INSIDE:
Labour leadership
The unions‘ role

Fighting back
TUC prepares for battles ahead

PRESSIN SHACKLES
Price of state support for Europe’s media
Pending cuts and union industrial action have dominated the news and our activities lately. The TUC caught the headlines as unions prepared co-ordinated industrial action against public service spending cuts. The annual conference pushed the union movement into the spotlight, even if it often came at the price of an overuse of Shakespeare with ‘winter, spring, summer of discontent’ stories.

And our union has been involved in an important fight against cuts to pensions at the BBC after an overwhelming vote for action by our members and those in Bectu and Unite. Our dispute has thrown the issue of pension cuts that will affect the broader public services into sharp relief, too, and has also come at the price of some alarmist coverage, with accusations of bias because of our decision to target the Tory conference as a newsworthy event.

In this edition of The Journalist we look at the battles ahead for the unions and how those issues are covered in the press. We also examine the unions’ crucial role in the recent Labour Party leadership contest.

It’s an important time for all trade unions at present, and that significance is only likely to increase as the full impact of the Government’s spending review and new policies on the media unfold.

Christine Buckley
Editor
BBC strikes halted after last-minute offer

Strike action at the BBC, which had been planned to hit the Conservative party conference was suspended after the NUJ, Bectu and Unite received a ‘significantly improved’ offer over changes to pensions.

Unions are consulting over the new offer and strikes later in October, including one that would disrupt coverage of George Osborne’s comprehensive spending review, will go ahead if the new offer is rejected.

Under the new offer, which was made four days before the first strike was due to go ahead, the BBC will protect the value of the money paid into a new defined contributions scheme which will apply to new staff and into which existing staff can opt to switch into. It is proposing that its contributions to the scheme accrue by four per cent or inflation, whichever is the lowest.

Originally the corporation had planned to introduce a cap of one per cent a year on the amount by which the pensionable salaries of existing staff could grow.

The BBC is arguing that changes to the pension scheme are necessary to tackle what it claims is a £2 billion deficit. But the clash over pensions comes as the BBC has offered to freeze its licence fee for two years, a move that was seen by many as a retreat by the BBC Trust and a victory for the Government.

Jeremy Dear, NUJ general secretary, said: “Given the outrage the BBC’s pension proposals have caused, which staff have consistently viewed as a pensions robbery, we’re obviously pleased that the BBC have seen fit to table an improved offer, rather than face strike action.”

Sir Michael Lyons, the BBC chairman, is to leave next May when his four-year term ends. He said the job had been more ‘demanding’ than specified.

Jeremy Dear, Page 9
Raymond Snoddy, Page 30

Spending watchdog to scour corporation’s books

The National Audit Office, the public spending watchdog, is to be allowed to scrutinise the BBC’s finances.

The move by the BBC Trust follows continued controversy over high payments to TV and radio star names and to high ranking executives. The trust will allow the NAO freedom to choose which of the BBC’s operations it wants to investigate. However, although the watchdog will be able to see the BBC’s books it will not be able to publish details of individuals’ pay or contractual terms with independent companies.

Until now, the watchdog has only been able to scrutinise areas chosen by the trust. These have been part of value-for-money studies of the corporation’s activities that the trust carries out as the BBC’s governing body.

The Government has said that the move will not jeopardise the BBC’s independence. But critics fear the development is bound to weaken independence.

TRIBUTES FOR VINNIE DOYLE

Vinnie Doyle, editor of the Irish Independent for almost 25 years, has died.

Irish prime minister Brian Cowen described him as a ‘legendary figure in Irish journalism’.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ Irish Secretary, said: “Vinnie was a life member of the NUJ and throughout his career maintained the links forged with the union when he began his journalistic career. As editor Vinnie enjoyed a robust relationship with the union but he also worked closely with chapel officers.”

Mr Doyle, who was 72, began his journalistic career in the traditional way, as a copy boy.

in brief...

TIMES SUFFERS 16 YEAR LOW IN SALES
Sales of The Times have fallen below 500,000 for the first time in 16 years. Circulation fell 14.23 per cent in August to 494,205. Its paid-for circulation was 444,065.

Meanwhile, The Daily Telegraph saw its sales drop 17.33 per cent to 673,010 with paid for circulation at 629,011.

BBC LOSES RIGHTS TO MASTERS GOLF
The BBC has lost exclusive live TV rights to the Masters golf tournament after 24 years and will share coverage with Sky Sports from next year. BSkyB will broadcast exclusive live TV coverage of the opening two rounds of the tournament and the BBC will share coverage of the final two rounds.

MORE LISTENERS TUNE IN TO RADIO
UK radio listening leapt to its highest level for more than 10 years in the three months to the end of June, with stations such as BBC Radio 4, Radio 5 Live and TalkSport experiencing record audiences over a period that included the general election and the World Cup. Some 90 per cent of the population over the age of 15 listened to the radio each week.

JOURNALISM JOBS SHRINK BY A THIRD
Jobs in mainstream UK journalism have shrunk by between 27 and 33 percent over the last decade to around 40,000, according to University of Central Lancashire journalism researcher François Nel. Conversely, the number of journalism university graduates has never been higher - 7,590 in 2008/09.

PCC BACKS CLARE BALDING COMPLAINT
The PCC upheld a complaint from BBC presenter Clare Balding after Sunday Times writer AA Gill described her as a ‘dyke on a bike’. Balding complained that Gill had breached the discrimination clause of the Editors’ Code in his review of her BBC4 programme, Britain by Bike.
in brief...

MURDOCH SEES HIS PAY FALL
Rupert Murdoch’s total pay dropped to $16.8 million last year, his lowest level since 2003, as a performance-related bonus dropped 20 per cent. His salary was $8.1 million and he received stock and share options worth $4 million. News Corporation made $2.5 billion profits, compared with a $3.4 billion loss for the previous year.

NOW MOVES TO CHARGE ONLINE
The News of the World has gone behind the Paywall paywall, with readers paying £1 for a day’s access and £1.59 for a four-week subscription. The Sun is now News International’s only free-to-view website, but it is also expected to start charging for online content in the next few months.

PAYWALL DELIVERS LOW INCOME
Annual income per paywall subscriber on TheTimes.co.uk and WSJ.com is only a quarter of that gained from subscribers to print editions, according to analyst Benedict Evans from Enders Analysis. He said that any turning off of the presses at a future point would only save newspapers 25 per cent of their costs, not enough to make up the shortfall in online income.

FT GAUGES PRINT AND ONLINE READERS
The FT has begun a new measure to calculate the total number of people paying for FT content. It is releasing online statistics, including subscribers to FT.com and e-reader services, every quarter at the same time as the ABC figures on print circulation are announced.

ITALY LOOSENS GAGGING LAW
Italy’s draft ‘gagging law’ has been amended following widespread criticism within the country and internationally. The changes remove some liability from publishers over wiretaps and allow a ‘filter legal hearing’ at which a judge will consider issues of public interest.

PCC reviews phone hacking allegations at NoW
The Press Complaints Commission has said that it will look again at allegations of phone hacking at the News of the World after new claims have emerged about the extent of the practice. The decision to review the allegations could lead to a re-opening of its investigation.

Stephen Abell, the PCC director, confirmed the move in a letter to Alan Rusbridger, The Guardian’s editor in chief. The Guardian and The New York Times have run a series of stories claiming that the practice was widespread while Andy Coulson was editor. He is now director of communications for the Tories.

The move by the PCC also follows an escalation of legal action over phone-hacking allegations.

The former deputy assistant commissioner Brian Paddick; former Labour minister Chris Bryant; and Brendan Montague, a journalist and author, have launched a judicial review of the police decision not to warn them that they may have been victims of invasions of their privacy, and they accuse John Yates, assistant Metropolitan Police Commissioner, of making misleading statements to parliament and the public.

Lord Prescott, who has issued a separate claim, is expected to join the action after police initially refused to hand over details about him that were taken from the office of a private investigator employed by the newspaper. Lord Prescott contacted Scotland Yard in July last year after The Guardian reported that police files showed that he was targeted in 2006. He said that police only confirmed the documentation in December after several requests.

The former MP George Galloway and the football agent Sky Andrew are suing the NoW’s parent company, News Group, for breach of privacy. Legal action against the News of the World is also being taken by the comedian Steve Coogan and the TV host Chris Tarrant.

Cable lobbied over sale of BskyB
Pressure is mounting on Business Secretary Vince Cable to intervene in the bid by News Corporation for the 61 per cent of BskyB that it doesn’t already own. Controversy has been stoked by a memo leaked to the media industry website Beehive City by media analysts Enders. The memo, sent on spec to Mr Cable, warns that if the deal goes through the Murdoch empire will have a grip on the newspaper and television market in the UK that its competitors cannot match.

The NUJ has been organising opposition through the campaign group 38 Degrees, presenting a petition and sending thousands of letters of concern. So far the Business Department has said that it is too early in the process for Mr Cable to become involved.

Montgomery to quit Mecom
David Montgomery, the former chief executive of The Mirror and former editor of Today, is to leave Mecom, the European newspaper group that he founded. The company has said that Mr Montgomery, who started Mecom 10 years ago, would take a ‘planned retirement’ in January. Institutional investors have been attempting to oust Mr Montgomery.

The company said that while he had the board’s support ‘following pressure from certain shareholders’ he had nevertheless decided to leave in the New Year.

At its height Mecom employed 11,000 people
Mirror pares back to just nine news subs

Trinity Mirror, the red-top’s owner, announced cuts of 25 per cent – 200 jobs across its workforce earlier in the year.

The cuts were set out as it outlined plans for multimedia newsrooms linked to the introduction of its web-based content management system Contentwatch. It said that the successful implementation of Contentwatch had enabled the cuts.

The extent of the cuts on news production have been confirmed to The Journalist by staff at the paper. But a spokesman for Trinity Mirror said the company was still discussing changes with staff.

Most of the 200 departing staff go at the end of October when the paper will begin a new pattern of working. Some subbing work will be done by subs at the Press Association’s operations in Howden, East Yorkshire. Some subs’ jobs have been transferred to Howden from Canary Wharf at a reduced salary. Other production work, especially for the sports department, will be done by people working four hours a night from their homes.

The job cuts come as it has emerged that the company’s profits have improved. Trinity Mirror’s pre-tax profits jumped 61 per cent to £50.4m in the six months to July. This follows its acquisition of the Manchester Evening News earlier in the year.

There will only be nine dedicated news sub-editors working in the Daily Mirror’s Canary Wharf headquarters following the sweeping cuts to the workforce announced earlier this year, The Journalist has learned.

Such a small team producing a national paper’s news would have been unthinkable not long ago. But other newspapers have also pared back to the bone as they have shifted editing work into content management systems.

