

# NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE Informed

issue 22 March 2018



Newsquest strikers at the Swindon Advertiser

## NUJ welcomes May's review of the press

**The union has welcomed the government's announcement of a review of national and local press will look at the sustainability of the sector and investigate new ownership models, but it will be seeking assurances that the NUJ will play a major role in the inquiry.**

The review announced by Prime Minister, Theresa May, will look at:

- The overall health of the news media, with a focus on the local and regional press.
- Range of news available and the different business models for high-quality journalism.
- How the press is adapting to the digital market and online platforms.

- The digital advertising supply chain.
- "Clickbait" and low-quality news.

The review will make recommendations and a final report is expected in early 2019.

This is a victory for the union which has long called for a review, particularly during Local News Matters week last year, as part of our Parliamentary work and in talks with ministers. The government's announcement was accompanied by a quote from the newspaper publishers' organisation, the News Media Association, but the NUJ insists the voice of journalists will be heard, loud and clear.

The latest news that 49 jobs are being lost, and more expected, by

Trinity Mirror's decision to extend its digital pilot, Birmingham Live, makes it essential that the major newspaper groups answer questions about the impact their policies will have on the sector.

Concerns about the threat to media plurality were raised after Newsquest's recent takeover of the independent, family-owned CN Group, which owns two regional dailies, five weeklies and magazines. The deal could result in the UK's local newspaper industry becoming a duopoly of Newsquest and Trinity Mirror since Johnston Press's debts make its viability appear at risk.

The NUJ will be calling for the big three news groups, Newsquest, Trinity Mirror and Johnston Press, to be called to account for failing to invest in journalism and presiding over the loss of hundreds of titles and thousands of journalist and photographer jobs. The union intends to involve itself in a constructive dialogue which will look at new ownership models and solutions to the industry's financial crisis, which has seen advertising hoovered up by Google and Facebook and the move to digital not replicating the revenues of print.

The year started with a two-day strike at Newsquest's Swindon Advertiser. The staff went out because of cuts, poverty pay and heavy workloads.

The chapel said: "A senior reporter in Swindon gets £19,000-£20,000 and the chapel believes Swindon Advertiser reporters are now among the lowest paid on a daily title in the UK."

The strikers braved the rain and remnants of Storm Eleanor as they picketed outside the Advertiser office and earned huge support from colleagues, members and local politicians.

**Local News Matters, page 11**

**Also  
in this  
issue:**

Equal Pay  
Win  
Page 5

Murdoch  
Deal  
Page 8

Whistle-  
blowing  
Page 10

**NUJ**  
NATIONAL UNION  
OF  
JOURNALISTS

# Michelle's Message

MARK THOMAS



**As I passed through security at Westminster's Portcullis House, there were some very familiar faces following me in...**

## BBC's sisterhood supporting in style

**It was the BBC's presenting sisterhood, who were there in strength to demonstrate their solid support for Carrie Gracie, the corporation's former China editor, who was testifying to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee hearing. We were both giving evidence on the BBC and pay.**

Ours was the first session up – listed for an hour – to be followed by director general, Tony Hall, his deputy, Anne Bulford, the newly appointed head of news and current affairs, Fran Unsworth, and Sir David Clememti, chair of the board.

Since the new year the joint unions at the BBC have been involved in regular meetings with the corporation to discuss its review of On Air Talent – negotiating over its approach to equal pay, tax arrangements, and contracts for its on-air staff and freelancers who have mostly been outside the unions' bargaining unit for many years. The growing external pressure on the BBC has been clearly felt in the glazed offices of New Broadcasting

House where the director general and executives have held daily meetings about the spiralling crisis.

The day before the DCMS hearing, that crisis had been given new legs on publication of the long-awaited report from accountancy giant, PricewaterhouseCoopers, which was quickly blasted by staff. Riddled with the same flaws as the equal pay audit done for the rest of the staff population last year, it seemed more an exercise in providing the BBC with clean hands than it did an honest and transparent reckoning of the corporation's equal pay problem. This "Nothing to see here, guv" approach was the last thing the BBC needed, given the massive crisis of trust among its own staff, particularly women.

The 140 plus – and counting – women who have raised complaints through the BBC know all too well that there is a problem. No amount of spin can hide that – nor can pay inequities be glossed over as "non-deliberate".

So, no surprise then, to learn later that BBC newsrooms were glued to the televisions when the hearing began. Just before we took our seats, the BBC's entourage had passed by and we all exchanged hellos before they were shepherded to an adjoining room to watch on a screen and await their turn.

A turn that took quite some time – another two-and-a-half hours to be precise.

In a frank, angry and at times emotional testimony, Carrie described how she was offered an extra £45,000, plus £100,000 back-pay, but the BBC continued to deny it was a case of pay discrimination. Carrie has been clear throughout that it wasn't about money – it was parity she sought.

