

theJournalist

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A good hack?

In search of ethical journalism



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As we all know, trust in the media is at a low amid misinformation and the inability of journalists to get time to talk to contacts because of huge and repetitive workloads, among many factors.

Worryingly, in our news section we have a report of a big jump in AI-generated fake experts being quoted in news stories.

But it's important that society can have trust in the media. In our cover feature Neil Merrick finds out what is being done to promote ethical journalism.

In a similar vein Ray Snoddy is glad that finally some of the American media are beginning to question President Trump's many baseless assertions.

Some of the toughest journalism is done on the frontline in war reporting. Anttoni James Numminen looks back to the war in Bosnia 30 years ago and sees how the country and journalism have changed.

As our cover story in the last edition reported, many freelancers are having to diversify to boost their income. Linda Harrison encourages people to consider hosting events as a way to find new avenues of work and showcase skills.

I hope you find some food for thought in the latest edition of your magazine.

Christie

Christine Buckley
Editor

@mschrisbuckley

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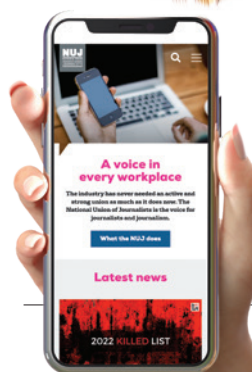
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We love fear and loathing

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Cover
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STV staff strike across Scotland

STV STAFF across Scotland went on strike in early January braving freezing temperatures and heavy snow to oppose cutbacks.

Around 50 staff members formed a picket line outside the Glasgow head office of the broadcaster and were joined by Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, and Anas Sarwar, Scottish Labour leader.

More than a dozen members also picketed outside the STV North HQ in Aberdeen, where significant programming cuts are looming.

Staff working at the company's bases in Edinburgh, Dundee, and Inverness were involved in strike action as well.

Members at STV had voted overwhelmingly in favour of the strike action in December over the company's plans to



make compulsory redundancies and axe the north edition of its News at 6 programme. Some 94 per cent of those voting backed strike action.

In December the regulator Ofcom gave provisional approval to a revised version of its original plans which would see STV have a single news programme across its two north and central licence

areas, but with a guaranteed minimum amount of regional coverage. The NUJ has repeatedly criticised the plans as being bad for viewers, advertisers, and journalism.

A formal consultation by Ofcom closed in early February and a decision on the planned cuts is expected before Easter.

The plans have been

opposed by the Scottish government and the leaders of all the main political parties in the Scottish parliament along with the NUJ and Bectu, the broadcasting and technical division of Prospect.

The Scottish government has told Ofcom that the cuts "represent a serious weakening of public service broadcasting obligations and risk long-term harm to Scotland's media ecology, democratic accountability, and local representation."

Last year STV issued a profits warning because of a 10 per cent fall in its advertising revenue. The warning triggered a substantial fall in the broadcaster's share price.

STV has said that its planned cuts are needed to protect its news service in the digital age.



The NUJ has repeatedly criticised the plans as being bad for viewers, advertisers, and journalism

AI 'experts' appearing in news

A SURGE in fake AI-generated 'experts' appearing in mainstream news demonstrates the threat AI poses to trust in journalism and the need for a strong, coordinated response, the NUJ has said.

An investigation by Press Gazette uncovered 1,000

articles in the British press that attribute 50 "non-existent and AI-enhanced experts." Journalists have reported being 'bombarded' with dozens and sometimes hundreds of dubious press releases a week bearing the hallmarks of AI-generated images and copy.

According to the Press Gazette, "Rogue PR operators appear to be using AI to generate press releases which then secure lucrative links and brand mentions for their clients."

The NUJ, which represents a significant number of members working in PR and

communications, has responded to the findings.

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, said:

"All our members - including those working in PR and comms - have signed up to the union's Code of Conduct to adhere to ethical standards of journalism and communication. This includes 'striving to ensure that

information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.'

"However, as this investigation shows, there are plenty of anonymous bad actors out there who have little regard for observing ethical standards. They are enabled in their large-scale deception by the rise of unregulated generative AI.

Stars turn out for Jilly Cooper's memorial service

DAME JILLY COOPER, best-selling author and long-standing NUJ member, was celebrated for her 'champagne soul' at her memorial service in Southwark Cathedral, *Christine Buckley writes*.

The service was attended by a host of high-profile figures including Queen Camilla, Dame Joanna Lumley, Sir Derek Jacobi, Rupert Everett, David Tennant, Danny Dyer and many of the cast of *Rivals*, Alan Titchmarsh and Clare Balding.

The dean of Southwark, the Very Reverend Dr Mark Oakley, coined the phrase champagne soul primarily because of her effervescence but also a little to do with her liking of the drink. However, he stressed how the former journalist turned author worked hard and meticulously, producing more than 40 fiction and non-fiction works that had been thoroughly researched.

In a tribute, Felicity Blume, Dame Jilly's literary agent, echoed the strength of her research and said that she wore her deep knowledge lightly.

At the service in the packed cathedral, Dame Joanna read from her diaries *The Common Years* - and Alex Hassell and Bella Maclean, stars of *Rivals*, read an extract from the novel. Rupert Everett read *The Parting Glass*, a Celtic folk song.

Best known for her 'bonkbuster' novels such as *Rivals* and *Riders*, Dame Jilly, who started out as a journalist on the *Middlesex Independent*, was a *Sunday Times* and *Mail on Sunday* columnist.

She maintained a deep affection for her first profession and her union, saying she loved reading *The Journalist*. She was also accommodating to journalists locally and nationally, giving her time for interviews and comments.



Pay and recognition win at Wyvex Media

NUJ members at Wyvex Media have secured formal trade union recognition, alongside a new house agreement that delivers transparent pay scales and a 7.3 per cent pay rise.

The agreement marks a significant step forward for journalists at the Scotland-based media company, which publishes several well-known titles including *The Oban Times* and *Scottish Field*.

Andy Curry, NUJ organiser, said: "To come together and win union recognition followed by a substantial pay rise in quick succession speaks to the tenacity and determination of our members at Wyvex Media."

"Our members have worked incredibly hard through a



period of turmoil and uncertainty at the company. They have also been facing significant financial pressures due to the cost-of-living crisis, making this agreement all the more important."

The deal was agreed following a successful recognition campaign by NUJ members and establishes clear, transparent pay

structures for journalists, providing greater fairness and security for staff.

Kathie Griffiths, Wyvex Media chapel representative, said: "We're delighted to secure NUJ recognition and a decent pay deal."

"We look forward to continuing our open, healthy and productive relationship with Wyvex Media."

"We hope to continue with an understanding of mutual support, producing thriving and successful papers and magazines."

A Wyvex Media spokesperson told *Hold the Front Page*: "Prior to engagement with the NUJ, we were in the process of addressing historical anomalies within the editorial department and this reorganisation has resulted in some salaries in the department increasing beyond the negotiated 3 per cent annual pay award."

• *If you're looking to organise and unionise your workplace and would like support from the NUJ, please contact campaigns@nuj.org.uk.*



To win union recognition and a substantial pay rise speaks to the tenacity and determination of our members

Andy Curry
NUJ organiser

Telegraph takeover under scrutiny

THE PROPOSED takeover of the Telegraph Media Group by the Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT) may need to be referred for regulatory scrutiny, UK culture secretary Lisa Nandy has indicated.

DMGT announced it had agreed a £500 million deal with RedBird IMI in late November, soon after the US

private equity firm abandoned its own takeover bid.

In January, Nandy said in a written statement: "Following a thorough consideration of the terms set out in the derogation request and independent research, my department has today written to the current and proposed

owners of the Telegraph Media Group on my behalf to inform them that I am minded to intervene. This will enable the necessary regulatory scrutiny to commence."

DMGT already owns a 50.6 per cent share of the daily national print newspaper market through the Daily Mail, Metro and the i,

according to data provided to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, said: "Regulatory scrutiny would be welcomed by the NUJ, and we will consult members at the Telegraph before responding to any investigation."

"More generally, the NUJ

has long been expressing concerns about the consolidation and concentration of media ownership in the UK.

"Media plurality is vital in a functioning democracy and for the overall health of journalism, which is why the union wants to see a maximum market share set at 25 per cent across all platforms and on each of radio, television, newspapers and online."

Photographer Pete awarded life membership of the union

NOTTINGHAM-BASED freelance photographer Pete Jenkins has been made a Life Member of the NUJ.

Chair of the Nottingham branch Ben Cooper presented Pete with his certificate to mark the occasion.

Pete joined the NUJ towards the end of 1985 and has played an active role in the union over the past 40 years. He has served on the national executive council, was pivotal in the establishment of a photographers' council, and has held the position of welfare officer at the Nottingham branch for many years. Paying tribute to his commitment to the union, Ben said: "On behalf of the branch, I was honoured to present Pete with his Life Member certificate. It is a huge achievement to notch up 40 years in the union and we congratulate Pete on this milestone."

NUJ regional organiser Chris Morley also paid tribute to Pete's work for the union and in particular for his support for photographers and freelancers, and thanked him for his dedication.

Pete launched his career in the 1980s covering rugby and quickly began supplying photos to all the Fleet Street publications. He later diversified by covering conferences and events.