Call to help reporters meet people

The Media Trust is calling for for local ‘news hubs’ to be established where journalists and the public could meet. It has suggested that these centres should be located in community centres, schools or pubs and that they should be financed by lottery money and local authorities.

However, critics say that journalists have stopped going out on the beat and meeting people because papers are too short-staffed and reporters are too busy. Increasingly, also, regional newspaper groups are amalgamating offices and taking journalists further away from the areas on which they report.

MANCHESTER RELOCATES TO OLDHAM

The Manchester Evening News is now produced in Oldham, or as one MEN journalist phrased it, ‘not actually in Oldham, but just off the motorway somewhere near Oldham’. The move follows the title’s sale by Guardian Media Group to Trinity Mirror earlier this year and a decision by the new owner to move the famous title to an existing print operation that it already operates. MEN’s 21 sister weekly publications will also relocate to Oldham. The move is being seen as another blow for local news in Manchester. The city, in which The Guardian was founded, once had 26 newspapers.

in brief...

LE MONDE SUES SARKOZY

Le Monde has accused Nicholas Sarkozy of ordering French counterintelligence services to spy on one of its reporters. Under a law brought in under the current president, it is suing for breach of confidentiality of sources which were linked to claims of tax evasion and funding of M Sarkozy’s party by the heiress of L’Oreal, Liliane Bettencourt.

States of Freedom, page 16-18

TALIBAN RELEASE BRITISH JOURNALIST

A British journalist, Asad Qureshi, was released by the Taliban in Pakistan after five months in captivity. Mr Qureshi, who has dual UK-Pakistan citizenship, was working for a production company making a documentary for Channel 4 when he was kidnapped.

UNESCO CHIEF CONDEMS MURDERS

The head of Unesco has condemned the recent murders of four journalists in Afghanistan, Angola and Iraq, Irina Bokova, director general, said: “The work of media professionals is vital for the fundamental right of freedom of expression.”

NEWSPAPER APPEALS TO DRUG CARTELS

A leading Mexican daily newspaper - El Diario de Juarez - has asked drug cartels for guidance on how not to offend them following the deaths of two journalists. In a front page editorial it asked what journalists needed to do to avoid being killed and said that even in war, laws protected journalists.

RAMADAN PICTURE BRINGS APOLOGY

In Oregon the Portland Press Herald has apologised for running a story and picture showing Muslims celebrating Ramadan on September 11, the ninth anniversary of the Twin Towers attacks. Readers complained, and the paper’s editor said it should have been conscious of ‘the painful memories stirred by the anniversary’.

The Journalist | 05
Irish titles fall under sudden axe

The sudden closure of two of Ireland’s leading regional newspapers last month provoked anger throughout the country. Staff were advised of the closures after the final editions of the Roscommon Champion, the Longford News and their sister paper the Athlone Voice had been put to bed. Owners Alpha Newspapers, headed by Unionist peer Lord Kilclooney, refused to negotiate collectively with the NUJ on the redundancies.

Instead Irish Organiser Nicola Coleman, Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley and NEC member Barry McCall found themselves accompanying members at a series of individual consultation meetings that Nicola described as ‘a meaningless and shambolic mess’. Twenty five staff lost their jobs, receiving only the legal minimum in redundancy payment.

The company operated no pension scheme.

The Roscommon Champion was established in 1927 while the Longford News began in 1936.

Lord Kilclooney had hailed their ownership as a cross-border expansion of his business. The Athlone Voice, which was bought by the group five years ago, was a new arrival on the regional newspaper landscape.

As company representatives met workers, politicians and community groups joined relatives and friends in protests outside the premises in Roscommon and Longford. In Longford public representatives carried banners proclaiming ‘No News is Bad News for Longford’, while in neighbouring Roscommon’s colourful mayor Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan carried a poster declaring ‘Roscommon Needs a Champion’.

Lord Kilclooney, better known as former MP John Taylor, is one of the leading media owners in Northern Ireland.

In the week in which the Co Westmeath, Roscommon and Longford titles were abruptly shut down Alpha Group acquired the Newry Democrat newspaper in Co Down. It was sold by TCH, owner of the Roscommon Champion’s main competitor, the Roscommon Herald.

“Twenty five staff lost their jobs, receiving only the legal minimum in redundancies”

Other articles of interest:

DEATH OF LEICESTER BASED PR CHIEF

Stephen White, Director of Communications at the British Psychological Society, has died at the age of 61.

Stephen headed the communications team at the Leicester-based society for almost 25 years. At the time of his death he was being assisted by the NUJ with a workplace issue.

He was an NUJ member for 35 years, first joining while a press manager in London at the former NALGO public services union.

A talented fashion designer and life-long socialist, Stephen had radical roots as a leading figure in the famous May 1968 six-week student sit-in at the Hornsey College of Art.

The circumstances surrounding his death are being investigated by the Leicester Coroner.

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“Setting up a website was the best marketing move I ever made. What Writer’s Residence has done is create an easy to understand and easy to afford package which removes every excuse for avoiding taking the plunge.” Andrew Crofts, author of The Freelance Writer’s Handbook

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Web Investigator – Find Hidden Information. Save time. Stay Invisible.
23-24 October, City University London
A hands-on two-day course on how to search beyond Google and stay unseen online.
Admission: £150 Students, £250 NUJ Members, £300 Full Price

Computer Assisted Reporting (CAR)
5-6 November, City University London
Learn about this important tool that enables journalists to make sense of and analyse government, financial, and social statistics.
Admission: £150 Students, £250 NUJ Members, £300 Full Price

Understanding Company Accounts
13-14 November – beginners course, Holborn
27-28 November – advanced course, Holborn

These two-day intensive courses taught by one of Britain’s top forensic accountants will show you how to understand company accounts and get beyond the corporate PR spin. This course is for journalists only.
Admission: £250 NUJ Members, £350 Full Price

Booking is essential.
To book: www.tcij.org More information: 020 7040 8220
Jobs go at Five but Desmond promises investment

A quarter of Channel Five’s workforce is being cut by Daily Express and OK! proprietor Richard Desmond following his £103.5 million acquisition of the broadcaster.

Seven of the channel’s nine directors, including chief executive Dawn Airey and director of programmes Richard Woolfe, have also left. The management shake-out is one of the most sweeping seen in broadcasting, but is of a similar style to the action taken by Mr Desmond when he bought Express newspapers 10 years ago. Mr Desmond’s company Northern & Shell has set out plans for £1.5 billion investment in the channel over the next five years and has pledged that the station will not be taken downmarket. Those staff remaining at the station are leaving its central London Covent Garden headquarters to move in with Northern & Shell at offices in the Isle of Dogs and Lower Thames Street.

Mr Desmond has ordered a £20m cost-cutting drive that will lead to between 60 and 80 job losses – more than a quarter of the almost 300 employees.

Jeff Ford, the new Channel Five director of programmes, said that he has ‘tens of millions of pounds’ of extra money to spend on ‘big things, whoppers’. He said pitches for new factual entertainment programmes were a good place to start with the extra money he had. The aim was to appeal to younger and upmarket viewers, and to attract larger audiences overall. Mr Desmond has been reported as holding talks about buying Big Brother for Channel Five.

Last year the station lost £34 million and revenues were down 21 per cent.

Mr Desmond has ordered a £20m cost-cutting drive that will lead to between 60 and 80 job losses

Own goal for Saints’ photography ban

roy of the Rovers and Viz’s Billy the Fish may be football characters who only play on imaginary turf. But early in the football season the Plymouth Herald hired a cartoonist to cover a real match after Southampton banned photographers from newspapers and news agencies from covering its home games.

Southampton had originally insisted that an agency, Digital South, supplied photographs of home matches. But it has since rowed back after protests from newspapers and a boycott of its own photos.

Plymouth artist Chris Robinson was asked to capture Plymouth Argyll’s 1-0 win at St Mary’s stadium.

OWNERSHIP RULES TO BE LIFTED FOR LOCALS

Ownership restrictions on local newspapers, television and radio are to be lifted, Jeremy Hunt, the Culture Secretary, has said.

Mr Hunt claimed that a new ‘landscape of local TV services’ could help strengthen local democracy. His claims come as fears grow about the accountability of local authorities as regional media contract. He said that loosening ownership restrictions would help boost investment in local news. But Mark Thompson, BBC director general, said that the corporation may be inhibited in its involvement because of ‘market impact’ issues.

In a speech to the Royal Television Society, the Culture Secretary said that he was very encouraged by the consideration that the BBC had given to partnering new providers of local news. However, speaking at the same conference, Mr Thompson repeated an earlier statement that the BBC would “not go more local in television and the web than we are now.”

in brief...

LORDS LOOK AT TV ADVERTISING

The House of Lords’ communications committee is to begin an inquiry into the TV advertising market. The inquiry is likely to have important implications for ITV. Peers will scrutinise especially the system of contract renewals that controls ITV1’s advertising rates in order to stop the broadcaster abusing its dominant market position.

ORKNEY WEEKLY PAPER TO CLOSE

Orkney Today, a weekly newspaper that was launched seven years ago, is to close in December. Its owner, Orkney Media Group, which also publishes The Orcadian, said that the closure was necessary because of falling advertising and circulation.

ITN FORGES LINK WITH METRO

ITN is providing video clips to the free daily newspaper Metro. The broadcaster is syndicating video content including domestic news, world news, sports and show business stories to Metro.co.uk, as the title, which is owned by the Daily Mail & General Trust, looks to expand its digital presence. Metro distributes 1.3m copies every weekday in 16 cities while Metro.co.uk publishes to 2.5 million monthly unique users.

TYCOON BUYS NEWSWEEK FOR $1

The struggling US current affairs magazine Newsweek has been rescued by Sidney Harman, a 91-year-old audio equipment tycoon. He reportedly paid the Washington Post group only a dollar for the title.

AEGIS BUYS UP AUSTRALIAN GROUP

UK-based media buying and research group Aegis has bought Australia’s Mitchell Communication Group, in a move to expand in Asia Pacific. Aegis paid £208m for the Australian business. Harold Mitchell, the founder and chairman, has become a ‘significant shareholder’ in Aegis.
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If there's a war, we didn't start it

Almost 4,000 NUJ members are to be balloted over the BBC's latest pensions proposal after an eleventh hour improved offer averted the threat of the first of two planned 48 hour strikes. The ballot is the latest stage in an increasingly bitter dispute over the BBC's threatened pensions robbery. Our campaign has upset the Daily Mail. BBC Unions' War on Tories it screamed from its front page when we announced strike dates. It was nothing of the sort. We targeted major news and sports events – and the threat had the desired impact. It forced the BBC in to significantly improving the offer.