During the committee's questioning I



BBC's presenting sisterhood

made it clear that this was not a problem confined to a number of high-earning presenters – this was a systemic issue that ran through the corporation. Our affected members work in all grades and levels of the BBC. Many have raised their concerns over a number of years – they have been misled, lied to and in many cases forced out of their staff jobs on to contracts that have increased their job insecurity and meant they have missed out on benefits such as sick and maternity pay. The culture remained too much like a boys’ club where men profited from promotion and more pay, with the news division one of the worst culprits because of the serial misuse of managerial discretion.

Instead of holding their hands up, accepting there is a problem and working with staff and unions to sort it, the BBC was adopting a bunker mentality and trying to pretend things were not as bad as they were. More transparency is needed – as is a radical restructuring of pay and expenditure and a complaints system that has independent involvement.

I was also clear that gender pay inequality is not only a problem at the BBC – it is an issue across the industry, in newspapers as well as in broadcasting. At a recent meeting with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, I spoke of the spike in equal pay cases in other parts of the industry – with media companies now keen to resolve cases swiftly and avoid the spotlight that the BBC is currently under. It is clear that one of the unintended consequences of the EHRC’s implementation of the gender pay gap regulations is that it is focusing attention on, and sparking conversations about, equal pay – something the commission hadn’t anticipated.

As the deadline looms for companies to publish gender pay, it is clear many are waiting for a busy news day to slip out their results unnoticed. There is a journalistic job of work to ensure they don’t get away with it, so equal pay one day soon becomes a reality.

**THE CHAPEL CAFÉ BAR**

AVAILABLE FOR BRANCH EVENTS AND PARTIES

AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE FUNCTIONS AND CELEBRATIONS

DISCOUNTS FOR NUJ MEMBERS

**the chapel**

**VENUE:**  
**THE CHAPEL**  
 308 GRAYS INN ROAD  
 LONDON WC1X 8DP

**FOR ALL BOOKING ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:**  
 T | 020 7843 3747  
 E | INFO@THECHAPELKINGSCROSS.CO.UK

**It was with great sadness that I learned of the sudden death of Simeon Andrews – Simeon ran the consultancy operating the NUJ’s Parliamentary Group since its inception and was the key figure in bringing a number of like-minded unions together to forge the Trade Union Coordinating Group.**

**His professionalism, knowledge, and political skills, coupled with his deep commitment to the trade union movement, made Simeon an absolute pleasure to work with and a massive asset to the NUJ’s work in parliament. Our collective condolences go to his family, particularly his partner Cathy and daughter Lily.**

# News Update

## Five-figure sum won on unequal pay claim as chapels take action

**The scandal of the BBC sofa revelations of unequal pay at the corporation being pursued by the union has led to other chapels taking action and members winning pay increases.**

A grievance submission at Newsquest resulted in a female member achieving justice with a five-figure compensation sum to fix the shortfall to her salary and pension contributions over several years.

Chris Morley, Northern & Midlands senior organiser, said: "It did take two bites of the cherry because the company initially put up a remedy that would have short-changed the member by about a third. But an appeal won the day and full financial compensation - but no word of an apology or acknowledgment that our member had been the victim of discrimination because of her gender. Sounds familiar?"

It is the absence of transparent and published pay structures which makes it

# FIGHTING FOR EQUAL PAY NUJ

difficult for chapels to pursue suspected pay discrepancies. In the Newsquest case, the chapel had a good idea how much a male colleague who did the same work was being paid.

But, as the case suggests, the pervasive culture of editor's discretion on pay and lack of credible accounting on salaries mean that the tip of the iceberg discovered at the BBC is very likely to be replicated in the newspaper sector.

It was a happier situation at CNN,

where the company, when challenged, took a more positive and helpful approach and worked to remedy the situation. The union has won other claims, but members have requested confidentiality. Elsewhere chapels are running equal pay surveys, work continues at the FT and RTÉ and a positive meeting was held at Reuters.

So far, the media companies appear to be leaving it right to the 4 April deadline to publish their pay gender data, as required by law, but news agency PA's recent figures show its workforce consists of 63.9 per cent men and 36.1 per cent women. There was a small gender pay gap, but men were getting much higher bonuses and two-thirds of the best-paid jobs were filled by men.

Lloyd Embley, editor-in-chief of the Mirror titles, has already admitted that Trinity Mirror's figures will reveal an "embarrassing" gender pay gap because senior positions are dominated by men.

### Flawed freelance reports

Reactions to the UK government's response to the Taylor report on self-employed rights were at most lukewarm, with Frances O'Grady, general secretary, of the TUC, saying it would not end exploitative working practices, 1.8 million workers would still be without key rights at work. Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant secretary, said the Irish government review of self-employment

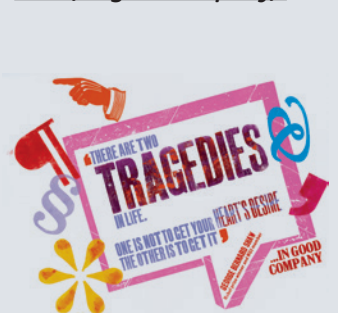
arrangements "missed the target and failed to address key issues about labour rights and social protection". He has been appointed to ITUC committee to review The Future of Work, an International Labour Organisation initiative.