Pete said: "I am extremely proud to have been made a Life Member of the NUJ, an organisation that I have now been a member of for more than 40 years. Sometimes it is hard to believe that I have been doing this since the early 1980s, having become a full-time professional in 1983 the years have just flown by."



Pete Jenkins presented with life membership by Nottingham branch chair Ben Cooper

2026 PETE JENKINS

Life on the ground reporting in Gaza

WHAT IT'S like to be a journalist in Gaza was the subject of South Wales NUJ conference in November, *Andrew Draper writes*. We wanted Gazan journalists to give their accounts.

Three Palestinian journalists contributed at the event in Cardiff – Hala Hanina, Sami Abu Salem and Shaimaa Eid. Feedback was positive and almost £300 was raised for the International Federation of Journalists' Safety Fund.

Hanina, host of *Falasteeniya*, a podcast with Palestine Deep Dive. *Falasteeniya* is said to be the world's first Palestinian-led platform dedicated to examining the gendered

dynamics of Israeli violence in Palestine.

Now based in the UK, she said targeting journalists was not new: "Their killing is also killing the truth." Referring to Israel's ban on international media from Gaza, she said raw, incisive reporting from local journalists is invaluable and "they're perfectly capable of reporting the truth".

She read out an article by fellow Gazan journalist Shaimaa Eid, who was unable to participate. She wrote how "hunger is no longer just a humanitarian plea – it has become a harsh reality lived by journalists in every detail".

The journalistic work that once provided her with a stable



Palestinian researcher Hala Hanina addresses the meeting

income has ended. A fellow journalist sold a 20-year photo archive for a bag of flour.

Freelance Gazan journalist Abu Salem talked in a pre-recorded video with Welsh freelance journalist Mike Joseph of coexistence and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis, which he said would

require getting "rid of the extremists".

Bristol-based journalist Jonathan Cook spoke about difficulties in persuading mainstream outlets to take stories on Palestinian suffering.

Pontypridd film-maker Claudio Laurini showed his documentary on militarised Palestinian society,



Reporting from local journalists is invaluable and they're perfectly capable of reporting the truth

Hala Hanina
Host, *Falasteeniya*
podcast

Short sharp rift at Kerrang!

FREELANCES at music magazine *Kerrang!* staged one of the shortest ever successful strikes – an action that lasted for less than two hours.

After the 16 freelance contributors withdrew their labour, the magazine's

management agreed to meet all their terms after just an hour and 19 minutes.

These included: the settlement of all outstanding invoices, some of which stretched back to the summer; the reversion of a payment timetable; and

assurances on contributors being paid in full and on time in future.

Anger among the writers arose shortly before Christmas when the company unilaterally announced a change of business terms, including

from paying 30 days after publication to paying 60 days after publication.

Several writers had significant sums outstanding.

Ian Winwood, an NUJ member who helped coordinate the action, said: "There was a lot of anger about the imposition of new terms.

"We writers have long been connected by an instant messaging group, and it was soon clear that there was a mood to resist. "We told the magazine's management that we would not write another word until their met our terms and, an hour and 19 minutes later, they came round to our point of view."

Steve Bell



YouTube SCREAMERS

Right-wing streamers are stirring up trouble at protests. **Kath Grant** reports

St Peter's Square in Manchester has been a site of political protest since the 1819 Peterloo massacre. Nowadays, it's also a rendezvous for far-right 'auditors' seeking content for YouTube channels.

They can be heard urging subscribers to 'buy me a coffee' online or donate as they film Palestine support rallies and other demonstrations – while screaming abuse at protesters to provoke retaliation and create dramatic content.

The streamers' targets in Greater Manchester – as with many other areas – have been hotels housing asylum-seekers. Far-right protests have forced refugees to stay trapped in their rooms and often placed them in danger.

Outside the hotels, it is difficult to distinguish between the auditors, far-right agitators and 'concerned locals' who organise the protests. They are equally vocal.

NUJ freelance photographer Gary Roberts has covered demonstrations in the UK and abroad for over 30 years.

He says streamers can be the only other 'media' he sees at protests in Manchester. For a time, police officers were failing to distinguish between freelance journalists and far-right vloggers. Last summer, officers refused to recognise press cards and threatened to arrest Roberts and another NUI freelance photographer. Matters have improved, he says, "but they still seem pretty powerless to stop the provocation".

The number of streamers first grew around lockdown, he adds: "The anti-vax movement gained traction and gave them a large audience.

"They now attend every demonstration in central Manchester in numbers varying between five and 50, regardless of the cause. "But they are

more prevalent when there are counter demonstrations as they need conflict to drive engagement with their viewers. I have seen them at marches relating to Palestine and Ukraine, and at protests about women's rights, Pride, trans rights and climate change."

Roberts says they turn up at political party conferences, trade union marches and picket lines. "I haven't attended a demo since 2020 where no streamers have been present."

They have always been deliberately provocative, creating misleading and controversial content rather than just filming or taking photographs, he says.

"They team up and the presence of other streamers seems to embolden their interactions with demonstrators. I have seen them regularly hurl abuse to gain a reaction, which they then film.

"They often claim they are journalists if they are asked to move by the police and complain if the legitimate journalists with press cards are not moved with them."

Roberts has been told the most successful streamers are earning large sums of money. Some have over 100,000 followers on one platform and may stream across others.

"Auditors in London have brackets holding three phones so they can



Top: Stand Up to Racism protests in Altrincham, Greater Manchester.

Bottom: filming at an anti-Trump protest in Manchester: Photographer Gary Roberts says "I haven't attended a demo since 2020 where no streamers have been present."

stream to different platforms simultaneously.

"I have seen their work with bylines in the local and national press so that's additional income along with buy me a

coffee, donations and advertising linked to streams. There is no doubt it is having a negative impact on the earnings of many freelance photographers.

"I have had a lot of people contacting me to say they have seen me on TikTok or YouTube, which shows how many people are viewing this stuff."

Arguably, mainstream coverage of the hotel protests has raised awareness of the streamers' methods. Last autumn, Channel 4 News ran a piece about the money that streamers were making from their exploitation of refugees.

Similar stories have been run in regional and independent news outlets, including in a Blackpool news Facebook page, which is urging people to boycott the streamers' channels. The auditors' connections with far-right agitators have been exposed in many articles and social media posts.

Roberts describes meeting three younger auditors he had seen at hotel protests. "One told me he hadn't been to recent protests and was fed up of covering them because he didn't want to be labelled as far right any more. I think it shows that, for some of the streamers, it's all about the numbers rather than the content."



They often claim to be journalists if asked to move by the police and complain if journalists with press cards are not moved with them



Media were complicit in Trump-era derangement

American journalists took far too long to hold Trump to account, says **Raymond Snoddy**

Suddenly, you don't have to be completely crazy or an impossible optimist to suggest we may be entering the last days of President Donald J Trump – a man who had appeared untouchable whatever he did until now.

Even Andrew Neil, who unaccountably was prepared to give Trump the benefit of the doubt at the start of his second administration, is now saying “we are past peak Trump”.

While it is impossible to predict how precisely it will come to an end or when, an accumulation of factors will combine to undermine his presidency.

In a single week earlier this year, Trump suffered multiple setbacks and climbdowns that would have been fatal to any orthodox American politician. There was Greenland, the disparaging of NATO's contribution in Afghanistan, the ICE murders in Minnesota and promising help to protesters in Iran then doing nothing as they were gunned down in their thousands.

Stir in the increasingly lurid leaks from the Epstein files, the signs of accelerating dementia plus threats to the dollar and the American bond market, and the brew is toxic even for Teflon Trump.

There could be a sudden collapse, political or physical. Action could be taken using the 25th amendment of the US constitution, which, as we all now know, enables congress to remove a president deemed no longer capable of carrying out their duties.

It is possible that Trump will stagger on to the mid-term elections in the autumn and perhaps have another shot at trying to overturn democracy.

Perhaps vice-president JD Vance will go for the top job – but President Vance is a story for another day.

A crucial factor in ensuring Trump will not see out his full term is that, very belatedly in many people's opinion, the American media have arisen from their slumbers and started doing their job of holding power to account.

The turning point was the cold-blooded murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by ICE agents. From the under-pressure CBS network and CNN to the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal – even the Murdoch New York Post – all have rejected the administration lies that Good and Pretti were lawfully killed insurrectionists.

After detailed analysis of the many horrific recordings of the events, the media came to the same conclusion – neither had been a threat to anyone when they were shot multiple times.

Such coverage looks like a sign that American journalists are toughening their approach to the Trump administration when their billionaire owners allow them to do so. Their role in the coming implosion could be vital.

But, when all of this madness comes to an end – as come to an end it will – the American media will face tough questions about how it was allowed to happen in what appeared to be a mature, 250-year-old democracy.

The charge sheet against the American media – with transatlantic echoes – will be long and embarrassing.

It was the US networks, with a special starring role for Rupert Murdoch's Fox News, that created the Trump public persona in the first place. They were more than bright enough to know the potential damage they were causing but, as long as the ratings and the advertising revenue continued to roll in, they did not care.

Too many news outlets were also happy to normalise Trump and report what he said and did as if they were normal when they were anything but.

