

# the Journalist

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## Out with the old boys

Media networking for the many, not the few



# Contents

## Main feature

### 16 Beating the old boy network

How to break the 'class ceiling'

## News

### 03 Scottish titles in strike vote

Anger at fresh Newsquest cuts

### 04 'Scroogequest' cuts hit local papers

NUJ urges new investment

### 05 Dutch court boosts freelance pay

Judgement hailed as historic

### 06 Irish delegate conference

Reports on biennial meeting

## Features

### 10 Getting close to readers

Newsletters can boost income

### 12 A riot of colour

Uproar over first supplements

### 14 Heyday of alternative press

Radical impact on mainstream media

## Regulars

### 09 Viewpoint

### 19 NUJ & Me

### 26 And finally...



W elcome to the last edition of 2019. It's that time of the year when we look back and make plans and changes for the new year.

In a similar spirit of changing something old for something new, our cover feature looks at how the old boys' club is being changed in the media for a new way of networking. Holly Powell-Jones looks at how mentoring and helping young people find accommodation in expensive cities can promote diversity in the media and give newcomers that all important first step.

Another recent change in the media landscape is the growing opportunity for journalists to make money from newsletters. Jem Collins guides us through the ins and outs of the subject.

We've got a bit of looking back too. Jonathan Sale continues his absorbing and entertaining media anniversary series, this time throwing the spotlight on the first newspaper colour supplement. And Phil Chamberlain takes a look at the heyday of the radical press and a new project to document it.

As The Journalist went to press, we were awaiting the general election in Britain and we have yet to see what the new government has in store for the media.

And speaking of elections, I'm very pleased to have been re-elected as editor. I'm honoured and grateful to be backed by those members who voted.

Wishing everyone a happy and prosperous 2020.

Christine

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**Cover picture**  
Simon Spilsbury

The Journalist's polyfilm wrapping is recyclable at carrier bag recycling points in supermarkets.



**Raymond Snoddy**  
Page 18

**Arts with Attitude**  
Pages 20-21



**Letters**  
Page 22-23



# Scottish Newsquest titles ballot for industrial action

**NUJ MEMBERS** at Newsquest's Scottish titles, which include The Herald, Herald on Sunday, The National, Sunday National, and the Glasgow Evening Times, were balloting for industrial action over proposed staff cuts, as The Journalist went to press.

The move is in response to the company's announcement on proposed redundancies, stating that it will make compulsory dismissals if it cannot achieve proposed cuts of around £500,000 by any other means.

The ballot at the Glasgow-based titles also follows a series of structural changes that staff say will have a detrimental impact on the quality of their work, health and family lives.

Although the company has yet to confirm the exact number of jobs they will cut, this is seen as a further blow to journalists who have faced more than a decade of cuts to staffing levels and almost no increase in wages during the same period.

By coincidence, the NUJ had conducted a stress survey shortly before the company's announcement. Among other findings, the survey showed that 83 per cent of respondents believe the quality of their title has declined over the last year; 78 per cent say their workloads have increased in the last year; 57 per cent say they are pressured to produce work faster than they are comfortable with and just nine per cent said they had confidence in the current management.

John Toner, NUJ national organiser for Scotland, said: "Our members are very

committed to providing Scotland with quality journalism, and our survey demonstrates that commitment, despite the severe reduction in staffing levels over many years.

"This latest blow has galvanised them, and they don't believe it is possible to work harder than they do already, with fewer people than they already have."



**They don't believe it is possible to work harder than they do already**

**John Toner, NUJ Scottish Organiser**

## Samira Ahmed claims pay parity

**THE BBC** presenter Samira Ahmed, backed by the NUJ, has made a claim for equal pay at an employment tribunal. The ruling is expected soon.

The case was heard at the Central London Employment Tribunal over several days and focused on her contracts on Newswatch. Her equal pay comparator was Jeremy Vine in relation to his work on Points of



View between 2008 and July 2018. He was paid £3,000 per episode between 2008 and 2018. His fee was then reduced to £1,300 in January 2018. He left

the programme in July 2018. By contrast, Samira was paid £440 per programme from 2012. This increased in 2015 to £465 but then reduced again when the BBC moved presenters onto employment contracts.

Samira previously secured backdated pay in line with male comparators for work on BBC Radio 4's Front Row and Radio 3's Night Waves/ Free Thinking.

## Journalist editor re-elected

**CHRISTINE BUCKLEY** has been re-elected editor of The Journalist in a ballot of NUJ members. Nine candidates competed for the role. The election was conducted by single transferable vote which means that the lowest

scoring candidates are systematically eliminated, and their second preference votes distributed to other candidates until a candidate reaches a required quota. Bill McCarthy was eliminated first with 55 votes and David

Nicholson was eliminated second with 93 votes. At that point Christine Buckley was elected with 1364 votes. Jane Anderson polled 572; Samantha Downes 120; Alanna Gallagher 154; Marc Jones 169; Matt Salusbury 182; and Lynne Wallis 126. Turnout was 11.2 per cent.

## inbrief...

### MALTA'S PM RESIGNS AMID PRESSURE

Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat is to resign in January following public pressure for the truth about the 2017 car bombing that killed journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. Muscat will quit as leader of the Labour Party on January 12 and subsequently resign as prime minister.

### DAILY MAIL BUYS THE I PAPER FOR £49M

The Daily Mail and General Trust, which publishes the Mail and Metro, has bought the i paper from JPI Media for £49.6 million. It said it wanted the i because it is a strong print title with a reputation for quality journalism. It promised to preserve its editorial independence.

### ORWELL SOCIETY OFFERS BURSARY

The Orwell Society is inviting aspiring journalists to enter a competition for a £3000 bursary. It is open to students studying in September/October 2020 or those aiming to take up a journalistic job at that time. For more information email [info@orwellsociety.com](mailto:info@orwellsociety.com) with Bursary Journalist in the header.

### REACH CLOSES LAST CORNISH NEWSROOM

Reach is closing its last newsroom in Cornwall and another office in the south west. Its journalists there will work remotely or in shared spaces while others go to a hub in Plymouth. No jobs will go from the closure of the Truro and Exeter offices.

### GROCER'S TRIUMPH OVER APOSTROPHE

A society that championed the correct use of apostrophes has closed. John Richards, a former sub-editor, started the Apostrophe Protection Society in 2001 when he retired. Now 96, Richards is ending his mission. On its website, he said: "We, and our many supporters worldwide, have done our best but the ignorance and laziness present in modern times have won!"

## inbrief...

**WIN FOR FREDDIE STARR'S HAMSTER**

'Freddie Starr ate my hamster' has been voted favourite Sun headline by readers. The poll marked the 50th anniversary in November of Rupert Murdoch taking ownership of the paper. One in five voted for the 1986 front page that said the Starr had eaten a live hamster in a sandwich. He later denied the story.

**THE SUN EXPANDS DIGITAL FOOTPRINT**

The Sun is expanding its digital operation to the US, saying it has 'ambitious plans for growth'. The title, which is the most-read news brand in print and online in the UK, revealed the US launch in a job advert for a head of audience based in New York.

**AFTER-SCHOOL TV NEWS UNDER THREAT**

The BBC wants to cut Newsround's after-school bulletin after almost 50 years to focus on online children's news content. The CBBC channel now airs three daily Newsround bulletins of 5-10 minutes each to meet an Ofcom requirement of 85 hours per year. The BBC has asked for changes to its licence to require 35 hours per year with a minimum of one scheduled daily bulletin.

**GUARDIAN GOES FOR NET ZERO EMISSIONS**

The Guardian Media Group has pledged to reach net zero carbon emissions as a business by 2030. It has also promised to 'prioritise and give prominence' to its environmental journalism and never allow its reporting to be influenced by commercial or political interests.

**STYLIST PLEDGES A LONG FUTURE IN PRINT**

Women's free magazine Stylist has a 'long lifespan' in print yet, its editor-in-chief Lisa Smosarski has said. She said the 10-year-old title had a solid audience and advertiser base and distributed 410,674 copies a week.

# Union condemns 'Scroogequest' as Christmas cuts hit local papers

**NUJ MEMBERS** in Cumbria and Darlington have been informed of hefty new cuts to local newspapers owned by Newsquest.

The editor at the Carlisle News and Star is leaving without replacement. At the Workington and Whitehaven titles, the associate editor and content editor are at risk of redundancy, as is the editor of the Westmoreland Gazette.

The arts and leisure writer at Westmorland Gazette, journalists working on Carlisle features and the arts and leisure writer in Kendal are being consulted on redundancy.

If these jobs are cut, one group editor will remain in Carlisle to edit all the titles in Cumbria.

At Darlington, home to the Northern Echo and the Darlington and Stockton Times, journalists were told the weekly multimedia content manager post was being axed, along with a sports editor (production), a freelance specialist writer and the IT technician.

Since Newsquest took over the family-run CN Group in 2018, all of the subeditors, four out of our five photographers and the

majority of the experienced reporting staff in Carlisle have left in rounds of cuts.

Cuts are also being made at the group's magazine titles, including Cumbria Life, Dumfries and Galloway Life, Carlisle Living and a business magazine. Six employees have been put at risk of redundancy and staff have been told that two jobs will remain. Most of the production work on the Cumbria magazines will move to Newport in Gwent.

The NUJ is urging the company to

reconsider and commit to investing in sustainable local journalism and jobs.

Chris Morley,

Newsquest NUJ group chapel coordinator, said: "Yet again, as we approach Christmas as the season of goodwill, Scroogequest looms large.

"The job losses most often affect older, more experienced staff whose local knowledge and invaluable experience are being lost to the detriment of their communities."

He added: "The loss of journalists' jobs at CN Group since Newsquest took over just 19 months ago has been staggering."




**The loss of journalists' jobs since Newsquest took over just 19 months ago has been staggering**

**Chris Morley**  
Northern and Midlands  
senior organiser

## Academic: reclaim black radicalism

**ACADEMIC KEHINDE** Andrews made a passionate call to arms to black people who he said had been stopped by racism from building on advances made in previous decades, when he gave the NUJ's keynote Claudia Jones Memorial Lecture in London.

The Birmingham City University professor and author, who runs Britain's first black studies course, said: "The liberal road to reform is

a dead end. It's not good enough to have a few black people making it when others are at the bottom of the pile."

He urged black people to get organised and fight for their rights, including in unions.

He added: "We need to reclaim the politics of black radicalism because it's not just an ideology in the tradition of Malcolm X but a blueprint for major change."

The lecture is held every



HAZEL DUNLOP

year as part of London's Black History month in honour of radical journalist Claudia Jones. You can watch the full lecture here: <https://tinyurl.com/ukf6546>.

## Time with the NME falls down the charts

**TIME SPENT** reading the NME has fallen 72 per cent since the music magazine went online only, according to an academic study.

Authors Dr Neil Thurman

and Dr Richard Fletcher had previously shown that the Independent saw an 81 per cent fall in the time readers were spending on it when it went online only in 2016.

In March 2018, the NME ended 66 years of print publication after a three years as a freesheet.

Dr Thurman said: "While a post-print existence may be

less costly, it's also more constrained, with much of the attention simply stripped away."

Read the study at <https://tinyurl.com/spjmwv>



# Freelance journalists' pay boosted by Dutch court

**IN A HISTORIC** judgment, a Dutch court has ruled it reasonable for two freelance journalists to be paid 50 per cent more for their work. Hourly rates of approximately €12.50 were judged too low.

It was the first time a case, brought under the Netherlands' Authors' Contract law, has intervened in the market to offer better pay for freelances.

Employer DPG Media must now pay the reporter €0.21 a word, and the photographer €65 a photograph.

Thomas Bruning, general secretary of Dutch journalists' union the NVJ, said the new rates were a first, important step towards fairer pay for regional journalists. The NVJ now plans to bring further legal cases for a large group of freelances.

In January 2019, the NVJ, with its photographers' section the NVF, organised a national strike against low pay rates for freelance photographers which, it feared, could turn the profession into a 'glorified hobby' within 10 years. More than 500 members – half of the Dutch profession – laid down their cameras for 24 hours.

The union then backed claims for higher rates by regional freelance photographer Ruud Rogier, who had been paid €42 for photographs, involving up to three hours' work each, and reporter Britt van Uem, who



was offered rates of 13 cents a word for a 500-word article taking four hours.

