



November 2021 Branch

It's been a hugely busy year for the union and branches and that is why we have launched our all-members' survey to get a snapshot of how our lives have been affected by the pandemic and changes in the industry. Please take part.

The latest round of government sleaze stories has shown just how important it is to have a press which can hold the government to account.

The investigative skills of journalists unearthed a flurry of stories about the financial dealings of the MPs who "forgot" to disclose their extra earnings, the exact number of the other jobs they had, to the lobbying of ministers on behalf of companies they were being paid by, the awarding of government contracts to chums, plus details of all those shady island tax havens where the cash is squirreled away.

Reports showed that more than 200 MPs received earnings in the past year on top of their £81,932 salary. More than a quarter of Tory MPs have second jobs with firms whose activities range from gambling to private healthcare, making more than £4m in extra earnings in a year, a Guardian analysis found.

When the Daily Mail's lead read "Shameless MPs sink back into sleaze," the Prime Minister knew he was in trouble - and it looks as if reform on MPs' extra jobs is on the way.

This is a government which blocks Freedom of Information requests, wants to end judicial reviews so government decisions cannot be challenged, and to weaken the powers of the Electoral Commission. These issues may seem arcane for most people, but everyone can grasp that something smells off when an MP is earning wheelbarrows full of dosh in the British Virgin Islands while his constituents are coping with

the fallout of the pandemic.

This week I took part in a Media Society webinar with investigative journalists who outlined the range of the threats - new and old - journalists face when holding power to account. Tim Dawson's report on page 5 outlines what they had to say, and I explained how the union will be calling out all attacks on those lifting the lid on issues the powerful prefer to be hidden.

Survey

Please take time to complete the NUJ all-member survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/nujmembers2021>

I also told a Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport select committee there needed to be a culture change to stop journalists having to put up with this abuse and outlined the work the union was doing as part of the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists. We were discussing the Online Harms Bill which aims to impose legal duties on social media platforms to take down illegal and "legal but harmful" abusive and discriminatory content and also the extent to which there should exemptions for journalistic content.

It has been another tough year for many journalists, but there are signs that the news and publishing industries are back on their feet and our officials and chapels are battling to secure decent pay rises and improvements to terms



and conditions, especially with inflation on the horizon. That's why we have put out our all-members' survey to find out whether freelancers' earnings are recovering, how people are getting on if they are working from home or mixing office and home working, and the toll the past year has had on our mental health.

We are also asking court reporters to have their say in our submission to the Justice Committee's inquiry into court reporting in the digital age. You can learn more about it from Emma Pennink, PA's Old Bailey correspondent, on page 4.

As we come to the end of the year, we can look forward to the Claudia Jones lecture, always one of the highlights of the NUJ's calendar. This year we will hear from Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, senior staff editor at The New York Times, former editor-in-chief at gal-dem magazine and winner of The Guardian's Georgina Henry Award. So, make sure you put the evening of Thursday 2 December in your diary.

In Solidarity

Michelle Stanistreet

Online Harms Bill

The culture needs to change because the abuse of journalists was at risk of becoming “normal” and seen as part of the job, Michelle Stanistreet warned a cross-party House of Commons committee hearing.

The NUJ’s general secretary described how journalists were being abused and threatened online and how this was also spilling into physical violence and stalking.

She was giving evidence to a Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) select committee inquiry into the Online Harms Bill. She outlined the

widespread attacks on members revealed in an NUJ survey and gave the example of a member who had to flee to a hotel for her own safety after receiving hundreds of death threats during the first lockdown.

The Bill aims to impose new legal duties on social media platforms and search engine operators to monitor and take down illegal and “legal but harmful” abusive and discriminatory content. Michelle said members

reported the platforms were too slow to remove the abuse or didn’t respond at all.

She also spoke of the abuse heaped on journalists – disproportionately women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds – in comment sections below stories online. These should be included in the scope of the Bill, she said.