Then there came the half-way stage when broadcasters, still reluctant to call out Trump lies, started adding weasel words to their reports that no evidence had been provided to support Trump statements. There have been honourable exceptions but, for too long, too many of Trump's 'facts' went unchecked and unchallenged.

There has also been a disgraceful disparity between how the health and ageing of President Joe Biden were treated compared to the same of Trump. Biden may or may not have been too old to go for a second term, but there is no doubt he was hounded out of his candidacy by media attacks on every physical and mental slip.

There has been no equivalent treatment for Trump despite him falling apart mentally and physically in plain sight. Again, Trump has been normalised by the media picking out a coherent sentence or two while ignoring the nonsensical ramblings in the rest of a 50-minute speech.

Even the tactics of reporters have been individualistic and naive. Trump deflects questions by asking where the reporter is from then dismisses their media organisation. There is no sense of reporters getting together to ask the same question again and again to either get an answer or demonstrate Trump's unwillingness to address it.

There will be a day of reckoning for the American media and it may come sooner than you think.

But, before British journalists get smug, be warned they too will face tough questions if they continue giving Trump acolyte Nigel Farage his current easy ride.

There have been honourable exceptions but, for too long, too many of Trump's 'facts' went unchecked and unchallenged

Clickbait versus reputation

Journalism is being undermined and trust lost.

Neil Merrick looks at what can be done

It won't come as a surprise to most journalists to discover that trust in the media is in short supply.

More than a decade after the phone-hacking scandal and Leveson inquiry, media regulation remains a hit-and-miss affair. Journalists, meanwhile, are under relentless pressure to serve up 24-hour news and clickbait stories, often while negotiating the hazards of social media.

But is there a way forward whereby public trust is regained? Perhaps by changing the way journalists operate and approach stories?

According to Hardeep Matharu, editor-in-chief of Byline Times, the strongest critics of today's media include journalists themselves.

"There are many individuals working in the profession who have a sense that perhaps what they're doing does not always equate to the high standards of journalism," she says.

At the heart of the problem, says Nick Davies (pictured right), the former Guardian journalist who exposed the phone-hacking scandal, is a business model that largely depends on the internet and, in some ways, is subservient to it. This makes it harder for journalists to get to and report hard facts, assuming that is their intention.

"The real test is whether they are telling or at least trying to tell the truth," says Davies, who retired from journalism in 2016. "Insofar as journalism fails that essential test, people are quite right to distrust it."

Most journalists, he says, are decent, honest people. Yet the newsrooms they work in are starved of resources. "If they are not given the time to go out and find stories and check facts, they are likely sometimes to end up recycling all sorts of falsehoods, distortion and PR crap," he adds.

Media owners argue that they must meet the demands of online audiences to raise revenue. This can mean responding to the emotions and prejudices of those who frequent social media and are steered towards stories via online platforms.

The relationship between journalists and social media makes it harder to build trust with wider audiences, says



**The test is
whether
journalists are
telling the truth**



Ali-Abbas Ali, director of media competition at Ofcom, which regulates broadcasting and online safety.

"The environment in which people get their news means there is a strong financial incentive for the person running the [online] platform to provide more clickbait-type material," he says.

This puts ever-increasing pressure on journalists to show they have more impact and influence than, say, social media influencers.

"It's important audiences understand there's a difference in quality between what you do as journalists and the rest of the content out there," adds Ali.

Of course, it wasn't always like this. In days gone by, a limited media – consisting largely of print newspapers and

Studying an ethical approach

For the past six months, about 30 journalists from across the UK have been studying how the media can be more ethical.

The course in ethical media and journalism, run by regulator Impress with the University of Huddersfield, began as a pilot last summer before its launch in October.

Themes include navigating bias, protecting personal data, ethical investigations, discrimination in community journalism and working with vulnerable people.

Beth Parkes, education manager at Impress, says the course is a response to poor

practice. "Certain newspapers and publishers have gained a reputation for being unethical and untrustworthy," she says. "That's what we are working to change," she says.

Most of the course is online, although participants met in person last June and via Teams in September.

Should a publisher want a group of journalists to take the course, a cohort could be taken through the nine modules together and perhaps taught face to face.

Parkes stresses that not all journalists are unethical, and are sometimes unhappy

about how their stories are presented, perhaps after being rewritten.

"A lot of journalists are passionate about being trusted and improving the industry," she adds.

This makes studying issues such as attribution, copyright, disinformation and misinformation important.

"We talk about the benefits of respecting privacy and what good investigative journalism looks like," she says. "It's about respecting communities, especially marginalised communities we're not necessarily directly involved with."

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broadcasting – probably carried greater respect, says Catherine Happer, a former BBC journalist and now director of the Glasgow University Media Group.

It was not a ‘golden age’ as such, stresses Happer, as complaints of media bias were circulating well before the 20th century came to an end.

Nevertheless, the fact that it was harder to check the accuracy of reports in the same way as today meant that, by default, people tended to believe what they were told by the media.

“Journalists had access to information that enabled them to explain what was going on,” she says.

Fast forward 25 years and the so-called democratisation of the media, including the birth of citizen journalism, has if anything fuelled mistrust. “We are bombarded with news that’s not valuable to people,” says Happer. “We have a phenomenon of news avoidance.”

The revolving door of political journalism makes it hard to know when political figures who work for the media are fulfilling some sort of journalistic function or when they are carrying out the role of MPs.

At the same time, there is a growing tendency among reporters to rely on quotes from anonymous sources, often at the behest of politicians and spin doctors who see the media as a way of feeding ideas to an inevitably cynical electorate.

Journalists argue that anonymous sources are essential to getting stories – but is the trade-off between reporters and those who frame reports a healthy one?

According to Matharu, journalists should be questioning the way they build relationships with contacts and the bargaining that goes with gaining access to so-called exclusives. “It seems so far removed from the public and what they should be informed about,” she adds.

Perhaps salvation lies at local and regional levels, assuming that journalists get out and meet the people they report on.

Paul Hutchinson, editor of the Bedford Independent, says it is wrong to tarnish all journalists by accusing them of mimicking the behaviour of ‘bad actors’.

He encourages reporters to be curious, question authority, correct mistakes and treat people with respect, even when a story reflects badly on part of the community.

“We need to think less about clicks and more about reputation,” says Hutchinson. “If I have written a story that people find difficult to digest, then I should be able to show that it was accurate so that I can hold my head up high.”

Last year, media regulator Impress launched a course in ethical journalism (see box), covering issues such as bias, discrimination and reporting on vulnerable people.

Within marginalised communities, says author and journalist Shelina Janmohamed, people may be less inclined to take a story to the media if they are uncertain about how it will be approached or shaped by journalists.

It is, she says, understandable for people to weigh up whether to trust journalists or shy away from speaking to the media in case a story turns into clickbait.

“It’s quite a wild west out there once you give up a story,”



GUY CORBISHLEY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

she says. “Communities bring a sense of history when it comes to publications that dealt with them negatively in the past or did not report on them accurately.”

The failure of journalists to leave their desks and meet the wider population is also an issue at national level, says Matt Kelly, editor of The New World. He praises The Guardian’s John Harris for travelling around the UK and reporting on people who often feel disenchanted with politicians as well as parts of the media.

However, this style of reporting is clearly an exception. Kelly would like to see more non-graduates in journalism, helping the local and national media to be more in tune with the people who appear in stories.

Equally, there is a need for journalists to be less dependent on stories based upon quotes from politicians and, instead, seek the views of people with more knowledge.

“Journalists listen to the opinions of politicians, but they won’t go to the economist or medical expert to see if there is any validity in what they’re saying,” says Kelly.

The more that journalists are guided by an internet-based media model that regards clicks or views as achievement, the harder it will be to regain trust and demonstrate there is a reason for investing time and money in journalism.

Is the solution as difficult as appears? According to Happer, journalists will succeed if they engage with ‘people in everyday situations’ and avoid excessive focus on the same issues. She says: “Journalists should adopt a more relatable style and use everyday narratives that people find interesting.”



Journalists listen to politicians but won't go to an economist or medical expert to see if there is any validity in what they're saying

Get the most by

If you're inspired by attending events, why not hold your own? asks **Linda Harrison**



Have you ever considered running your own in-person event?

Personally, I'd never pictured myself doing this. But when my writing and PR work started to dry up last year, it pushed me into action.

I told a friend about an idea for a speed-networking event for local businesses and regional journalists in Yorkshire.

We put 30 tickets for sale on Eventbrite, booked a venue, gave it a name – Meet the Media – and started sharing details on social media. Within a few weeks, it had sold out.

I was a wreck on the day; hosting this pushed me way out of my comfort zone. But the event was a hit.

We got fantastic feedback, articles started appearing in our local paper about businesses who had attended the event and people emailed about joining the waiting list for the next one.

We realised we were onto something.

While I'd originally hoped it might be a way of making some extra cash, what I loved was discovering the other benefits, such as building connections with local businesses and journalists and getting our names out there.

Meet the Media is now a regular event.

Think like a business

Lisa Francesca Nand is a freelance journalist and travel expert turned entrepreneur who hosts regular in-person coffee mornings and networking events in Brighton and London.

She says: "Like so many freelancers, I was finding that journalism alone wasn't always enough to pay the bills. So, I started to think a bit more entrepreneurially.

