in London for 15 years before returning to her home city of Newcastle.

“I moved back two years ago, in part because of regional accent discrimination that I faced at the BBC,” she says. “I woke up one morning and thought, I can’t be bothered with this any more.”

During her time in London, Borrell worked in national newsrooms and on current affairs investigations for the BBC and independent production companies. Now based in the north east, she recalls “abuse, particularly around my accent, in production companies and at the BBC”.

She says: “I think that the investigative journalism sphere and the television sphere are some of the worst genres to be working in as someone with a regional accent.”

Numerous studies have revealed prejudice against people with northern accents. The Speaking of Prejudice research project, led by Northumbria University, found people believe that speakers in the north of England are less intelligent.

“There’s a stereotype – and there always has been – that Geordies are stupid, don’t like clever things, we’re all broke, and that we wouldn’t watch a programme like Newsnight or File on 4,” says Borrell. “And there’s an idea that any Geordie who comes into a newsroom or is watching a programme is living their life like Billy Elliot. And I think you can see that massively in programming.”

“The BBC does want to do more in Newcastle but it’s all daytime and drama. I haven’t seen any documentaries or high-profile news coverage from the BBC that has been based in the north east.”

Borrell believes that people in the north east are more likely to watch ITV regional news programmes which, in her experience, are better at reflecting what is happening locally. She also points to a surge in hyperlocal outlets.

“In the north east, there is a lot of appetite for journalism for current affairs for issues that affect people on a day-to-day basis. But I’m in my late 30s and I don’t know anyone who has a licence fee. To them, they are not getting any value out of it or any representation.”

Small boat survival

Amid the small boats crisis, **Ruth Addicott** talks to journalists working on the coasts

Speaking to a pregnant, Iraqi-Kurdish woman, who was about to board a small boat to cross the Channel with her two children, investigative journalist Nicola Kelly passed on her details not knowing if she would hear from the young mother again.

Kelly has spent the past six years documenting the crisis for The Guardian, The Observer and The Independent and posts regularly on Substack. In 2015, she published a book, *Anywhere But Here*, referring to graffiti she saw scrawled on a wall next to a camp in Dunkirk.

Reporting from beaches, ports, courtrooms and detention centres, she has travelled across the UK, speaking to local communities, new arrivals and people on the front line.

Kelly says one of the biggest challenges facing journalists is the legal battles. She cites an investigation she did for The Observer in 2023, involving allegations of abuse against asylum seekers at five hotels in the Liverpool area run by Serco.

"Serco is a really big organisation with lots of lawyers, lots of money and lots of heft and The Observer cannot compete with that," she says. "These big organisations, of which there are many in the asylum system, use their heft against

reporters and particularly freelances, who are in a much more vulnerable position."

Kelly has also had threats made towards herself and her family, including an incident where a far-right group found out where her son went to nursery.

"There have been moments that have made it really difficult for me to continue reporting on this issue, but I stay focused," she says.

Zak Garner-Purkis is investigations editor at The Express and, although a lot of focus is on the embarkations (which he says is what the desks want), he has tried to look more into what is happening on the ground, in terms of the camps, the police and the traffickers.

With multiple migrant camps, multiple beaches and the situation constantly changing, he says it's easy to capture the chaos and lose sight of the story.

"You have to plan well and stay focused," he says. "Often, you find people who will start to speak, then someone will come and tell them not to speak. The traffickers blend in and build networks amongst the migrants, they know everything that's going on, so it's being aware that the people you are trying to expose and do the story on are watching you – they're present and you need to recognise that."

He says the strongest stories come from speaking to local people or working with a collaborator such as a journalist who speaks French or Arabic.

Law, language and locals

Know the law

Journalist Nicola Kelly (who has worked at No 10 and the Home Office) advises reading up on the law and policies, and getting to know immigration

lawyers: "It can be quite complex because it's fast moving, so get some sources inside government, particularly the Home Office, who will feed you information.

That's always helpful in terms of getting exclusives."

Locals and language

Zak Garner-Purkis, Investigations editor at The

Express, advises speaking to locals – waitresses, bar staff and people walking their dogs.

"On every side – the police, the migrants, locals – there is more to be found out. If you speak any languages of the migrant groups, that will give you a serious leg up."

Dig into details

Photographer Sean Aidan says: "Don't always believe or accept what you've been told.

"Do your own research. Put the time in. Talk to people. Look for an angle that hasn't been fully explored and don't give up."



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

One investigation he worked on recently showed how the traffickers operate.

“What was remarkable was how brazen and how close it was to the French police,” he says. “We had to pull our undercover out after a ridiculously short time because they had gathered so much information. We went down and confronted the traffickers and they were happily mingling around a market area where people were making a profit selling life jackets. The police were clearly aware this market was operating and that blew my mind.”

Garner-Purkis says the camps can be dangerous and you can be cut off if you go in too far. He always takes precautions in terms of who he’s with and never takes unnecessary risks.

“I’ve had bottles thrown at me and someone pull a knife out,” he says.

One incident occurred when he was in a migrant camp with shadow home secretary Chris Philp in August 2025.

“Chris Philp was speaking to someone, I was watching the backs of the videographers and a guy walked past with a machete over a foot long, swinging it around – he made eye contact and smiled, he obviously wanted to intimidate,” he says.

Another issue is content creators and ‘vigilantes’ trying to stop the boats. Garner-Purkis says he has been stopped by French police and had his press card taken several times. He says the vigilantes are making it difficult for reporters.

“We may differentiate ourselves but, to a policeman, migrant or local, they just see someone speaking English with a camera,” he says.

Kent-based photographer Sean Aidan works for national press including The Times, the Mirror and The Sun.

“It used to be fairly easy photographing the new arrivals at Dover docks,” he says. “You could get right down to the unloading docks 100 yards away and easily get good shots of men, women, children – toddlers sent over on their own, and mothers with babies. In the last couple of years, screens have gone up so there is no chance of getting shots. Security around the docks has increased and it’s impossible to get close, especially if you have a camera on your shoulder.” (He now

“I don’t think this is an issue that we can cover from desks and certainly not from London.”