If there's a war, it's not a war we started – but our members will fight to defend their pensions rather than face poverty in retirement. When BBC management – cushioned from the recession by large pay awards, protected from the cuts by not just having one pension but a separate pension slush fund paid for by the licence fee – announced plans to cap pensionable pay at one per cent, thereby undermining the pensions already earned by thousands of workers, there could only be one response.

Staff, saving all their working lives, stand to lose thousands of pounds every year – tens, if not hundreds of thousands of pounds over the period of their retirement. Those who joined the scheme on one set of rules are suddenly facing the goalposts being moved in the most disingenuous way. The BBC's plans have been called 'draconian' by pensions experts, have not got the support of the Trustees, and even the actuaries say there is no reason the BBC needs to take such action now. The scheme valuation is not even due to be published until next year.

But the BBC – and of course the Daily Mail – said there was no alternative. Then we balloted and 97 per cent of our members voted for industrial action. Across three unions more than 90 per cent backed strike action.

It forced a rethink. The BBC put forward new proposals. They were an improvement – but they remained unfair and unacceptable.

How can it be fair to ask workers to pay almost double in pensions contributions, only to be worse off in retirement? How can it be fair for those at the top to enjoy six-figure annual pensions whilst the majority lose tens of thousands of pounds from their deferred wages in retirement? How can it be fair when over 13 years the BBC took a partial pensions holiday, underpaying to the tune of around £1bn, to now seek to claw that back out of the pockets of researchers, journalists, producers and others who have all paid their share every year.

In the face of media criticism and unhelpful comments from politicians (including Red Ed) BBC members held firm and the BBC upped their offer by up to £20m per year.

BBC staff aren't greedy. They know the value of public service. They're not saying no change. But change must be fair, protect the value of pensions earned, and must help the BBC deliver on quality news and entertainment.

Now the latest offer goes out to members. They have the final say. Deal or no deal? One thing they can be sure of is if they vote no we are committed to strike defend our members' pensions and for fair pensions for all – whatever the Daily Mail might think about that.

For all the latest updates from the General Secretary visit his blog at: http://jeremydear.blogspot.com
The TUC was back on the news agenda this year as a focus for opposition to public spending cuts. Although, or maybe because, Labour is out of power there was a greater sense of purpose at the annual unions’ gathering.

**Christine Buckley reports.** *Photographs by Jess Hurd*

**Mass strikes against spending cuts**

Unions are to mount a wide-ranging campaign against government spending cuts after overwhelmingly backing a call for co-ordinated action at the TUC. The action will include co-ordinating the timing of separate industrial disputes for maximum impact; building a broad consensus against the cuts with community-based and national organisations; and staging national demonstrations.

Brendan Barber, TUC general secretary, warned that the austerity drive would damage public services and cost many jobs. He told delegates at the conference in Manchester: “Decent public services are the glue that holds a civilised society together, and we diminish them at our peril. Cut services, put jobs in peril, and increase inequality – that is the way to make Britain a darker, brutish, more frightening place.”

Dave Prentis, Unison general secretary, accused the Government of attacking public services because of ideology rather than a need to tackle the deficit. He said: “The coalition does have choices. It can stop the giveaways that benefit the few. It can start protecting the services needed by the many. It can have the guts to go back to the banks, the speculators, the profiteers, to tell them on our behalf: ‘You created this mess, you pay for it.’”

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of PCS, attacked the Government’s focus on benefits claimants and said that the real ‘scroungers’ in society were wealthy people who evade tax. Only one delegate from pilots’ union Balpa spoke against, saying that co-ordinated action would give the Government an ‘open goal’.

Unions are expected to wait until the spring before launching any action. They believe there will be more public support then because the impact of cuts will be more than it is at present.

**BANK GOVERNOR CONCEDES BONUS ANGER**

Mervyn King, the governor of the Bank of England, admitted that the banks had caused the financial crisis and sympathised with union anger over bonuses. But he also told the TUC that public spending cuts were necessary and that any union that opposed them needed to offer a reasoned alternative plan.

Mr King said that bonuses had encouraged excessive risk-taking. He said: “I understand the strength of feeling,” he said. “I’m surprised it often hasn’t been expressed more deeply. I certainly understand that.”

And he also responded positively to a question from Janice Godrich, president of PCS, asking about his support for action on tax loopholes and more jobs in tax collection. Mr King admitted that the UK’s financial systems needed ‘radical reform’ to avoid another crisis.

**PCS calls for action on tax evasion**

PCS has launched a campaign to oppose public sector cuts, arguing that £120 billion is lost in revenue due to tax evasion, compared with £1 billion lost in benefit fraud. The union is using economic research to demonstrate that investment in public sector jobs is cost effective and that action against tax evasion would deliver far greater benefits than a crackdown on benefit claimants.

Research by Richard Murphy, a chartered accountant with Tax Research, has shown that the state recoups 92 per cent of the cost of creating new public sector jobs because of the increased tax revenues generated and the reduction in benefits payments.

PCS argues that the debt crisis is not a proper argument for cuts because in times when the debt/GDP ratio was higher it was nevertheless possible to create the welfare state, the NHS, state pensions and comprehensive education.
Fighting fund for the right to strike

The TUC is to establish a fund to help smaller unions fight legal actions when they are fighting for the right to strike. The move follows a call from the NUJ after it was caught up in widespread action by employers to block strike mandates on legal technicalities.

Earlier this year Unite, PCS, the RMT and the NUJ all had strike action blocked. In the NUJ’s case it was when Johnston Press challenged an overwhelming strike vote because its name was on the ballot papers. The company argued that all Johnston Press’ sites should be balloted separately because as a national organisation it ‘employed no journalists’.

Donnacha DeLong (pictured left), NUJ vice president, told the TUC that legal precedents could be established that affect the whole movement because some smaller unions didn’t have the resources to fight legal action. The NUJ and the RMT are fighting the legal challenges that they faced in claims against the UK government at the European Court of Human Rights. The claims are that UK legislation impedes the right to freedom of association.

A right to strike motion at the TUC was backed by delegates. It said: “The best way to defend our members’ interests is to put an end to the UK’s repressive anti-trade union laws and endeavours to support any legal action designed to do so.”

The TUC will ask all unions to contribute what they can to the new legal fund. Meanwhile John McDonnell MP is attempting to get a private members’ bill on lawful industrial action through parliament. If enacted it would prevent employers from using technical errors to stop strikes.

CWU faces fresh Royal Mail battle

Unions unanimously backed the campaign by the Communication Workers Union to fight controversial government plans to privatise Royal Mail. The CWU has battled against on/off threats to the continued state ownership of Royal Mail for many years, including a partial sale and a commercial joint venture proposed by the previous Labour government. In the latest, and potentially biggest, fight, the union will target key marginal parliamentary seats held by Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs.

The move follows the decision of Vince Cable, the business secretary, to look at total privatisation. This goes much further than had been expected.

Dave Ward, CWU deputy general secretary, told the TUC that a sale would threaten the universal service – the ability to send items anywhere in the country for the same price – and lead to the closure of hundreds of post offices. The CWU has already suffered tens of thousands of job losses as the postal group has implemented sweeping technological changes.

PUBLIC CASH FOR LOCAL NEWS

Public subsidies should bolster local journalism to ensure that it can play an active part in maintaining local accountability and democracy, according to a coalition of groups including the NUJ, the Carnegie UK Trust and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

Jeremy Dear, NUJ general secretary, told a fringe meeting that local democracy had been hit by the closure of 107 newspapers in the last two years and by the loss of one in four of all local journalism jobs. Media analysts Enders estimate that half of the current local newspapers will close by 2013.

The three groups are pressing for an economic stimulus plan for journalism which could be funded by a levy on recording devices, as happens in some other countries. The call follows the publication of the Carnegie UK Trust’s report Making Good Society, part of which looked at how people could be encouraged to join public debates at a time when local media is being cut back.

in brief...

HOPES TO CREATE A MILLION GREEN JOBS

TUC delegates backed a One Million Green Jobs campaign. The campaign, which was already backed by some unions and NGOs, says that a million public-sector jobs can be created through investment in green manufacturing, energy-efficient housebuilding and an integrated public transport system.

10-POINT PLAN TO BOOST INDUSTRY

Unions endorsed a 10-point plan to revive British manufacturing. Key demands include better use of government purchasing power to protect British manufacturing jobs, increased investment in research and more involvement for workers in securing the sector’s future. The move is the latest of many union initiatives to help boost the UK’s contracting manufacturing base.

CALL FOR HIGH PAY COMMISSION

A commission should investigate ‘out of control’ wages of executives and other high earners. The CWU said the TUC should set up a commission to examine the difference between the highest and lowest pay in leading companies. Will Hutton, chief executive of the Work Foundation, is currently looking at fairer pay ratios in the public sector for the Government.

UNITE VOTES FOR NEW LEADER

Britain’s biggest union, Unite, is voting to elect a new general secretary. It will be the first time a leader has been elected by the whole of the merged union and follows a difficult period for Unite operating under joint general secretaries who had been leaders of the TGW and Amicus.

LEAHY ELECTED NEW TUC PRESIDENT

Michael Leahy, general secretary of Community, trade union is the new TUC President. A former steelworker, he was elected by the TUC’s governing body and takes over from Dougie Rooney, a national officer at Unite, who held the post for the last 12 months.
Practical international solidarity

TUC Aid is appealing for funds to help trade unionists in three of the most challenging environments. This is your chance to put solidarity into action. Help fellow trade unionists create democracy and fight poverty. **Make a difference.**

**Burma**

Burma is one of the worst countries in the world to be a worker. The Federation of Trade Unions - Burma (FTUB) is banned, dubbed a terrorist organisation by the regime and forced to operate underground.

Your support can help the FTUB educate and train its organisers and tell Burmese workers’ stories to the outside world.

Help the Burmese unions in their struggle for democracy and workers’ rights.

**Zimbabwe**

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) needs our help to promote real democracy, an end to the violence in the countryside which hurts black farmworkers most, and better wages and working lives for ordinary Zimbabweans.

The TUC has already increased the ZCTU’s capacity to influence Ministers and MPs, but unions now need money to keep afloat.

We can provide them with basic tools like laptops and office equipment, newspapers, courses and campaigns – they bring their own bravery and commitment.

**Palestine**

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank, illegal settlements and the blockade of Gaza have led to unemployment, poverty and repression of union rights.

TUC Aid will support women in the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) to recruit new members and improve pay, conditions and opportunities. Nedaa Al-Zaher says: “Now I realise the importance of unions and I have begun to know my rights at work.”

Your support can give women trade unionists new skills and the confidence to really make a difference to their day-to-day lives.