"I've always loved connecting people and sharing ideas, and I realised that hosting events could be a brilliant way to bring entrepreneurial women together – especially those juggling side projects or small businesses like me. Men are welcome of course, but many of my meet-ups by default seem to be women only. It feels like a lot of women are finding they want more from their working life and are going out and trying to do something different.

"My first event was a coffee morning in Hove organised by me and a property investor friend, Mary Cullen. We managed to get 25 people along to a breakfast – entrepreneurial women coming together to chat about business, property, travel and life. It was such a success, and honestly so much fun, that I decided to keep going."

Share your expertise

Harriet Meyer, a financial journalist who writes for The Guardian, The Times and The Sun among others, is the

founder of AI for Media. She runs online and in-person AI training for news, content and PR firms.

Meyer says: "After more than 20 years behind a screen, I wanted a change. When ChatGPT landed in November 2022, I could see what was coming, and it felt time to make a big shift. It's been the steepest learning curve of my career, but I absolutely love it."

Meyer started running events for her AI training business because, she says, nothing beats in-person training, particularly in the age of AI.

Her first event was a three-hour, half-day workshop for a PR firm. She now runs events alongside organisations such as the British Society of Magazine Editors and Women in PR in London, helping media professionals develop practical, actionable and mindset-based strategies for using AI.

Meyer adds: "Journalism taught me how to listen, connect and translate complex topics into plain English – all skills that now sit at the heart of my AI training work. It's still about people and stories, just told through a new lens.

Freelance social affairs and global health journalist Sally Howard started The India Story agency with Delhi-based journalist Geetanjali Krishna in 2020 to focus on cross-cultural and cross-border journalism collaborations.

They now run in-person and online workshops and masterclasses for young journalists with a focus on their specialisms of solutions journalism (the US framework), cross-border collaboration and bid applications for journalism.

They also host solutions journalism training events in universities, and training sessions for academics.

Howard says: "We run events to keep up our visibility and situate us globally and within specialisms.

"For us as journalists working across borders and for numerous markets, they're a good way of staying visible in a few markets, particularly for LinkedIn presence. They can also be great for leading to paid lecturing work."

Build a community

Organising events can also provide a social aspect to work – or even lead to a new career.

Penni Pickering, co-founder of Cowork Crew, says: "I've been a freelancer for almost 10 years and, in that time, spent lots of time working from home, and some time travelling and working from co-working and co-live/co-work spaces. I felt lonely in the home office, and decided to start up local events to solve my need. Turns out other folk had the same need.

"My first event was in my local co-working space, Vulcan Works in Northampton. It was a co-working event during the day, with a speaker at lunchtime.

"It was lovely, and it turned into a regular thing – almost monthly. We now run 10 months of the year. As our local community grew, other people became interested in having an event near them, so we set up in other cities with local

Tip #1

"Don't do it alone. If you can, find a partner who can help and support you. Offer early-bird ticket pricing when announcing the event and then go full price. People buy tickets at the last minute"

<https://creativeslikeusevent.abbasmarketing.com>

Angela Lyons



Events are a good way of staying visible



y being a host

people hosting events. We get a lot of self-employed folk and some remote workers too.”

Cowork Crew events run regularly in London, Cambridge, Birmingham, Reading and Northampton. More are planned, including in Leeds.

Angela Lyons, a graphic designer and founder of Lyons Creative, came up with an idea with a friend to run events after spotting an advert from a company that wanted to open up their space to diverse and underrepresented groups.

She applied with co-founder Ayo Abbas, and started Creatives Like Us.

Lyons says: “It’s for black and brown business owners/freelancers to network and work on their business. Our first in-person event was in a design studio in Shoreditch, London, in February 2025. It was such a success – our keynote speaker, Vanessa Belleau, became part of our team. We hosted another event in June and then one in October.

“Giving back to the community feels good. It also gives you visibility and gets eyes on what you do. Also, I can now add another skill – event planning and event host.”

Boost business

One amazing result of Meet the Media is that it has really grown my business, with attendees recommending me for PR and copywriting work.

Pickering has found something similar, saying: “I get more referrals because I run coworking events than I would otherwise. There’s goodwill associated with the events that gets passed to me, and folk trust me because of it.”

Nand adds that getting out there and meeting people face to face is also incredibly energising.

“You never know what collaborations might come out of it – new clients, new stories or even new friendships,” she says. “A lot of journalists, photographers and writers come along, and have ended up joining me in the business. It’s a lovely mix of people who are creative but, also like me, have realised we have to become more business minded.

“I’ve introduced over 100 people – including fellow journalists – to the opportunity to earn from travel themselves. Some just using it for their own travel, some as a side hustle selling holidays to friends and family. And others, like me, who want to make it a big business.

“Many of us were looking for ways to create extra income alongside journalism and the events have become a natural space to share ideas like that.”

Tip #2

“Consider venue costs – university events are good as they have an events space factored in. Then consider what is unique about you and your job trajectory that might make a good event”

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-india-story-agency>

Sally Howard

JOANNA BRIERLEY

Linda Harrison (left) and Jo Leatham, who run Meet the Media events in Yorkshire



Attendees at Meet the Media in York



OLIVIA BRABBS

Tip #3

“Start by selling to existing contacts, try online first, then market your events where your customers are – whichever social channel that is.”

www.harrietmeyer.com

Harriet Meyer

A lesson from history

Times refusenik **Barrie Clement** reflects on the Wapping dispute

It was the afternoon of Friday January 24 1986 when we were summoned to a meeting in The Times newsroom in Grays Inn Road by an uncharacteristically nervous acting-editor Charlie Wilson.

The normally belligerent Wilson mounted a table and wobbled somewhat as he recounted what we already knew. Some 6,000 News International print workers, who produced our paper along with the Sunday Times, Sun and News of the World, had been fired for going on strike over the introduction of new technology.

Then he added something we suspected might happen: we were to report for duty the next day at the company's new Wapping print works, where henceforth The Times et al would be printed.

Something he didn't add was that the papers would be produced largely by an army of scabs covertly recruited on the south coast by the renegade electricians' union on the pretext that they would produce a new daily newspaper.

The Times NUJ chapel reluctantly voted to accept Wilson's invitation, which was sweetened by a £2,000 handout, worth about £8,000 today.

That flew in the face of the NUJ's national position which was that members should continue to report for work at their existing workplaces.

The Times labour staff of three – Donald Macintyre, David Felton and myself – decided to make our own decision. After a series of conversations,

one of which involved Harry Conroy, NUJ general secretary at the time, we decided to go with the union's national position.

Greg Neale, then NUJ father of chapel at The Times, estimates that, initially, only about half a dozen of the paper's journalists told Murdoch what to do with his bribe. Other colleagues subsequently joined us, making a total of about 20 or so Times refuseniks.

Don, David and I were aware that attempting to cover the labour movement from Fortress Wapping would have been difficult if not impossible.

There were other more personal considerations, however. My wife Sue and I had three young sons, a foster daughter and a recently acquired mega-mortgage. Not the most promising basis on which to engage in the class struggle.

But Sue said she would support whatever decision I made – something for which I will always be grateful. I had to back either Rupert Murdoch, who owned News International, or the print workers. No contest for a working class boy from Briton Ferry!

Strike pay from the NUJ was enough to pay my mortgage but I needed freelance work for the rest. The labour staff formed a cooperative – a 'consortium' when we spoke to potential employers'.

Along with other refuseniks, we met every Tuesday at the NUJ headquarters in Grays Inn Road to hear the latest news on the dispute and collect our strike pay.



NIC OATRIDGE



Top: March on Fortress Wapping
Bottom: Sue and Barrie Clement with their family 40 years ago

From there, we repaired to the Kolossi, a legendary Greek restaurant which had always been infested by Times and Guardian journalists.

Thousands of miles away, former Times labour editor and refusenik Paul Routledge, who had become South East

Asia correspondent, was intermittently kept abreast of the latest goings-on.

Together with a fulsome contribution from the union movement generally and NUJ members in a position to employ us, we kept the wolf from the door.

During this time, a superficially emollient Charlie Wilson called me and offered me a job as a sub. I declined.

Meanwhile, pickets were being arrested and thousands of employees' lives were being disrupted. Some print workers were made homeless, some of their marriages were torn apart, some were driven to suicide.

Eventually, I decided that, having made my point, my family responsibilities should come first. The nascent Independent had started recruiting and wanted two labour staff. They were persuaded by my two colleagues that they would have to take the three of us or none. They agreed and we left The Times and the dispute.

The eventual defeat of the sacked print workers and Margaret Thatcher's triumph the previous year over Britain's miners heralded years of declining influence for unions. As a consequence, over the past 40 years, journalists' pay has inexorably declined – a process accelerated by the internet and now AI.

We need a strong NUJ more than ever.

Some print workers were made homeless, some of their marriages were torn apart, some were driven to suicide



Story behind the picture

The Metropolitan Police's
public order training centre
By Jess Hurd

In my 30-year photography career, I have covered public order situations globally. So I jumped at the opportunity to join a group of filmmakers, photographers and reporters on an NUJ-organised visit to the Metropolitan Police public order training centre at Gravesend in Kent.

Sergeant Mills, a specialist instructor, started by explaining police command structures. Gold were strategic, silver tactical and bronze implemented orders. He covered human rights, freedom of expression and citizen journalism, focusing on difficulties caused by antagonistic far-right vloggers while keeping bona-fide UKPCA press card journalists safe.