Their lawyer Otto Volgenant said: "This is too little to live on." Van Uem said: "I refuse to work for a newspaper which thinks €15 an hour a reasonable rate."

Under the authors' law, journalists have a right to 'reasonable' reimbursement, but this is the first time a court has said what is reasonable. It took into account the gap between freelance rates and staff salaries.

Rosa García López, secretary of the NVJ's freelance and photographers' sections said this was a historic judgment with "consequences for all Dutch self-employed photographers and journalists".

DPG Media, which employs 4,000-5,000 regional freelance journalists, argues it is important that regional journalism remains profitable.



**This was a historic judgment with consequences for all Dutch self-employed photographers and journalists**

**Rosa García López**  
**Secretary, NVJ**  
**freelance and**  
**photographers'**  
**sections**

## inbrief...

### FT APPOINTS FIRST FEMALE EDITOR

Roula Khalaf has been appointed the first woman editor of the FT. Khalaf, who is now deputy editor, will start in the new year when current editor Lionel Barber leaves. Barber has been editor for 14 years and Khalaf has been deputy for three years. She has been at the paper for 24 years, having previously been foreign editor.

### YOUNG BECOMES SOCIOLOGY ACADEMIC

Gary Younge, editor-at-large at the Guardian, is leaving the newspaper to join the University of Manchester as a professor of sociology. Younge, who has reported from the US, Europe and Africa, will continue to write for the newspaper.

### PROFITS FALL AT THE TELEGRAPH

The Telegraph's pre-tax profits fell by 88 per cent to £1.6 million last year. However, total subscription revenues rose by 10 per cent after a 27 per cent increase in income from digital subscriptions.

### CLARIFICATION FOR ENNISKILLEN REPORT

In a news report about online threats to a reporter who had investigated historic child abuse in Enniskillen in the last edition of The Journalist, it was wrongly stated that the chair of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council refused to take a motion commending the reporter's work. We would like to clarify that no motion was tabled although the reporter was praised.

### TRAVEL INSURANCE FOR JOURNALISTS

The International Federation of Journalists and battleface – a specialist travel insurer – are offering insurance to journalists. IFJ members, which include NUJ members, can access protection for medical expenses, evacuation, accidents and injuries. For more information: <https://www.ifj.org>

## Reporter 'does the job of the police'

**A HEALTH TRUST** representative shocked a public meeting in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, when he said he did not know girls from a children's home were being sexually abused until he

read an article by NUJ member Rodney Edwards in the Impartial Reporter.

Martin Carey, representing the trust's chief executive, was answering a question about what the trust was doing about the abuse. He

said he knew "just what I've read in the papers".

Since March, Edwards has been running articles exposing sex abuse in the area. As a result, victims and survivors established a group, Silent No More, who

organised the meeting.

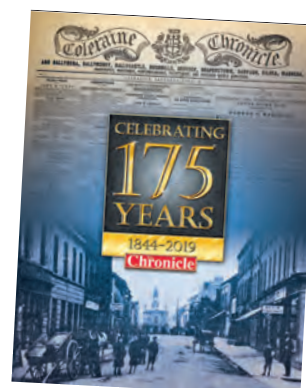
NUJ national executive council member Anton McCabe was a speaker. He asked: "Why was it left to local journalists? Why was this investigation not carried out by police?"

## Coleraine Chronicle marks 175 years

**THE COLERAINE** Chronicle, one of Northern Ireland's oldest newspapers, celebrated its 175th anniversary in November with a souvenir supplement. This included a reprint of the paper's first front page in 1844, which then showed only advertising.

Editor John Fillis said: "No matter how we get the news out to our readers, one thing remains paramount – trust. Readers have to know that what they are reading is true and unbiased, never more so in the age of fake news and bloggers.

"It's why the Chronicle has managed to maintain its position as the most widely read newspaper in town – and just one reason that will continue to see it keeping that position."



Reports: Deaglán de Bréadún. Photos: Derek Speirs and Mark Maxwell

## Government attacked over RTE's funding

**THE IRISH** government was sharply criticised over its approach to the major financial crisis at state-owned public-service broadcaster RTE (Raidió Teilifís Éireann) in a motion carried at the NUJ's Irish Biennial Delegate Conference in Dublin.

Proposed by the Irish executive council, the motion condemned "the refusal of successive governments to provide adequate funding for RTE; the refusal to reform the outmoded licence fee collection system and the action of the current minister for communications, climate change and the environment in postponing the introduction of a new collection system for five years."

Irish secretary Séamus Dooley said the government



had "failed in its legal and moral obligations to RTE" and that RTE management had "shown themselves to lack vision and to be inept".

Earlier at the conference, Dooley recalled how recently deceased broadcasting legend and NUJ member Gay Byrne used to say to

politicians: "Don't banjax the country."

Dooley added: "I'm going to say to those who run RTE and those who are to ruin RTE: this country needs RTE – you have no right to banjax it."

Ronan Brady of Dublin Press and Public Relations Branch quoted a recent letter

he received from the office of communications minister Richard Bruton, which stated: "It is a matter for the RTE board and executive in the first instance to decide on the optimum strategy to meet the strategic and financial challenges the company faces".

Brady described the comment as "a blatant abdication of responsibility".

The NUJ has launched a political lobbying campaign aimed at securing government support for RTE.

It is the first stage in a wider campaign supported by sister unions SIPTU and Connect and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The slogan is 'It's your RTE, save it' – in Irish, 'Leatsa é RTE, sábháil é'.



**To those who run RTE and those who are about to ruin RTE: this country needs RTE – you have no right to banjax it**

**Séamus Dooley**  
Irish secretary

## Move to review The Journalist defeated

**A MOTION** calling for a cost-benefit analysis of the continued publication of The Journalist and a feasibility study on replacing it with a daily

online publication was narrowly defeated by five votes to four.

Proposing the motion on behalf of Dublin Freelance Branch, Kieran

Fagan called for a debate as to whether producing The Journalist was the best use of the union's limited funds.

The motion said there was "no criticism of what is recognised as a highly professional and lively publication". It said the question was "about priorities at a time of stagnant or falling income".

## Call to beware complacency over press freedom



**A freelance video journalist was escorted out of a public meeting, amid jeers and shouts of "out, out, out"**

DEREK SPEIRS



**THERE CAN** be no complacency in Ireland over press freedom, Séamus Dooley said in his report to the conference, which was on the theme 'Defending journalism in times of crisis'.

He described an incident on Achill Island where a freelance video journalist was escorted out of a public meeting, amid jeers and shouts of "out, out, out" from a minority of those attending the event.

The meeting had been called following reports that a local hotel would

be used to accommodate asylum-seekers.

Dooley also highlighted the decision of Communicorp Media, owned by businessman Denis O'Brien, to ban interviews on its radio stations with Irish Times journalists as well as staff and contributors to a news website, The Currency.

The NUJ complained to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. Dooley said: "I can confirm that our concerns are to be considered by the compliance committee of the authority."

## NUJ remembers murdered journalist Lyra McKee

**ALL AROUND** the world, media freedoms are being threatened and journalists are losing their lives for doing their jobs, the NUJ general secretary told delegates.

Michelle Stanistreet made a special presentation to Sara Canning (pictured right), partner of journalist Lyra McKee, who died after being shot on April 18 this year as she observed a confrontation between police and rioters in the Creggan area of Derry.

NUJ members held vigils and other events in many locations to celebrate McKee's life and signed condolence books in her memory.

Stanistreet said she was presenting the books to Sara "on behalf of Lyra's NUJ family for whom she will always be held in massive affection".

Owen Reidy, assistant general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, said that when Lyra McKee was shot, she was "standing



DEREK SPIERS

taking notes and filming on her phone, doing her job, while so-called dissident republicans rioted in the Creggan".

He added: "Whatever about their right to hold certain views, these people do not, I believe, deserve the honour of being called 'dissident'." He said the term dissident implied "thinking against the grain – it implies acting in a manner which is true to your own beliefs and values while not trampling on the rights of others, in

particular their right to life."

A motion from the Belfast and District Branch, passed unanimously, instructed the Irish executive council "to liaise with the ICTU to call action as necessary against sectarian violence and the activities of paramilitary groups". The motion also instructed the IEC to work towards the NUJ setting up a charitable fund that will commemorate Lyra McKee by providing training, grants or other assistance to young journalists.

**//**  
She was standing taking notes and filming on her phone, doing her job, going about her work, while so-called dissident republicans rioted

**Owen Reidy**  
**Irish Congress of Trade Unions**

## in brief...

### WORKERS LOSE STEADY INCOME

The rights of journalists, health workers, teachers and other professionals to steady employment and a predictable income have declined, Irish Congress of Trade Unions assistant general secretary Owen Reidy told delegates. He said: "This is a common problem which can only be challenged by common resolve across all economic sectors."

### NEW DUO TO CHAIR IRISH EXECUTIVE

Dara Bradley and Siobhán Holliman from the West of Ireland branch have been elected to chair the NUJ's Irish Executive Council on a job-share basis, in succession to Gerry Carson of Belfast and District and Bernie Mullen from Derry North-West Branch, who jointly held the position for four years.

### TOUGH CONDITIONS IN SOMALILAND

NUJ member and asylum-seeker Mohamed Abdi Curad was an observer at the conference. He told delegates about the difficulties experienced by journalists in his home country of Somaliland, including inhuman treatment and imprisonment.

### DELEGATES CALL FOR SAFETY TRAINING

The conference passed a motion, proposed by photographer Liam McBurney of Belfast and District Branch, to organise training for NUJ members in Ireland around personal safety in situations where they might be at risk, as well as support for those who experience violence, threats or trauma in their work.

### RECOGNITION FOR LIFE MEMBERS

Life membership certificates were presented to Irish NUJ members who have been in the union for at least 40 years. One of them Tony Mulvey, who recently retired from the Clare Champion newspaper, joined in 1961 and his father had joined in 1943.

## Name those who reject recognition

**REFUSAL BY** managements to recognise unions is increasing, the conference heard.

Delegates unanimously approved an Irish South-West Branch motion "to seek the backing of the Irish Congress of

Trade Unions for a campaign to highlight this practice — including a naming and shaming campaign".

Irish Organiser Ian McGuinness said: "Naming and shaming works. It works in Ireland, because we're a small country

and it works particularly well with local newspapers, and I've seen that on an ongoing basis."

He added that ICTU was also pressing the Irish government to legislate for statutory recognition of trade unions.

## Social media bullying controls could backfire

DEREK SPIERS



**SOME PROPOSED** solutions to social media harassment could be counterproductive, Dr Karlin Lillington (pictured left) told a session on 'hate speech'.

The Irish Times columnist added that it was often argued that social media users should have to provide formal identification and people should not be able to hide behind anonymity by using encryption. However, the

problem was that "the very activists who are often attacked also need anonymity, especially outside western democracies", she said.

Sara Canning, who was Lyra McKee's partner, said McKee had been "the victim of a sustained bullying campaign" on social media.

On a separate issue, Dr Lillington said she would like to see tax from companies such as Google ringfenced for public-service broadcasting.



# Folklore or racism?

There is growing controversy over the Dutch Christmas character Zwarte Piet. **Tony Sheldon** reports

**I**n the Netherlands, it is the time of Sinterklaas, whose arrival from Spain in November, according to Dutch folklore, marks the start of the Christmas festivities.

This white-bearded, fatherly do-gooder is helped by his diminutive and hapless sidekick Zwarte Piet, or Black Piet. Piet is often played by white people in blackface, with thick black curly hair, thick, accentuated, red lips and hoop earrings, much like enslaved Africans are supposed to have looked.

While some insist that the character is an innocent part of folklore, others decry him as a racist stereotype. In recent years, Sint's arrival in the Netherlands and Belgium has sparked heated debate about whether Black Piet should be less racist or relegated to the past.

Marvin Hokstam of the NUJ's black members council's (BMC) moved to the Netherlands from the Caribbean in 2012. He says: "Blackface is without a doubt a racist depiction of black people which causes insult and it should require no explanation any more.

"But I find it truly appalling when journalists appear openly to choose a side in the debate. Then it is not about Black Piet but about journalism and ethics."

The worst coverage followed an incident in 2017 when buses carrying Kick Out Zwarte Piet supporters were prevented from attending Sinterklaas's arrival. The road was blocked by lorries, minibuses, cars and forklift trucks. Dozens of young men, some hooded, surrounded the buses, threatening and, reportedly, shouting racist abuse.