When asked what the NUJ was doing to protect members, she said staff and freelances were encouraged to report all incidents to their employers and to notify the police. As part of the union’s work as a member of the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists, the NUJ was collating a free online toolkit/digital support pack for journalists with



the help of the Society of Editors. The union also issued advice for members covering local and national events, including the protests at COP26 and the Million Masks marches.

Michelle also said the tech giants should be made to pay for the damage they had inflicted on the media industry, particularly the local and regional press, and pay a levy to fund public-interest journalism.

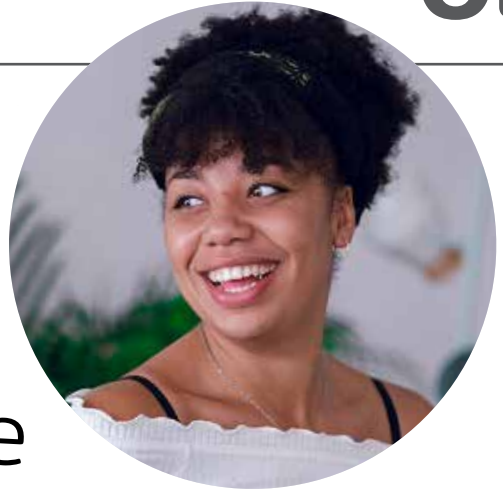
Journalist targets

One-third of female journalists do not feel safe in their job, a UK government survey has found.

Four in five of all media workers also told an evidence-gathering exercise, organised by the Home Office and DCMS, that they had experienced threats and violence at work. The incidents included abuse, intimidation, threats of violence, death threats, bullying, sexism, racism and homophobia. A growing number of protesters and activists were also now directly targeting and intimidating media film crews.

Many respondents did not report incidents to social platforms, police or employers because they weren’t confident they would be taken seriously. One in five said they saw receiving threats, abuse or violence as part of their job, and one in 10 because they felt it could harm their career prospects.

Half of female respondents experienced sexism and a third from ethnic minority backgrounds reported experiencing racism during work.



Make a difference

Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff is giving this year's Claudia Jones lecture

From writing what it's like to be a mixed-race girl on Tinder - being called a caramel cutie - to Motherland, her book exploring the Windrush generation, Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff's output has blossomed since one of her first jobs editing a property supplement at the **Hampstead & Highgate Express**. She is now a senior staff editor at

The New York Times, was an editor-in-chief at gal-dem magazine and is a winner of The Guardian's Georgina Henry Award for Innovation in Journalism.

She is rightly proud of her hard-hitting Vice article, The UK Imprisons Twice as Many Black Women as White Women for Drugs, and her exploration of Afro-Caribbean hair salons in Peckham for the

Financial Times. She believes her journalism can counteract the negativity found in right-wing tabloids that affect people of colour in the UK.

***The Claudia Jones lecture will take place online from Thursday 2 December.**



The TUC's short film, Liam/Every trans person should join a union, about the importance of recognising the issues trans workers face and building a more inclusive workplace has won the 2021 Outvertising Awards best campaign prize.

The film was written and directed by Sam Nicklin and you can watch it on **YouTube: <https://youtu.be/G5WFKE6030A>**

TV fails its staff

More women and people with disabilities are leaving TV and radio than joining up and broadcasters need to start talking to the unions.

Natasha Morris, the NUJ's legal and equality officer, has been working with Included, the diversity and inclusion consultancy behind Ofcom's 2021 Diversity in Broadcasting Report, which predicted the proportion of TV employees who are disabled could fall during the next five years - as would the number of female radio employees.

She said. "It's not just about recruitment policies, it's about removing barriers, making broadcasting organisations places where disabled people feel valued and not an afterthought. It's in everyone's interest that the skills, talent and experiences of disabled people and under-represented groups are used in programme making and news gathering."

The report found that only 16 per cent of women in the TV workforce were aged 50-plus, compared with 22 per cent of men and 32 per cent of the working age population.