The instructor and Met press officer in attendance faced tough questions. A Muslim colleague conveyed their experience of policing and tackling racial stereotyping. Another journalist recounted their arrest while covering a Just Stop Oil protest. In the past three years, more legitimate journalists have been arrested while covering protest than at any other time.

From a rooftop, we witnessed the training. Unpaid volunteer officers acted as rioters, hurling wooden bricks and Molotov cocktails at regimented police lines.

Often the best police tactic is to withdraw, the press officer said, as a large police presence often antagonises situations. They also referred to the use of police liaison officers to both negotiate with protestors and gain intelligence.

On another street, militarised police vehicles were lined up next to an obstacle course of punchbags for training officers to manoeuvre through crowds. This suddenly made sense to me after years of direct experience.

The first time I visited the Gravesend training centre more than a decade ago and our NUJ group was greeted with guarded impatience. At this second visit, there seemed to be a genuine interest in improving the professional relationship between police and press during public order situations.

Journalists were crucial in drawing attention to atrocities in Bosnia. **Anttoni James Numminen** looks at their work and how the war changed reporting

BOSNIA 30 years on

Last December saw the 30th anniversary of the end of the war in Bosnia, a conflict marked by ethnic cleansing, genocide and more than 200,000 deaths.

The work of domestic and foreign journalists was crucial in bringing global attention to the plight of civilians, and many risked and gave their lives to report on the break-up of Yugoslavia. However, it was also a conflict marked by inaction from the international community, while questions about the role of foreign journalists and the scope of their work remain valid today.

In 1995, in neighbouring Croatia, John Schofield, a BBC reporter with *The World Tonight*, was killed. His death set several changes in motion, including in how news outlets support reporters in hostile environments. With the aid of family and friends, his wife Susie set up the John Schofield Trust that supports early-career journalists and make newsrooms representative of their audiences. (I am a fellow of the charity.)

As most foreign journalists in Bosnia were based in the capital, Sarajevo, much reporting on ethnic cleansing and concentration camps was not immediate. Nonetheless, it played a part in the public pressure that led to NATO intervention.

Roy Gutman, *Newsday*'s European bureau chief, won the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting that disclosed atrocities and other human rights violations in Bosnia and Croatia.

"I made it a point to myself not to follow the pack. The story in Sarajevo was not only legitimate but also really horrific and dramatic. But I had the feeling that there were terrible things going on elsewhere. From reading the local news media in Croatia, I learned about a huge number of refugees who were fleeing the north out of fear – they even talked about concentration camps – and I decided it was worth going and interviewing them," he told me.

The genocide at Srebrenica – the ethnic cleansing of 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys in 1995 – is recognised internationally, with a day of remembrance on July 11. Controversially, some journalists went on to provide testimony at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague against Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić, who was convicted of genocide.

However, in recent years, the political situation in parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and pro-Serbia sentiment have led to denials about the massacre, changes to that effect in some school textbooks and calls for the Republika Srpska region to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Digital reporting, security, stress and resilience

The war was impactful in many ways, as reporting became increasingly digital.

Kenneth Morrison, professor of history and chair in modern southeast European history at De Montfort University, is an expert on the siege in Sarajevo and has written two books about journalism during the conflict.

"This was, in many respects, the first digital war. At the beginning, journalists were still trying to connect crocodile clips to whatever phone lines were still available," he recalls.

"By the end of it in 1995, people were using laptops, data transmitters and satellite phones that you could put in a backpack and carry around."

Alongside greater security around journalism, with flak jackets, helmets and armoured cars becoming commonplace, awareness rose of the psychological effects of covering a brutal conflict.

The 1990s saw a shift to a better understanding of the effects of post-traumatic stress on journalists, "particularly on photographers and cameramen who had to be there and they were witnessing some pretty awful stuff", says Morrison.

Dr Martyn Bignold (pictured right) was bureau chief for Reuters Television in Bosnia at the end of the conflict in 1995-96, based in Sarajevo, covering "probably the biggest story at the time".

He changed careers in the early 2000s and is now a consultant clinical psychologist.

On arrival in the Bosnian capital, which had been under siege for almost four years, his "first thoughts were of the devastation and how parts of the city were just obliterated". He realised "how remarkable it was that life still went on, even in a city that had been under siege for so long".

Testament to local

resilience was Bosnian daily paper *Oslobođenje*, which was published throughout the war despite the destruction of its offices and a lack of resources, from ink to electricity.

"Domestic journalists were incredible in their coverage of the war," Morrison notes. "Photographers, print journalists and TV journalists knew the city and the country an awful lot better than any of the foreign correspondents."

The mindset and attitude intrinsic to maintaining some sense of normalcy "raised some questions for me, which ultimately prompted the curiosity that led me to retrain", Bignold says.

Being a witness to traumatic events and seeing

how colleagues coped with PTSD also influenced him.

An incident involving a cameraman who had been "first on the scene at a really horrific mortar attack on a market" stuck with him.

"Much of the footage we wouldn't be able to put out without a significant warning because of its extreme nature. The cameraman remarked on this, saying filming it had not really impacted him. However, back at the bureau, he engaged with the horror of what he had seen.

"There are aspects around journalism that allow you to witness things professionally but, if they get under your skin and you then relate to them, that lands in a different way."



ANTTONI JAMES NUMMINEN

'You can put the spotlight on war crime in a systematic way'

For many, Bosnia has become a byword for political paralysis, as political and ethnic tensions continue and the viability of complex power-sharing mechanisms is put under pressure.

Equally, many journalists I spoke to and whose work I have read speak of a special affinity with the country after covering the war. I have visited Bosnia on several occasions as a journalist, election observer and tourist, and it is a beautiful country with kind, generous people, and the continued peace is a testament to the commitment of citizens to lead a 'normal' life and avoid another conflict.

When I visited the autonomous Republika Srpska

region, it was striking to speak with people who live side by side with those responsible for horrific crimes.

In many cases, Bosniak Muslims continue to face discrimination and an uphill struggle to work in public roles or maintain their places of worship. Meanwhile, those accused of crimes during the war hold positions of responsibility, from police officers to elected officials.

Just before I visited Srebrenica last summer, staff closed the genocide memorial centre for a few days owing to tensions and threats against it.

In light of Bosnia's present-day situation and with another war raging in

Europe, journalists and readers have questioned what impact – if any – being a witness to war has and whether it is worth the risks.

Pulitzer-winner Roy Gutman tells me: "The one thing you can do in journalism is put the spotlight on crime and wrongdoing, especially massive crime."

"You can't write stories or uncover facts with the goal of moving major powers into military operations. What you can do is put the spotlight on the crime in a systematic and thoughtful way."

"And that spotlight, based on the sequence of events, actually led to the closing of the concentration camps. It wasn't me alone. I may have

been the first one to write about it in a convincing way and put it on the map."

He added: "Journalism can embarrass criminals in the act of crime and it can force them to react with a gesture. And, in this case, the gesture was, basically, closing the camps."

Musing on the impact of journalism and covering the war in Bosnia, Dr Martyn Bignold says: "I think it's worth it only in the sense that any alternatives are worse."

"Covering it as an international [journalist] has its problems because it's very much seeing what is of interest to our viewers in the UK and that's a distortion. Covering it in that way has many problems but it's probably better than any of the alternatives."

"Did it make a difference? Well, in hindsight, it's difficult to see that because the problems remain, but it's certainly better than ignoring it."



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CODE OF CONDUCT

Members of the National Union of Journalists are expected to abide by the following professional principles

A JOURNALIST

- 1** At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.
- 2** Strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.
- 3** Does her/his utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies.
- 4** Differentiates between fact and opinion.
- 5** Obtains material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means.
- 6** Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.
- 7** Protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work.
- 8** Resists threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information, and takes no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of her/his duties before the information is public knowledge.
- 9** Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- 10** Does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or of the medium by which she/he is employed.
- 11** A journalist shall normally seek the consent of an appropriate adult when interviewing or photographing a child for a story about her/his welfare.
- 12** Avoids plagiarism.



The NUJ believes a journalist has the right to refuse an assignment or be identified as the author of editorial that would break the letter or spirit of the code. The NUJ will fully support any journalist disciplined for asserting her/his right to act according to the code.

Get your crisis toolkit packed

Cash, pencils and wind-up radios can help you work if disaster strikes. **Francesca Marchese** gets prepped

Things like these come unannounced,” says Graham Keeley, a British freelance journalist based in Madrid. “You don’t know about them until they happen.”

On April 28, during the most severe blackout in Europe in the past 20 years, Keeley was still able to work for the main UK news outlets. He was travelling in his car when the power failed, leaving 55 million people in Spain, Portugal and southern France without electricity.

He still covered the news.

Could we have done the same? How many of us – reporters, photographers and other media professionals – would be able to work safely and effectively in case of power outage or another major disaster here in the UK?

Imagine a day or more of disruption: no internet, no telephone connection, chaos in transport links and no online payments.

Most of our UK phones received the emergency test alarm from the government on September 7 so perhaps we all will be informed if a calamity occurs.

But when digital systems fail, putting millions in the dark, how can journalists continue to work and possibly get the best out of it?

The answer could be a media prep toolkit for an emergency.