**In Good Company**  
On Valentine's Day the NUJ held a love-in for local news, with members, branches and chapels encouraged

to tweet support for independent, quality, ethical journalism. A DM motion had highlighted the widely supported and highly effective 24-hour strike by NUJ members in 1985, known as the Real Lives strike, in protest at censorship and in defence of editorial independence at the BBC. It called on the union to raise awareness of the benefits for society of independent and ethical journalism as well as the

need to highlight examples of journalists taking individual or collective action in its defence.

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/news/ingoodcompany/>



# Indie & RTÉ chapels join branches boom

## Journalists working on the Independent have re-established a union chapel.

They said: "We love working at The Independent and in this ever-changing media landscape we would like to positively contribute to shaping the workplace. We will be sending all NUJ members an anonymous survey and hope to use its findings as the basis for discussions with management."

In Darlington, a get-together in the Red Lion pub brought together local journalists with other branch members in the north-east. The event will, hopefully, herald the revival of a fully-functioning branch for media workers and students the journalism school at Darlington College.

Chris Morley, Northern & Midlands senior organiser, says union solidarity in the north east is alive and kicking.

It was an announcement by Newsquest that it was seeking voluntary redundancies (VR) across the whole of its newly-acquired NWN Media, which has offices in north England and Wales,



that galvanised members. Jane Kennedy, Northern & Midlands organiser pulled together a chapel meeting and contacted Nick Fellows, managing director for the North West and North Wales,

asking for more details on the VR deal. He said there were enough volunteers to avoid compulsory redundancies, so now the chapel will seek recognition and raise issues of pay and workload.

New chapels have been established at RTÉ in TV and press and information and there has been increased activity in the newsroom chapel and the Irish language Nuacht.

**Read More**  
<https://www.nuj.org.uk/where/>

## Paradise defended

The NUJ defended the BBC and Guardian for exposing mass tax evasion revealed in the leaked Paradise Papers and pledged to defend the right to report, after it was revealed that offshore company Appleby had initiated breach of confidentiality proceedings against the news organisations. Michelle Stanistreet said: "Journalists have a duty to represent the powerless when their interests are at odds with the powerful. It is typical of corporations to use their financial muscle to try to bully individual media outlets in the hope that they will frighten all who seek the truth. The response of all journalists should be that we will not allow this to succeed."

## Money and membership

**The union's treasurer reported a surplus of almost £200,000 in his end-of-year accounts. The NUJ's headquarters in Acton Street, London now has tenants and from 2019, when full rents will be paid, the union will receive an income of £300,000 a year.**

**John Barsby said: "The year finished with the union's finances in a strong position with positive balance sheets and funds amounting to almost £334,000 at the end of September." He noted that this year the union will have to bear the costs of DM and committee elections, plus the costs of the BBC pension case, for which the union has made a provision of £200,000. The NEC heard that there was no decline in membership contributions. A big increase of new members from the BBC (167) and freelance (171) was noted.**

## International Report

**The International Federation of Journalists has published its full annual report which detailed the killings of 82 media staff in 2017.**

While the report welcomed the fact the number of work-related killings of journalists fell to the lowest level in a decade, the death toll remained unacceptably high. Journalism is still an extremely perilous profession and media freedom is crushed in many parts of the globe. Afghanistan, Mexico, Syria and Iraq topped the killings list. <https://www.nuj.org.uk/news/impunity-ifj-killed-report-2017/>



# News Update

## Some Like it Hot Metal

**While the hot metal presses, windy public telephone booths and long lunches distinguished the newsroom portrayed in Stephen Spielberg's *The Post* from today's media world, there was plenty to compare about the role of journalism, a panel of commentators agreed following a screening of the film at London's Soho Hotel.**

The film tells the tale of the Washington Post and the decision of its owner Katherine Graham to publish the leaked Pentagon Papers, disclosing how the American government misled its citizens about the Vietnam war, continuing to send out young soldiers despite knowing it was unwinnable.

Tim Dawson, NUJ president, said the disclosures by Edward Snowden of global surveillance programmes, the MPs' expenses scandal and the Paradise papers, revealing mass tax evasion,

Entertainment One UK



Meryl Streep as Katherine Graham

proved that journalism was still holding power to account; any of them would provide ample fodder for an exciting screenplay.

Rebecca Vincent, UK bureau director of Reporters Without Borders, said the Investigatory Powers Act, the Data Protection Bill and the proposed Espionage Act showed newspapers and broadcasters were still fighting the battle to preserve press freedom.

The panel of media experts, which also included Ian Murray, of the Society of Editors, and Phil Harding, of The Media Society, agreed the film starring Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks was an exciting portrayal of journalism at its best.

But none of them would be drawn by Robbie Collin, the Telegraph's film critic, in suggesting who should play editor-in-chief Paul Dacre in *Daily Mail: The Movie*.