Subsequently, 33 of these counter-demonstrators were found guilty of blocking the public highway. Jenny Douwes, who had urged people on Facebook to support the blockade, was found guilty of incitement. All were given community service orders, although these were reduced on appeal.

However, in the media, it was the Kick Out Zwarte Piet supporters who were described as 'troublemakers' and

'killjoys' and said to have 'spoiled the children's party'.

An article in a daily called the Kick Out campaigners 'a handful of fanatics' and 'extreme left activists' whose 'agenda was to remove icons of Dutch culture'.

Kick Out campaigner Jerry Afriyie was described as a 'poet activist' and a columnist said his activist talents could be put to better use in Ghana, his country of origin, referring to an Amnesty International report on the death penalty and repression of gay rights there.

In a TV debate, Douwes refused to share a stage with Afriyie, so the black man sat in the audience while the white woman was on stage. "The talk show host relegated him to the back of the bus" says Hokstam.

Questionable reporting appears persistent, with one recent news story talking of anti-black Piet activists ready 'to clash with angry fathers'.

Hokstam says: "When I see this sort of subjective reporting, my hopes of more balanced reporting fade. It's like

they are consciously pitting people against each other."

Hokstam, who launched black community publication Afro Magazine, joined the NUJ in 2018. He was pleased to find the union has a record of challenging racism, and guidelines to ensure stories are balanced and reporters not forced write things considered racist.

"The NUJ is light years ahead of other unions. It is only now that the Dutch media are considering adjusting the use of offensive language."

Today Hokstam and his BMC colleague Martin Todd, backed by their NUJ branches, are urging journalists to adhere to professional standards.

Hokstam says: "The fact that there is still debate about this in 2019 is concerning, especially when journalists and newspapers appear to take sides in favour of those supporting black Piet.

"Journalists, talk show hosts, radio and TV presenters have ridiculed the campaign's views, allowing audiences to believe minorities do not have the right to criticise Dutch traditions, no matter how offensive they consider them."

**Marvin Hokstam worked with Tony Sheldon on this article**

**I find it truly appalling when journalists openly choose a side. Then it is not about Black Piet but about journalism and ethics**



DPA PICTURE ALLIANCE ARCHIVE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



# Why did the media not ask the Irish question?



British Brexit coverage missed a main issue, says **Séamus Dooley**

**I**rish Times cartoonist Martyn Turner uses an acerbic pencil and can always be relied upon to get to the point.

One of my favourite Turner cartoons features the Queen of England commenting that no Queen's Speech would be complete without reference to Northern Ireland. In the next panel, she is seen waving a large handkerchief as she declares: "Hello, Northern Ireland."

It is a supreme irony that the two features analysing the media coverage of Brexit in the October-November edition of *The Journalist* did not even doff a hat in the direction of Northern Ireland.

The omission is all the stranger because Raymond Snoddy is from there. He knows better than most the complexities of Anglo-Irish relations, of the vital importance of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and the deep political divisions that materialise whenever the border is mentioned. It used to be called the Irish question.

And, as Denis MacShane is a former minister for Europe, it's hard to believe he is unaware of Northern Ireland. Anyone writing on "the uncertain fate of Britain" cannot be blind to the uncertain fate of Northern Ireland or of the failure of the UK media to adequately explore the implications for UK/Irish relations of the referendum.

The problem that dared not speak its name – the Irish dimension – was simply ignored by all but a handful of journalists and media organisations.

I may be partisan but one of the few journalists who seemed to get the full implications of Brexit was Tony Connelly, RTÉ's Europe editor and a former colleague at the *Irish Independent* in Dublin.

Born in Antrim, educated in Derry and Dublin, Connelly brought local knowledge, expertise and political nous to his coverage. His performances on British TV were impressive.

I followed British coverage – radio, TV, print and digital – from my home in the oldest part of Dublin, the Liberties. I can't say European affairs usually float the boat of punters in Fallon's pub under the shadow of St Patrick's Cathedral or are a burning topic of conversation among Meath Street stallholders – but Brexit captured the attention of the Irish public from day one. It was not just the chattering classes on this side of the Irish sea who followed the referendum.

We Irish strongly value our ties with Britain. We are united by connections of history, politics, sport, family and, for many Irish journalists, our trade union. We also value the peace brought about by the Good Friday Agreement and watched with horror from afar the unfolding threat to that fragile creation.

What struck me was that two central issues – workers' rights and the implications for Northern Ireland – received little attention in the British media.

Inevitably, elections and referendums are personalised but, above the din, there could and should have been meaningful media analysis. When the result was announced, scant regard was paid to the result in Northern Ireland, where the majority voted to remain.

That blind eye was a harbinger of what was to come. When the Democratic Unionist Party assumed a powerful position in Westminster, many journalists suddenly found themselves trying to figure out what was going on 'over there'.

As the backstop emerged in November 2017, the heretofore forgotten border suddenly became relevant. Connelly described the Brexit negotiators' clause as an "innocuous-sounding paragraph ... the infant that would grow into the single most intractable source of conflict in the negotiations".

There are genuine challenges for media organisations in comprehensively covering such a major story. Given the intricacies of border controls and VAT or John Berrow v Boris Johnston, it's probably not surprising that hard facts were obscured by theatrical tantrums.

Significant sections of the media, such as *The Sun*, the *Telegraph* and the *Daily Express*, tried to turn Taoiseach Leo Varadkar into what Roy Greenslade, writing in the *Guardian*, described as the Brexit Bogeyman. The *Mail* on Sunday once said that Theresa May loathed him.

The British and Irish public paid the price for the lack of a proper analysis from day one. The failure of the British media to hold the political class to account in relation to Northern Ireland is worthy of serious examination.

On the morning the referendum result was announced, I sent a text to an NUJ colleague, quoting from the *Second Coming* by WB Yeats:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.

A vision of anarchy in the UK? The media should have seen it coming.

**When the result was announced, scant regard was paid to the result in Northern Ireland, where the majority voted to remain**



# You've got mail

Producing newsletters can raise income and bring you closer to readers, says **Jem Collins**

**I**n October, London Playbook sent out a newsletter about the Brexit process to its tens of thousands of subscribers. Nothing unusual there. However, this edition also contained a reference to an obscure type of animal, a zebu.

What's a zebu? you ask. "Look it up," wrote reporter Charlie Cooper, almost in anticipation of the question. And look it up they did, with Google recording a 100 per cent rise in the usual number of searches for zebras by 1pm.

It's an incredible engagement statistic, especially when some reports estimate readers spend as little as 30 seconds reading articles online. However, it is less surprising when you think about the reason newsletters have endured.

"They're a very engaged medium," explains Gavin Allen, a lecturer in digital journalism at Cardiff University. "They're self-selecting. The chances are, if you sign up for a newsletter, you're going to use that newsletter."

However, while newsletters have long been an engagement tool for publishers, freelance journalists have been using them in recent years for their own original reporting – and charging readers directly.

Substack, a start-up that helps journalists do just that, now facilitates thousands of writers, with more than 50,000 people subscribing to a Substack publication.

Similarly, Ko-fi, a site that allows fans to pay creators for their work, say more money is changing hands than ever before.

"We hit a milestone in September of a million dollars in a single month being earned," says Simon Ellington, one of the site's founders. "That's the first time we've crossed that kind of chasm."

For Eve Livingston, a journalist based in Scotland, a paid-for newsletter was the perfect way to combine nuanced, specialist writing with a steady stream of income. No Offence, her monthly mailing about free speech, contains two original pieces of reporting, analysis of a topical issue, and links to related reading elsewhere.

"I wanted to write about these topics," she tells The Journalist, "but the arguments I wanted to make were quite nuanced and theoretical, and obviously places don't always want to go for that."

Finances were a key consideration, with a subscription newsletter offering "something sustainable and steady". "It doesn't make me loads of money but it does pay about a day rate," she says.

Similarly, Frankie Totoro, who runs Doing It For The Kids (DIFTK), says it was about making a 'side project of epic proportions' sustainable.

Since DIFTK's launch three years ago, it has grown into an all-encompassing support group for freelancers with children. As well as organising events, Frankie produces a podcast and newsletter, and runs social media groups where freelancers bond over the "utter ridiculousness of trying to take a client call with a toddler gnawing at your ankle".

"Until a couple of months ago, it was something I did completely for the love," she explains. In September, though, as well as exploring sponsorship, she "took a leap of faith" and asked the community itself to lend their financial support.

"While I'd been slowly building up a generic newsletter list, I could never justify the time and headspace to send anything to it," she says.

While she still keeps a free list for general DIFTK updates, she feels a premium monthly offering gives both the justification and head space to create something 'really useful for people', which also acts as a small thank you.

Financial rewards aside, newsletters can be a lifeline for other reasons. New York-based writer Sonia Weiser runs Opportunities of the Week, a mailout made up of a scarily comprehensive list of calls for pitches and freelance work across the globe. Launched a little more than a year ago, it now has more than 1,000 subscribers on Patreon alone, all parting with between one and 10 dollars a month.

"It was an extension of my obsessive night-time job searches that I had been doing for years," Weiser explains. "Jumping from retweeting opportunities to compiling them into an email wasn't that much of an imaginative leap."

"I was at a point in my life where I felt completely useless. The Harvey Weinstein news and its immediate fallout pushed me to an edge not only in terms of my personal experience with men but also because I saw how much journalism could do. And, with that, how little I was doing as a writer to make any kind of positive change."

It was originally a free weekly newsletter – "people grabbed onto it quickly" – and it became vital for Weiser too. "It became something that I could work on when I was too depressed to do anything beyond typing keywords into Twitter and, being someone with chronic depression, my other work often got sidelined for this kind of menial labour."

A few months later, Weiser began to charge for the service – she was now spending eight to 10 hours a week on it, and it was limiting her own ability to write. Now with a recommended price of \$3 a month, it covers her main expenses.

"Not having to think about making rent has opened up space in my brain which was otherwise occupied by financial

**\$1m**

**Amount earned  
in one month  
at Ko-fi**





## How to start a newsletter

### Just start

The key is simply to just start, says Simon Ellington from Ko-fi. "Don't overthink it. It doesn't matter if you have 10,000 readers or 10."

"Just start writing, publish on a consistent schedule, then seek feedback from your readers," echoes Hamish McKenzie. "Don't invite paralysis analysis."

### Go free first

Even if a paid newsletter is the plan, start by producing a high-quality free newsletter, says McKenzie.

"Keep adjusting [your content] until you're in a good rhythm and you know people like what you're

producing," he adds.

"At that point, you can pick a launch date for your subscriber-only content."

### Always have some free content

"Even once you have payments enabled, you should continue to do regular, high-quality free posts," stresses Hamish, suggesting these are sent out at least once a week.

"This free content should often be your best stuff, because that's what builds your reputation, brings in new readers and can be shared."

### Don't be afraid to stop

A newsletter doesn't work

for everyone, so don't be afraid to quit.

"If it's not going well and you've been doing it for six months, you shouldn't feel like you can't put that down," says Gavin Allen.

"If you have an audience, you can still transfer them to a new product."

### Find software that works for you

There are lots of options. Ko-fi, Substack and Patreon offer an all-in-one service, while sites like CampaignZee integrate with Mailchimp.

Make sure you look at what works best for you, looking at both fees and the user journey.

anxiety. Not to say I'm rolling in money, but the newsletter definitely helps."

However, as with anything, starting a newsletter does not work for everyone. As Livingston, Weiser and Totori all indicate, putting together a good-quality product is a time-consuming business, and there is no guarantee things will take off straight away.

"We don't suggest you open up your page and this will be your full income stream," adds Ellington. "It's additional, not instead of. Don't quit your job to open a Ko-fi page."

Finding an audience itself can also be tough – especially in



a crowded marketplace. "Newsletters are becoming more and more specific," explains Allen, pointing to the Washington Post's Trump impeachment newsletter. "It shows how specific it's getting. It's not just a Trump letter – you're going down three notches of niche."

While Livingston found she was easily able to entice readers, she admits this was thanks to the profile she had already built.

Then, there's the noticeable silence after you press send. Even if your newsletter has thousands of subscribers, you won't be inundated with replies.

"You know that people have read it because they've all opened it," adds Livingston. "But there's less of a feedback loop. It's rewarding on a personal level, but you aren't getting the same sort of discussion going." After all, asks Allen, when was the last time you replied to a newsletter?