Keeley had cash, a radio and batteries. “I had enough cash on hand to buy petrol for my car,” he recalls. “I was travelling towards Seville and I had a long journey in front of me when the blackout started. I was lucky to find a garage accepting cash, as card payments were not working.”

Keeley has been living in Spain for the past 20 years so he was far from stranded: “I had a radio I could listen to and I had enough battery in my computer and phone. Otherwise, things would have gone very differently.”

The UK government set up a webpage for the public with guidance in case of sudden emergencies, Get Prepared (<https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk>), which advises keeping essentials such as bottled water, food, a torch, medicines and batteries in a ‘grab bag’. Those in the media need to go further than households planning for a sudden emergency caused by a storm, flood, cyberattack or a health crisis.

I am familiar with it. In my native Sicily, I have a similar sack in case volcano Etna erupts or a big earthquake hits. The European Central Bank suggests we hoard banknotes and coins, too.

A professional grab bag should have lightweight pieces of equipment so it is possible to work in volatile conditions: simple tools such as a notebook, pencils instead of pens (as pencils last longer and never leak but this debate is still not settled), spare glasses or lenses and a printed list of contacts with emails and phone numbers of editors, plus old-fashioned tools such as a wind-up radio and more innovative ones such as a foldable solar charger (I recently bought one – I tell myself it is for sunny days at the beach).

Once you have a full power bank, social media can be useful. “It is the fastest route for verified updates,” says Nika Talbot, journalist, content creator and social media officer at the NUJ London freelance branch. She suggests checking X for breaking news and Facebook/Instagram/WhatsApp for

local community support. “Always stick to official channels and fact-check information is legit before you repost or share it,” she adds.

Talbot recommends starting locally: follow your local resilience forum (search LRF + your county) and join the communities in your area. Her suggestions include joining the priority services register for extra support if you are eligible. She also has a series of tips for your smartphone: set emergency contacts in health/medical ID and turn on low power mode (if you’re off grid, there is Apple Emergency SOS via satellite). The website OnlineOrNot (<https://onlineornot.com/>) gives updates in case the internet goes down.

Finally, store files, data and work in the cloud so you can access it anywhere. Digital safety advice can also be found as well via organisations such as the Tor Project and Access Now.

The Rory Peck Trust website (www.rorypecktrust.org) has many free resources for psychological support and organises affordable courses such as Hostile Environment and First Aid Training.

Freelance video journalist Jason N Parkinson, who covers protests and riots, says that since Covid he always carries 70 per cent alcohol hand sanitizer. “Strangely enough, I have never suffered a cold or flu ever since,” he notes. His most useful tool? “I would say the first thing is the camera to document what is going on and always keep it recording, after that a decent medical kit (with tourniquets, gauzes and wound suppressors) because we are humans before journalists and, if someone needs help, that is our first port of call. The footage can wait.”

Alerts on X

@metpoliceuk
@mayoroflondon:
London safety alerts
.....
@UKHSA: health
updates
.....
@envagency: flood
warnings
.....
@metoffice: weather
warnings
.....
@cabinetofficeuk and
@govuk: national
emergencies
.....
@BBCBreaking
@BBCNews @PA
@Reuters
.....
@BBCSounds: live radio
.....



Some of the essentials

Beware of the dogs

Non-stop barking, jumpy owners and some raised hackles, **Ruth Addicott** goes to Crufts

It's a British institution, the greatest dog show in the world and, as every journalist knows, you don't have to look far for a lead.

There was the KGB-style poisoning scandal (in 2015 in which an Irish setter mysteriously ingested poisoned meat), a ring invasion by protesters (2018), a prosecution under the Dangerous Dogs Act (2013) and, in 2010, a streaker sporting a strategically placed cat mask.

Crufts, which has been going since 1891, takes place at the Birmingham NEC every year, drawing more than 150,000 people, 500 journalists and 24,000 dogs (many of which are identical). As well as Best in Show, there's a Hero award for lifetime service and the crossbreed competition Scruffts.

Organised by the Kennel Club, it was first televised by the BBC in 1950, but was dropped in 2008 after a BBC Panorama investigation raised concerns about welfare and harmful breeding practices. The film prompted outrage, led to three separate inquiries and major reform. In 2010, the coverage was taken over by Channel 4 and is now hosted by Clare Balding.

Spread over five halls with 500 trade stands, selling everything from state-of-the-art treadmills to dog chews tested by humans, it requires stamina as well as planning.

Bruce Adams, staff photographer for the Daily Mail, has covered Crufts for the past decade and learnt to expect the unexpected. He's seen everything from protesters interrupting the live final to one finalist pausing half way through a routine 'to answer the call of nature'. Snow in March 2023 provided pictures of thousands of competitors arriving in colourful coats and boots.

"And that was just the dogs," he says.

Adams has developed a strategy, focusing on breeds that make the best pictures for the paper and online. "Unusual breeds such as the Hungarian puli or komondor, which resemble dreadlocked sheepdogs, or the Chinese crested dog known for its naturally bare body except for the hair on its head and tail seem to go down well," he says.

"I normally concentrate on breeds that have personality and are visually unusual or attend judging of new breeds that are unknown to the UK readership. The show is so immense – you just have to get stuck in and drown yourself in the subject, chatting to owners while they groom their dogs, watching the judging rounds and witnessing the day's events."

Photographer Simon Hadley has worked in the Birmingham area for 25 years and lost track of how many times he has been to Crufts. "I have to admit, it's not one of my favourite jobs," he says. "Thousands of barking dogs and their owners can get a bit much."

The challenge is finding a new angle. One year, when

How to fetch the best in show

Plan ahead

Freelance journalist Jane Common says the Crufts space is huge, so plan which stands you want to visit and the heats you want to see. She also

suggests visiting the Kennel Club's Mayfair HQ to view their art gallery. "The collection, open by appointment only, is comprehensive and a real testament to the long-

standing relationship we enjoy with man's best friend."

Don't hound the competitors

Beverley Smith, editor of Dogs

Today, says wear comfortable shoes, take your own food and don't touch the dogs. "The people showing the dogs are tremendously serious," she says. "They don't want you patting the dog in case you ruin the dog's hair. Always ask permission – people are

very jumpy. Dog people generally are very phobic of the press and very suspicious of the public in case they steal their dog or give it something to eat." Smith advises getting to know owners first and finding a friendly press person to take you around.



FARLAP / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

covering Crufts for the Birmingham Post, he decided to see if he could shoot an entire feature without including a picture of a real dog.

"I photographed dog paintings, dog plates, dog jumpers, dog statues, cuddly toy dogs etc. It turned out pretty successfully and the Post ran it as a whole broadsheet page photo essay," he says.

In 2025, he was commissioned by the Royal Academy of Dance's Dance Gazette magazine to do a feature showcasing the movement of dogs. Although Hadley had a photo pass, it did not include ringside access and he had to shoot from public areas – a heads-up for photographers attending this year.

Press access has been a bone of contention over the years.

Beverley Smith, editor of Dogs Today magazine, remembers a time when the press were "as welcome as fleas". She recalled a producer of a children's programme using the F-bomb once because they couldn't get press passes.

Smith recalls internationally acclaimed photographer Elliott Erwitt struggling to get in after being flown over from New York.

"I've been banned a few times," she says. "There was a time when the Kennel Club issued a memo to staff which said they weren't allowed to read Dogs Today. I criticised lots of things and we were seen as a sort of 'dangerous' publication. They've reformed quite a bit since then."

Smith has covered the show for more than 35 years and has campaigned on issues such as puppy farming and tail docking. She says she receives a 'rush of whistleblowers' every year in the run-up to Crufts and interest from overseas journalists is huge.

A story with a major impact was the 2008 investigation by journalist and award-winning director Jemima Harrison. Her BBC documentary *Pedigree Dogs Exposed* revealed the extent of health and welfare problems in pedigree dogs and harmful breeding practices – a subject she began looking into after her own dog, Freddie – a flatcoated retriever – died at the age of 15.

"I discovered that many flatcoats are dead, typically, by the age of eight or nine due to a particularly aggressive cancer," she says. "I started researching and opened up a can of worms

"Crufts is one huge example of the love humans have for our four-legged friends."

Bruce Adams,
photographer,
Daily Mail

"Tannoys, voices, barking and hubbub fill the air."

Anna Webb, BBC
contributor and
host of the *A Dog's Life* podcast

"It was a genuine exposé of a great British institution."

Jemima Harrison,
journalist and
producer

"The press were as welcome as fleas."

Beverley Smith,
editor, *Dogs Today*

about the way pedigree dogs were bred. The more I dug, the worse it got. I couldn't believe that no one had looked at the issue for a prime-time documentary before. In fact, the film was initially commissioned for BBC4 but moved to BBC1 when it became obvious how strong it was."

The biggest problem was getting vets to speak out.

"Senior vets were nervous about upsetting the Kennel Club – which was a source of research funding for some of them," she says. "The vets who did put their necks on the line to speak to us got a lot of grief from breeders afterwards – that actually continues to this day for some of them."

"The media appetite for the story both in the UK and internationally was pretty gobsmacking. It went on for months."

The Kennel Club hired law firm Schillings and complained to Ofcom about the programme but four of the five complaints were rejected. Harrison says that Ofcom did however find that we had not given the Kennel Club sufficient right of reply, which was a mistake on our part.