### Westminster watch

Emily Cunningham, MoC of the SNP's chapel in Parliament, was successful in winning a seat on a panel set up by Leader of the Commons, Andrea Leadsom, which reviewed a survey of workers at Westminster showing high levels of bullying and harassment. The panel called for a code of conduct and sanctions on MPs and peers who transgress. She said: "Our proposals were a positive step in building a safer, professional working environment."

### Panorama cuts a 'terminal blow'

**Staff on Panorama, the BBC's flagship current**

**affairs programme, voiced their concerns after the new editor announced plans to make half of the programme's experienced producers redundant. Rachel Jupp told them she wanted to reduce the numbers of full-time producers working on the programme from the existing seven to four. A producer left in October and his post was closed. It is part of the £600,000 savings Panorama plans to make in 2018/19; staff said it was a terminal blow to the award-winning show.**

### Recruitment boost

The union has won success in increasing members

at Nature and associated titles and, since voluntary recognition talks broke down, an application has been made to the Central Arbitration Committee. A recruitment drive is under way in other areas of Springer Nature.

A skirmish for recognition has been triggered at Rough Guides since its new owner gave notice to terminate the NUJ/Unite agreement. Organising campaigns are afoot at Conde Nast and Pan Macmillan, meanwhile reps at Faber and Faber are taking up the issue of unpaid interns.

### Mags takeover

One of the UK's biggest magazine publishers, Time

Inc, which owns NME, Marie Claire, County Life, Women's Weekly and Horse & Hounds among its 50-plus brands portfolio, has been sold to private equity company Epiris in a £130m deal.

Alex Fortescue, the managing partner at Epiris, suggested some titles would be sold and cuts to the 1,700 workforce are expected. According to the Guardian, Epiris is also considering a bid for assets belonging to Dennis, the publisher of titles including The Week, Viz and Men's Fitness, for £75m to £100m. Time Inc UK made close to £30m in profits last year on revenues of about £250m.

## Cash win at Oldham

**The NUJ has won £39,000 for members sacked when the Oldham Chronicle, owned by Hirst, Kidd & Rennie, went bust in September last year, with 49 people made redundant.**

A Manchester employment tribunal hearing resulted in a protective award judgment for the union's members at

the daily newspaper, founded in 1854. Judge Batten awarded 90 days' pay to the staff. The payment will come from the government's redundancy payments office. In theory, the members would be due money from the assets, but the liquidator, KPMG, said there would be little left once it had taken its fee.

## Hobby photographers told to make them pay

**If it's good enough to publish, then it is good enough to pay for was the starting point of #useitpayforit, a campaign asking amateur photographers to become more aware of the value of their images.**

NUJ branches and chapels were encouraged to make contact with local camera clubs. These clubs have been the target of the major newspaper groups for a source of free images for their titles, at the same time as sacking staff photographers.

Newsquest has given out prizes to its centres which have run the most non-paid for content, with Weymouth, which produces the Dorset Echo and Bridport and Lyme Regis News, running almost 17 per cent of stories and pictures from free sources. The union reported that on Johnston Press titles in Scotland, the weekly picture budget is £15.

The union interviewed Martin Le May, whose amazing shot of a weasel riding on the back of a woodpecker was shared around the world in minutes without him making a penny. Quicker to cash in was Tanya Gold who snapped former Ukip leader Henry Bolton



with his controversial girlfriend on the Tube, when he had said the relationship was over. Jason Latchford, the teenage photographer, had to chase up his local newspaper when it syndicated his picture of a pranged super-car to the national press without his permission. Most newspapers will pay highly for such pictures; there is no reason why amateurs should not benefit.

That is why the NUJ has been promoting its Rate for Job and Freelance Fee Guides and has put out a checklist to help amateur photographers to get paid properly and to ensure they protect their work.

**Read More**  
<https://www.nuj.org.uk/campaigns/useitpayforit/>



## Broadcasting news

### STV concerns

**Members at STV attended an anxious and vocal chapel meeting following an announcement of cuts in news by the new CEO, Simon Pitts. A working group to determine the future of STV2 has been established; options include the closure of the station and the handing back of the licences. The chapel will meet frequently during this worrying time, to aid communication and as a show of strength, and will increase recruitment efforts. Separately there are concerns over discrepancies in gradings, with one grievance procedure initiated. The chapel will conduct a pay survey to gauge the extent of the problem.**

### Peers warned of perils of radio out-sourcing

The NUJ published a briefing paper for peers, as part of its Save BBC Radio campaign, as Lord Stevenson of Balmacara led a debate in the House of Lords which called for a review of the BBC's plans to outsource 60 per cent of radio production and cautioned against the "Uberisation" of the radio workforce.