Nicola Kelly,
investigative
journalist

“I think that is the dangerous aspect, that the people who run this enterprise have very little regard for human life”

Zak Garner-Purkis,
Investigations
editor, The Express

“It appears that the government, border force etc are being economical with the truth – almost as if they are trying to cover the story up.”

Sean Aidan,
photographer

takes pictures from a public car park on the cliff).

A standout moment was talking to a woman on the beach at Dungeness, who had made a 5,000-mile trip from Eritrea with her five-year-old daughter. “She had fled war and conflict, most of her family had been killed and her home destroyed,” he says. “She came here not as a freeloader but to give her daughter a better life – they both spoke very good English but had no family here.”

Aidan passed on his details and, four years later, she got back in touch – she was working in the NHS and her daughter was doing well in full-time education. “This was one reason for covering the story – to find a positive human story,” he says.

Aidan relies on contacts and marine traffic apps. His biggest challenge is getting access and information about the scale of new arrivals.

Garner-Purkis says there is a lack of transparency on all sides, from the French police, the British government and the migrants. “Everyone is guarded and I understand that, but it’s within that environment the traffickers are able to operate. I think what needs to shift is getting people to open up and journalists can play a role in that.”

Kelly’s concern is the issue is often now covered by political rather than home affairs correspondents, who have more specialist knowledge, experience and contacts.

“Hacking away at those [home affairs] teams and moving the focus of the coverage to political correspondents means that this issue is only viewed through the lens of Westminster and I don’t think that helps people’s understanding of the asylum system and the way it affects people on the ground.”

Another frustration is the lack of change, which has left many journalists ‘demoralised’ and leading some to shift focus. (Kelly now works in the World Food Programme press office.)

As for the pregnant Iraqi-Kurdish woman, Kelly followed her journey. “I followed them thankfully, safely across the channel and they were dispersed to the north of England,” she says. “I am in touch with them regularly. They are doing well now, the kids are in school and their English is amazing. There are so many moments in their story.”

Union activist

ARTISTIC ARC

Union stalwart Anita Halpin is leading a project to unite art history and radical politics, drawing on her extraordinary family history. **Conrad Landin** reports



Anita Halpin has a voice that carries – as any NUJ activist who has heard her speak at delegate meetings or TUC events can attest. And, like many trade unionists of her generation, she chooses her words and her commitments carefully.

Since joining the NUJ in the 1970s, Halpin has been one of the union's most prominent lay activists. She served as president in 1994–95 and was a longstanding NUJ treasurer and member of the TUC general council.

Now 82 and largely retired from her union positions, she seems busier than ever – as the figurehead of a vibrant publishing project bringing art history and radical politics together. It's all thanks to a side of Halpin's story that will have passed many of her union comrades by – and, for once, it's not something she arrived at by choice.

Born Anita Hess in 1944, she was the child of Jewish emigrés Hans and Lili Hess, who had fled Nazi Germany along with Hans's mother Tekla. The family made a remarkable contribution to the visual arts – Tekla and her husband Alfred as collectors and patrons of expressionist artists and their work in interwar Germany, and Hans as a curator and Marxist art historian in Britain.

But for Halpin, there was never any time for looking back. Her union activity jostled for space with her career as a PR and comms journalist in the medical sector, senior positions in the Communist Party and bringing up her son, Boris. Her husband Kevin had an equally illustrious vocation in the trade union movement, founding the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trades Unions in the late 1960s to resist anti-strike legislation.

Hans and Lili had both died in the mid-1970s and their house in Sussex was cleared. Halpin and Kevin got their papers but, with a baby and the demands of politics and trade unionism, they never had time to go through them. When Kevin died in 2017, Halpin began to think again about the three rusty-green filing cabinets in her attic.

"It was a quite simple choice," she recalls. "Do I live in the past and continue to mourn my father, or do my family live in the future?"

Hans Hess had been expected to go into a management role at his parents' shoe factory in Erfurt, central Germany. However, a series of seismic events – first the Wall Street Crash, then the rise of the Nazis – put paid to that. It was only after fleeing to Britain, internment as an 'enemy alien' in Canada and war work on a Leicestershire farm that he ended up a curator.

The head of the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Trevor Thomas, had heard that the Hess family – famous for their art collection – were in town, and gave Hans a job. He played a key role in putting on an exhibition of German expressionism before the war was over – entitled, diplomatically, 'Mid-European Art'. He later became curator of York Art Gallery and a visiting lecturer at the city's new university in the 1960s.

Fast forward to 2019 and, with the help of two other NUJ veterans – former Morning Star journalist Kenny Coyle and

Be wary of the records

Archive research can provide a fascinating insight into domestic life and political entanglements – but records of turbulent times can be subject to abuse.

At the Berlin conference in April, art historian Henry Keazor of the University of Heidelberg presented his research on the collectors Nicola and Franz Moufang. Delving into their many volumes, he found that Nicola – a Nazi collaborator – had fashioned guestbook entries to cast himself in a better light after the war.

Journalists and historians alike must assess historical documents carefully. Katja Hoyer, whose recent book Weimar narrates the people of its eponymous city, found that diaries held in local archives enabled her to tell a much more personal story. She was confident enough not to worry about the authenticity of her protagonist Carl Weirich's account – because he was frank about his support for the Nazis.

There have also been famous cases of outright

fraud. In 1983, German news magazine Stern claimed to have bought the diaries of Adolf Hitler, and licensed serialisation rights to The Sunday Times.

The Murdoch-owned paper asked its non-executive director, historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, to certify their authenticity – and he duly obliged. Other historians disagreed, and forensic analysis established they were present-day forgeries. Frank Giles, the editor of the Sunday Times, was sacked by Murdoch.