The NUJ is already working with sister organisations in Palestine and Zimbabwe and, through the International Federation of Journalists, we are supporting fellow journalists in all three countries.

TUC Aid welcomes personal donations or contributions from union bodies.

Visit our website to donate directly, set up a standing order, or arrange for your employer to make payments out of your wages through Give As You Earn.

Or send a cheque made out to ‘TUC Aid (Multi-Country Appeal)’ to Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

www.tuc.org.uk/tucaidappeal
A wise journalist once told me that most beats could only generate two kinds of story. Japan, from where he had returned, did either strange or fiendishly clever. Unions, he warned, were only good for strikes or splits with Labour.

As it is hard rowing with a then – leaderless party with no post-election policy, most journalists covering this year’s TUC Congress were on a single-minded hunt for strikes. Their mission was to generate as many sentences as possible containing a season followed by ‘of discontent’.

Just as geographical area is measured in either football pitches or multiples of Wales, strikes are now reckoned in units derived from Gloucester’s opening speech in Richard III, the winter of discontent. Many years have seen little more than an afternoon.

Yet the discontentometer is not without flaws. My new media colleague, John Wood, found that the Daily Mail achieved the full quattro stagioni of discontent, predicting or claiming that 14 out of the last 40 seasons were ‘of discontent’.

Handling the strike story was our great challenge in Manchester. We wanted to talk about spending cuts and explain our campaign strategy. This is not based on industrial action, but democratic pressure on coalition MPs.

Yet it is inevitable that workers hit by public sector cuts will consider industrial action. With attacks on pay, pensions and other conditions of employment likely, it is not impossible that we may exceed an afternoon of discontent this year.

But strikes need a secret ballot of members and are regulated in a way that makes many of the rules that employers dub as burdens on business look like polite requests in an anarcho-syndicalist commune. We may bring unions together to co-ordinate action when they want us to, but that is not setting out to maximise disputes.

Did we win? Certainly in quantity. There were strong home wins in the Mirror and The Guardian, and most broadsheets and broadcasters were fair, thanks to lots of hard work from the TUC media team – Liz Chinchen, Elly Gibson and Rob Holdsworth – and a strong performance from Brendan Barber. Special marks for the Indy, who mostly got it right, despite not sending anyone.

Yet we are only ever spin paramedics at the TUC. Proper spin doctors need power in their own organisations and with the media. We lack both. Every union runs their own line, and we don’t play hard to get as we are grateful for coverage.

So journalists from the usual suspect papers were free to look for blood-curdling quotes from the union leaders most likely to frighten their readers, even when those views did not reflect the union mainstream. And in an object lesson in how you can never win, our references to the poll-tax, an exemplar of a government U-turn after protest, became ‘TUC threatens riots’.

But we did manage to get the Daily Mail to take down a leader and publish a letter explaining that we were not planning violence. Peter Mandelson, eat your heart out.
Ed and the brothers

David Hencke looks at the crucial role that trade unions played in choosing the new leader of the Labour Party

The surprise victory of Ed Miliband over brother David for the Labour Party leadership is proof that the power of trade union members is not dead. The fact that most of the media (honourable exceptions being Michael Crick of Newsnight and Nigel Nelson, political editor of the People) missed what was coming is another story. But it is a myth that a cabal of union leaders fixed it for 'Red Ed' in a backroom deal using their members' votes as battering rams to crush David.

The truth is that David and Ed Miliband both spent enormous amounts of energy wooing trade union leaders; because they knew that under Labour's complex voting system even if a fraction of the membership voted it could seriously influence the result. The fact is that Ed was more convincing than David.

David began his campaign by telephoning personally the general secretaries of the major unions with some spectacular own goals. Probably the most extraordinary was an early morning "Hi, it's David" call to Keith Norman, general secretary of the train drivers union, Aslef. So little had David previously wooed Norman that he didn't know who the mystery caller was until he mentioned his surname.

He persuaded Norman to have a breakfast meeting to convince him that he had the train drivers and the railways' interests at heart. It was so successful that Aslef immediately decided to back Diane Abbott and gave her office space at Aslef, where David came in third behind Diane and Ed.

At Unite, David may have tried to convince Tony Woodley and Derek Simpson, but the only surprise there was a decision to back Ed Miliband rather than Ed Balls. And at Unison the choice lay not with David or Ed Miliband but between Andy Burnham and Ed Miliband.

However, it is suggested that unions influenced the vote by including a leaflet for their preferred candidate in a separate envelope with ballot papers. If Unite and the GMB are to be accused of using this tactic for Ed, Usdaw did the same for David.

And there was another battle. While union offices sent out leaflets, David Miliband had the best phone bank system targeting union members alongside ordinary party members. Paul Kenny points out that GMB members were targeted to secure, despite the union's preference for Ed, a strong showing for David in the North East where he is an MP and Birmingham.

It has to be pointed out that a lot of this by-passed the media. and when there was any suggestion that Ed might be in the lead it was brushed aside. Probably the most spectacular example was my old colleague Michael White of

The election system for the Labour leadership is bizarre and according to Andy Burnham, who was one of the candidates, in need of reform.

Voters are divided into three groups – MPs, members of constituency parties, and members of trade unions and affiliated societies.

But it is far from equal – on MP's vote is worth up to 600 times the weight of an ordinary member and it is also easily possible to have more than one vote. People can vote as a Labour Party member, as members of a trade union or even two if they are affiliated (The NUJ is not one of the unions involved as it affiliates to the TUC but not Labour) and any society from the Fabians to the Socialist Health Organisation that is connected to Labour.

So people can even vote for different people as leader. Probably the largest number of votes any person can have is about 12, if they belong to more than one union and are members of a lot of Labour societies.

"The truth is that David and Ed Miliband both spent enormous amounts of energy wooing trade union leaders"

Aslef
The Guardian denouncing Paul Kenny as a ‘political dunce’ for suggesting this might happen after an interview with Kenny in The Times.

Too much time, I suspect, was spent by lobby journalists and commentators talking to each other and their briefers and not enough time spent talking to people who could have told them what was happening on the ground. There was also a belief that the victor could win through using the media rather than listening to what people wanted.

With a Shadow Cabinet being elected following Ed Miliband’s victory, Labour is ready to have a new agenda. With the leadership candidates all likely to get a place if they want one, although David Miliband has ruled himself out, their views on the media are important. The Journalist asked the five leadership candidates their views on press ownership, the future of the BBC, freedom of information, press regulation and the blogosphere. Three of them responded.

David Miliband, Andy Burnham and Diane Abbott wanted to defend the BBC and its current funding through a licence fee – suggesting that there will be a fight between Labour and coalition should the government choose to change the system.

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There is also strong support for the Freedom of Information Act but little appetite to extend it, with the exception of Diane Abbott, who said that it should be broadened to cover private companies. Andy Burnham and Diane Abbott wanted the regulation of the press strengthened while David Miliband would keep the present system but under review.

No one had any appetite to regulate the blogosphere, except Diane Abbott, despite the fact that it has taken the lead in exposing politicians – preferring to rely on existing libel laws.

David Miliband said: “There is regulation of the internet – for example protection against consumer fraud and child pornography and the libel laws. There are a lot of views expressed on the internet that I strongly disagree with, but at its best, it is a hugely democratising force. It gives citizens across the world the chance to express their views and challenge the mainstream media – as we have seen in Iran and Burma in recent times.”

Diane Abbott said: “I would be willing to look at some kind of regulation and setting up some accountability, so that the internet can be a political participatory tool for everyone.”

Andy Burnham, a former culture secretary, gave the strongest warning about domination of the media by Murdoch: “For me, the biggest issue of media regulation that is coming on the agenda is preserving the impartiality of TV news. The Government have indicated that they are prepared to scrap this for non-PSB broadcasters. This opens the door to Sky News becoming Fox News, which I believe would change the whole character of our television news. This would be hugely detrimental to the quality of public debate in our country and must be resisted.”

Usdaw had a paltry turnout of 4.3 per cent the lowest of any union
In Italy the law would also impose fines of up to €25,000 on editors/bloggers if they fail to rectify ‘incorrect’ information within 48 hours.

‘*Chi legge, si vede*’ (Who reads, sees). Unfortunately, more than 80 per cent of Italians get their news via TV – and this is predominantly owned or controlled by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. So the campaign may disappear up a blind alley.

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Tablet computers – and pay walls.

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Berlusconi is not only trigger-happy with libel suits against ‘critical’ newspapers reporting but has provoked even greater outrage with a law on electronic surveillance. According to Anna Finocchiaro, leader of the Democratic Party in the Italian Senate, this is designed to ‘protect the criminals and kill freedom of information’. In response, in a country marked by increased use of libel laws, intimidation of journalists by criminal gangs and the far right, and by ownership concentration, most of the media staged a 24-hour strike in July. Berlusconi did water down some of the bill’s provisions afterwards, but they remain pretty draconian. They limit the ability of police and prosecutors to record phone conversations and plant eavesdropping devices while restricting the right of journalists to publish excerpts from transcripts.

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In Italy, the federation of newspaper editors has launched an ad campaign to promote newspaper reading: “*Chi legge, si vede*” (Who reads, sees). Unfortunately, more than 80 per cent of Italians get their news via TV – and this is predominantly owned or controlled by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. So the campaign may disappear up a blind alley.

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Across the Alps, Sarkozy has been (wrongly) compared with Berlusconi for his own efforts to control the press. The French Press has been in decline for decades. As national daily crumble, it has been kept alive by some strong regional

States of freedom

David Gow examines the impact of government support in troubled economic times on European media
newsletters. But more than two-fifths of readers are aged 50 or over.

Nevertheless, as in all other countries, press ownership yields huge political influence and, in France, most owners are very close indeed to the president. Le Figaro, which backs Sarkozy’s UMP party, is owned by Serge Dassault, the arms manufacturer. Another, Arnaud Lagardère, who has a 15 per cent stake in EADS, owns Paris Match, TV stations and part of Le Monde. Two retail billionaires, Bernard Arnault and François Pinault, own, respectively, financial daily Les Echos and Le Point, the current affairs magazine. Finally, Martin Bouygues, head of the eponymous telecoms group, owns TF1, the main commercial TV channel.

All are close to Sarkozy but his political vanity is boundless. Recently he took powers to select the head of France Télévisions, the public service broadcaster, and tried – but failed – to ward off a trio of business executives who are close to the opposition Parti Socialiste from rescuing Le Monde.

In France investigative journalism has mainly migrated to web-based news media such as Médiapart and Rue89. These relatively small sites first exposed the alleged illegal funding scandal of Sarkozy’s UMP via the Bettencourt family, owners of the L’Oréal cosmetics empire.