COURTS

04

Seeing justice done



Emily Pennink, the Press Association's Old Bailey correspondent, describes changes under discussion in the justice system and court reporting

The importance of open justice, the digital news revolution and the trials and tribulations of reporting in the midst of a pandemic have been discussed with MPs.

As part of Open justice: court reporting in the digital age, I was invited to give evidence to the Justice Select Committee as PA news agency's Old Bailey Correspondent.

I highlighted the shocking murder of Sarah Everard as an example of open justice at its best, and also why it was so important. It was vital the case was fast-tracked to provide much-needed answers and action to restore public faith in the Metropolitan Police. An unprecedented number of journalists filed into the Old Bailey or attended by video link to witness the emotionally-charged moment Sarah Everard's family confronted her killer, PC Wayne Couzens, reducing some reporters to tears.

MPs were told the rise of digital media had brought court reporting to a wider and more diverse audience, with stories told in words, pictures and video – often in real

time. While this has reinvigorated interest in the courts, it has made journalists vulnerable to online abuse – for example I received a Tweet suggesting I should be abducted and murdered during the Everard case.

Social media has also increased the risk of contempt of court through an ill-judged Tweet or comment on an online story. To combat that, I suggested live cases could come with a warning to readers or that the comment functions simply be disabled.

MPs were told that they were right to be concerned about court reporting on a local level because numbers of journalists have declined in recent years. With misinformation rife on social media and press releases focusing on sentencings alone, it was more important than ever that people got the full facts about what was going on in their communities from professional court reporters, I argued.

I stressed the importance of legal training to a professional standard would be necessary to preserve accredited journalists' unique position.

Throughout the pandemic, court reporters faced numerous problems –

from tracking cases to getting access to the courts. I suggested there should be debate on the possibility of allowing accredited reporters access to the court digital case system. This is a web-based platform that allows users to upload, view, annotate, present, and share case documents. There are specific permissions for each party, the judges, court administrator, and any other relevant groups. Journalists could submit useful documents to the platform, including reporting restrictions, case summaries, judgments and sentencing remarks.

But the greatest threat to open justice is the delays due to the case backlog because of Covid. If technology could be used to tackle the issue, then I would support proposed reforms, but a robust system is needed to ensure cases dealt with out of court do not fall under the radar.

The inquiry finishes taking evidence on 29 November 2021.

Take part in the NUJ's submission to the Justice Committee inquiry into the court system by emailing campaigns@nuj.org.uk by Wednesday 24 November. Inquiry questions: <https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/586/>



Sued and spied on

Tim Dawson reports on a webinar which examined the threats to investigative journalists and writers telling their stories and exposing wrongdoing.

Ask John Sweeney about the devices of the rich and thin skinned to thwart investigative journalists and it is hard to shut him up. The former *Observer* and *Panorama* reporter knows them all. He's been spied on, sued in multiple jurisdictions, physically threatened, and faced falsified personal accusations - and that is just by Sir David Barclay.

After decades of attempts to gag him, however, Sweeney describes the environment for investigation as deteriorating. "It is worse today than it has ever been," he says. "Threats online are way more intense, Britain's courts are a favoured destination to attack journalists, and politicians have failed pathetically to do anything."

Carole Cadwalladr (pictured) - Pulitzer prize finalist - agrees. "The way journalists are targeted online is not understood by news organisations. Investigative journalists are the first to be attacked and silenced... it will be fashion and interiors writers next."

Both were speaking at a webinar, convened by The Media Society to consider the threats to investigative journalism. Gill Phillips, director

of editorial legal services at The Guardian, James Ball, global editor at the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and NUJ general secretary, Michelle Stanistreet, joined them.

It was the NUJ's survey of the industry that lifted the lid on the scale of the threats faced by journalists. Michelle described a reporter forced to flee her home, a photographer whose house was attacked, death threats issued to the entire staff of a newspaper in Northern Ireland, and threats from sovereign states intent on closing down London-based media. "These start as personal messages but are also aimed at chilling the wider journalistic community," she said.