ANDREAS DOMMA (INSTAGRAM: @ANDREAS.DOMMA)

A black and white caricature of a man with a large, ornate mustache and a top hat, looking down. The drawing is framed by a thick black border.

Max Pechstein, Portrait
of Alfred Hess, 1919,
Leicester Museum and Art
Gallery, loaned
by private collector
© Pechstein Hamburg/
Toekendorf/DACS, 2013



The next stage goes back another generation. Avant-garde artists would regularly visit the large family home in Erfurt during Hans's childhood. Halpin's grandparents Alfred and Tekla kept a guest book – to which leading expressionists including Max Pechstein, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee contributed drawings and watercolours.

The conference had a moral significance too, in bringing Halpin's family back to Germany – where many family members were persecuted in the Nazi era and much of the Hess art collection was looted.

In 2006, Halpin won a restitution case against the city of Berlin for a famous painting that had been in the family collection, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Berlin Street Scene*. Even then, it provoked a fierce backlash from right-wing politicians and a section of Germany's art establishment unwilling to accept the need for redress.

Halpin is encouraged by the project's success in bringing together different aspects of media production, skills and craft – from the Morning Star and German media partners Neues Deutschland and Junge Welt to the Bristol-based printing firm that produces the books.

When she first joined the NUJ in the 1970s, there were still fierce demarcations between areas of work in newspapers and magazines. "It was seen as a guild rather than a trade union," she explains.

"And that certainly changed under recent general secretaries John Foster, then Jeremy [Dear] and Michelle [Stanistreet]. Certainly [with] the current general secretary having come out of a very harsh negotiating arena successfully, I'm sure we'll keep up that tradition of punching above our weight."

The project has now grown much bigger than Halpin, with a series of events and seminars taking place across Europe.

Halpin played a crucial role in the Cultures in Resistance festival at Wortley Hall, the ‘workers’ stately home’ in south Yorkshire, in April. That event brought together trade unionists, artists and art historians. London Recruits, the film about the British activists recruited to fight apartheid in South Africa, was screened and there were discussions on art and labour in the age of AI, and a workshop on producing artistic manifestos. There was also a significant programme for children. “Some of them have already been writing down in the notebooks that we provided for them what they want to do next year, which is brilliant,” Halpin says.

She hopes this will become an annual event, and that it can play a role in bringing working class organisation together with the arts, which, she says, "really is a bourgeois enterprise".

Halpin won a restitution case against Berlin for a looted painting that had been in the family

Samantha Downes looks at the professional and ethical issues

“My concern is not necessarily that journalists become deliberately biased. Rather, it is that financial dependence on corporate clients can subtly influence decisions about who to quote, what stories to pursue and how aggressively to challenge powerful organisations.”

Ruzicka sees the issue as more complex. “What gives me a lot of comfort, even though I’m working in house, is that these institutions care about the rules and make sure they are compliant,” she says. However, she sees inherent tensions: “We all need to sell something and they’re going to beat their chest and say they’re the best. That doesn’t always sit so well.”

Nonetheless, she also sees continuity between her current role and her journalistic background.

“The more I can help end users understand their product, the more I am being a journalist because my role is in explaining and making things clearer.”

The distinction, she said, lies in transparency. “The audience understands corporate communications have a commercial purpose, whereas journalism carries different expectations.”

Most journalists who undertake corporate work insist they can separate the roles. Problems arise when others do not.

For example, last year I posted a request for expert comment through a professional network. Another group member, who had used their PR credentials to join, then pitched my idea to a rival publication. To me this illustrates how blurred professional boundaries can create ethical problems.

The issue is not corporate work itself. Journalists have long supplemented their income through training, consultancy or commissioned projects; concerns arise when commercial and editorial activities become difficult to distinguish.

In addition, straddling journalism and PR can require a cultural adjustment, which can be a shock to the system.

Smith says one of the biggest surprises was how much his professional behaviour needed to change: “Where straight talking may be expected in journalism, your client’s staff and their clients are VIPs, so a very polite approach is necessary.

“A journalist may rightly consider themselves to be a gatekeeper for their audience; as a PR, you are no longer the most important person in the room. You must be the lukewarm water between the ice of your client and the fire of the journalist.”

He also found out far more about the industries he covered: “As a third-party PR, I learned more about the workings of the sector in a year than I did in 10 years covering it as a journalist.”

Lewis also points out that a white paper on AI she helped write for a corporate client gave her the knowledge to write news and features on the subject.

Smith says: “Working inside organisations often provides a deeper understanding of decision-making processes, regulatory requirements and commercial realities. That knowledge can ultimately make journalists stronger reporters if they later return to editorial work.”

The overwhelming view among those interviewed is that yes journalists should take on corporate work – provided that clear ethical boundaries are maintained.

The former editor who moved into corporate communications sees no contradiction.