The overall fear among French journalists is that the government’s aid is too narrowly focused on buttressing existing business interests rather than investing in jobs, training and skills for the digital age.

The European picture is not uniform.

In Germany there have been pay cuts and savage job-losses (down by a quarter), notably at David Montgomery’s Mecom empire, and readership has declined by 10 per cent in the past three years. But more than 70 per cent of adults still claim to read a newspaper. Even heavyweight weeklies such as Die Zeit can retain a circulation close to half a million – despite the migration of readers to sites such as its own zeit.de or the market leader Spiegel.de. And the newspaper owners last year issued a clear Nein to state subsidies – despite the ever-growing presence of news sites owned by public service broadcasters.

But outside the European Union, Iceland has captured the imagination and backing of journalists worldwide. The island boasts an adult newspaper readership...
of 96 per cent among the population of just 300,000. But much trust evaporated during the 2008 financial meltdown, which saw foreign media play the bigger part in exposing its roots. Now, with a new law passed in June, Iceland claims to be a global haven for investigative journalism. The law offers new protections against libel tourism, strengthens the ability to protect ones sources and makes it harder to censor stories pre-publication. Drafted by the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative, with substantial input from Wikileaks, the legislation also offers up the island as a storage site for web-based organisations facing state/judicial interference and/or intimidation in their home country.

But this is a rare bright spot in an increasingly dark European media landscape where quality journalism is under attack from both publishers and the state. This is particularly true of south-eastern Europe where political interference, state subsidies for government-controlled media and intimidation are on the up. But it’s also true of EU countries such as Bulgaria and Romania where journalists are under increased surveillance and political pressure. There are also similar tendencies evident in Greece, Estonia, Latvia and Hungary.

So journalists and unions are becoming ever more wary of looking to the state to bail out newspapers and, instead, seeking new business models for the Fourth Estate.

The OECD report says it is too early to be talking about ‘the death of the newspaper’. But it adds: “It is unclear whether online readers obtain the same depth and breadth of news as traditional readers. Furthermore, a significant proportion of young people are not reading conventional news at all, or irregularly.” The study also finds that no business models have been found to finance in-depth independent news production.

Former NUJ president (and ex Europe minister under Labour) Denis MacShane is forthright: “Europe imagines it is the world centre of press freedom but the state or media oligarchs now dictate the terms of journalists’ trade in ways that reduce democracy and freedom. Arrogant editors who see themselves as pontificating pontiffs rather than as fact-gatherers are courted by politicians and morph into their supporters.”

He is calling for a European-wide investigation into why the news media no longer has the status or the public confidence it once had and what action needs to be taken to restore that faith.

The small funds for investigative journalism, such as the Belgium-based Pascal Decroos Fund (which has recently awarded €21,000 to five teams) or Norway’s Storebrand, are so far a welcome response to a rapidly increasing problem. But only a very small one.
What made you become a photographer?
I had my first commission from the GMB when I was 18. A worker had been stabbed by a scab on a picket line in Birmingham and I had to photograph him in hospital. It was a massively inspiring dispute and I have been covering injustice and inequality ever since.

What other job might you have done?
I very nearly became a firefighter, but I was a bit scared of the necessary laser eye treatment, but I love the camaraderie. True heroes.

When did you join the NUJ and why?
I joined the NUJ chapel at Socialist Worker when I started work as a staff photographer in 1996 and I have been a freelance member since 2001.

What’s been your best moment in your career?
There are many best moments – working with political journalist and comedian, Mark Thomas; exposing Coca Cola’s actions in Colombia; covering the global anti-capitalist and anti-war movements.

And the best?
Sometime the worst experiences are also the most rewarding. Haiti. A tragic situation of exploitation over many decades, made worse by some frankly racist reporting, which labelled people trying to survive the earthquake as looters and criminals.

What is the worst place you’ve worked in?
Haiti. A tragic situation of exploitation over many decades, made worse by some frankly racist reporting, which labelled people trying to survive the earthquake as looters and criminals.

And the worst?
The worst, or most scary, was out on patrol near San Diego with the notorious vigilante group called the Mountain Minutemen, I really thought I was done for and would end up in a shallow grave like the Mexicans they murder on the border.

What is the worst place you’ve worked in?
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And the best?
Sometimes the worst experiences are also the most rewarding. Haiti made me fundamentally question journalism and journalistic ethics but I learnt about real humanity, resilience and humour alongside the tragedy.

What advice would you give to someone starting in journalism?
Begin with passion, then learn to be a journalist.

What advice would you give a new freelance?
Watch and learn from those around you, respect your colleagues, take advice but go with your gut instinct and stick to your principles. Grab the opportunities, time moves very quickly.

Who is your biggest hero?
The people I find everywhere battling against the odds and standing up for themselves and their communities. My friend Dipti represents countless heroes for me. Dipti was a young woman in a Mumbai slum who became my interpreter, fixer and friend. Her She battled against discrimination and intolerance all her life but the struggle became too much and she sadly took her own life.

And villain?
Various global corporations that exploit and murder workers, poison our food and pollute our planet.

Which six people (alive or dead) would you invite for a dinner party?
Frieda Karlo, Mark Thomas, Leon Trotsky, George Grotz, John Harris, Oscar Wilde – should make for entertaining pie ‘n’ mash.

What was your earliest political thought?
My Tory parents in their wisdom sent me to a convent school so I became very quickly aware of inequality. My earliest political thought was probably about the differing class-related content of lunch boxes and pure horror at the prospect of being force-fed on a nun’s knee (hence the packed lunch).

What are your hopes for journalism in the next five years?
The continuation of quality journalism at local and national level. That professional photography is celebrated and properly rewarded.

And your fears?
That rates will be eroded and outlets diminished, putting many of our finest journalists out of work and having a broader impact on our ability to hold our political system to account.

What one thing would you most want to change in the next 12 months?
The present government.

Who would you like to see join the NUJ?
All the London-based photographers that are not yet organised in the union.

How would you like to be remembered?
With a cheeky smile.
The voice of an announcer. That was what I first thought when a man asked: ‘Are you Claudia Julieta Duque?’ The driver of my daughter’s school bus was my second thought, when he asked about her, mentioning her first, middle and two last names. On both occasions I replied ‘yes sir’. But when the string of insults, threats and a detailed description of what would be done to my daughter for getting involved in what you shouldn’t began, I felt an electric shockwave run through my body and I listened to more, appalled, until he said: ‘We are going to throw her fingers throughout the apartment, your daughter will know what it’s like to suffer, bitch.’

Death threats against her and her daughter are nothing new to Claudia. She’s hunted – in a country that consistently ranks as one of the most dangerous in the world for journalists.

The day I meet her in Bogota is the ninth anniversary of her kidnapping. Since that day she has been subjected to a campaign of threats, intimidation and harassment at the hands of the DAS, Colombia’s security service. She has been forced to flee the country three times. She even uncovered an operations manual written by DAS agents about how to carry
out ‘offensive intelligence’ against her and her then pre-teen daughter. Thanks to a court order which forced the release of documents, she knows what that meant. According to a memorandum from 2004 she was to be raped, tortured and killed.

Her crime? Simply being a journalist covering human rights in a country with an appalling record of abuses. Over 20 years as a journalist she has documented multiple human rights abuses, exposing the involvement of state authorities, in particular the DAS itself, in illegal activities against media, politicians, NGOs and civil society organisations. One investigation into the 1999 murder of the renowned journalist Jaime Garzón unleashed the forces of hell against her. In March 2004 this investigation led directly to the first conviction of the intellectual perpetrator of a journalist’s murder. A former paramilitary commander was given 38 years. He disappeared and has never served his sentence.

Through her work Claudia also uncovered a sophisticated plot by the DAS to pervert the course of the Garzón investigation. As a result a judge ordered an investigation into 10 DAS officers, including the then Deputy Director. That investigation never happened. Instead Claudia is being sued for libel and slander, a familiar tactic to criminalise those who speak out. Her case has been going on for five years, during which time the authorities have destroyed documents, kept her under illegal surveillance and ignored court rulings.

But Claudia remains committed to exposing human rights abuses. She was publicly accused by previous President Alvaro Uribe Velez of being a human rights trafficker. But that doesn’t mean she isn’t scared.

She talks about the night she received that call. “Desperation took over and it was me, who up to that moment had been able to keep a minimum balance during the last two years, in which it had been common to find messages on my answering machine of piercing cries that could only be of tortured people, others of funeral music, some yelling at me ‘we are going to chop you alive’, ‘damned woman’, ‘son of a bitch’, or announcing with laughter they had taken my daughter and she would ‘never return’. It was me that knew I had to remain lucid despite eight months of insomnia, multiple and constant persecutions, kidnapping, but I finally broke down.”

“I hung up and immediately tried to contact a lawyer on the radiotelephone. But the service was blocked and on the screen appeared a ‘restricted’ message, even though just a minute before I had received a call that would change my life. The memory to this day causes the same shock, terror and minute before I had received a call that would change my life. The memory to this day causes the same shock, terror and

“During these years, my daughter and I have taken our picture in five of the world’s wonders; we have climbed snowy mountain tops and known places the sun hides near midnight and people may bathe in rivers without the risk of becoming kidnapped. However, at Christmas, salsa music and desserts have been absent and on December 31st we have not been able to sing the traditional song: ‘I will run to my house to hug my mom’. We have cried over the absence of hugs. But she doesn’t dwell long on the sadness. She’s back up and talking about the next investigation, the continuing human rights abuses, her court case and the need for an end to the terror that stalks Colombia with impunity.

Like all good journalists she always has one more question: “When will all this end?”

FACT FILE
• 101 trade unionists were murdered around the world in 2009. 48 of them were killed in Colombia. 7 journalists were murdered last year.
• 196 trade unionists in Colombia are currently “disappeared”.
• 4.5m people are forcibly displaced, largely as a result of land seizures.
• There are 5,700 political prisoners in Colombia – largely opposition politicians, trade unionists and community leaders.
• At the core of the human rights crisis is the issue of impunity. The UN reports that in 98.5 per cent of cases involving extra-judicial executions carried out by the army, nobody has been brought to justice. Impunity is at 97 per cent in respect of the assassinations of trade unionists.

UNION KILLING FIELDS
Justice for Colombia campaigns for human rights, workers’ rights and peace with social justice in Colombia.

Established in 2002, it was created in response to the appalling human rights crisis in Colombia – and particularly the abuses committed against trade unionists. In that year alone, 184 trade unionists were assassinated and Colombia remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist. The key aims are:
1. To provide concrete support to trade unions and other civil society organisations in Colombia in their struggle for human rights, trade union rights, democracy, peace and social justice.
2. To campaign against the systematic human rights abuses carried out against trade unionists and other civil society activists and to highlight the regular collusion between the Colombian state security forces and illegal paramilitary groups and the impunity, which the perpetrators benefit from.
3. To insist that UN and ILO conventions and recommendations are implemented in Colombia in both law and practice.