Legal challenges to journalism have evolved significantly in recent years, says Gill Phillips. "Privacy and data protection are now advanced as the main routes for complaint, with defamation relegated to the third or fourth line of attack".

Asked what would improve the situation, the panel had some novel ideas.

Gill Phillips called for anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) laws to stop journalists being threatened by expensive lawsuits. She described legislation

being considered in Europe and already enacted in Canada and South Africa. It allows vexatious legal challenges intended to frustrate journalists to be thrown out at an early stage. The NUJ has signed a letter in support of journalist and author Catherine Belton. She is fighting defamation lawsuits, including from Russian businessman Roman Abramovich and the Russian state energy company Rosneft in relation to her book *Putin's People*.

James Ball suggested that simple changes to the journalistic exemptions to data protection laws would save many journalists from "immensely silly" challenges.

Dealing with online harassment is arguably the most pressing issue, however. "These new technologies are created by white men in San Francisco who are never on the end of the harms they cause," said Carole Cadwalladr. She described social media "swarms", co-ordinated via messaging groups and often legitimised by other journalists. "I don't know of any news organisation that is good at dealing with this, and young women entering journalism have no idea of the bear pit they are joining".

Michelle castigated employers for their response: "It is a cultural issue that has been normalised - no one should have to accept harassment as a part of their work."



Oxford gold

Oxford NUJ branch secretary Anna Wagstaff reviews an extraordinary year when the branch helped members during the pandemic and got involved in local disputes

The big issue for all of us in Oxford branch this year has been dealing with the demands of working from home.

A hardy bunch of our committee members attended NUJ online workshops and trawled through documents to glean information about staying safe and sane during lockdown, including how to get help in supplementing lost income, health and safety tips, and how to deal with stress, zoom fatigue and overcrowded and unsuitable workspaces.

The changes and problems brought by the pandemic led to the need for expert advice to help chapels negotiate agreements that work well for all members with different – and changing – needs. A huge shout out to the Taylor & Francis chapel committee, of the publisher of academic journals, for their incredible work throughout lockdown and in current negotiations over future patterns of remote/workplace working.

Thanks also to Pam Morton,

who started work as NUJ national organiser for the Books and Magazines sector in the summer and certainly hit the ground running. Oxford is home to many publishers.

Newsquest, owner of the Oxford Mail and Times, lived up to their reputation of having no interest in the wellbeing of staff when they issued notices of termination of contracts to all our members, after the chapel declined a 'proposal' to their end time-and-half pay for working on most bank holidays. The company sought to use this fire and rehire strategy to force staff to sign up to worse terms and conditions, or face having their contracts terminated.

Our young chapel responded brilliantly to this intimidating move, which stood to save Newsquest a paltry £2,000 a year. They stuck to a collective approach and negotiated. Branch members joined the campaign and got MPs and community activists on board to tell the Oxford Mail to 'Stop bullying your journalists'. Newsquest was name-checked in Parliament and at

TUC Congress for its intimidatory action – and the dispute was covered in the local and trade press and ITV news.

Our big project for 2020-21 was a joint survey with the Oxford Society of Young Publishers and Oxford Publishing Society to learn about the pros and cons of working from home. Its findings, based on almost 1,000 responses, have informed the NUJ's work on negotiating future working practices and was picked up by the Bookseller. The project continues to run.

An invitation to members of the Oxford Coalition of Black Communities and Communities of Colour led to a very constructive discussion in April about the need to reflect the experiences of Oxford's many Black and ethnic minority communities in our local news reporting. We are now working with Oxford Brookes University to reach out to sixth formers from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds to entice them to consider a career in what is an overwhelmingly white, middle-class profession.

Five delegates from our branch took part in the virtual delegate meeting in May where we tabled several policy setting motions.