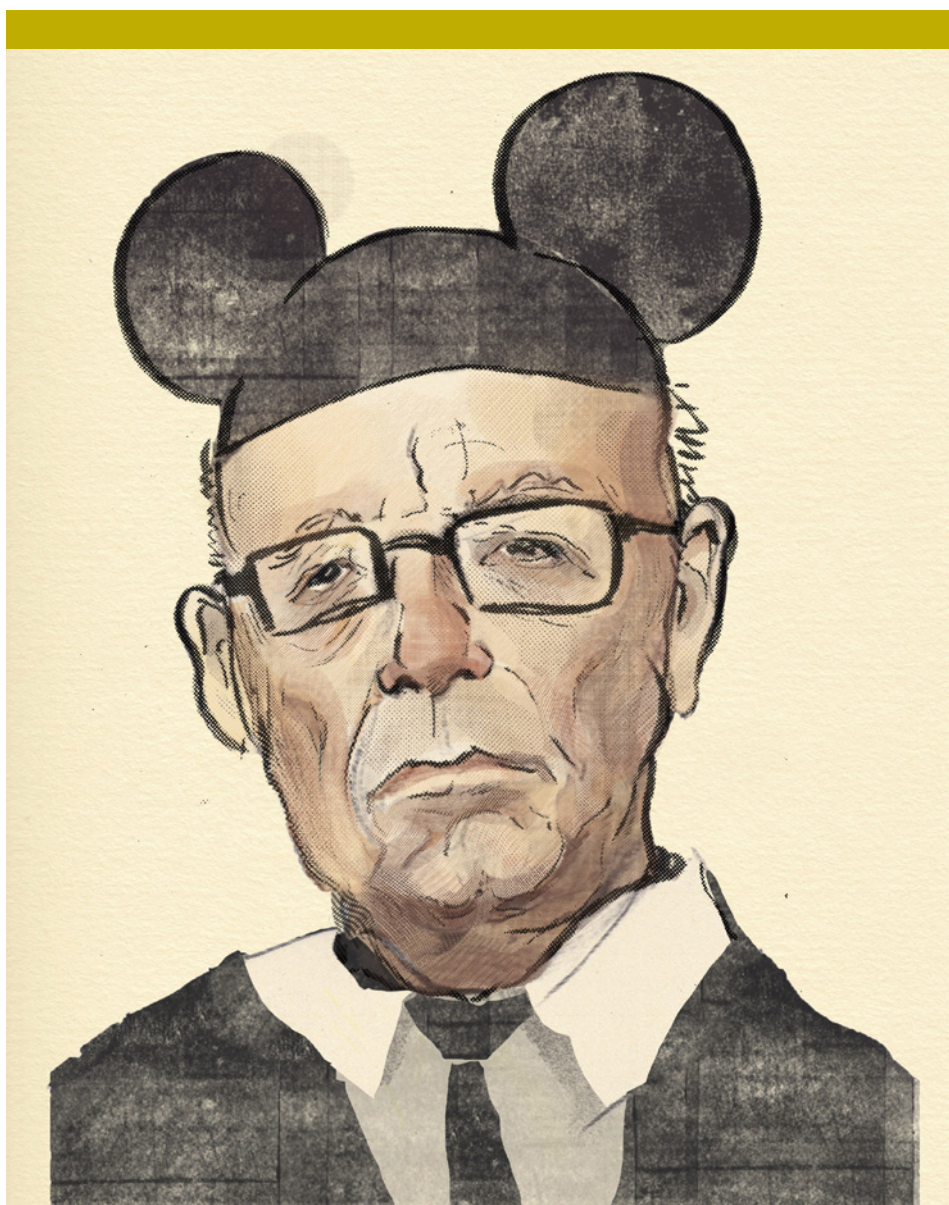
He said: "This change of practice at the BBC gives rise to serious concerns, centring on the sustainability of what is really a very fragile radio production market. The potential threat to smaller independent producers and to the BBC's own in-house, world-leading production capacity has to be borne in mind."

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/documents/nuj-briefing-competitive-tendering-of-bbc-national-radio/>

# Spotlight

## Is the Fox/Sky deal a Disney fairytale ending?

Ian Burrell reports on the latest chapter in the international media takeover saga



**For more than five years a giant fibreglass caricature of Rupert Murdoch's head has been a haunting presence whenever the media magnate's empire has strayed into legal and political controversy.**

At the publication of the Leveson inquiry report, outside the High Court in the Strand for phone-hacking hearings, and in front of the Houses of Parliament, the Rupert dummy has been there, often worn by a man in stilts dangling smaller puppets of David Cameron or Theresa May, Murdoch's supposed marionettes.

The proposed \$66bn (£47.5bn) deal in which Disney absorbs most of 21st Century Fox has changed the background scenery of this long-running piece of theatre. Murdoch – the great media expansionist of the past half-century – suddenly appears to be in retreat.

But the puppet head, constructed by the campaigns group Avaaz, will not yet be packed away as a cultural artefact of a bygone era.

"The big Murdoch head has been a powerful symbol of his size and stature in the UK media and politics and it may soon be time for both the head and the man himself to think about retirement, but not quite yet," says Alex Wilks, who has been a leader of the Avaaz campaign against the founder of News Corporation and sometimes the man inside the Murdoch mask.