Although Crufts divides opinion, many people have a soft spot for it, not least its eight million viewers.

Freelance journalist Jane Common, who has been writing about pets for more than 20 years, recalls taking her Battersea rescue dog, Attlee, to the show in 2015 for an article commissioned by The Guardian, 'A scruff goes to Crufts'. Attlee was given the once over by an official judge in the show ring, arranged by the press office.

"Attlee, knowing he was in elevated company, rebelled, acting the larrikin," she recalls. "Barking, jumping up and down and spinning round chasing his stubby tail."

Attlee passed away last year, but the photo of him on the famous green carpet is one of her treasured possessions. Unfortunately, it was the same year as the 'poisoning', so her feature never saw the light of day.

If there's one tip that Smith has for journalists attending this year, it is: don't pat the dogs or try to speak to the owners as they are about to step in the ring.

"The dogs won't bite, but the people will."

by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books

What We Did on our Holidays

Felicity McCall

Out now, Colmcille Press

Ten short stories by the former NUJ Irish executive council member (and the first woman to be co-chair), sometime BBC broadcaster and prolific playwright. The Derry and North West branch member brings us tales of a bereaved mother, a seaside holiday and post-conflict city streets.

The Othered Woman

Shahed Ezaiddi

March 20, Pluto

The writer and editor argues that

Islamophobia has excluded Muslim women from feminist conversations. Subtitled 'How white feminism harms Muslim women', her book aims to upturn myths about victimhood and oppression.

Comedy

Sam Nicoresti: Baby Doomer

On tour until March 20

Winner of the 2025 Edinburgh Comedy Award, Nicoresti uncovers universal truths in the queer experience and scores big mainstream laughs out of touchy subjects such as misgendering, trans role models and buying clothes that fit.

Exhibitions

Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2026

The Photographers' Gallery, London

March 6–June 7

The prize for artists who have made a significant contribution to photography over the past 12 months showcases the work of Jane Evelyn Atwood, Weronika Gęsicka, Amak Mahmoodian and Rene Matić. Their images deal with gender, fake news, exile and lives shaped by politics.



Catherine Opie: To Be Seen

National Portrait Gallery, London

March 5–May 31

First major exhibition in the UK of the American photographer whose

30-year career has put marginalised people in focus, while raising questions about politics, identity and power.

Events

Storyhouse Women

Storyhouse, Chester

March 3–7

A week of events celebrating women and girls, with a view to creating a more equitable world. The programme includes a discussion about misogyny in sport and a comedy night starring Mel Owen and members of the Token comedy collective.

Kitchen Revolution

Barbican, London

March 31–April 1

Journalists Carole Cadwalladr and John Sackur are guests at this evening of dinner and debate organised by Belarus Free Theatre, the dissident company living in exile in London. It is inspired by kitchen discussions about art and politics in the old Soviet Union.

In depth

Punk: on the spot in Liverpool

Penny Kiley was a journalist in the right place at the right time. In 1976, she arrived at the University of Liverpool to study English. At the start of her second term, she made her first visit to Eric's, the backstreet club synonymous with the city's punk scene. She was hooked – on the music, on the atmosphere, on Liverpool itself.

"I don't think it's hindsight or nostalgia – Eric's was a very special place," says Kiley, who would rub shoulders with such future stars as Pete Dinklage (a fellow student), Julian Cope, Ian McCulloch (pictured), Bill Drummond and Pete Burns. "I was so privileged."

In 1979, she filed her first review for Melody

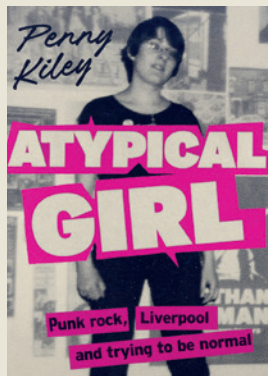
Maker. "It was a great time to be doing it because there was so much going on, so I got plenty of work," she says.

Now an NUJ activist and member of Oxford branch, she has written a memoir, *Atypical Girl*, that looks back to a thrilling musical moment as well as trying to make sense of her own late-diagnosed autism.

"There are already a lot

of books that are just about Liverpool music, so it turned into more of a personal story. It's my perspective on the scene I was part of," she says.

"There are a lot of autism memoirs where people tell you what a terrible time they've had in their life and I didn't want to write a misery memoir. I wanted it to be entertaining."



She adds: "I wrote it as testimony, because women's voices need to be heard, particularly those who are working in traditionally male environments such as the music business."

Written in the crisp, lively prose that befits a winner of a Plain English Campaign award, the book is a reminder of the hard work involved in sustaining a career in freelance journalism ("I never made any money").

It was also a fresh challenge for Kiley, schooled in short-form journalism, to write at length: "It was creatively very satisfying because it was difficult. I was learning new things all the time."

Atypical Girl, Penny Kiley, Birlinn, March 5



Films

Breaking Social

General release

From March 6

A global view of corruption and kleptocracy making links between the murder of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta and a river without water in Chile, Fredrik Gertten's film considers ways to rebuild society after the injustices of the past.



Orwell: 2+2=5

General release

From March 27

Director Raoul Peck pays homage to

George Orwell in a film that blends archive material with present-day reflections about truth and democracy. Damian Lewis narrates.

Television

Secret Service

ITV

Spring

Small-screen adaptation of one of the 10 novels by ITV News at Ten anchor Tom Bradby. Filmed in Malta and London, the thriller stars Gemma Arterton as a senior MI6 officer, dealing with rising tensions between Russia and the UK.

Theatre

Ukraine Unbroken

Arcola Theatre

London

February 26–March 28

Five short plays by David Edgar, Cat Goscovitch, David Greig, Jonathan Myerson and Natalka Vorozhbit, reflecting the recent turbulent history of Ukraine. Nicolas Kent directs a production featuring live Ukrainian music.

The Plough and the Stars

Abbey Theatre, Dublin

February 27–April 30

Exactly a century ago, Sean O'Casey's play provoked uproar for its less than reverential portrayal of those who had fought for Ireland's independence in 1916. Now regarded as a classic, it has been revived by Tom Creed.

In the Print

King's Head Theatre, London

March 26–May 3

Playwrights Robert Khan and Tom Salinsky turn Rupert Murdoch's battle of Wapping into a political thriller, pitting print union boss Brenda Dean against a newspaper proprietor prepared to put 5,000 jobs on the line in the name of technological progress.



Spotlight

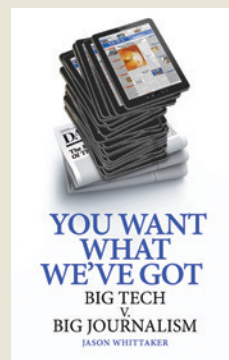
Prophet of profits

Jason Whittaker takes the title of his book from a remark by John B Evans, a player in Rupert Murdoch's empire.

"You want what we've got," he told the tech specialists at a 1992 multimedia conference. He added: "Including our profits."

He was right. They did want it and, as Whittaker shows, they got it. Subtitled 'Big tech v big journalism', *You Want What We've Got* is a fascinating overview of the shift in power that has taken place during many of our working lives.

Evans was talking in an era when old media was at a commercial peak. Yet to lose readers and advertisers to the internet, the major newspapers were as profitable as they were influential. In less than three decades, the



media moguls would be eclipsed by Meta, Apple and Amazon.

The author, who is professor of communications at the University of Lincoln, charts the progress of the takeover, shaped by historical events such as the Gulf war and the pandemic, and by innovations including search engines and AI.

All of this raises questions about democracy, accountability and trust. In an age when truth is in contention, Whittaker's book is a vital account of how we got here.

You Want What We've Got: Big Tech v Big Journalism, Jason Whittaker, Reaktion Books, out now

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DAVID NICHOLSON



Roy Jones

Labour correspondents of yore liked to see themselves as cut from a rougher and more authentic cloth than their 'effete' colleagues in other specialisms.

One of our number, however, was the real deal. Arthur Roy Jones, who died on Sunday December 21 aged 95, had worked for decades as an itinerant pipe-fitter before becoming industrial reporter on the *Morning Star*. A communist and militant trade unionist, Roy had also, counterintuitively, been an RAF police officer. Much to his subsequent embarrassment, in his 30s he returned to Baden Powell's ranks as a scoutmaster – in ill-fitting shorts apparently.

Roy left school in Ellesmere Port without qualifications aged 14, starting his career in industry as a lowly office boy in an iron works. Consequently, he had little difficulty infusing his journalism with both sympathy and empathy for working people.

In his fascinating memoir, *Reminiscences of a Worker Correspondent*, Roy recalled that his long road to membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain began with a protest about 'bullshit' in the RAF, continued with resentment over his failure to win promotion in an industrial job and solidified after a conversation with a party member.

Over a 20-year period, he was blacklisted as a militant trade

unionist and was occasionally jobless as a result. He stood in council elections as a Communist candidate in Ellesmere Port – and failed to be elected five times. He was nothing if not persistent.

His pipe-fitting gigs took him to all sorts of workplaces, including Buckingham Palace, where this 'dangerous Bolshevik' was often within yards of the Queen.