However, challenges aside, subscription

newsletters offer freelance journalists a new way to diversify their income and connect with the readers in a more meaningful way.

With subscription prices varying anything between £1 and £9 a month, they're not a million miles away from packages offered by The Telegraph, The i Paper, and other national news sites. So, just what is it that makes readers willing to pay journalists directly?

"There's a qualitative difference between the idea of paying for a publication and paying to support a person," says Hamish McKenzie, a co-founder of Substack. "You don't subscribe to get content, you subscribe to a person. Really, a subscriber is paying for a newsletter that improves their life."

# A riot of colour

First sunday supplement proved to be controversial, says **Jonathan Sale**

**T**he innovation was not universally welcomed: 'suddenly, there was a scream of horror, followed by shouts of rage, followed by a clatter of dustbin lids.' When Hunter Davies shared his entertaining reminiscences at an NUJ freelance branch meeting about his career at The Sunday Times, he did not mention the morning of February 4 1962 nor the horrified old lady in the flat below his. Nor did he refer to the pair of sugar tongs with which she gingerly picked up the loathsome colour section and then dumped it in the rubbish bin.

He was seeing the reaction of many readers whose Sabbath had been ruined by the launch issue of this vulgar comic that was lurking like a cuckoo in the nest of their respectable copy of The Sunday Times. Being a reporter on the 'steam section' (as the trendy magazine staffers dismissively referred to the main, black-and-white newspaper), Davies could plead not guilty to any involvement with the gaudy newcomer; it was just as well that the lady downstairs would not have guessed that one day he would be the fourth editor of this add-on which changed the (type)face of British newspapers. The future held 12,000-word features on genocide – and articles by Jilly Cooper.

The first cover of this groundbreaking publication displayed 12 shots of model Jean Shrimpton in a Mary Quant dress taken by her boyfriend David Bailey and its contents included a Robert Carrier recipe for stewed oyster. Yet these delights did not save the day: "The Sunday Times issued an apology the following week because it was such a disaster," recalls Magnus Linklater, the third editor.

Looking back at the early copies with benefit of 10 years of hindsight, Mark Boxer wrote: "I found them curiously disappointing, safe mostly." And he had been the launch editor. The magazine lost a million pounds in its first year.

On the bright side, the readers who had cancelled were more than replaced by the

quarter of a million new readers who were drawn in by the only colour in a black-and-white Sunday world. The magazine chronicled and became a conspicuous part of the Swinging Sixties. Lord (Roy) Thomson had started it unashamedly as a vehicle for advertising and, encouraged by the fact that ads made up the 60 per cent of the pagination at then enormous rate of £3,000 per colour page, he held his nerve.

So too did the editor of the paper itself, who was known as 'the brigadier' because he was, in fact, a brigadier (well, actually a lieutenant-colonel).

George Perry, who joined a few months after the launch, pays proper credit: "Denis Hamilton was a tremendous overall editor. If readers complained, he said: 'It doesn't matter what they think – they will be enlightened. Our job is to give them what they don't know about.'"

Always a restless soul, Boxer flew the nest he had constructed after a mere three years and was replaced by Godfrey Smith, aka Godders. Hamilton moved upstairs two years later. Harry

Evans moved from The Northern Echo to The Sunday Times editorial chair. Later to be Sir Harold, he was a serious, campaigning journalist and looked askance at the louche lads and lasses of the magazine. They in turn looked to Lord Thomson, for whom they were soon making a fortune, to watch their backs.

"The golden age was in the 60s and 70s," says George Perry.

"A period of paradise," agrees Philip Norman, one of the star writers. "The magazine was completely irresponsible." In a good way, he adds: "They sent me round the world."

He once remarked when I was dropping in my freelance copy that there was a novel to be written about the goings-on at the magazine and, a quarter of a century later, he wrote it.

*Everyone's Gone to the Moon* featured in The Journalist's recent round-up of classic journo yarns. It is a wickedly humorous tale of the struggles between a young provincial journalist (like Norman, say) and his editor who bears no resemblance to, er, Evans.

"If the novel paints Harry as the villain, that's how we saw him," says Robert Lacey, who, in addition to his day job on the magazine, started work on *Majesty*, his authoritative book on the Queen. "Evans' genius lay in allowing units like

## Ideas man boxed clever

**MARK BOXER**, the editor of the inaugural issue of the first UK colour supplement, was ahead of the curve to the point of being early for his own funeral.

When he was rusticated (suspended) from Cambridge for publishing a poem in which 'God' was rhymed with 'sod', he had a mock funeral procession escorting him to the station.

Having made his name as the cartoonist 'Marc', he joined and redesigned Queen (later Harper's & Queen).

Oddly enough, he was not the first person to be appointed editor of The Sunday Times colour section (as it was called).

This was John Anstey, who took ages to come up with dummies; these were not liked and he left without producing a single issue. He later became the launch editor of the Telegraph's colour mag, so his dummies must have improved.

Lord Thomson, the proprietor of The Sunday Times, then found Boxer exactly the man to get the ball – and the presses – rolling. Boxer was an ideas

person, who got others to execute them.

"The visual image moved him," said his successor, the late Godfrey Smith, "but he appreciated good writers or 'wordies' as he liked to call them, and knew intuitively how to mix the two."

"Pencil thin, meticulously dressed, dark hair – a younger and more refined edition of Rex Harrison. He lived on the front edge of life."

Boxer's second funeral – the real one – came when he was only 57.





Looking  
back to:  
.....  
**1962**

JEFF MORGAN 02 / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



the colour mag to operate with virtual autonomy."

There may have been complaints about the magazine's generous spending policy but Lacey retorts: "I'd be defensive about expenses. The essence of finding material was to be out and about."

The most extreme example of out-and-about was when Godders took the staff on an outing to the former Yugoslavia for a feature on A Day in the Life of Sarajevo. Not a word was published.

"The pictures weren't very good," explains art director Michael Rand and, if the art director didn't like it, it didn't go in. What did go in was the work of brilliant photographers. Lord Snowdon would drop in with his classic portraits. Also in the stable of sensational snappers was Don McCullin, whose early photo feature on the Vietnam war had a tremendous impact.

Photographs could be used with jocular effect, as in Boxer's crime issue, his last. "There was an extraordinary cover of the Duke of Bedford in a stocking mask and a caption inside asking readers if they could recognise who it was," marvels former deputy editor Peter Crookston. Inside was a handy, step-by-step guide for readers on how to blow a safe.

When Godfrey Smith took over from Boxer, he instituted a strict regime of enormous lunches. "Sumptuous game pies and ideas would flow, sometimes 50 or 60," reminisces Perry. Ideas, that is, not pies.

"I never really wanted to go on holiday," says Suzanne Hodgart, a long-time staff member who kept the show on the road. "It was so much fun."

There was particular fun when Godders read out Evans's memos, generally about useful subjects such as teeth cleaning, in a Northern accent, then dismiss them with "f\*\*\* off".

These editorial skirmishes ceased when, after seven years, Godfrey was hauled off to the steam section. Magnus Linklater, who was later to edit The Scotsman, replaced him. Linklater soon discovered £80,000-worth of unpublished articles.

"I was supposed to be sorting out all those 'pansies' but they were such a brilliant, brilliant lot of people doing brilliant things. The accusation against me was that I went native."

"Within a week," agrees Norman.

The task of Hunter Davies, who followed Linklater, was to lay down the law. After he had left, he said, "I didn't enjoy my spell as editor," so he probably succeeded. Let's hope the lady downstairs was now happy.

Full disclosure. The copy I dropped in was a *Which?*-style guide to prisons. In *Everyone's Gone to the Moon*, the commissioning of a *Good Nick Guide* is one of the dodgy ideas that leads to the sacking of the magazine editor. In real life, my feature was killed off by the Home Office. However, it was nice to have played my part in the £80,000 overmatter bill.



# Paste-up poli

## Phil Chamberlain is helping to map the heyday of the alternative press

**I**t was September 1975 and a young Tony Harcup had arrived in Leeds. “I picked up a copy of Leeds Other Paper in a newsagent. Its 18 scrappily designed A4 pages contained an alternative selection of stories and attitudes. I knew I wanted to be involved.”

Harcup, an NUJ life member and journalism lecturer at the University of Sheffield, was just one of thousands of people involved in a relatively short but intense burst of radical media activity that started around the time of the Grosvenor Square demonstrations against the Vietnam war in London in 1968 and continued until the fall of Thatcher in 1990.

A project from the University of the West of England (UWE) is mapping the regional radical newspapers in that period and interviewing participants. It has identified more than 220 publications, some of which have not been archived and many not analysed.

The major cities had a dozen each over the period, often covering specific districts, with London boasting close to 40. No part of the country was untouched. From the Waveney Clarion in East Anglia to Mother’s Grumble in the north-east, Yorkshire’s Cleck Hooter, the Pack-O-Lies in Liverpool, the Smoke and Whispers in Somerset, the Cwmbran Checkpoint, Belfast’s Resource, the Fapto in Margate and the Torry Citizen in Aberdeen.

Some burned brightly but only for a few, infrequently produced issues. Others ran for years, were published regularly and seriously challenged the established media. Leeds Other Paper and the Rochdale Alternative Paper are among the best known, breaking major stories and piloting the use of listings and arts coverage to draw in readers.

Earlier this year, contributors from a dozen of these publications met in Bristol as part of the UWE project. Copies were pored over and a tin of Cow Gum reverentially passed around.

Pat Tookey from Bush News in west London was involved. “We recognised the local press was hopeless and we didn’t want the SWP [Socialist Workers Party] press,” she said. “There were lots of local issues like strikes and we realised we had the ability to do it. A lot of us were squatting and had just left university or were working part time or fallen in with a crowd with people we had met. None of us had children and we could afford to it.”

The growth of the alternative press related to activity around squatting, community associations, print shops and book shops. Oxford’s Back Street Bugle began life at the Uhuru Cafe on the Cowley Road. Ned Gate in London’s

Notting Hill would not have happened without the local Crest Press printing collective.

Bruce Wilkinson, who had reported for Reuters from Algeria, worked on the Swindon Free Press: “Because I had a flat and because I had previous experience, I effectively took it over. There was no editorial policy – every meeting was open to everyone but preferably if they could bring us something and do something.”

Steve Poole, now a history professor at UWE, worked on the Bath Spark. “Spark had no professional journalists – I was probably the nearest we came to that with my NCTJ certificate from Portsmouth Tech.”

Many, like Leeds Other Paper, had a written manifesto, while Billy Ridge from Ned Gate said the editorial strategy was simply ‘provoking anger’. This might not have been a slick approach but it quickly found a wealth of stories.

Hedley Bashforth from Bristol Voice said that, as with many others, housing was a regular feature. “Stories about squats, campaigns and challenges to the market, such as the Self-Help Community Housing Association,” he said. “For example, in 1981, the Voice was handed a list of the first 15 houses in Bristol to be

Below: Pat Tookey



## Read and write about radical press

**THE UNIVERSITY** of the West of England’s research project into the regional radical press has a blog site at <https://radpresshistory.wordpress.com/>.

You can read posts from people involved and there is a map of the newspapers uncovered so far.

Archives are held in various places including the MayDay Rooms in London, the Working Class Movement Library in Manchester and the University of Brighton.

You can follow the project on twitter @RegionRadPress and its authors are myself @philchamberlain, from the University of Bath, and

@RegionalHistory, from the University of the West of England, and Dr Jess Baines from the London College of Communication.

They are always interested in hearing from people who were involved and have them contribute posts.

### A look back

The literature on this period is relatively small. Tony Harcup’s Alternative Journalism, Alternative Voices is a good start by the former Leeds Other Paper journalist.

Chris Atton’s Alternative Media and John Downing’s Radical Media: the Political

Experience of Self-managed Communication are more academic approaches but very readable.

Contemporary accounts can be found in the Minority Press Group pamphlets including Here is the Other News by Crispin Aubrey and News Limited: Why You Can’t Read All About It by Brian Whitaker.

Other histories include Robert Dickinson’s Imprinting the Sticks; John Spiers’ The Underground and Alternative Press, and Nigel Fountain’s Underground: the London Alternative Press 1966-74.

For a critique on how alternative papers were run, try What a Way to Run a Railroad by Charles Landry, David Morley, Russell Southwood and Patrick Wright.