Find out how you can get involved www.justiceforcolombia.org

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Find out how you can get involved www.justiceforcolombia.org
Arts with attitude

Some of the best things to see and do with a bit of political bite

For listings email: journalist@NUJ.org.uk

INDEPTH

OUTSIDE IN

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Arts for autumn

Now the summer festivals are a distant memory, it’s time to move back indoors for entertainment. But the good news is there’s more than enough going on...

Music:

Adrian Edmondson and The Bad Shepherds

Adrian Edmondson – best known in The Young Ones, Bottom, and The Comic Strip Presents – and The Bad Shepherds play punk on folk instruments. Not as a gag, but because they like the noise. They do songs by The Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Stranglers, The Jam, The Ramones, The Buzzcocks, The Specials, Talking Heads, and even Kraftwerk! They think a reel is the nearest thing to the excitement of watching punk live in the 70s.

Ade is at home in the music world, having played the Monsters of Rock and Reading festivals with Bad News, Hootenanny with Jools Holland, and Hyde Park with The Who.

See them on: October 7 Leeds Brudenell Social Club; 8 Sheffield The Boardwalk; 9 Manchester Martin Harris Centre; 10 Hull Truck Theatre; 13 York The Duchess; 14 Stroud Subscription Rooms; 15 Bristol St Georges Hall; 16 Swansea Milkwoodjam; 17 Tavistock The Wharf; 20 Norwich Waterfront; 21 Derby Assembly Rooms; 22 London Bush Hall; 23 Southampton The Brook; 24 Reading Sub 89; 28 Powys Theatre Hafren; 29 Bistol Robin 2; 30 Kendal Brewery Arts Centre; 31 Barrow-in-Furness Forum Twenty Eight; December 10,11,12 Birmingham LG Arena Rock With Laughter.

Billy Bragg

December

Catch the redoubtable Mr Bragg at Hatfield Forum on the 1st; Nottingham Rock City 2nd; Preston 53 Degrees 4th; Penrith Leisure Centre 5th; Glasgow The Arches 6th; Norwich UEA 8th; Leamington Spa Assembly 9th; Bexhill De La Warr Pavilion 10th; Bournemouth 12th

www.billybragg.co.uk

When Sam and Dave (Samantha and David Cameron) wanted a present for David to give to Barack Obama on his first visit to the White House as Prime Minister, they chose works by British artist Eine, writes Alf Martin.

Ben Eine was shocked, the British media also. They leapt onto the story because Eine has three convictions for criminal damage and perfected his art on walls, bridges, underpasses and train carriages. A Downing Street official claimed Mr Cameron was a fan and would Eine mind if the Prime Minister gave the US President one of them. He donated Twenty First Century City.

Some may have thought Eine’s departure from London to East Sussex would have meant a quieter existence. Well known for his decorative output of a single capital letter on shop front shutters in and around London, he continued this theme when he moved to Hastings and St.Leonards. Rather than receiving a hostile reception, many shops hanker after an Eine letter. In all the years these letters have been appearing on London’s shutters they have been sturdy upper case characters. Capitals for the capital. Now, in a 100-yard stretch of Middlesex Street in the Petticoat Lane area Eine has introduced a whole lower case alphabet plus a little bit more. He says: “Basically I had the opportunity to do the entire alphabet. We got permission off 20-odd owners to paint the a-z.

“The project started about a year ago but up to the moment the first can was pointed at a shutter the outcome was still uncertain. There’s only one gap in the shutters, one shop owner was definitely not having it."

Months and months of hard work and Eine is basically playing to a few pedestrians. Then, illustrating how fate can change everything, a single canvas has conspired to bring global attention and turn Eine’s world on its head.

“I got the phone call on a Friday night. I was in my studio cutting some stencils. It wasn’t a number I recognised. It was a friend of Samantha Cameron. ‘It’s a weird phone call,’ she said, ‘a bit secret, a bit strange but Samantha and David Cameron are really big fans of your work. David is looking for a piece of art to give to…. I can’t mention any names but…. He’s the most important man in the world from America.’

“I sent them some pictures of stuff that was available and they kind of hummed and haaa’d. They eventually came back and said ‘we really like Twenty First Century City’. They picked it up on Monday and it flew over to Washington with Cameron and was given to Obama on Tuesday.”

So Samantha and David panic buy presents just like the rest of us.

• For the full interview, visit: http://graffoto1.blogspot.com/2010/07/eine-interview.html
**PREVIEW**

**UB40’s** ground-breaking album Signing Off is 30 years old. **Alf Martin** looks at why the band is still important today.

The story of UB40, and how a group of friends from Birmingham became the world’s most successful reggae band is not the stuff of fairytales as might be imagined. It is true that the group has led a charmed life in many respects but it has been a long haul since the days they’d meet up in the bars and clubs around Moseley, and some of them had to scrape by on less than £8 a week unemployment benefit. The choice was simple: if you’d left school early, you could either work in one of the local factories, like Robin Campbell did, or scuffle along aimlessly whilst waiting for something else to happen.

By the summer of 1978 something else did happen, and the nucleus of UB40 began rehearsing in a basement. Robin’s younger brother Ali, Earl Falconer, Brian Travers and James Brown knew each other from Moseley School of Art, whilst Norman Hassan had been a friend of Ali’s since school. Initially, they thought of themselves as a ‘jazz-dub-reggae’ band, but by the time Robin was persuaded to join and they’d recruited Michael Virtue and Astro – who’d learnt his craft with Birmingham sound-system Duke Alloy – the group had already aligned themselves to left-wing political ideals and forged their own identity, separate from the many punk and Two Tone outfits around at that time.

The group had nailed their colours to the mast by naming themselves after an unemployment benefit form. Their political convictions hadn’t been gleaned second-hand either, but cemented in place whilst attending marches protesting against the National Front or rallies organised by Rock Against Racism.

‘Signing Off’ chronicled the times, and wider social and political issues, as well as the plight of communities throughout the country during the early Thatcher years.

Now UB40 are to celebrate the anniversary of their seminal album by performing it during a tour of small venues throughout October and November 2010.

UB40 saxophonist Brian Travers says: “2010 marks UB40’s 30th anniversary, three decades since we started this incredible journey. We had to ask ourselves ‘How can we celebrate? How can we say thanks to the fans for their unconditional support?’

We decided to go back to where we started, downtown to the heart of the cities and the venues where we played our first gigs, then perform our first album ‘Signing Off’ in its entirety, something we have never done before.”

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**UB40 UK dates**

**October and November**

October 25 Liverpool Philharmonic; 26 Birmingham Symphony Hall; 27 Wolverhampton Civic Hall; 29 London Troxy; 30 Shepherds Bush Empire; 31 Brighton Dome; November 2 Newcastle City Hall; 3 Edinburgh Usher Hall; 4 Glasgow Royal Concert Hall; 7 Manchester Bridgewater Hall; 8 Preston Guildhall; 10 Southend Cliffs Pavilion; 11 Cardiff St David’s; 15 Leicester De Mont Fort Hall; 16 Cambridge Corn Exchange; 18 Ipswich Regent; 19 Southampton Guildhall.

www.kililive.com and 0844 871 8803

**Union City: My Elastic Eye**

**October 25**

Camden Barfly, London

Union City is a collaboration between artists, unions and community campaigns, bringing together the art of resistance.

www.unioncitymusic

**Visual art**

**Newspeak: British Art Now**

Saatchi Gallery, London

Until October 17

The Saatchi Gallery showcases some of the best new artists in the UK over the last few years. The exhibition’s title is taken from Orwell’s 1984, in which newspeak is ‘the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year’.

www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk.

**Loud Flash: British Punk on Paper**

Haunch of Venison, London

Until October 30

Punk paraphernalia from album covers and gig promotions along with political ephemera from the time.

www.haunchofvenison.com

**History**

**Industrial Revolutionaries**

Preston Harris Museum

Until November 6

“The eyes of the working classes are now fully opened, they begin to cry: Our St Petersburg is at Preston” So said Karl Marx in 1854.

Industrial Revolutionaries charts Preston’s role in creating a new industrial world and the fight against inequality caused by industrialisation.

www.revolutionaries.org.uk
How many are written by ‘real’ journalists?
I was surprised to see Jeremy Dear’s defence of local authority publications in his otherwise excellent Up Front column. His lengthy list of reasons for supporting them included the claim they provide unbiased information about local council issues and services. He must be reading different council papers to the ones I have seen – and I have seen quite a few.
I asked how many are written by ‘real’ journalists and, among those that are, how many are members of the NUJ?
There is also the issue of how much they cost hard-pressed council taxpayers.
I was also surprised to see David Hencke (Wall of Death?) describe Murdoch’s pay wall as an attempt to destroy the spirit of free access to information on the internet. If his King Canute analogy is correct, it won’t happen anyway, but the real issue is surely whether quality journalism should be available at no cost to the reader. He might be happy that his considerable skills are available for free, but I am not.
If we have to give it away to get people to read it, we might as well all pack in and go home.

David Skentelbery
Warrington

Paid-for papers don’t cover councils properly
Jeremy Dear is right to say (September edition) that council newspapers do not compete with paid-for titles. It strikes me that paid-for papers have given up covering councils seriously, meaning an in-house magazine is the only way a local authority can tell people what they’re doing.
Instead of covering most council meetings, Brighton’s local paper, The Argus, has had a reporter leafleting parked cars inviting drivers to say how they’ve been ill-treated by council traffic wardens. Meanwhile its circulation slumps 3,000 in the last year to a record low of 27,000.
That’s hardly surprising as only a handful of permanently disgruntled people are interested in what has become a daily magazine about car parking.
If newspapers treat local politics with such contempt they can’t complain about councils publishing their own news.

Alan Stone
Brighton

Crackdown on spin or an attack on local freedom?
What’s the Government’s crackdown on the ‘millions spent on town hall PRs’ all about?
Is it really about saving ‘outrageous waste’ by preventing councils hiring high-profile public relations firms, as Communities Secretary Eric Pickles would have us believe? Or is it a move to ‘stifle the voice of local government’ and an attack on the freedom of speech, as some PR consultants like Lord Bell claim?
The NUJ is in an unusual position with members who write those headlines; who work in local authorities; and who work in public relations.
Our PR industrial council also has an ethical code that values the public’s right to balanced and accurate information.
Mr Pickles says he wants to root out ‘spin’ and ‘waste’, but we fear the impact will lead to concealing important information about the effect of government measures. It will certainly curtail free and open debate about whether the draconian cuts to public services are really necessary.
Picking on high-profile PR consultancies is a smokescreen and a way for Pickles to score some easy points. We fear the real target is our members and others trying to speak up for the public sector.
Journalists should be asking ‘What is Cameron trying to conceal’?