David Felton, then labour correspondent at *The Times*, noted Roy's amazing inability to bear grudges. David cites an example at the annual Engineering Employers' Federation Christmas press party – a notoriously bibulous affair: "Roy was drinking with a captain of industry and discovered he was the boss who had blacklisted him on Merseyside in his pipe-fitting days. They left the party best of mates."

As an Everton fan and talented footballer, his first steps in journalism were taken at Goodison Park, writing for the *Morning Star*. That started a 45-year association with the paper.

His full-time career at the *Star* began in 1982 at its office in Farringdon Road, just north of Fleet Street. Roy was proposed as a member of the NUJ's Farringdon branch by Paul Routledge, then labour editor at *The Times*.

Roy's salary of £8,000 a year (the average UK wage in 1982) was considerably less than that of his branch colleagues on other national

newspapers. The Soviet Union's bulk purchasing of the *Star* could not compensate for the paper's ideological distaste for commercial advertising and – it has to be said – its limited circulation.

The irony of working for a pro-union paper and being paid below the going rate was not lost on Roy or his colleagues, who occasionally took industrial action to improve their lot.

Fundamentally, however, they accepted that the paper could not afford Fleet Street rates.

He enjoyed the friendship of most other members of the rumbustious and blokeish Labour and Industrial Correspondents' Group and the relatively impoverished Roy was rarely allowed to buy a round.

Despite a self-acknowledged inability to make attention-grabbing speeches, Roy was eventually elected chair of Farringdon branch and subsequently to the union's national newspaper council.

On his relatively meagre salary, he had to send money home to his wife Gladys in Ellesmere Port, who later joined him in London.

At that time, communists had considerable influence at senior levels of the union movement and Roy and his wife were convinced their phone was being tapped. In those days, surveillance techniques were primitive and audible clicks gave the game away. Their flat was also broken into twice – unlike any of their neighbours'.

Roy covered all the major disputes in the mid 1980s, including the miners' strike and the Wapping dispute with his boss Mick Costello, the *Star*'s industrial correspondent.

"He was a grafter who was able to draw on his rich experiences in politics and the labour movement," says Mick.

"His good sense of humour contributed a lot to make his writing come alive. Roy will be missed by friends and colleagues in the labour movement and beyond."

On one occasion, three NUJ life members, Roy, Chris Kaufman and Mike Pentelow, went to visit Ballydehob in Cork to celebrate the birthday of another one such, Pat Mantle, who had upped sticks to the Emerald Isle. *Morning Star*

photographer Ernie Greenwood was among the London posse.

Chris, who had been editor of the Transport and General Workers' T&G Record and was at the time a Unite national officer, recalls: "Pat, as a civic dignitary (he was on the town council) was entrusted to deliver the results of the local lottery to all 10 pubs in Ballydehob and environs.

"However, as the mine host of each establishment furnished Pat with a soothing drink, he forgot the vital numbers and was in danger of arousing the patrons' ire until Roy came to the rescue, having jotted them down at an earlier stage." He was one of nature's reporters.

Ex industrial correspondent Kevin Maguire, currently a *Mirror* columnist, was also a mate: "Roy was a lovely man, a gentle giant. I wouldn't have minded a revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat led by him."

His achievements in journalism and the NUJ were recognised when he was made a member of honour in 2013. Presenting the award, Anita Halpin, NUJ treasurer at the time, said: "Roy has made a tremendous contribution to the NUJ as a reporter of trade union affairs and as an effective and popular activist."

When he 'retired' to Colwyn Bay, Roy covered Everton home games for the *Star* for another 14-plus seasons and wrote a column for the paper. He also worked on papers in North Wales and became an official of the local branch.

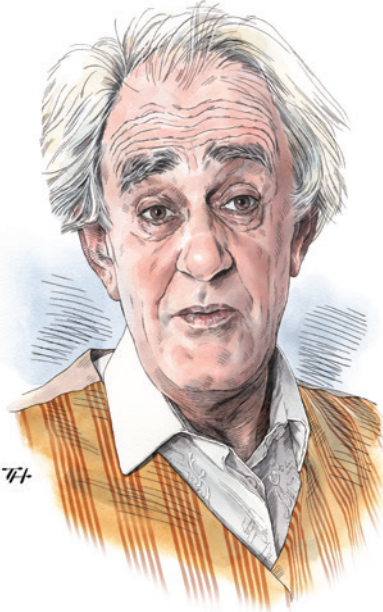
He kept in touch with his colleagues in London as chair of the NUJ's 60+ council.

His commitment to the Colwyn Bay community was expressed through campaigns on behalf of council estate tenants, organising benefit concerts featuring Ewan McColl and spending 14 years as press officer of the Old Colwyn Environmental Federation.

Gladys, his wife of 65 years, died in 2022. He leaves three daughters, Christine, Alison and Elaine, seven grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Further tributes can be read at <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/nuj-tributes-to-roy-jones.html>

Barrie Clement



Tips on terrorising the poor punters

Many stories aim to strike fear into people so we need to build skills in this, says **Chris Proctor**

I am amassing a collection of Halloween outfits, loud fireworks, whoopee cushions, Nigel Farage lookalikes, clockwork mice and jumping spring snakes. Anything, in fact, that will scare people. I intend to use them as atmospheric backdrops for a course I am preparing on Frightening Journalism.

As the title suggests, this module hones skills for alarming the public, which is part and parcel of the modern newshound's toolkit.

A fair proportion of stories are now devoted to striking terror into the populace. They often appear under the generic header: 'How frightened should you be about...?'

This question encompasses a wide range of topics, including my personal favourite: 'How worried should we be about clusters of Chinese restaurants surrounding our most sensitive military bases?'

The correct response, according to the Mail is 'very'. The Loon Fung in Glasgow, for example, may be a front to monitor foreign dissidents and influence senior politicians. You never know.

The Independent applied the 'How frightened?' formula to H₃N₂. How worried should we be about this new strain of flu which, possibly, could lead to the most severe outbreak in decades and wreak havoc on the NHS? Metro asked the same about the spread of human metapneumovirus. Is it already in the UK? And, if so, what level of trembling is appropriate?

The Beeb's science arm wonders how agitated we should be if the plague comes back. Lots of infectious diseases

we thought were long gone might be breaking out all over the place. So how alarmed would we be if the Black Death slipped back for an encore? I mean, given that last time it saw off half of Europe's population, I'd say it could cause anxiety.

But even this eventuality is eclipsed by the World Economic Forum asking how worried we should be given we might be on the brink of a 'polycrisis'. This splendid concept, embracing a mélange of troubles, is studied only at postgraduate level of the Frightening module.

Of course, I welcome any new strain of story that fills the purses of our profession, but I wonder about the readership. Personally, I'm not keen on anxiety so I skip over these articles. If you'd started the day without a care in the world, why would you peruse articles listing reasons why you should reduce yourself to a palpitating shadow of your earlier self?

It also seems that the 'How frightened should you be?' formula leaves no option for zero. Having entered the spirit of the article, you can hope to emerge, at best, anxiously disconcerted and, at worse, utterly terrified.

Despite this, frightening has developed into a popular and growing industry. I am considering boosting its appeal by sponsoring awards to recognise and encourage the field.

I wondered about tagging onto the award ceremony of the Hollywood-based Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films but, having researched this, I am loath to recommend it. I'm worried about the event's founder, Dr Donald A Reed. Don, 'a Roman Catholic whose life was profoundly influenced by a meeting with Doris Day', is an officer of the Order of Antioch, having been initiated by Prince-Abbot Edmond II in 1971. (The

Prince-Abbot, the seventh you will recall, is also the fifth Mukungu of San Luigi).

I find the personnel involved somewhat unsettling so tend towards seeking a home at the Dead Meat Horror Awards. This features The Kill Count, analysing the number of eternal rests in any production, and rating the quality of the featured passings. Awards include the most impressive slaying (The Golden Chainsaw) and the least imposing (The Dull Machete). Surely space could be found for the Most Frightening Newspaper Question: the Hanging Hack's Hatchet, perhaps?

Those enrolled on the Frightening Journalism module will begin with the lighter stuff, such as substandard alarms (tooth decay, playground dearth) or niche markets, such as the residents of Rochdale or the burghers of Brighton. Central to their work are reports of the worst places to have a heart attack or a baby or chilblains.

In these pieces, a particular location is chosen and the populace is informed that their area has, for example, the worst-performing schools. They are told that their offspring are more likely to emerge from their education with a fracture than a qualification.

It is the perfect horror scenario: the unfortunate readers are trapped, threatened and defenceless. Their choices are stark: they can either uproot their family and bravely go somewhere distant, abandoning income and acquaintances. Or they can condemn their own offspring to a life without enlightenment.

They will never achieve the literary levels needed to study the Daily Star. Never stand a chance of being accepted onto a Frightening Journalism course. Never meet Doris Day.

What sort of future is that? Scary or what?

A location is chosen and the populace is told their offspring are more likely to emerge from school with a fracture than a qualification

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.



Be Part of a Collective Voice

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.

Respect at Work

The NUJ challenges work cultures which lead to bullying and harassment. It will represent you if you experience this behaviour. It uses its collective voice industry-wide to argue that media workers are treated with respect. We promote workplaces where workers and managers are constructive with their criticism during the creative process, and the union publishes codes of conduct and dignity at work policies.



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