# tics

sold under the Tories' right to buy legislation. The Voice article showed that the houses most likely to be sold off were the better-quality, higher-value ones, leaving the council with a smaller stock of lower-quality dwellings."

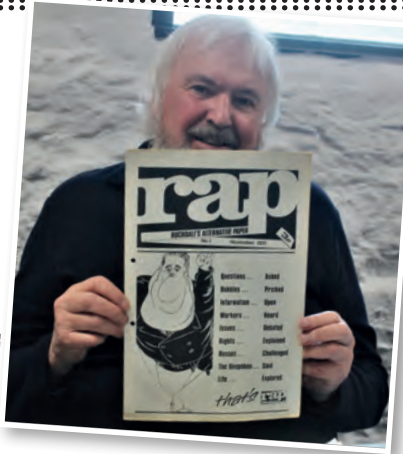
The Metro News in Bury had an astonishing run of stories picked up by the national media. One was a scandal caused by skin-whitening soap produced by a local factory. Co-editor Sue Ashby said: "Women working in the factory were having miscarriages caused by mercury poisoning." The News was alerted by a community medicine group that they were in contact with. The story was picked up by Newsnight and the factory was eventually closed down.

Famously, the Rochdale Alternative Paper exposed Cyril Smith many years before the rest of Fleet Street (and the political establishment) caught up. The Cardiff People's Paper got a huge city-centre redevelopment stopped.

Other successes were more idiosyncratic. Oxford's Kevin Eady said: "The Bugle's greatest coup was to get the now-renowned graphic novelist Alan Moore to contribute. He turned up one Saturday morning with the first edition of St Pancras Panda, loosely inspired by Paddington Bear, which became an irregular comic strip in the paper."

Many of the papers were especially keen to tackle racism and promote feminism. There was also a general suspicion of the state being secretive. The ABC trial\*, the activities of the

STEVE POOLE



Left: John Walker

Special Branch and preparations for nuclear war were all covered, generating interest by the state in return. There were suspicions of phone tapping and that union members in the Post Office would refuse to do that sort of work. Alex Bird from Cardiff said: "The phone would go tinkle tinkle and then it would go dead. Most of the Post Office union members refused to work on particular telephones so we always had the same engineer come to fix it."

Radical publications have been around since the advent of printing and have flourished at different times. Publications such as Oz and Private Eye and their US counterparts showed what could be achieved. Other national title included Spare Rib, The Leveller and numerous music zines.

Then, around the end of the Cold War, most of the regional radical press folded. Some morphed into other publications or, eventually, migrated online.

Julie Thorpe from Leeds Other Paper says: "I'm not sure it was exhaustion – people just found other ways of doing things."

John Walker from the Rochdale Alternative Press says there is much to celebrate from that period: "The alternative press was one of the many influences that have led to pressures on the mainstream media to take marginal issues much more seriously – gay rights, feminism, antiracism."

Since then, a lot of activity has moved online with hyperlocal journalism making a return. It appears that new generations have had to relearn the lessons of those who worked in the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps it is time for a rediscovery.

*\*In the ABC Trial in 1977-78 the Labour Government employed the Official Secrets Act to try to stop the press investigating the State's surveillance activities.'*

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**The alternative press was one influence that led to the mainstream media taking marginal issues much more seriously**

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# Cracking the 'class

**Holly Powell-Jones** looks at how some barriers to journalism are being broken down

**C**an you remember the most invaluable advice you were given back when you started out in journalism? Was it to keep a little black book of all your contacts? Maybe it was always to pitch to a named individual. Or perhaps something as basic as 'wear comfy shoes' (a lifesaver when I was running across London as a young TV reporter). There's a proud history of insider knowledge among journalism professionals, which, most of the time, most of us are very happy to share.

Given the speed and ease of access afforded by social media, plus the fact that media technologies are becoming more accessible, you'd be forgiven for thinking it's easier than ever for the next generation of broadcasters to get a foot in the door. But this isn't always the case.

BBC Two's *How to Break Into the Elite* with Amol Rajan revealed how hard work, qualifications and talent are not enough to secure graduates a top job these days, including in the media. Similarly, Ofcom's *Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Radio* report highlights the continuing under-representation of people from ethnic minorities (seven per cent, compared with 12 per cent UK working average), people with disabilities (six per cent, compared with 18 per cent UK working average), and women in senior positions. Then there is the thorny issue of the British class system.

When researching their book *The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged*, sociologists Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison conducted 175 in-depth interviews with people in four elite occupations, including television broadcasting. They investigated not only opportunities to gain access to these professions but also career progression within them. They identify four key factors that contribute to inequalities, the first of which is the so-called Bank of Mum and Dad. Essentially, this is the financial security that allows new journalists to take on unpaid or unpredictable work at media employers. Without this, the chances of breaking into the industry are massively hindered.

This is where organisations such as PressPad can come in handy. They match journalism interns with London-based 'host mentors' who have a spare room, effectively allowing them to live rent free in the capital during a placement. It was set up in 2018, after founder Olivia Crellin reflected on her own experiences and early career. Despite her (acknowledged) privilege, the cost of getting started in London was so high that she decided instead to move to South America to gain reporting experience. PressPad boasts 100 hosts on its books, and is developing an Airbnb-style web platform. As well as offering obvious practical and financial benefits to young

journalists, the social enterprise has a broader aim of trying to level the playing field within the industry itself.

"At the end of the day, that's not a charitable mission – it's a business imperative and it's also a demographic imperative," Crellin explains. While it is satisfying to help individuals, she says, PressPad is also trying to change the culture of the journalism community: "We have some really high-profile hosts – some of the top editors and senior journalists in our industry. Where else would they meet a 19-year-old, working-class, white girl who has been on free school meals? They wouldn't! The real thing is – it's a two-way street."

It is easy to become disillusioned when a steady stream of data shows the persistence of inequalities in our industry. I wonder if schemes like this could be viewed as threatening by those who benefit from structural privilege. Crellin is careful not to point the finger, saying that, if we want change, we have to get everyone on board: "There can be a bit of backlash from white, middle-class men, feeling the whole kind of 'pale, stale, male' thing. It is a problem, but I think the solution isn't to demonise them, to isolate them... We're trying to say, 'You don't have to be labelled as part of the problem: you can become part of the solution.'"

Mentoring is a huge part of the process, too. She explains it is important to place interns with hosts who do not work in the same organisations as their placement. This allows

## Seeing a world you couldn't see before

**Deborah Shorindè, an audio producer:** "When done properly and genuinely, mentoring is extremely transformational and necessary..."

"To invite you into conversations that you're left out of because you don't usually have access to these, because you are young, because you are black, or because you're a woman, and just elevating you, so that you can see a world that maybe you couldn't see before – I think that's what's really amazing about it."

"When you see people like you do really well, who care

about you or care about your vision do really well and want to support you, you start to believe things that you never imagined were possible."

**Zahrah Ali, 17, a sixth former:** "Being mentored holds so much sentimental and practical value for me. The thought of attending an audition or applying to a top university felt beyond me. But now I finally feel capable of achieving whatever I want to."

"It is really reassuring to hear from someone who is not a family member or a

friend to remind you of the skills and experience that you already possess, especially from a professional who is well established in their career."

**Eshan Puri, a graduate:** "Having someone who is a part of the industry I am aiming to enter immediately captured my interest – it makes everything we talk about relevant, and their experience genuinely useful."

"One thing I found as a student was that finding people you are able to connect with and who have had a similar experience or journey as you is difficult. Being matched with someone who has faced those challenges before is invaluable."



# s ceiling'

meaningful social conversations to unfold at home, without fear of being judged in a professional context.

The definition of mentoring is quite elusive, as it is often used interchangeably with terms such as coaching, advising or sponsoring. Chances are that if you work in news, then you will have benefited at some point from a mentor – even if the relationship was not defined in that way.

Neil Griffiths, co-founder of mentoring charity Arts Emergency, says mentoring should be focused towards helping people achieve specific outcomes: “You have to have an end point, otherwise you’re not mentoring – you’re just hanging out. It also has to be really personal.”

The charity prides itself on arranging personalised mentoring experiences. Teenagers are interviewed and carefully matched with a mentor in industry, who attends a brief training session before supporting a young person for up to eight years. Griffiths started Arts Emergency with the comedian Josie Long in 2011, when it helped eight students in Hackney. Today, it supports more than 500 people across the UK.

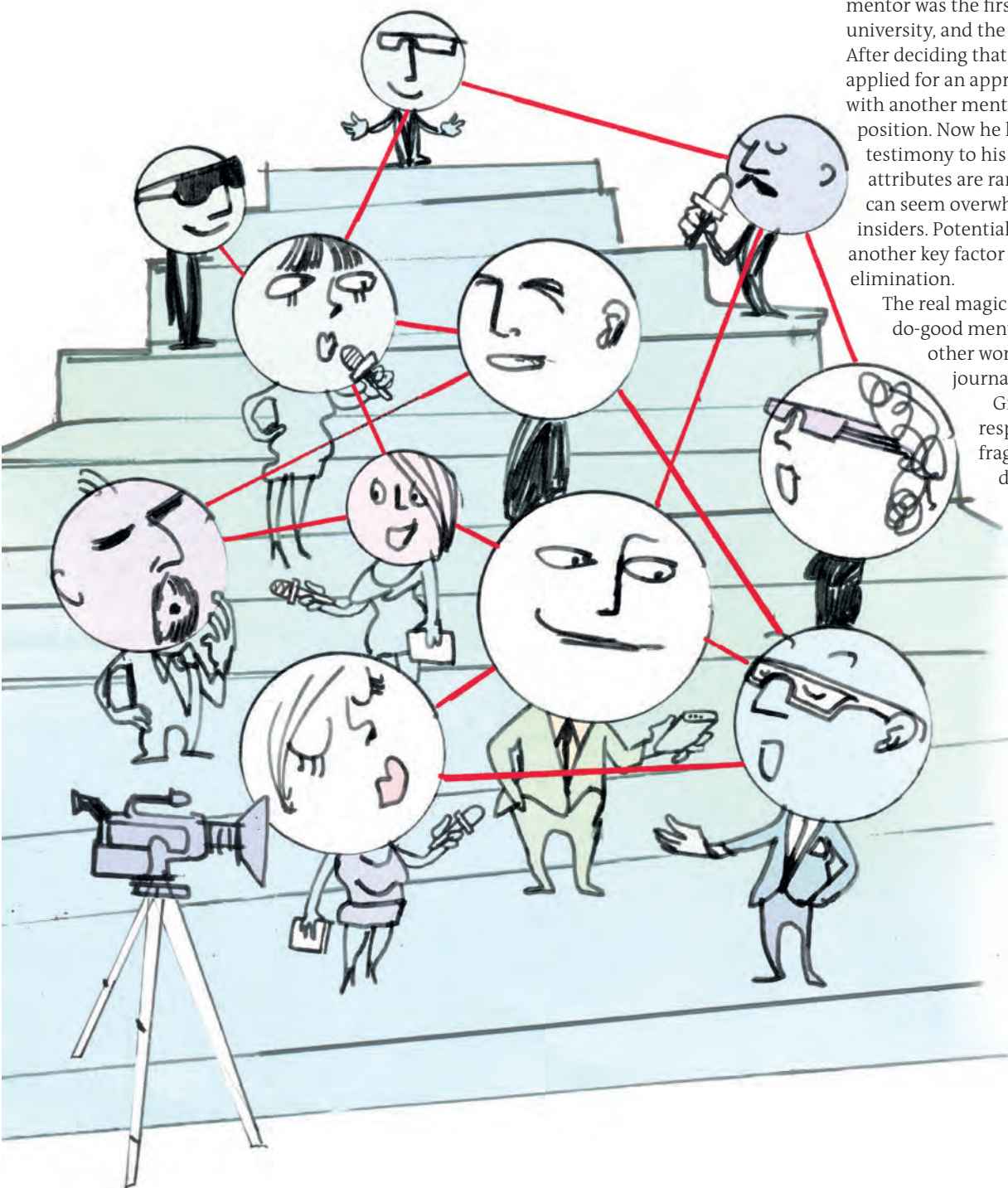
He tells the story of a 15-year-old boy who lived in the north east and was matched with someone in Leeds. His mentor was the first person he had ever met who had been to university, and the contact helped to demystify journalism. After deciding that higher education was not for him, he applied for an apprenticeship with Sky, and was put in touch with another mentor in London when he achieved that position. Now he has a career as a digital producer, which is testimony to his focus and talent. However, these attributes are rarely enough; the various steps to success can seem overwhelming with no support from industry insiders. Potentially professionals have the power to counter another key factor affecting inequalities, which is self-elimination.