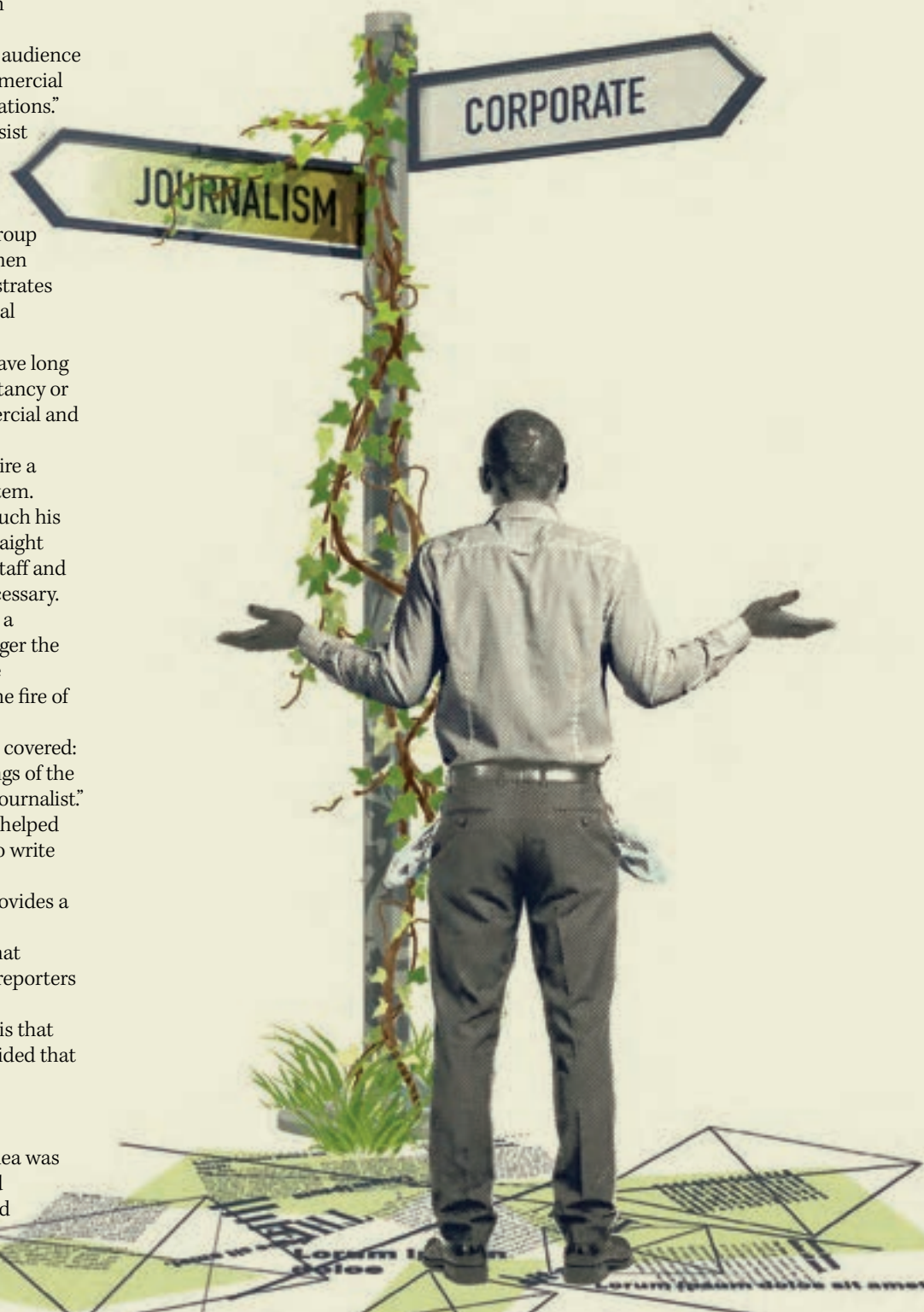
“I never gave it a second thought,” he says. “If the idea was good enough and they were reliable on deadlines and decent copy, I’d commission. We are professionals and

we are simply using our skills to earn a living.”

Perhaps the more uncomfortable question is not whether we should undertake corporate work but whether we have alternatives. Many reporters now derive the majority of their income from corporate clients. One journalist tells me two to three articles of journalism have served as a shop window for more lucrative consultancy, training and content work.

It may also be why so many talented journalists can no longer earn a living from journalism alone.

Smith, who has now returned to journalism, believes good journalists will always be prized. “It’s a skill set that cannot be replaced by AI and, as the public become more educated, they will realise that too.”



A life of resistance

The story of Fleet Street's first black journalist reminds us how corrosive racism is, writes **Francis Beckett**

Memories are short. A top Reform politician sneers at a Labour politician for having been born in Somalia, while a Reform council leader tells broadcaster Sangita Myska that she is "English only in your dreams". Meanwhile Nigel Farage demands people should be deported to countries such as Afghanistan and Eritrea despite the danger.

The late Lionel Morrison, who came to Britain as a refugee from apartheid South Africa in 1960, would be appalled. He would want to remind us where this leads, and the publication of his autobiography, finished for him after his death by his wife Liz, does just that.

Born in 1935, Lionel gives us, in his marvellously evocative first chapter, the colour and texture of a South African childhood – the fun and the magic, as well as the harsh reality of having a skin colour that made you a second (or third) class citizen.

At Witwatersrand University, he finds that "extracurricular activities, like joining student societies and taking part in sports, were for whites only". He can see what apartheid does to people. There is his Uncle Harry, who fought in North Africa, came home with shell shock, and has none of the benefits white soldiers received. There is his girlfriend Selina, who was persuaded by pharmaceutical company advertising to make her skin lighter with experimental cosmetics. The stuff gave her cancer and she died.

In 1955, he becomes a journalist, working on *The Drum*, an important platform for African writers. At the end

of press day, to get a bottle of whisky for himself and his colleagues, he has to pretend to be a white man.

Lionel joins the Picasso Group, which chalked anti-apartheid slogans on walls. He knew where this would lead if he was caught: to the dreaded Fort prison in Johannesburg (pictured), which he describes in one stark sentence, the opening sentence of this book: "Crowded, filthy, lice-ridden cells, continual abuse, extreme violence, and beatings." He was caught, and they threw him into the Fort.

He is arrested and faces a possible death sentence as the youngest of the famous 1957 treason trialists; the evidence against him included the fact that he possessed a book called *Black Beauty* – a story about a horse.

Eventually, knowing that staying in South Africa means another spell in the Fort, he escapes by stowing away on a liner and enters Britain illegally.

For the next five years, he scratched a living in Britain, got to know the NUJ well and travelled extensively in Eastern Europe, China and Africa preaching the anti-apartheid gospel. He spent some time in prison in Zambia, and got to know some remarkable people, East German leader Walter Ulbricht and President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana among them. He might have settled in Indonesia but he was expelled from the country after the 1965 coup in which his fiancée was killed. He settled in Britain.