The mogul still has a lot of power in the UK media, he argues and, in another twist, Avaaz is celebrating winning its bid for a judicial review on the ruling by Ofcom, the broadcasting watchdog, that Sky would remain "fit and proper" to hold a UK licence if it was owned by 21st Century Fox. The group argued that James Murdoch was not a fit and proper person because of his stewardship of the family's UK newspaper stable at the time of the phone hacking scandal.

"The case is arguable and may raise some important points of principle," said Mr Justice Morris, who granted the judicial review, which will be heard before June 30.



**Leveson  
Two**  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43240230>

After the proposed Disney merger, the most famous dynasty in global media will focus on news and sport. A "New Fox" company, comprising Fox News and related assets not included in the sale, could be merged with News Corp, created by Murdoch 40 years ago and still a \$9.6bn business that operates marquee newspaper brands in the US, UK and Australia.

Former Murdoch executive, Phil Hall, now chairman of media company PHA, thinks the Disney sale will enable the family to spend elsewhere. "I suspect we will see a reinvestment of the family's wealth in a different form of media," he says.

The Murdoch family trust is set to take a 5 per cent stake in Disney. Son James Murdoch, CEO of 21st Century Fox and chairman of Sky, could take a senior role at the House of Mouse.

Alex deGroot, media analyst at Cenkos Securities, says: "I'm sure they will be angling for a board position and maybe more, so their influence will be felt within the new company."

The Competition and Markets Authority rejected Fox's planned purchase of the 60.9 per cent of Sky it does not already own on the grounds that the family had "too much control over news providers in the UK ... and therefore too much influence over public opinion and the political agenda".

DeGroot admits to being "slightly surprised", given that last year's UK general election demonstrated the declining power of the press as it "marshalled against" Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn. "The influence of Fleet Street is waning big time in terms of the young."

George Brock, professor of journalism

at City University, London, and a former Times journalist, says: "As the younger generation of Murdochs have taken more control, the significance of the newspapers has diminished, but it would have diminished in almost any circumstances because newspapers – even if they are online and in print – are just a small part of anybody's news spectrum. There's just too much proliferating competition for them to go on holding the amount of bandwidth they used to hold."

The key to the complete takeover of Sky by Fox, and subsequently Disney, is likely to rest with the fate of Sky News. It has been a worrying time for the network's staff; Rupert Murdoch had been quite happy to threaten closure of the station if it affected his deal. His latest move has been to say that Fox would establish a fully independent board for Sky News, which might help to appease the CMA but it is not certain that the loss-making news channel has a long-term future under Disney.

That saga is far from over. In January 2018, News Group Newspapers made confidential settlements (believed to run into six figures) with comedian Vic Reeves, TV presenter Kate Thornton and two others who alleged phone-hacking and blogging by journalists at The Sun and the News of the World and a cover-up by senior executives. NGN has never admitted wrongdoing at The Sun.

Evan Harris, executive director of press reform group, Hacked Off, says there will be a trial in autumn: "If a judge makes a finding that there was concealment and destruction of evidence, the police will have to lay charges – this was never one of the charges at the original [2014 phone-hacking] trial," he said.

As NUJ Informed went to press, another twist emerged as US cable giant Comcast made a £22.1bn bid for Sky, challenging Murdoch's £18.5bn deal. Comcast chief executive Brian Roberts said: "We would like to own the whole of Sky and will be looking to acquire over 50 per cent of the Sky shares." Your move Rupert.

## Farewell then Desmond

**Three years after Richard Desmond told Trinity Mirror's CEO to "Fox off", the sale of Express Newspapers to the Daily Mirror's publisher has been concluded.**

The deal includes £126.7m for his daily and Sunday newspapers and magazines plus the company's 50 per cent joint venture interest in the Irish Daily Star and a commitment until 2027 to invest £70m in the staff pension scheme.

Simon Fox, Trinity Mirror's chief executive officer, said £20m savings would have to be made. He said the newspapers would be

editorially independent; the Brexit-supporting Express has been a cheerleader for Ukip and the Mirror is traditionally left of centre.

The Express Newspaper's chapel said it hoped the deal would lead to investment in the cash-starved titles. But NUJ general secretary, Michelle Stanistreet, cited Trinity Mirror's reputation for cost cutting and called for the union to be consulted on forthcoming changes.



Nobody, particularly the journalists who worked for Desmond and endured many years without pay rises, will be sorry to see him to go. In its heyday The Daily Express sold 4.4m copies. Under Desmond, lack of investment and its bizarre headlines obsessed with Princess Diana, the weather and miracle cures made it increasingly irrelevant, although beyond the crazy front pages there was good journalism.

Desmond will be Trinity Mirror's third-largest shareholder, but Simon Fox said he would have no influence. The man once behind Asian Babes and Readers' Wives is now said to be spending more time with his property portfolio.