The real magic of mentoring comes not from some do-good mentality but from passion for the job. In other words, it is from people who care about journalism and feel lucky to do it for a living.

Griffiths says: “It isn’t forced as corporate responsibility, or built on the foundations of a fragile, ethical obligation, or the bottom-line desire to diversify in order to reach new markets. It’s just people sharing the joy for what they do.” Ultimately, you’re in TV because you love TV, or radio because you love radio.

Above all, a journalistic natural curiosity makes mentoring extremely rewarding, as it involves meeting people and sharing new experiences. Crellin argues that good journalists should always be open to challenging themselves. Her message to those who are curious about hosting an intern? Give it a try. Griffiths adds that spending time with young people can be immensely restorative: their hope and optimism is life affirming. “Not in a patronising sense,” he quickly adds. “It just washes away all of the rubbish.” For journalists feeling world weary of the news media right now, it might be just the antidote.

**To find out how to get involved,  
visit: [PressPad.co.uk](http://PressPad.co.uk)  
[Arts-emergency.org](http://Arts-emergency.org)**



# Three women making changes in the media



Sex equality case may show value of news, says **Raymond Snoddy**

**T**his is a tale of three strong women of the media – two journalists and one advertising executive – and what their different stories say about how far we have reached in the battle for sex equality.

By coincidence, all three were making headlines of differing size and volume at around the same time.

The most eye-catching news was the announcement by Financial Times editor Lionel Barber on Twitter that he would be handing over to the first woman editor in the paper's 131-year history in the new year.

Lebanese-born Roula Khalaf is at the moment deputy editor of the FT and a former Middle East and foreign editor.

A few old hands could be heard spluttering into their bitter that "she knows nothing about the City".

But what was remarkable was that the appointment was seen as, if not inevitable, certainly nothing unusual.

If Khalaf had been deemed unsuitable because of perceived gaps in her journalist armoury, it would still not have changed the gender balance or the historic moment.

Many people's favourite for the top FT job was another women, award-winning journalist Gillian Tett, who famously warned of the dangers to the world economy of increasingly obscure financial derivatives.

There is still some way to go. Khalaf will join a small, still outnumbered group of female national editors – Kath Viner of the Guardian, Alison Phillips of the Daily Mirror and Victoria Newton of the Sun on Sunday. But progress at least.

On the same day, Tracy De Groose, executive chair of Newsworks, was appealing to the newspaper industry – publishers of news brands as she has it – to start reclaiming some of the £1 billion in ad revenue they have allowed to leach away to rivals over the past decade.

For De Groose, they have been selling the wrong product – advertising space instead of their journalism and the trust it attracts.

The former adland boss emphasised at the Society of Editors' conference how people's trust in news brands has risen from 48 per cent in 2017 to 60 per cent this year, according to Edelman, which regularly monitors such matters.

However, trust in the social media is around 29 per cent while trust in advertising, according to the Advertising Association, has fallen from 50 per cent to 25 per cent – an all-time low.

De Groose has just begun her campaign to persuade news brands to start reclaiming some of the revenue that should rightfully be theirs by emphasising their reach across both print and digital – no fewer than 44 million people a week in the UK.

Expect to hear a lot more from Tracy De Groose next year.

The most problematical of the three stories about prominent women is the long and complicated sex discrimination case taken by Samira Ahmed, with the support of the NUJ, to an equal pay employment tribunal.

On the most simplistic level, Ahmed has a small problem. As presenter of Newswatch, the BBC's accountability programme, Ahmed was paid the same £440 fee as her predecessor – me.

There was a subsidiary argument

that, as a long-experienced and more famous broadcaster, she was worth more than this mere newspaper reporter. Perhaps – but that only takes us so far.

The heart of the matter is that Ahmed was paid £440 for a 15-minute programme while Jeremy Vine was paid nearly seven times as much for many years for presenting Points of View, a programme of equal length.

Ahmed is claiming nearly £700,000 in compensation.

She can claim, with considerable justice, that Newswatch can be a difficult and challenging programme while Vine, also a serious professional journalist, was presenting a light-hearted programme that was classified as entertainment.

Rather laughably, the BBC is relying on the very fact that Points of View was light entertainment to justify the huge disparity and that Vine had the remarkable skill of being able to roll his eyes in a convincing way.

Samira Ahmed deserves compensation. The gap is too large to justify. How much that should be is difficult to assess.

A lot of other cases could depend on the outcome and the very pursuit of the case, whatever the decision, could help change attitudes and encourage a better pay balance between the sexes in future in broadcasting.

But perhaps the biggest story of all is that the Samira Ahmed case could lead to something that goes beyond sex equality or even the achievements of Khalaf and De Groose.

It could help to rebalance the relative value put on serious news compared to light entertainment. That really would be worth fighting for.

**“Newswatch can be a difficult programme while Vine was presenting a programme classified as entertainment”**



**What made you become a journalist?**

I wasn't good enough to be an actor. Journalism naturally followed as a way of telling stories. Foreign correspondents get to tell the most exciting stories. My late sister had Down's syndrome: in retrospect, journalism was a way of standing up for people like her.

**What other job might you have done/have you done?**

My first proper job was looking after waxworks at the Windsor branch of Madame Tussauds. I've been grateful for colleagues who can converse ever since. After university, I made tea for John Simpson, Jeremy Bowen and David Shukman at the BBC.

**When did you join the NUJ and why?**

I joined while I was a BBC news trainee in the 1980s and made friends on a picket line soon afterwards. I left once, but my belief in collective bargaining at ITN brought me back.

**Are many of your friends in the union?**

Many of my friends at Channel 4 News are. I'm also a proud member of the West London Trades Union Club. I went to the bar once and there was a man in a military beret mourning the death of Hugo Chavez. I love encounters like that.

**What's been the best moment in your career?**

Witnessing the Arab Spring revolutions in Tunis and Cairo



# NUJ & Me

**Jonathan Rugman** is a BAFTA-winning foreign affairs correspondent for Channel 4 News

in 2011. Being an eyewitness to history is of course an enormous privilege.

**What is the worst place you've ever worked in?**

I saw a lot of dead people after the Haiti earthquake – so Haiti.

**And the best?**

I love working in France and Turkey.

The people are charming and infuriating in equal measure and the food is good.

**What advice would you give someone starting in journalism?**

Ask yourself if you really want to tell stories. If you are not prepared to be persistent, don't do it.

**Who is your biggest hero?**

Charles Dickens. The epitome of a journalist and campaigner who became a novelist.

**And villain?**

Any world leader taking their country backwards. I can think of far too many at the moment.

**Which six people would you invite to a dinner party?**

Diane Keaton, Atatürk, Audrey Hepburn, Nelson Mandela, Frankie Howerd and Rosamund Pike.

**What was your earliest political thought?**

That if you don't speak up for the vulnerable, nobody else will.

**What are your hopes for journalism over the next five years?**

That local news survives and that many people who claim to be journalists get some training.

**And fears?**

That it becomes a desert inhabited by a few centres of excellence, allowing the powerful to get away with it.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

As a father who loved his family and knew how to tell a story.

*The Killing in the Consulate: Investigating the Life and Death of Jamal Khashoggi* by Jonathan Rugman is published by Simon & Schuster

# arts with attitude

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

For listings email: [arts@NUJ.org.uk](mailto:arts@NUJ.org.uk)

## Film

### Two-tone meets Combat Frock



#### Singer-songwriter Emily Capell doesn't mind being 'Billy Bragged'.

The 23-year-old Londoner has been busy recently, releasing her debut album - the wittily titled Clash-inspired *Combat Frock* - touring with two-tone legends *The Selecter* and announcing a headline solo tour.

The album follows three provocatively titled EPs, *Who Killed Smiley Culture?*, *Who Framed Winston Silcott?* and *Who Stands with Latasha Harlins?*

"I have no idea how to describe my music," she tells Arts with Attitude. "I start off country, then I go ska, I really like doo wop and Kirsty MacColl. People say it's like London, very multicultural, and I agree with that because there's a bit of everything in it. I know that's the naffest answer ever, but you really can't put my music in a box."

You can put her politics in a box, though, because it runs in her family: her mother works for a union, her uncle was a blacklisted builder and her parents were active in the miners' strike, the printers' strike and the poll tax demonstrations.

"There's definitely room for politics in music today but it's hard

because you don't want to ram it down people's throats," she says. "And if you do, you get Billy Bragged straight away - which is great for me - but it's not what everyone wants."

She started young, playing her first gig aged 14, and has worked hard for her success.

"I was quite happy supporting, singing other people's stuff, going out whenever," she says, "but an album's a bit scary because what if no one buys it? What if my nan buys every copy?"

She looks back: "I had a million jobs when I left school. I've worked as a teacher, as a customer care assistant, a baker.

"I had a residency at the Dublin Castle in Camden Town while working as a baker, so I'd play a gig, drive home for 1.30am, my alarm would go at five, I'd have to put a hairnet on and when you have a beehive it's an absolute nightmare. It was horrendous. And I was a rubbish baker, burning everything.

"I wouldn't say I was exploited because it gave me a lot of opportunities, but it was very, very hard work."

[www.emilycapell.co.uk](http://www.emilycapell.co.uk)



by **Tim Lezard**

#### Xmas book special

##### **The Killing in the Consulate**

Jonathan Rugman

Channel 4's BAFTA award-winning foreign affairs correspondent and NUJ member pieces together the last moments of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Khashoggi was filmed going in to the Saudi consulate in Turkey and was never seen alive again. In this brilliantly written book, Rugman reveals the context behind the murder and attempted cover-up.

<http://tinyurl.com/y5twy657>

#### **Motherwell**

Deborah Orr

This childhood memoir by former Independent and Guardian columnist Deborah Orr is to be published posthumously in January. She tragically died of cancer in October.

Well-known for being fearless and outspoken, she writes about her Scottish working-class upbringing in council flats and, interestingly, what the decision to leave cost her.

<http://tinyurl.com/y2nqpas3>

#### **The Dance of Death**

Martin Rowson

NUJ member and Guardian cartoonist Martin Rowson updates Holbein's classic series of woodcuts to bring a contemporary corrupt and callous elite crashing down to earth with thoughts of their own mortality.

We are treated to vicious 'engravings' of Paul Dacre, Richard Desmond, Robin Day and, my favourite, Rupert Murdoch - "Death knows why the rat swarms, but worms! You know who'll feed ya? He

who controls all platforms in all available media."

<https://selfmadehero.com/books/the-dance-of-death>

#### **Our Mary**

John Callow

Telling the extraordinary story of Mary Turner (1938-2017), the Brent dinner lady and trade union activist who rose to become president of the GMB union and chair of the Labour Party, this lavish coffee table book is a fitting memorial to a brilliant woman.

[www.lwbooks.co.uk/book/our-mary](http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/book/our-mary)

#### **Sammy**

Vince Gledhill

NUJ life member Vince Gledhill delves into his cuttings book to inform his novel of northern England in 1910.

You can reminisce about typewriters that go 'thuck, thuck' because they have three layers of copy paper separated by two sheets of carbon in them, and the hooks, ticks and swirls of classic Pitman's shorthand.

And - if you want proof it's fictional - Gledhill also refers to newspaper branch offices, staffed by reporters born on the patch who know it inside out.

[www.books2read.com/Sammy](http://www.books2read.com/Sammy)

#### **Corbynism from Below**

Edited by Mark Perryman

The co-founder of Philosophy Football brings together a diverse range of thinkers, writers and activists - Neal Lawson, Lindsey German, James





Meadway and Hilary Wainwright among them – to explore how a bottom-up Labour campaign can beat the rising tide of right-wing populism.

[www.lwbooks.co.uk/book/corbynism-from-below](http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/book/corbynism-from-below)

## Film

### **A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood**

In cinemas nationwide

Based (loosely) on an encounter between award-winning US magazine writer Tom Junod and TV icon Fred Rogers, this film looks at how the cynical journalist's perspective on life changes after begrudgingly accepting a commission to write an Esquire profile of the eternally positive Rogers. An example, perhaps, of how journalists' work can change their own lives as well as those of others.