All this Lionel recounts in simple, luminous matter-of-fact prose but

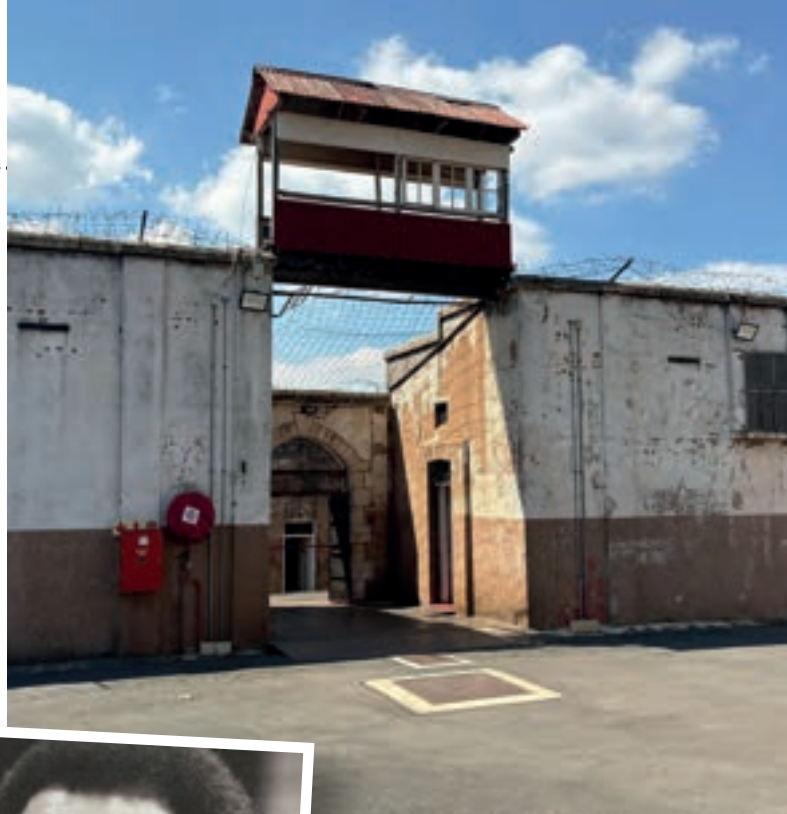
that is as far as he got, and Liz takes up his story. The change of voice is immediately apparent, but the style is still readable and accessible. Lionel became one of the leading voices identifying and confronting racism in Britain, and encountered such prejudice himself, less brutal and more subtle than the racism he was used to, but hurtful nonetheless.

Few of us can say we made a difference. Lionel did. When he came to Britain, there were no black journalists in Fleet Street. As the Guardian's Gary Younge writes in his introduction to the book: "Lionel cleared a lot of space. And then, the gent that he was, he held the door open so others, like me, might walk through it."

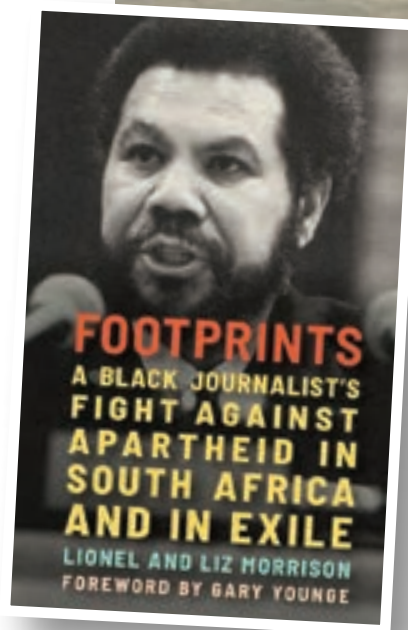
In my time on the NUJ national executive council, we shamefully underestimated Lionel Morrison. He was a man of deep convictions, but also a humorous companion with a store of entertaining anecdotes, even about the darkest parts of his life. This book reflects his personality as well as the dark times he knew.

It's a tremendous book – important but, like Lionel, wearing its importance lightly; and more important now, when we are in danger of forgetting how corrosive racism can be. It deserves far more attention from the media than it has had so far.

***Footprints: A Black Journalist's Fight Against Apartheid in South Africa and in Exile* by Lionel and Liz Morrison is published by Haymarket Books**



SHUTTERSTOCK



Lionel cleared a lot of space. And then, the gent that he was, he held the door open so others, like me, might walk through it



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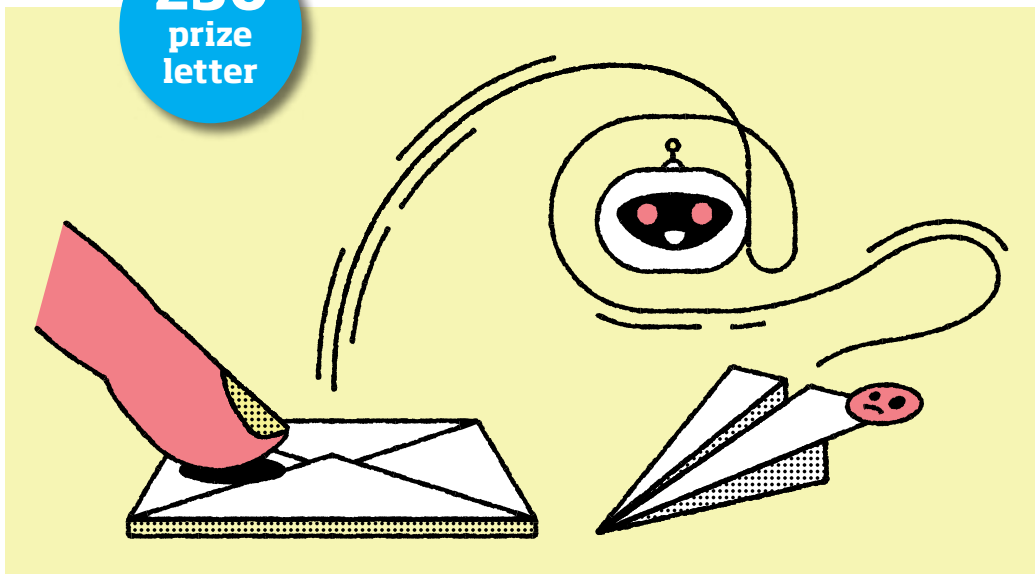


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DENIS CARRIER



When diminishing returns combine with dashed hope

I returned to freelance journalism after spending a big chunk of my career running a publishing business in the airline industry and, latterly, a marketing business. I've always been a journalist at heart but life can derail one's best intentions.