# Spotlight

## War, Journalism and Whistleblowers

### Fifteen years on, former NUJ leader Jeremy Dear recalls the union backing GCHQ whistleblower Katherine Gun

**By any criteria the decision was remarkable. Katherine Gun, a self-confessed whistleblower who had deliberately breached the Official Secrets Act, had been acquitted. The prosecution would not have been hard.**

As Martin Bright, the then Observer journalist and NUJ activist, said: "We are told the case was dropped because there was insufficient evidence to proceed – absurd considering Katherine Gun had admitted to the leak."

The case against Katherine was dropped despite her leaking an email from the National Security Agency in the US asking the UK government's communications centre, GCHQ, to bug the UN delegations of other countries – a move designed to put political pressure on them in the run up to a crucial vote on the Iraq war.

In March 2003, she passed the email to a friend who gave it to The Observer. Katherine was sacked and charged under the Official Secrets Act. In the weeks and months following her arrest the NUJ, civil rights and press freedom campaigners, celebrities, and others rallied to her defence.

Demands increased for the government to publish the advice it had received on the legality of the war. It was clear the case was dropped to stop the government facing huge political embarrassment at such a sensitive and politically difficult time.

The NUJ played its part in creating a public atmosphere in which such questions were being asked.

The union also used the case to make it clear that there must be a strong

public interest defence to protect whistleblowers who give stories to the media to expose official lies, dirty tricks or corruption.

The union's championing of whistleblowers such as Katherine Gun is part of a proud history the NUJ has in fighting uncompromisingly for the protection of sources.

The union had come to the aid of Martin Bright when he revealed details of allegations by an MI5 whistleblower of a plot to assassinate then Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Martin refused to hand over material, the NUJ named those agents alleged to be involved in the plot and, again, a principled journalist backed by the union scored a victory.

Matt Keynon



The case was thrown out and the judge issued a strong declaration on the freedom of the press in English law.

But following the attacks on New York's twin towers and the declaration of a "war on terrorism" political, and public, support began to ebb away and new challenges to the rights of journalists emerged. In the UK, and across the world, laws designed to combat terrorism have increasingly been used to clamp down on civil rights and threaten journalism, giving governments sweeping powers to spy on journalists and their sources.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 is a classic example. Attempts to rewrite the Official Secrets Act were condemned by Katherine Gun just last year. "If the proposals... extend the overall dragnet nature of the act, increase the penalty limit and disregard a public interest defence it will exacerbate power in the hands of the government and deter or even prevent whistleblowers from revealing government lies and abuse of power."

Whistleblowers play an essential role in detecting fraud, mismanagement and corruption - helping to save lives, protect human rights and safeguard the rule of law. Journalists understand how important protection for whistleblowers is to enable them to continue to do so.

Journalists unions were instrumental in the lobby to secure a vote in the European Parliament demanding EU-wide legislation protecting whistleblowers.

Campaigns are not just about legal rights but also building workplace and community support for those who act in the public interest. As it has done throughout its history, the NUJ and its sister unions in the International Federation of Journalists will be at the forefront of this struggle.

# Spotlight

## Ideas sought to save our press

**Newspaper review must be open to the journalist's voice, says Frances Rafferty**

**The arguments for having an inquiry into the press were well rehearsed by the NUJ during last year's Local News Matters Week.**

Branches and chapels held events in their communities publicising the crisis in the press and lobbied their MPs to support their local newspapers. New models of newspaper ownership were showcased.

As well as calling for an inquiry, the NUJ said newspapers should be made community assets to prevent newspaper titles closing overnight and to give potential new owners the time to put together a bid for a paper. The union proposed research into ways independent public-interest journalism could be subsidised.

That is why the union has welcomed the government's review into the sustainability of the press.

Not long after the announcement, Trinity Mirror (TM) said it was cutting 49 jobs (with more expected) as part of its development of a digital-only strategy. These cuts followed the annual pre-Christmas cull at Newsquest (NQ), adding to the under-resourced, badly-paid newsrooms across the UK and Ireland.

The newspaper owners believe the Googles and Facebooks must be brought into line for taking content without paying and sucking up advertising revenue. They will be looking

for the government to wield a stick and support them. But the NUJ will also be calling them to account for their role in bleeding titles dry to pay shareholders and executives way beyond the normal rewards of blue-chip companies. The big three (TM, NQ and Johnston Press) made profits well in excess of £150m in 2016.

Media commentator Roy Greenslade had a jaundiced take on the review. He said: "Theresa May, in coming up with this new 'review', has surely consigned Leveson Two to the back burner." He was right - Culture Secretary Matt Hancock has said it will not go ahead.

The NUJ is not expressing cynicism. Yet. That is why we will be putting pressure on ministers to make sure its panel overseeing the review includes the voice of journalists and not just vested interests.