[www.abeautifulday.movie](http://www.abeautifulday.movie)

## Bombshell

In cinemas nationwide from January 24

A-listers Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman and Margot Robbie star in this hard-hitting look at sexual allegations made against Fox News founder and CEO Roger Ailes, and how the company reacted to the scandal. Ailes resigned from Fox in 2016, receiving a £40m pay-off. He continued to advise Rupert Murdoch until his death the following year.

<https://bombshell.movie>

## Exhibitions

### **Turner Prize.19**

Rendezvous, Margate  
Until January 12

Every other year, the Turner Prize leaves Tate Britain for a venue outside



## Book

# A tribute to young lives lost in the Troubles

In *Children of the Troubles*, NUJ members Joe Duffy and Freya McClements reach across the Irish border and beyond to acknowledge and pay tribute to young lives lost.

From the teenage striker who scored two goals in a Belfast schools cup final, to the aspiring architect who promised to build his mother a house, to the five-year-old girl who wrote in her copy book on the day she died, "I am a good girl. I talk to God", *Children of the Troubles* recounts the previously untold stories of Northern Ireland's lost children and those who died in the Republic, the UK and as far afield as

West Germany – and the lives that might have been.

Based on original interviews with almost 100 families as well as extensive archival research, the book includes the stories of many children who have never been publicly acknowledged as victims of the Troubles, and draws a compelling social and cultural picture of the era.

These children were much loved, and are deeply mourned and will never be forgotten. *Children of the Troubles* describes itself as both an acknowledgement of and a tribute to young people who lost their lives.



*Children of the Troubles* is published by Hatchette. <http://tinyurl.com/y6ccpes4>

London. Four exciting contemporary artists are shortlisted to win the prize, based on an outstanding exhibition from the previous year. This year's finalists are Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Helen Cammock, Oscar Murillo and Tai Shani.

[turnercontemporary.org/whats-on/turner-prize-2019/](http://turnercontemporary.org/whats-on/turner-prize-2019/)

### **Among The Polar Ice** **The McManus, Dundee** **Until March 8**

The most fragile landscapes on earth are the subject of this new exhibition, bringing together contemporary and historic works by artists who have experienced life on the ice. It features lantern slides, drawings and watercolour sketches by William Burn Murdoch, who accompanied William Spiers Bruce on the Dundee Antarctic

Whaling Expedition in 1892.

[www.mcmanus.co.uk/content/news/among-polar-ice](http://www.mcmanus.co.uk/content/news/among-polar-ice)

## Comedy

### **Arabella Weir – Does My Mum Loom Big In This?**

On tour until April

Described as "the mother of all confessional shows" from author, Independent and Guardian columnist and TV star, this show is for everyone who's had a mother or been a mother. And, yes, the name is a reference to her book *Does My Bum Look Big In This?*

[www.berksnest.com/arabella-weir](http://www.berksnest.com/arabella-weir)

### **Darren Harriott – Good Heart Yute**

On tour until February

Darren Harriott is 30 years old, has never been in love and wants to know why. He's embarking on a tour to learn more about himself – and to

discover if he actually likes himself. <https://darrenharriott.com>

## Theatre

### **Be More Chill**

The Other Palace  
From February 12

This musical splashes into London after making waves in Broadway. An atypical love story about a guy, a girl and the supercomputer in the guy's head, it claims to be full of addictive earworms.

[www.bemorechillmusical.com](http://www.bemorechillmusical.com)

### **Drama at Inish**

Abbey Theatre, Dublin  
Until January 24

Director Cal McCrystal brings this 1933 comedy to the Abbey Theatre. A small seaside town in Ireland hits the headlines after the De La Mare Repertory Theatre Company arrives.

<http://tinyurl.com/y2d7rtep>

## Spotlight

# Strong words meet ferocious energy

Bristol-based band Idles wear their politics and their emotions on their sleeves.

Whether it's Danny Nedelko, about immigration ("Fear leads to panic, panic

leads to pain, pain leads to anger, anger leads to hate"), feminist anthem Mother ("Men are scared women will laugh in their face, whereas women are scared it's their lives men will take"), a

haunting tune about a stillborn child ("Baby shoes for sale, never worn") or Samaritans about toxic masculinity ("This is why you never see your father cry"), they don't hold back.

Fresh from a sold-out tour, they've released their first live album, which captures their ferocious energy.

"That tour was nothing short of catharsis," says singer Joe Talbot.

[www.idlesband.com](http://www.idlesband.com)





# Your Say...

inviting letters, comments, tweets



Please keep comments to 200 words maximum

Email to: [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)  
Post to: The Journalist, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB  
Tweet to: @mschrisbuckley

£30 prize letter



HARRY MALT

## Too much information!

Having cast my vote for the editorship of The Journalist, I have to tell you - the new or current editor - how dismayed I am by the process.

I refer to the list of candidates - my biggest gripe being the length of candidates' statements. I mean, who cares that Joanna Bloggs passed geography O-level in 1983? We were subjected to screeds of rambling, irrelevant waffle - and this from professionals who surely know how to sub-edit!

It's a clear case of too much information amounting to disinformation, just like those 'terms and conditions' that no one bothers to read. As I waded my way through, I had succumbed to fatigue by the time I reached those unfortunate enough to be listed last.

And that's another thing: listing candidates in alphabetical order confers an unconscious advantage on those listed first. The same applies to those with photo headshots versus those without.

My suggestion? Insist on headshots for either all or none of the candidates. List them all on one page to reduce alphabetical order bias. And do like the letters pages: restrict statements to a maximum 200 words.

**Paul Gould**  
Brighton (in less than 200 words)

## Live where you work to get decent local stories

Gary Baker's comparison of local newspaper reporters and people who commute to work in London is interesting (Letters, October/November).

Being a reporter is not like working in an office in London after a commute from the home counties.

Of course, you can do the job after an hour's commute, setting aside the fatigue that such commuting would entail.

But, to be frank, as a local reporter with 30 years' experience, you are much more likely to get a steady flow of decent off-diary stories by living on the patch 'so you can go to the pub and get nuggets of stories'.

**Andrew Napier**  
Southampton branch

## I'd drink to a community paper, not a content farm

In response to Gary Baker's letter ('How far is too far away to work on a local paper?', Letters, October/November), I must admit it's pleasing to hear of a publication still evidently at the heart of its community, rather than being produced from a 'content farm' miles away.

As for visiting the pub to pick up stories, I'm not sure they attract the wide section of society they once did, but perhaps if Gary wants to make the effort, his editor could buy him a few pints?

**Owen Ralph**  
Manchester

## All hail Skibbereen's Southern Star newspaper

I can't be the only journalist who on holiday always picks up the local paper.

I have become a fan of Skibbereen's Southern Star. This week it was a house ad that struck me, the simple message: 'West Cork's Social Media For 130 Years'. That tag should be echoed in all proud locals.

As a crusty old life member I no doubt display 'they ain't like what they used to be' syndrome.

The Southern Star is a paper like what they used to be. Forty four broadsheet pages stuffed with local news. It's strength I would guess is from a nurtured army of local correspondents who are the backbone to local journalism. God bless 'em and preserve 'em. It's the same for the sports coverage. A 16-page tabloid supplement covers the county's many sports. I weep at my local's patchy and thin sports coverage where it's obvious the club honorary secretaries and

organisers haven't been nurtured.

I guess our Irish members know the weekly but I urge the suits at Reach, Archant and Newsquest to jump on a plane and find out just what the successful Star is doing right.

**Jeff Wright**  
Hampshire

## Pub beats press releases

I can sympathise with my friend and former colleague Gary Baker (How far is too far away to work on a local paper? Letters, October/November), but he should at least take some comfort from the fact that he has an editor who still recognises the importance of picking up stories in the local pub, not from council press releases.

**Graham Snowden**  
Life Member  
Sheffield

## Cuttings are invaluable records of local history

Conrad Landin's piece on the 'dying art of clipping newspaper articles' was timely, (Death of a thousand cuttings, (October/November 2019)).

Like Conrad, I am an inveterate clipper of press stories, not least to have easy retrieval of cuttings in one place relating to the same story. Also like Conrad, I end up with envelope after envelope loaded with cuttings that have become obsolescent. The key task is to be ruthless in disposing of such envelopes to make room for the next story.

There is another key aspect to the importance of cuttings: the rescuing and availability of historic cuttings files. With the demise of so many local and regional newspapers, their libraries are often thrown out, together with their cuttings files painstakingly assembled over many decades. These are vital records of local history and are invaluable to journalists and other writers needing to research the background to a story.

The Yorkshire Post cuttings files go back to around 1910 and are virtually intact. They are safeguarded by the



paper's photo editor who is well aware of their importance. The problem will come when he retires or leaves the paper.

A few years ago, NUJ members in Leeds began a project to safeguard the abandoned newspaper cuttings files more urgently, to do this before newspapers closed – but it became too difficult.

Perhaps it would be possible to gather a wider group of members to develop an early warning system to prevent future journalistic vandalism.

**Michael Meadowcroft**  
Leeds Branch

### A day in court then a night on the town, sort of

I was naturally sorry to read Lionel Barlow's obituary (October/November), but delighted that he had lived to the good age of 101, still with a glass in his hand.

Lionel, along with a handful of colleagues from the PA Law Service, had another string to his bow, which the writer of his obituary didn't mention.

In the 1960s, I worked in the RAC press office in Pall Mall. After a day's work at the law courts, instead of catching a train home to Kent, Lionel would do a night shift as duty press officer. We probably paid a pittance, but the perks of the job included a slap-up meal next door in the members' dining room, a good night's sleep (if the phone didn't ring) on a hideaway bed in the office and a full English breakfast before heading back

to 85 Fleet Street to start a new day.

**Graham Snowden**  
Life member  
Sheffield

### Too many on Tunis trip

Regarding 'How Could the NUJ afford to send seven on Tunis trip?' (Letters, October/November), I find the response from our general secretary vague to say the least. One good delegate from the NUJ should have been sufficient...

**Eddie Johnson**  
Life member  
Middlesbrough

### Journalism fails public duties over Brexit

I hope no member of the general public read Chris Proctor's column about Brexit (Great Brexit buffet proves to be a feast, July/August). They might imagine that all journalists are facetious and cynical.

He is right that Brexit has been good for journalism but fails to extend this to the next, dangerous thought.

Journalists are not innocent, objective bystanders in the political system whose function is to mock politicians and relay every little Twitter rumour.

The media is an interactive participant in the life of the nation and its purpose is to inform without falsehoods and orchestrate debate about contentious matters. This duty requires the exposition of the biggest variety of ideas. In Brexit, instead, we got an obsession with personalities and mechanisms; the subject was reduced to a discussion about macroeconomics, as if no real people

## twitter feed

Tweet us your feedback: [@mschrisbuckley](https://twitter.com/mschrisbuckley)



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 **Dale's Journalism** (@dalesjournalism) 12:36 PM – Oct 16, 2019  
Thank you [@NUJofficial](#) magazine for mentioning my graduate of the year award from [#UniversityofStirling](#) for Stolen Vision: Counterfeit Medicine in [#Iraqi](#) [#Kurdistan](#)

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 **Christy Lawrance** (@NorthviewN7) 12:39 PM – Oct 16, 2019  
Great cover and sharp, illustrated report on what a 'free press' is from [@SaHreports](#) in The Journalist

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 **Scene & Heard reports/David Ziggy Greene** (@SaHreports) 4:26 PM – Oct 14, 2019  
What's happened is the nice people at [@NUJofficial](#) asked me to do a little interview about drawing the news. It went from 2 pages to 3 pages to the cover story!!! Thanks. [#reportage](#) [#news](#) [#illustration](#)

would be hurt in the making of policy.

Journalism during Brexit has been reduced to wrangles between columnists and commentators with the same few thoughts and experiences. Their witterings have filled newspapers, websites and airtime for three years but done nothing to further understanding.

Most notably, the media has avoided grappling with the vital issues of sovereignty, democracy, truth and how we know what people actually voted for in 2016.

If it is all a joke and job creation scheme for Chris, he hasn't considered the impact of Brexit on people's lives.

**Nick Inman**  
Occitanie, France

### Politically correct humour - as funny as a phone book

So, Josie Long's baby 'absolutely hates' her comedy, Tim Lezard tells us (Arts with Attitude, October/November).