How things have changed: my first big freelance sell, back in the 1980s was a front-page feature in a new leisure section in *The Times*. I was paid £500 – a princely sum then. I now count myself lucky if I get £300 for a 1,000-word feature, notwithstanding decades of inflation.

It's hard coming back and finding yourself bereft of commissioning contacts but, nowadays, people rarely answer a telephone and hardly

ever respond to an email, so finding new outlets for work is challenging to say the least.

Last year things were ticking over OK, with a fairly regular gig with *The New World* and a twice-yearly aviation magazine to edit and publish. Then the aviation company went bust.

I researched outlets and was attracted by the *The Oldie's* guidelines: "The Oldie is one of the very few magazines in the country who [sic] believe in dedicating time and effort from our limited resources to reading all unsolicited pieces, so please do your bit – pay attention to these guidelines..."

"We regret that, owing to the volume of submissions we receive, we are unable to call or email unless a story is accepted for publication. We only read unsolicited pieces one day a week, so replies can take a month or so. If you have not heard from us within ninety days, please assume that we will not be able to publish your manuscript."

especially after having been sat in front of one all day writing.

Publishing only every other issue of *The Journalist* in print seems an odd move and, arguably, gives the digital-only issues less exposure.

I know from previous correspondence with the editor that she struggled to fill the letters page

when *The Journalist* went digital only during the pandemic.

The savings may also prove to be a false economy. While I support the NUJ's other work, I've always considered my NUJ membership a partial magazine subscription. But now, after almost 30 years of membership,

A commitment to read a submission felt like gold dust, so I crafted three stories of appropriate length and – I believe – thoroughly in tune with the magazine's typical content and values.

I spent time polishing and reworking them and finally hit send, expecting to hear nothing back for a while, as per said commissioning policy.

Imagine my surprise when, less than six minutes later, I received the following from editor Harry Mount: "Thanks so much but not quite right for us."

I tried again. This time, the response came back in less than a minute: "So sorry but not quite right for us."

Of course, it's an editor's prerogative to treat unsolicited submissions as they see fit, but these replies didn't accord with the published policy.

I wrote to the publisher, James Pembroke, suggesting: "If you no longer want to encourage submissions, then say so. Modify your email bot to say that you regret you are no longer able to consider unsolicited material."

He replied: "I do understand your disappointment. We are a very small team and we handle a great many submissions. Ninety nine per cent of magazine editors don't even reply, often because they don't want to cause offence."

Sadly, this missed my point – if *The Oldie* is too busy to read unsolicited material, it should take down material suggesting otherwise.

Editors might reflect that it is not just their own time that is of value.

**Stan Abbott
Durham**

James Pembroke, publisher of The Oldie, writes: An experienced editor like Harry can spot whether he likes a piece within a few minutes. Richard Ingrams and Alexander Chancellor were the same. I can't see how this contradicts our policy of welcoming submissions.

The Journalist budget cut may be false economy

Thanks for the latest edition. I have downloaded it and, maybe, I'll get round to reading it at some point.

If it were in print, I would already have read all of it. Maybe I'm a dinosaur, but I simply don't enjoy reading on a screen the same,

I am seriously considering whether it's worth the subs without more than two tangible publications a year.

For the record, I earn a living writing for both print and online outlets.

**Owen Ralph
Preston, Lancashire**

by Mark Fisher arts

Books

Come What May, We're Here to Stay

Taj Ali
Out now, Manchester University Press

The NUJ member and former Tribune editor tells the 'story of South Asian resistance in Britain', from global strikes by seafarers on the eve of the Second World War to 1970s racist violence.

Discipline

Randa Abdel-Fattah
Out now, Oneworld Publications

A journalist struggles to tell the truth about Gaza in defiance of her

newsroom, while an academic decides staying silent is the best option. Their paths cross in a novel about the perils of speaking out.

Red Triangle: Workers, Loyalists and Partition — a North of Ireland History *Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh* Out November 10, Verso

The historian contends that Irish labourers in 1918–19 were united in their defence of wages and dignity, regardless of religion. In this people's history, he looks at how trades unions dealt with sectarianism and imperialism.

Twelve Days that Shook the Middle East

Marwan Bishara
October 6, Haymarket Books

The senior political analyst at Al Jazeera English argues that Israel and the US manufactured the case for genocide in Gaza. Describing what happened following October 7 2023, he contends that mass killing was premeditated.

Comedy

Matt Forde's Political Party *Duchess Theatre, London* November 9–June 7

The satirist extends his monthly West End podcast recordings with live shows running into next year. At the time of writing, his guests include Liz Kendall



in November and Wes Streeting in December, with the 2027 line-up to be announced.

Exhibitions

William Morris: Common Paradise

Whitworth, Manchester
December 5–September 19

Textiles, wallpaper, ceramics, stained glass and personal artefacts explore the 'art for all' philosophy of the designer, activist and writer. The exhibition connects Morris's commitment to social reform with today's big political issues and encourages visitors to consider how his vision can shape a better future.

Sharjah Art Foundation Collection

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
November 19–May 30

This shows Palestinian art from the 1960s until today, with a focus on the late Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara, whose work depicted injustice in Palestine and as far afield as Ireland. Also at IMMA from October 22 until April 25 is Eltiqa: How to Work Together?, showcasing the work of a Gazan arts collective.