Nic Mitchell
Chair, Public Relations and Information Industrial Council

Would the Tories have led us to this?
What is wrong with our General Secretary?
Can he not see that if the Tories ‘had never been away’ (August/September) Great Britain would not be in the mess it is in now?
Blair would not have been able to collude with Bush to get us involved in a way that will follow the pattern of similar wars in the Far East, and elsewhere – a struggle we cannot possibly win. And one of the most economically inept Chancellors this country has ever had would not have been allowed to wreck our economy, leading (among other things) to severe cuts-back in journalistic staffs.
Let’s work together for public sector pensions

Unlike David Rimmer I do not believe that public sector pensions are unsustainable (Cable right about pensions). But it is troubling that as a union member he so readily adopts the rhetoric of the government and employers.

Civil servants receive on average £4,200 a year as their ‘gold-plated’ pension. Is David really saying we can’t afford that?

The growing gap between public and private sector pensions is not the fault of these low and modestly paid workers; it’s the fault of private sector employers retreating from decent pensions. The real divide is between executives in the boardroom securing large pensions with low retirement ages, and their workforces suffering repeated cuts.

Economically it makes no sense to degrade pensions, because it will force more people into poverty and on state benefits in their retirement – this will be more costly and will be a burden on future taxpayers.

We all help to pay for private sector pensions through the price of goods and services and we all help to contribute to public sector pensions through taxation.

Let’s not recycle the rhetoric of the employer and do their work for them, let’s campaign together to defend the pension schemes public sector workers deserve.

Laura Cockram
NUJ chapel, PCS

Do BBC activists welcome attack on pensions?

Alan Slingsby says: ‘It’s sad to hear people working for trade unions advance arguments that are the stock in trade of rapacious employers.’ (Letters, August/September)

It is doubly so, when such arguments are highlighted in a union journal. Therefore the misinformation from NUJ FOC David Rimmer is especially disturbing.

His support for ConDems attacks on public service pensions makes one wonder if BBC activists welcomed his views during their strike ballot?

He selects two sets of public servants with stressful jobs and therefore very specific conditions – police officers and firefighters – and lets readers conclude that these conditions apply throughout the public sector. They don’t.

The average public sector pension is under £5,000; the retirement age is 65; and in one of the largest schemes (local government), investments finance pensions, not taxation.

So the man in the cartoon with the pile of dosh is most likely a banker, or a director – they are the recipients of really unsustainable pensions. He certainly won’t be a nurse, cleaner, or carer.

Attacking fellow trade unionists while ConDems ‘orchestrate a war’ against the public sector – to borrow a phrase from Francis Beckett’s article – is no more sensible now than in the 70s.

Chris Bartter
ex-communications officer, UNISON Scotland

Freelances need to negotiate the best deal

I much appreciate the coverage of freelance issues, initiatives, contacts and information on the ‘Feeling The Squeeze’ spread (August/September).

It was good to read Paul Donovan’s realistic-not-gloomy article highlighting both the problem of rate cuts in many national publications and the decent, or even improved, rates available from other outlets.

But of course I want to moan about the bits I disagreed with. One implication of his piece was a bit misleading and unnecessarily discouraging. With phrases like ‘the Guardian reduced its rate from...’ he suggests that a publication pays one fixed rate per thousand. This is rarely true in national papers and uncommon elsewhere.

Freelances should always negotiate, always ask for more – in recessionary extremis, even when being offered a reduced rate by a regular client, we can at least try for a less reduced rate.

And on commissions, Donovan pertinently pointed out the growing practice of paying only for words printed rather than the length commissioned, but didn’t mention this is an illegal breach of contract unless agreed in advance by the freelance. Especially in regard to features, this is a retro-spective scam to reduce agreed fees.

Assessive but non-aggressive self-protection such as the above is crucial to freelance survival in hard times.

Phil Sutcliffe
London Freelance Branch

Flat rates and expenses cuts subsidise profits

If I had my time over again I think I would become a finance director for a media company. It seems like a cushy number, you just cut everything until your bonus for cutting kicks in, you never have to meet the workers as you can shaft them incognito thanks to email, just like Burda UK’s head office who sent out a cheery little email about cutting freelance mileage from 34p to 20p without consultation.

We were informed that we wouldn’t suffer because the tax man would pay us expenses to cover the shortfall in our regularly decreasing pay packets. Laugh? I nearly started!

This cut comes at a time when freelance rates haven’t moved since the 1980s. I still get the same rate for a job that I was doing in 1989. I subsidise companies such as Burda by running my car, my expensive cameras and my laptop into the ground, without sick pay, pension or holiday entitlements.

Freelances must have been born yesterday as who else is naive enough to subsidise a company’s profits?

David Cruickshanks
Fife

‘Startling revision’ of baby boomers’ history

Did Francis Beckett live in a parallel universe through the 1970s? He reckons ‘the myth that the unions were the principal obstacle in the way of equality for women helped Margaret Thatcher to destroy them in the next decade’ (August/September). That is a pretty startling revision of history.

I didn’t know ‘unions were the main enemy of women’s equality’ was even a myth. I’ve never heard it before.

Maybe it was peddled by right-wingers expressing a bogus concern in order to attack trade unions?

As an active feminist involved in numerous campaigns throughout the 1970s, I never heard any woman seriously express that view.

Feminists who were involved with unions, and therefore had any impact on them, tended to be left-wingers who presumed that unions were our natural allies. Of course it was disappointing when some of our ‘brothers’, including those who called themselves socialists, jealously guarded their privileges. Sometimes they weren’t helpful. But that didn’t put them in the same category as the law, religion or the Tory Party.

Francis Beckett sounds like a ‘Life of Brian’ leftie, wasting his energy on internal disputes. But I assure you that feminists knew damn well who the real enemies were. In solidarity (still) Janet Wright, London

There were no children of the 60s, no baby boomers

Regarding Francis Beckett’s article, Baby boomers and childish battles, take a period straddling two generations, include extracts from contemporary songs and make generalisations about millions of diverse people and we are asked to accept this as informed opinion.

There were no ‘children of the 60s’, no ‘baby boomers’. These lightweight terms serve to ignore the complexity of society. The majority didn’t come out of university and those who did didn’t go straight into unions. Beckett speaks about the unions and their members’ activities but draws examples from a slice of one of them. Personal and unverified opinions abound, How
were Castle’s attempts at union reform a failure? Where is the empirical evidence indicating anness of mind that Beckett would have us believe existed?

This country and its successive governments are, for better or worse, a reflection of majority sentiments of the electorate at any given time. In 1979, it wanted and got the Tories. Crude classifications of people are meaningless in understanding factors that create political change. The then generation didn’t consensually start with Opinion A and move to Opinion B. Political and economic forces changed, as did balances of power. Beckett’s analysis would have us believe the crude metaphors and hype but no more.

Robert McKay
London

Bloody Sunday has haunted me ever since

Unlike Eddie Barrett (Remembering Bloody Sunday), that event has haunted me for nearly four decades, as have other experiences from being a reporter of military operations throughout the 1970s. I was not there that day, but I was with the same soldiers a few weeks earlier. One young officer seemed withdrawn, then he would have outbursts of aggression.

Not until much later did I become aware of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its symptoms, including those affecting that officer. As journalists, we do no favours to military personnel, or to those who suffer when military operations go so monstrously wrong, as in Derry, if we don’t make more effort to take PTSD more seriously. It is a wound of war, as much as those inflicted by bomb or bullet. I am convinced it afflicts, to some degree, all who are in combat zones. I believe it played some part in the tragedy of Bloody Sunday and I gave evidence to that effect to the Saville Inquiry.

The support group Combat Stress was formed in 1919 to highlight issues like PTSD. We’ve a long way to go to catch up, but let’s, at least, use our media skills to help more than most of us seem to now.

Mike Starke
Isle of Wight

The death of print has been much exaggerated

Raymond Snoddy’s article in the last issue of The Journalist with evidence that the death of newspapers is greatly exaggerated is an ideal reason to pause for thought. We should consider the value of print on paper that has been lost in the rush to judgment that it has been overtaken by technology.

Printing on paper has been developed over hundreds of years suiting its materials to their variable uses, for our purposes in book, magazine and newspaper form. The finished products are fit for purpose with the humble newspaper a veritable masterpiece in terms of production, use and disposal.

The new media it is supposed to supersede in fact depends on it, with most on line material originating in newspaper form, style and content with vast chunks taken off printed pages of news and comment transferred to the screen without alteration. Rupert Murdoch’s decision to sell the Times titles on screen is proof of this.

The problem is that media owners have been withdrawing resources from national and local newspapers, undermining their assets. That is why the NUJ’s campaigning should remain focused on good journalism.

The inspired Journalism Matters campaign, a concept we should be proud of, is the banner that should be held high whether or not as Snoddy says there is possibly a light at the end of the journalistic tunnel.

Roy Jones
North Wales Coast branch.

NUJ photographers’ rates are not proper union rates

I’ve read the debates about photographers’ fees in the letters pages of The Journalist with interest.

Trade unions have an absolute obligation to only employ NUJ photographers for the work we commission for our journals and other communications requirements. It is the first question we ask at Unite and, depending on the answer, sometimes the only one.

We then pay a rate agreed with the photographer, in the absence of any negotiated rates that have been agreed through a process of industrial relations to which Unite is a party, either directly or indirectly.

‘NUJ rates’ are not negotiated rates in the normal trade union sense – they are guidelines that the union issues to its own members, not rates that have been agreed with an employers’ organisation.

If individual photographers in the NUJ’s membership are prepared to work for less, then that is a matter between the NUJ and its members, not between the NUJ and the other trade unions hiring them.

Andrew Murray
Director of Campaigns and Communications, Unite
Indebted to everyone for their support

I would like to place on record my thanks for all the hard work of several NUJ activists and officials during a recent dispute with my former employer.

Due to legal restrictions I am unable to go into detail about the case, but I would particularly like to thank Lawrence Shaw and Barry Fitzpatrick, who both went above and beyond the call of duty to assist and advise me in discussions with my employer and solicitor. Michelle Stanistreet and Jeremy Dear also did their bit behind the scenes, for which I’m very grateful.

I am also indebted to several of my NUJ colleagues, including many on the Welsh Executive and in the Swansea Branch for their help and support, particularly Meic Birtwhistle, Kate Carr and Ken Smith.