Oxford NUJ Annual Report 2021: <https://oxfordnuj.wordpress.com/>

TRAINING

07



Hybrid times

Caroline Holmes looks at how the union can recruit and organise as work patterns change

How NUJ members live and work has changed dramatically for many since March 2020. Those once office-based are now working from home or are spending only some time in an office (hybrid working). Some members are opting for flexible hours because of increased caring responsibilities. Many freelancers lost work or are now doing different jobs.

Others now find themselves disabled after developing Long Covid and cultural, organisational and structural barriers continue to exclude disabled members from accessing paid work.

This change has presented a number of challenges to chapels and branches. How do you find out who is a new member of staff who needs to be recruited to the NUJ when all of them are working remotely? How do you develop relationships with members and encourage activity when you are not able to meet face to face? What do you do when you are in an unrecognised workplace and want to gain recognition for NUJ members? How do you start the process, and how do you initiate

informal conversations when you never come into contact with most of the staff? These are just some of the challenges that reps face when trying to organise collectively.

There has never been a more important time to belong to the NUJ and to find ways of collectively challenging some of the poor behaviour many members are experiencing. Examples include employers failing to complete and publish comprehensive risk assessments in conjunction with NUJ reps. Freelance members are often excluded from Covid safety measures and are expected to assess their own risks with little or no support.

NUJ chapels and branches have had to respond quickly to find new ways of involving members in their activities. One branch has been organising weekly meetings so freelance members can drop in, share their concerns and get help. Some chapels have been holding weekly surgeries for members and have run training and information-sharing workshops.

In January 2022, NUJ Trade Union Training launches monthly organising and campaigning workshops (all courses are still

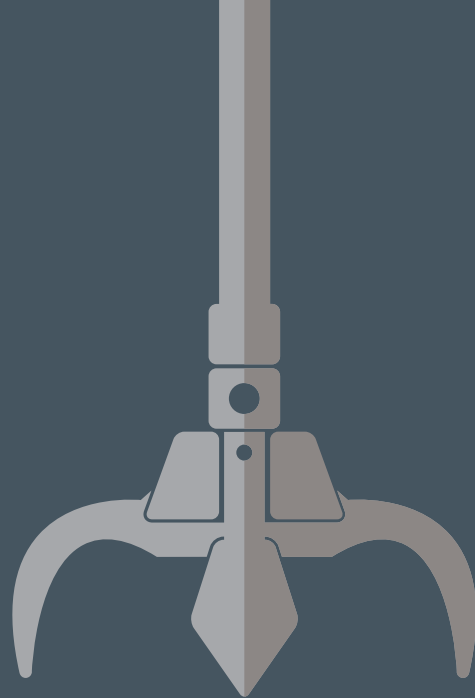
being held on Zoom) so chapel and branch reps can share some of their specific challenges and swap ideas. The workshops will explore ways of recruiting members and developing different approaches to involving members in union activity when so many are working remotely, flexibly or in a hybrid way.

The next NUJ reps meeting, on Wednesday 1 December, 3pm-4pm, will explore some of these issues. The dates for the Organising and Campaigning workshops are now on the NUJ website: they are: 27 January 2.30pm-4.30; 24 February 2.30pm-4.30; 25 March 10am-12; and 28 April 2.30pm-4.30. Email tuttraining@nuj.org.uk to book your place.

Professional training

NUJ Training Scotland and NUJ Training Wales have a full programme of courses to improve and learn new professional skills and keep you up to date with technological developments. All members can apply for online courses. More information can be found on the Scottish website: <https://nujtrainingscotland.com/> and Welsh website: <https://www.nujtrainingwales.org/>

REASONS TO JOIN



Diversity Matters

The media industry is one of the most socially exclusive. The NUJ fights to make the workplace socially inclusive and representative of the diverse society it serves. We protect the rights of our members and strive to ensure that media companies foster recruitment, promotion and retention of people from all backgrounds. The union has a proud record of challenging all forms of discrimination.

Are you keeping good company?

Join the NUJ today at

nuj.org.uk/join

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