Talents 2026: New Voices in Irish Photography

Photo Museum Ireland, Dublin
October 24–November 29

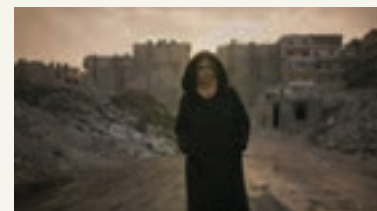
Eight emerging talents from the island of Ireland, showcasing the community activism of Laura Dunwoody, intimate portraits by Ronan Callahan, queer-themed reflections by Ines Pesado and analogue images of solitude by Ewan Power.

Film

One in a Million General release

From November 6

Ten years in the making, this documentary by Itab Azzam and Jack MacInnes follows 11-year-old



Israa as she leaves Syria with her family and comes of age in Germany where the pull of home remains strong.

In depth

A day in the life of Woodward

He is the journalist with more number-one best sellers than any other, 15 of his 22 books having topped the New York Times list. He is also the reporter who, with Carl Bernstein on the Washington Post, broke the Watergate scandal, bringing down President Nixon for his complicity in a White House espionage cover-up.

Now with *Secrets*, Bob Woodward is adding a memoir to his list of accomplishments – one that takes us from his formative years in Illinois to a behind-the-scenes insight into his confidential sources as he worked a beat covering the Supreme Court, the CIA and the Pentagon.

At a time when the Washington Post has been making swingeing cuts to its workforce – “I am crushed,” he said on X after more than 300 journalists were laid off in February – his story reflects an era of fearless, well-resourced news reporting that held power to account to dramatic effect.

Woodward has built his reputation on discretion and journalistic integrity: his sources talk to him because they are assured of anonymity.

“He has an extraordinary ability to get otherwise responsible adults to spill [their] guts,” Robert Gates, the former defence secretary and CIA director, once said.

Born in 1943, he graduated from Yale in 1965 and, after spending five years in the Navy, did a year at the Montgomery Sentinel before being hired as a reporter for the Washington Post, where he now has the honorary title of associate editor.

His famous scoop with fellow young reporter

Bernstein came a year later in 1972.

Only in 2005 did Woodward confirm that FBI associate director W Mark Felt was the informant known as Deep Throat.

Woodward was played by Robert Redford in *All the President's Men*, the 1976 Watergate thriller.

Now that many of his sources are dead, the 83-year-old is willing to reveal more about them in his 600-page book.

He will also share tips on how he gets people to talk – and why they agree to it – as well as explaining the reporting process and pulling the curtain back on President Trump's administration.

Secrets, Bob Woodward, Simon & Schuster, November 24



American Doctor
General release
From November 20

Medicine meets politics in Poh Si Teng's documentary about a Palestinian-American emergency doctor, a Jewish-American orthopaedic surgeon and a secular American trauma surgeon who volunteer in Gaza in the face of bombardment, medical shortages and personal danger.

Theatre
The Bridge
Bush Theatre, London
October 28–November 11

A young man carries a gift of olive oil from Jenin to Amman. Actor and comedian Alaa Shehada gives a broadside against British broken promises in Palestine.



Donald
Theatre Royal, Bath
November 6–December 5

Stefano Massini, who won five Tony Awards for *The Lehman Trilogy*, turns his attention to the 45th and 47th president of the United States and his journey from property and golf course developer via reality TV to disruptor in chief.



The Gang of Three
On tour, October 27
–November 21

The Labour leadership contest of 1973, dramatised by Robert Khan and Tom Salinsky, stars Alan Cox as Tony Crosland, Hywel Morgan as Roy Jenkins and Colin Tierney as Denis Healey.

Spotlight
Scottish originals

NUJ photographer Douglas Robertson has a busy sideline as a gig promoter. He and his partner Jane-Ann Purdy put together a year-round line-up of small shows in Edinburgh – sometimes in their house – with a focus on Tradfest in the spring and the Soundhouse Winter Festival in November.

“Each year, we aim to bring audiences the very best music being produced in Scotland at Winterfest,” says Robertson. “There is a huge wealth of home-grown talent and we carefully

curate this festival from that pool. Our aim is to bring audiences the music they love and, at the same time, artists they might not see anywhere else.”

This year's event kicks off with Edinburgh-based Irish singer Heidi Talbot, named composer of the year at the 2023 Scots Trad Music Awards, and singer-songwriter Boo Hewerdine, known for his long-time



collaboration with Eddi Reader. The long weekend continues with Ray Aggs and Eilidh Rodgers, aka Sacred Paws (pictured), with their Afrobeat and post-punk fusion.

Then come singer-songwriter Jake Cogan, saxophonist Matt Carmichael and folk musician Malin Lewis with a new, self-invented two-octave small pipe.

“There will be no act that we are not super excited to see playing,” says Robertson. “We hope that excitement is infectious.”

Soundhouse Winter Festival, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, November 26–30

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Mike Sherrington

Mike Sherrington, who has died aged 75, was a dedicated NUJ activist from the day he entered journalism, becoming successively father of chapel (FoC) at International Thompson magazines, a member of the national executive, general treasurer and a national organiser.

Born in March 1951 in Carshalton, he grew up in Ashted, Surrey, and worked as a surveyor in Wokingham. This expertise enabled him to persuade Construction News to take him on and turn him into a journalist.

While he enjoyed journalism, it was not long before he found his real vocation – trade union work. For most of his time at Construction

News, he represented his colleagues on all the International Thompson titles as their FoC.

This was a big job. He represented several hundred journalists working on more than 30 publications including Broadcast, Big Farm Weekly, Building Trades Journal, Communications International, Retail Jeweller, Drapers Record, Men's Wear, Building Today, and New Electronics.

He was, by common consent, a first class FoC, long serving and greatly respected and, as often happens with the best FoCs, it did his career in journalism no good at all. The management, which at first valued his integrity, knowing that if they could reach an agreement with

him it would be honoured, eventually tired of having to negotiate with the union and started its move to derecognise the NUJ. Mike lost his job in the early 1990s.

He freelanced successfully, writing for several trade magazines as well as for the trade union GMB's construction section and occasionally for national papers, but his heart was in trade union work.