Frankly, I'm not surprised. I had the misfortune to see her in Ireland. She was about as funny as haemorrhoids.

Some silly, eager-to-please members of the audience did laugh like drains at her every utterance. But then they would probably have giggled if she'd read out the Dublin telephone directory.

Of course, Josie was very politically correct. But Bernard Manning she certainly wasn't.

**Malcolm Tattersall**  
London Freelance branch

## STEVE BELL

## THE OWNERS



Ethics council chair **Chris Frost** explains the union's code of conduct

# Not just holier than thou



**A** letter-writer to The Journalist once wondered if the union's code of conduct had ever been enforced or if its principles were merely "virtue signalling" – an attempt to display the NUJ's moral superiority. It's an important question.

Professional ethical conduct has been part of the NUJ's work since it was founded in 1907. Most of us believe a responsible media that aims to give its public accurate, balanced information to help them make decisions is crucial to a free, democratic society. This makes the professional performance of members a concern for the whole union.

Professional conduct concerns the defence and promotion of the principles and practice of journalism, as outlined in the union's code, alongside the defence and promotion of freedom of the press, broadcasting, speech and information.

The union introduced its first code of conduct in 1936. That early code was a mixed document covering working practices and moral concerns such as behaviour to other union members, colleagues and employers, as well as professional standards. Members should "do nothing that would bring discredit on himself, his Union, his newspaper, or his profession".

The clauses concerning colleagues are now included in a rule about membership responsibilities, leaving the code of conduct governing professional behaviour. It became the

12-point code that all members now sign up to on joining the union.

This code is overseen and policed by the ethics council. This comprises elected members from all industrial sections of the union and representatives from diversity councils. These bodies were set up in the late 1980s when the union left the Press Council, of which it had been a founding member, over its inability to limit the excesses of some of the UK media.

The ethics council was set up to assess complaints from the public about alleged breaches of the code and recommend penalties to the national executive committee. It dealt with a rising number of complaints, approaching 200 a year.

Thatcher's attacks on unions meant that public complaints became severely damaging to the union. This was partly because of the high cost of running the council as a public complaints body at a time of serious financial pressure, and partly because union solidarity was being damaged as members had started to see the ethics council as a hostile star chamber. The NUJ delegate meeting in 1991 decided the ethics council should instead concentrate on education and the promotion of good practice.

The ethics council is the same today, although the code has been through a rewrite and several clauses added. The code is for journalists rather than publishers or broadcasters, so many members need to use the NUJ's code alongside those of organisations such

as the BBC, Ofcom, IPSO or Impress. However, if members follow the NUJ code, they are unlikely to be in breach of other organisations' codes.

The ethics council still polices the code, taking complaints from members about those who may have breached it.

It meets to discuss ethical issues and does its best to advise members, union councils and the national executive committee. It also campaigns, involving the government, select committees and international bodies, on journalism ethics and standards. The council keeps up to date; new guidance on social media ethics will shortly be added to the website, for example.

Council members are involved in journalism training, working with colleges to emphasise the importance of journalistic standards and the role the union plays in upholding them.

As chair, I am always happy to speak at branch meetings and offer advice, as are other members of the council.

We also run the ethics hotline – a phone and email service that allows members to discuss ethical issues. Students regularly contact the hotline seeking help with their work.

I believe the ethics council's work is important in assisting members produce responsible journalism. Delegate meetings regularly call on the ethics council and the national executive committee to remind members of the code.

**Chris Frost is chair of the NUJ's ethics council**

**“The ethics council's work is important in assisting members produce responsible journalism”**



RTÉ ARCHIVES



## Gay Byrne

**Louis Armstrong once said: "If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know."**

Gay Byrne loved jazz and he held a special place in his heart for Satchmo. They shared a sunny disposition, a wonderful ability to look on the bright side of life, even in dark days, and an ability to bring joy to large audiences.

When I think of public service broadcasting, I think of Gaybo. When we think of the very best of public service broadcasting, we think of programmes that challenge, provoke, entertain and frequently make a difference. In his

long career, Gay did all that and so much more.

His death at the age of 85 on November 4, after a long illness, really does mark the end of an era and comes at a difficult time for RTÉ, which he served so faithfully but never uncritically.

Gay began his television career in England and worked with Granada. He also worked in radio in England.

He was the first person to introduce The Beatles on screen, while working for Granada Television in Britain in the early 1960s.

During a career spanning five

decades, he worked in the UK and, briefly, in America – but it was in Ireland that he made an enormous contribution.

Gay was in many ways the father of public service broadcasting in Ireland. A broadcaster of courage, vision and boundless energy, he helped shape modern Ireland and used his talents to help create a more caring, compassionate and inclusive society.

He was often infuriating, annoying and provocative but never dull. In his career he brought light, laughter and humanity to TV and radio debates.

It would be impossible to agree with everything he said or did – he was innately conservative and rode a few hobby horses – but you could never doubt the sincerity of his convictions.

Gay believed in the precepts of public service broadcasting and his passion for RTÉ was reflected in every aspect of his career, from his early days in radio to the Late Late Show, his pioneering morning radio programme to his wonderful Sunday music and musings on Lyric FM.

He especially enjoyed Lyric FM and the opportunity that this gave him to share his appreciation and knowledge of his beloved jazz.

In his biography, *The Time of My Life*, he wrote tongue in cheek

about RTÉ head honchos in the administration block (which he referred to as The Hilton) who seemed to feel everything, would be all right if only they didn't have to deal with programme makers and the like.

He was also a strong advocate of public funding for public service broadcasting while also admiring commercial television and radio. He turned down many opportunities both at home and abroad to leave RTÉ for the commercial sector.

We in the NUJ were proud of his membership of the union – he was a member throughout his life. However, he encountered opposition when he first set about joining the union and there were those who viewed him as an entertainer rather than a serious journalist.

Gaybo was a man for all seasons who made a fine contribution to print journalism as a newspaper columnist.

The best way to salute Gay's legacy is to protect and promote public service broadcasting. He was, above all else, a public service broadcaster to the core.

He is survived by his wife Kathleen and children Suzy and Crona.

**Séamus Dooley**

## John Haylett



**John Haylett, former Morning Star editor, died on 28 September at the age of 74.**

He joined the Morning Star in 1983 as a journalist, having previously worked as an operator in international telecoms. He was active in the Union of Post Office Workers and led a strike at the International Exchange.

John's political shrewdness and attention to detail meant he rose quickly at the Morning Star. His first major job was joining and reporting on the People's March for Jobs. Then came the miners' strike of 1984-85, in which his skills as a journalist and incisive analysis of the class struggle were noticed.

In 1985, he became assistant editor, then appointed deputy editor in 1989. He became editor in

1995 and, from 2008, served as the paper's political editor until his retirement due to ill health earlier this year.

His appointment as editor was not universally popular among the senior management and there were troubled times at the paper. In 1998, he was sacked for what were later to be shown to be trumped-up charges.

John was unable to defend himself as the charges were not put to him. And it soon became clear to the NUJ's mother of chapel Amanda Kendal "that the Star's then management had no interest in compromise or negotiation. They told the union they couldn't show us the 'dossier' of allegations against John because they 'didn't know' that the union represented him". Then they said "it was

because the 'dossier' was 'the private property' of the management committee".

These breaches of the paper's own disciplinary procedure fuelled the NUJ chapel's anger to take action. NUJ members felt that if the editor could be treated in this way, then so could any member.

Deputy father of chapel Chris Kasrils recalls: "The strike lasted six weeks but, under the command of our sacked editor, the journalists launched their own weekly – The Workers' Morning Star – which appeared for five issues until victory was secured with John's reinstatement. The strike office, above shops on the Kingsland Road in Hackney was rented by the NUJ."

**Anita Halpin**

and finally...

# Beware the bias that undermines news



We could learn from the Commons speaker, says **Chris Proctor**

**T**he taxi driver in the front of my cab the other day had a deep well of knowledge about speakers of the House of Commons.

He was thrilled that he'd had Betty Boothroyd in my seat once, which astonished me. I wasn't amazed that she'd been in my seat but that he, a man in his 40s, should have recognised her. It seems a strange job to attract attention.

He said she had pig's bladder in her heart. I tensed, awaiting some anti-Labour diatribe. But no, he says she had undergone open heart surgery and this was the method used by the doctors to restore her to health.

Then he added that he supposed she'd 'gone private'. For a second time, I braced myself, anticipating a tirade about hypocrisy and privilege; but no, he was entirely sympathetic. "If you've got a job like that, you deserve the best," he said.

"What exactly is the job?" I asked.

"Speaker," he told me. "They do fairness."

This reminded me how last year – overnight – the media transformed the job of speaker from a saddish figure slumped in a green armchair like Billy No-Mates into a flamboyant political titan. I thought of that character in John DeLillo's *Underworld* who said: "Whoever controls your eyeballs runs the world."

It's not just the speaker, of course. In November, we were all metamorphosed into rugby experts. The most unlikely people developed strong views about rucking tactics, speedy backs and forward passes. Come

summer, we'll take to discussing Rafa, Djoker and ReRe as if we'd heard of them before. And, of course, everyone is an expert on general elections.

But are the days of 'the media' setting the agenda coming to an end? Social media might be ensuring that they are.

Reporters looking for a story used to go to the wires, the locals or the business press to see if a story could be amplified; they'd ring a few people to see if anything was happening; or maybe follow up a story they'd heard the previous evening; or simply go to the pub and see if anything turned up. Our hugely lamented former colleague Roy Rogers, who worked for the *Glasgow Herald*, would frequently call contacts to ask: "Have you got a story with a kilt on it?"

Now, as often as not, a reporter's day begins with a survey of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat or Reddit. That way, you find out what people are talking about so, if you talk about it as well, you're in the swim. You're the man with his finger on the pulse.

This sounds quite exciting. The people are leading the news, choosing the subject and reasserting their right to their eyeballs. They are empowered. They choose the agenda rather than some apparatchik of Rupert Murdoch or toady of Downing Street.

And, yes, it is a start. But only that. Social media is excellent for expounding prejudices but not reporting news. Usually, it's somewhere between rant and lunacy. So our job as journalists is to take the subject, rather than the content, and present a reasoned assessment.

ITN's Alastair Stewart suggests this is not what we're doing. He said recently, "I grow increasingly concerned about the bias of some of my TV news 'competitors'." He quotes, not the NUJ which he could have, but similar Ofcom guidelines, saying the media's job is to "ensure that news, in whatever form, is reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality".

Now this is a long way from the garbage on social media: the fake pictures of Jeremy Corbyn with an 'I love the IRA' slogan superimposed on his jumper; the bizarre posts saying, 'Give pensioners enough money to live on. Immigrants get more money than we do,' (how on earth did he become a Facebook 'friend'?); or calls to scrap the generous overseas aid we give to Johnny Foreigner. Someone – us – needs to put the balance right. We need to say the first one's a scam, the second's a lie and the third is 0.7 per cent of our income.

We need someone who, professionally, is politically neutral, as Stewart says, and who makes sure the facts are available so that there can be informed debates, aka democracy. We need to make sure all views are presented objectively and...

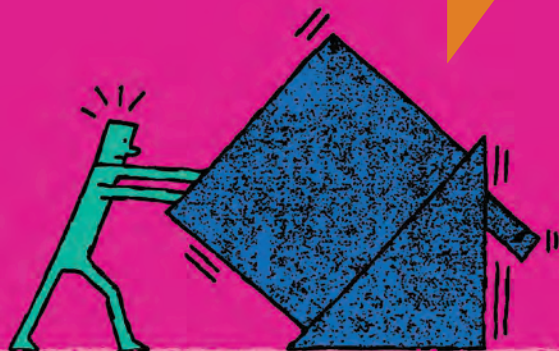
Hang on! This is what my mate the taxi driver says the speaker does. Impartial. Tick. Fair to all views. Tick. No personal interference in what's going on. Tick.

Dammit. We should have all applied before that new chap was elected to Hoyle the wheels of Commons debate. Yes, I know most of us are already on £156,676 a year and live in rent-free, four-bedroom flats in Westminster – but it would be worth pitching for it just for the private chaplain.

**Now, a reporter's day begins with a survey of social media. You find out what people are talking. You're the man with his finger on the pulse**



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