The review will publish research examining the current state of the local and national press markets. Paywalls, partial pay walls, subscription models, crowd-funding, co-operatives, philanthropic foundations, classic paid-for-by-advertising-and-cover-price are all in the mix as the newspaper sector seeks a new business model. There are the beginnings of a creative response to the crisis, but as circulations plummet Theresa May must not let this opportunity be squandered.

### *How to fund a free press?*

**There are a number of ways the government already subsidises the press, such as through an exemption on VAT and paid-for statutory notices. The Welsh government gave Newsquest £340,000 from its Skills Growth Fund, to set up a subbing hub in Newport; most of it had to be repaid when the hub was closed. The government has now allocated £200,000 over two years to fund Welsh hyperlocal start-ups.**

The BBC's Local Democracy Reporter scheme has top-sliced £8m a year from the licence-fee pot to pay for 150-plus reporters to work in local newspapers and the production of shared BBC videos and data. Of these, the vast majority will be working for the big three, Johnston Press, Newsquest and Trinity Mirror, the very same companies making journalists redundant. George Osborne's highly lucrative London Standard will get one.

The NUJ has grave concerns about how the scheme will work and this will be expressed in a motion to this year's Delegate Meeting.

The union does believe it is possible for public-interest journalism with strings attached, such as covering democratic institutions such as councils and health authorities, to be paid for by the public purse in much the way many arts organisations receive funding via an arms-length organisation from government. There are many international examples of governments aiding the dissemination of news and subsidising the press; this an area the review should further research.

**<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-review-launched-of-press-sustainability-in-the-uk>**

**local  
news  
matters**  
[www.nuj.org.uk](http://www.nuj.org.uk)

# News Update

## Sir Harry entertains

**The packed room at Downstairs at the NUJ was the venue for a conversation with the eminent journalist Sir Harry Evans, led by Tim Dawson, the union's president.**

The former Sunday Times editor may have been knocking ninety, but he showed he was still as fired up about journalism, news, truth and good writing as he was on the day when he cycled to his first job at Ashton-under-Lyne's local newspaper, aged 16.



Sir Harry Evans and Tim Dawson

Having also carved out a career in the States, where he lives with journalist wife Tina Brown, he keeps abreast of the UK press.

But it was the internet companies which won his ire. "Facebook is an open sewer," he declared, denouncing it and Google for propagating fake news without taking responsibility. "During the last US election, 20m people saw information from Russian bots; all anti-Clinton and pro-Trump," he said. He is not a fan of Donald Trump.

The defining story of his career was the exposé of the thalidomide scandal. Sunday Times stories led to £20m in compensation for UK victims of the drug, used by pregnant women, which led to babies born with deformities during the sixties.

He is still involved; the pills are still sold in Peru and in counties, such as Spain, compensation has still not been paid, he said.

### Journalists at Work 2018

**The National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) is updating its highly-regarded report *Journalists at Work*, produced in 2012, which has guided the industry's work on qualifications and has been a vital source of information about the journalism industry.**

Please take a few moments to take part in the research by clicking here: <http://survey.euro.confirmit.com/wix/p1863544209.aspx>. All responses will be treated in confidence and no individual will be identified. The questionnaire should take no longer than 15-20 minutes to complete. If you have any queries, contact Mark Spilsbury (who is managing the survey on behalf of the NCTJ) on [mark@spilsresearch.co.uk](mailto:mark@spilsresearch.co.uk) or Sarah Kenny at the NCTJ on [sarah.kenny@nctj.com](mailto:sarah.kenny@nctj.com).

## DM2018 & comms review

**The Delegate Meeting will take place this year in Southport. The sector conferences will take place on Thursday 19 April, followed by DM on the Friday until Sunday 22 April.**

The deadline for amendments to motions has now closed and the final agenda and annual report will be available by Tuesday 13 March.

Results of elections to the national executive and other councils can be found on the website: [https://www.nuj.org.uk/news/nuj-national-](https://www.nuj.org.uk/news/nuj-national-executive-council-elections/)

*executive-council-elections/*

Subjects for discussion include the level of subscriptions, new models of newspaper ownership, the danger of clickbait, professional and union training, pension rights, increased diversity in the industry, threats to press freedom, freelance rights, campaigns on journalist safety, online abuse of journalists and low wages in the media.

Delegates will be given a copy of the union's communications

review, which was discussed by the NEC at February's meeting. The document, in response to a motion at DM2016, was written by Michelle Stanistreet and Séamus Dooley and takes a comprehensive look at how the union communicates with its membership and members with each other. It includes the results and responses from the consultation, including a member survey, and

analyses of the present funding of communications and the Journalist

magazine. It makes the case for investment in a major revamp of the union's website to include more multi-media content and the creation of "flexible digital spaces where members can meet, network, communicate and share experiences". It calls for an overhaul of the way members are welcomed to the union and a rethink of how our branch network operates. It makes the case for more targeted e-newsletters and sector-specific publications.

If you have any queries, contact [DM@nuj.org.uk](mailto:DM@nuj.org.uk)

Read More  
<https://www.nuj.org.uk/documents/nuj-strategic-communications-review-2018/>