He was a member of the NUJ national executive council and of the magazine and book industrial council and, in 1996, he was elected general treasurer.

In the autumn of 2001, he got the job he wanted to do more than anything: he became an NUJ national organiser, looking after members in magazines and books.

His close friend and colleague from that time, the then freelance organiser John Toner, says: "His many years as a committed activist enabled him to slot into the job immediately. He was hard-working, diligent in personal cases

and a skilful negotiator, as many grateful members could attest." He left the job in 2006.

Mike was a large man, physically imposing, with strong beliefs but a gentle and kindly nature. Many people (including the present writer) have cause to remember his acts of quiet kindness and generosity. He loved trade unions, jazz and Young's beer, and worked off his heroic consumption of the last-named by digging his allotment. He followed football, cricket and athletics, and was encyclopaedic about all of them.

Mike married Ruth Lawrence in 1973. Their daughter, Rosie May, born in 1979, runs Juno Books, a feminist and queer indie bookshop in Sheffield. Mike and Ruth divorced in 1986 and, from 1989, he lived with his partner Maggie Coates until she died two years ago. In addition to Rosie May, he leaves a grandson, Arthur May, and a stepdaughter, Nikki Cooney.

Francis Beckett

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Never a cross word as puzzles take over

People seem more interested in brain-teasers than news. Why not combine them? asks **Chris Proctor**

H

ow do people choose what paper to read? Is it political affiliation? Attraction to a style of reporting?

To impress fellow commuters? A size that fits in your bag?

No. None of the above. The important thing these days is the puzzles page or, increasingly, pages.

Next door buys the Express. I wonder why. She tells me it's for the crossword. She can do it. She's tried other papers without success. She can finish the Express one and can't do the others.

But isn't she a loyal Labourite? Yes, she says, but she doesn't take any notice of that stuff.

What stuff?

The news. She doesn't have time after she's completed the crossword.

This alarms me until I realise that I sniff at the Metro but pick one up most days. For the crossword.

I see a day when papers will become quiz books with a news section. They will become A5 size, like those books of sudokus you find at airports. Pages 1–20 will be puzzles while fragments of news will compete for space at the back with the classified ads.

The number of brain-teasers on offer is astonishing. Every time I look, a new game has emerged. There are codewords, backwords, kriss krosses, piecewords, jigsaws, sudokus and even minipanagrams. By the time you've learnt how to do them, it's tomorrow. By the time you finish one, it's next week.

Of course, we've always had puzzles, but these used to be mainly in headers. I'm thinking of ones like 'Will Prince

Harry ever go away?' 'Will Burnham make us wear clogs?' 'Will Count Biface be our next PM?'

They are poor substitutes for the discriminating puzzler, because the answer is always the same: no.

Clearly, the future for our national press is to hone efforts on puzzles rather than reporting – unless it is reporting on puzzles. One solution, which could please both parties, would be to mingle the two disciplines.

I like the notion of using anagrams rather than people's official names, thus pleasing both puzzlers and current affairs aficionados. So a story would begin, 'Old Rant Dump today declared war. Specific targets will be selected after lunch, following discussions about his next peace prize.' In the main body, the name would vary to allow further riddles: 'Mr Odd Lap Nut said the enemy, once chosen, would be bombed from the air while Mr Do Punt Lad did not rule out boots on the ground.'

As a bonus, puzzling can also distract from the news, which would be soothing. You're so interested in rearranging the letters that you miss the genocide.

The popularity of the graphic novel suggests that news could be presented as images. So, for example, you have a picture of a Hovis loaf (brown bread) next to a photo of Ian Huntley, rather than bother with a written account of the demise of the child murderer. The same information is conveyed but in conundrum form. The head of FIFA could be seen with a shepherd's hook for those specialising in rhyming slang.

As the medium progresses, I favour giving the reader different accounts of a story from the point of view of the criminal, the authorities, the victim and a bystander. You have to guess which one is true. Or you could run the news

as usual and ask at the end, 'Do you believe this report? Answers in tomorrow's paper!'

It could delay you knowing the news by 24 hours, but does this really matter?

I also like the notion of running overseas news in the language of that country, which would improve linguistic skills as well as providing a challenge for the reader. Thus the Argentina press, reporting on a football match, would begin '¡Júgalo otra vez, Leo, hasta que ganemos!'

The sense of the statement would not be affected even for mono-linguists. You know it's something ludicrous. The details are insignificant and the brain has been teased. What more could you want?

A number of outlets have taken tentative steps in the right direction by having a regular news quiz. Thus readers are asked who officiated at Taylor Swift's nuptials, are given alternatives, such as an actor, a sportsman or a school friend – and make a choice. They can either discover the correct answer the following day or be pleased with the selection they have made and not bother following it up.

Yes, some will complain that the quiz format trivialises the news but I defend it. For one thing, we increasingly doubt what we read in the paper so we're already in the puzzle business working out what's factual. Why not formalise it?

Televised news could do worse than adopt the format of the quiz programme *Would I Lie To You?* The interviewee would be asked to make a statement ('Three million council houses in 20 minutes') and a panel would decide if the response sounds likely. If so, it would be declared 'news'. If not, it would be held as another example of the interviewee being a lying toad. Or, for Spoonerists, a tying load.

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REASONS TO JOIN



Ending the Gender Pay Gap

A Press Gazette analysis showed that 91 per cent of UK media companies paid men more than women and 85 per cent of men got better bonuses and it's a similar picture in Ireland. One magazine group's gap was almost 37 per cent. Opaque, unfair pay structures and unlawful sex discrimination are contributing factors. The NUJ negotiates on transparent pay structures, progressive work-life balance policies, better maternity and paternity deals and fair recruitment procedures.



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As a member of the NUJ you are part of a united force championing the rights of media workers and defending attacks on press freedom. Successful workplaces are those where the management and workers share the same aims and talk to each other. Being a member of the NUJ means giving yourself and colleagues a real voice at work.

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