There have been many others willing to lend a hand or a listening ear during the process as well, particularly the freelancer Bruce Jones, and I am grateful to all of them.

I would also like to thank Claire Kirby at Thompsons solicitors for her hard work and dedication.

It’s never easy to pursue a case, but I have been thoroughly impressed with the help I’ve received from the NUJ and from other journalists.

Rachel Howells
Swansea branch

Many reasons why we need the union

Bleeding hearts caused by the need of employers to shed jobs and run their publications on a threadbare shoestring would be laughable if journalists were not the casualties.

I pitched an idea to a monthly glossy magazine in 2008. It was received enthusiastically and I was commissioned to write a feature, which was delivered in September of that year and which was praised by the editor.

Six months later it had not appeared. I was told that the magazine was going through a rough time, with advertising down, though what this had to do with my work being shelved was unexplained.

Following unanswered emails throughout 2009, I was told last month that the magazine had new owners and that my work would not appear unless it were written in a ‘different style’. Even then, there would be no guarantee of publication. Note that this information was not given to me unsolicited.

I told the editor to pay me for work he’d commissioned eighteen months before. He refused, stating that the magazine paid for work only on publication. Obviously like the client who gets a builder to build him a house then makes him wait for payment while he decides when to take occupancy.

Why do we need a union? That’s why we need a union!

Nigel Jarrett
Monmouthshire

A message to NUJ Silver Surfers

The NUJ 60+ pensioners page on the NUJ Web site has a facility to use Facebook built into it and within that facility for us to set up a group site particular to NUJ Pensioners and this has been done.

The way into it is to go to the NUJ website and then to the ‘campaigns’ section and click on to the NUJ 60+ site scrolling down the page you will see A Facebook group has also been set up for NUJ 60+ Members. It is called Old(er) Hacks Aloud! and can be found here: http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=120183484693120

Click onto this and you should get Old(er) Hacks Aloud! where you will need to join as a member to continue. Then, join in by clicking on The Wall for messages and on Discussions to raise matters of interest with other members.

There are more than 2,500 NUJ pensioners with email addresses and we need all those who know about it...including you...to help then we could be on our way to a very interesting new initiative

Pensioners’ Committee.

STEVE BELL
The NUJ offers a wide variety of short courses in professional subjects. Whether you want to learn the best way to video blog or sell your services as a freelance, you can get to grips with the techniques you need over one or two days. The courses will help you increase and refresh your skills whether you’re at the start of your career or further along the professional path. They will increase your technical skills, improve your writing and editing and also offer you a chance to change direction completely.

Lost Your Job?
If you’ve lost a staff job you could be entitled to a free course. Bookings must be made within three months of losing a job and are free at the union’s discretion and subject to availability.

### Video blogging

**Ken Smith**

I’m a big fan of NUJ training courses; I’ve been on four in the past year. Of those, video blogging was the one that really took me onto a new level.

It followed on from a podcasting course I attended last year, and it really brought together the skills needed to make challenging video blogs from scratch and to tight deadlines. Within two days you go from learning the theory to putting it into practice and, perhaps most importantly for future work prospects, the finished product goes on a website that you can link to your CV.

At the start of the course, you get a good overall grounding in the theory of new and social media. But pretty quickly you get down to the hands-on stuff.

After a little bit of time getting used to the equipment, you are let loose on an unsuspecting world to carry out interviews and get footage for a three-minute blog. Anyone who thinks it’s just a matter of sitting down in front of a camera and musing over daily life will be disappointed.

My idea was to bring together a film about how students’ outlook on their future career may be changing because of the recession. So, an hour later after interviews with five students, a lecturer and a professor, I was pleased with the footage but realised I was behind schedule. But, despite a few equipment glitches, we all succeeded in getting our projects done, and some of them were, in my opinion, fantastic given the time and resources available.

How does mine compare? Please feel free to go to [http://www.onroadmedia.org.uk/profiles/blogs/business-school-blues](http://www.onroadmedia.org.uk/profiles/blogs/business-school-blues) and have a look at Business School Blues.

If I can do it after such a short time, then I am sure everyone on the course can.

Ken Smith is chair of NUJ Wales

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### Professional Training Courses

To book a place on any of these courses or if you would like some advice or have any questions, please email training@nuj.org.uk or telephone 020 7843 3730.

You can view course outlines at [www.nujtraining.org.uk](http://www.nujtraining.org.uk)

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*For Students and members in their first year of employment*
or Boris Johnson’s bikes were the last straw. When the mayor of London launched his bike-hire scheme at the end of July, the overwhelming reaction of online commentators was hostile. Fair enough, you may say, given the mayor and his politics – except that none of the critics seemed to have made the first attempt to find out about the bike scheme, let alone to try it.

Yet in the democracy of the web, their (usually anonymous) sniping merits the same prominence as the most informed comment. I was posting a reply to a pundit who was decrying the supposed lack of lights on the bikes when I realised I was wasting my time. In the days when such readers sent in their feedback in wonky red-fringed typescript, or the apocryphal green ink, we never graced them with a reply. Or if we did, it was the ‘Your letter is receiving attention’ card. Yet from fear of seeming foppeyish or elitist, or stark terror of losing our jobs, professional journalists have conceded principle after principle to the bloggetariat. We’ve made concessions on dealing with cranks.

We’ve made concessions on copyright theft. While publishers and freelance colleagues still robustly chase websites that blatantly cut and paste articles, we seem to have given up the fight when it comes to reproducing entire texts for the process of line by line ‘fisking’.

And of course we’ve made concessions on pay. I’m as guilty as anyone, for accepting The Guardian’s £90 Comment is Free rate, often one third the NUJ-negotiated minimum for the rest of the paper. (It is of course largely thanks to the NUJ that they pay at all.) Some other publishers pay half this rate, and less.

What have we gained in return? Do we, as sometimes claimed, now have a closer relationship with our readers? I doubt it. I’m unwilling to believe, for example, that the 445 individuals who apparently believe there is a serious debate over the legitimacy of stoning to death for adultery represent a cross section of Guardian readers. At least not the ones who buy the paper. The ones who pay our wages.

Look, when it comes to the web I’m an enthusiast and an optimist. I’ve been working largely online now for 15 years – half my career. But I also think it’s possible to embrace the web without conceding the principles that make journalism a viable profession.

Oh, and I can confirm that the London hire bikes work pretty well.

Michael Cross on the latest trends and kit

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Review

Phones to file by: Alcatel One Touch

Yes, it is possible to file a 600-word story from a mobile handset. I did it on my BlackBerry Pearl a couple of years back – and my right thumb was unusable for days. Hence my long-standing interest in typist-friendly phones.

Apple iPhone offers one solution, but despite being a complete iBore I’ve never found touchscreen acceptable for typing anything more than a quick text. Part of the problem is lack of tactile feedback to tell you that you’ve hit a key. (It’s taken me a couple of months of intensive use to get used to typing on the iPad, with a much larger keypad than the phone, and it’s still much slower than a laptop.)

So, what about a full qwerty keyboard that will at least enable two-finger hunt-and-pecking? That’s supposedly on offer from the new BlackBerry, the 9800 Torch, but I haven’t got my hands on one yet.

What I have been trying out is a very dinky – and ridiculously economical – new pay as you go handset from Alcatel. The One Touch Extra looks like a bog standard mobile phone, but comes with a click out qwerty keyboard as well as a touch screen. Of course there’s also a camera, an FM radio and an MP3 player in this multi-media marvel.

The nice surprise, after years of using the BlackBerry’s slow and clunky web software, was how fast and friendly the Opera browser, running on the Android operating system is. If you can’t figure out the steps to set up a Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail account, get a 10-year-old to help you, and you’re ready to file two-fingered copy. Best of all, it’ll cost you under £50 on a pay-as-you go deal, one eighth as much as the iPhone 4G.

This is a phone for the permanently connected generation – the latest example of consumer technology creating a perfectly acceptable business tool. I’m still planning on getting the next BlackBerry upgrade, but I’m not in any great rush.

Professional journalists have made concessions on dealing with cranks

“
Time Auntie began fight-back

A dangerous pattern is emerging from recent events at the BBC. On a range of issues the Corporation has beaten the retreat – a fighting retreat maybe, but a retreat all the same. Each decision can be justified on its own terms as completely rational, but the pattern is clear.

First Sir Michael Lyons, chairman of the BBC Trust, decided not to seek a new four-year term. Sir Michael, who has done a much better job than is publicly acknowledged, made up his mind in the summer. He wanted to get his retaliation in first by announcing his own decision.

As a former Labour councillor there was little chance of a reappointment by the Coalition Government. He has avoided the humiliation of being rejected but unless Nick Clegg takes an interest Sir Michael has now conveniently cleared the way for the appointment of a Tory sympathiser.

The decision to ‘voluntarily’ request a freeze of the licence can be portrayed as a wise and even courageous decision, a response to the spirit of the times.

Yet it means a £144 million hit for the BBC – much of which will come out of programme budgets and will inevitably affect employment somewhere in the broadcasting industry.

The decision seems to run counter to the policy carefully spelled out by BBC director-general Mark Thompson in his Edinburgh MacTaggart lecture.

There, Thompson clearly worried that Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt would cut the licence fee, argued that £1 off the licence fee was £1 out of the creative economy. There were no examples anywhere of the private sector stepping up to make good the difference.

Behind the political threats that there could be a smaller licence fee is the unstated assumption that the BBC licence fee is a routine part of the public sector due to receive savage cuts with all the rest.

The BBC chairman was adamant again that it would be best to seize the high ground and offer a squeeze rather than being forced publicly by the Government to do so.

A rational thing to do but also a dangerous precedent to set. Will the Government be satisfied with a mere £144 million Danegeld?

Then along comes an extension of the National Audit Office’s right to go through the BBC’s books, something opposed for years as a threat to the Corporation’s independence.

Sir Michael can justly claim that they are coming in on BBC’s terms. Up to a point. Editorial budgets have been excluded and the salaries of top talent will be disclosed to the NAO but not directly to MPs.

Yet NAO powers over the BBC have been extended. Jeremy Hunt must be very pleased with himself. With little more than a few threatening words he has managed to get the BBC on the back foot and on a retreat which may not yet be over.

Supporters will hope the Corporation will know when the moment comes to halt the retreat.

The only modicum of good news is that the Government and Culture Secretary Hunt are paying no attention to opponents of the licence fee such as former Sky executive David Elstein and David Graham who recently published an Adam Smith Institute paper on the subject.

How big the licence fee should be is another question.

The time has now come to hold the line and start the fight-back.

Raymond Snoddy presents BBC TV’s Newswatch

For the latest updates from Raymond Snoddy on Twitter go to @raymondsnoddy
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