

Pay offers prompt industrial action

Journalists working for Reach, the UK's largest regional newspaper group and owner of the Mirror, are being balloted to decide whether to take industrial action, including strike action, after rejecting the employer's pay offer of 3 per cent.

The union's national executive also approved a ballot for industrial action to go ahead at National World in Scotland where 18 staff are at risk of redundancy on The Scotsman and the Scottish weeklies.

Then, this week, Reach staff received an email calling for voluntary redundancies owing to "challenging" market conditions, plus a freeze on recruitment. The union said it was "disappointing" and called for consultation. The jobs will go in September.

The union agreed to further talks with Reach in a meeting with ACAS, the arbitration service, but the publisher failed to come up with a package acceptable to NUJ members.

The Reach journalists, who work on regional titles such as the Manchester Evening News, Liverpool Echo and BristolLive, have been urged to vote for strike action and action short of a strike by the union over the pay offer.

Chris Morley, NUJ Reach national co-ordinator, said the union was happy to continue talks as long as "realistic proposals are forthcoming to boost the income of Reach journalists in the face of the worst cost of living crisis in 40 years".

With inflation soaring, this year's pay round has proved a hot issue with many employers' offers being contested.

Thousands of people marched the streets in London, Belfast and Dublin to protest against the rising cost of living and the government's lack of response. Journalists could be joining workers from train and bus and airline staff to barristers, postal workers and staff at BT in strike action over pay. The NUJ is also fighting redundancies across a number of titles.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "Pay is an urgent priority for the union. Our chapel officers, industrial officials, communications team, legal office and administrative team are working extremely hard to co-ordinate this resolute response



to the demands of our members."

At the end of May, Reach cut nine story-editor roles across the regions, citing the spiralling cost of newsprint. These were all found through voluntary redundancy, but the union lost some of its most loyal members. The Irish office saved a member's job on the Reach website Buzz.ie. The union also intervened to prevent compulsory redundancy for members working for National World in Portsmouth. However, those remaining are left with huge workloads and high levels of stress.

BBC members accepted a 4 per cent pay rise but have plenty of battles ahead with 1,000 job losses forecast following the freezing of the TV licence fee for two years (see page five). At Immediate Media, a deal was reached giving a 7 per cent rise for those on up to and including £50,270, 5 per cent for up to and including £120,000, and 4 per cent for those earning more. The freelance day rate was increased from £120 to £140. Pay talks are taking place at the Irish Times, Mediahuis Ireland, and a range of regional titles, North and South.

The national executive was told many freelance writers, videographers and photographers had not recovered their pre-pandemic income and were leaving journalism. NEC member, Mike Pindar, said: "Photographers have high overheads in order to work. The cost of kit, computers and software, as well as insurance and travel, are going up in price." The NUJ has published a template letter for freelancers to use when writing to engagers, calling for improved pay rates: www.nuj.org.uk/resource/freelance-template-letter-to-engager-on-pay-rates-.html

Tony Sheldon, NEC rep for Continental Europe, said Dutch journalists had agreed a minimum hourly freelancers rate at media group DPG.

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NUJ
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Séamus Says



There was a time when summer was regarded as the silly season, when little of importance happened in the media and journalists could at least draw breath.

Not anymore. There's been no shortage of silliness this summer, most of it endured rather than enjoyed. Behind the political melodramas and high political farce, workers are struggling with the reality of inflation in a world far removed from the paper moon politics of slick slogans and oh so clever, perfectly delivered one line put downs.

That disconnection between those who occupy positions of leadership and those whom they purport to serve is not just a political phenomenon. The response of our members at Reach is not just a reaction to the cost of living, it's also informed by the sheer hypocrisy of a company led by a chief executive whose pay package last year was £4m. Jim Mullen would probably argue that £4m is a small price to pay for recording an operating profit in excess of £146m. Remuneration boards use a very different slide rule when calculating the worth of journalists.

In the Republic of Ireland, the Irish government finally published the Future of Media Commission Report, a much-anticipated body of work undermined by the decision of the cabinet to reject its core recommendation in relation to the funding of public service broadcasting.

The report recommends the abolition of the current licence system and to replace it by direct funding from the exchequer. Having established an expert commission, the government decided to reject the compelling argument that the license system is outdated and that the current collection system (Ireland has an evasion rate of 15 per cent) is beyond reform. Instead, the government announced the establish of, yes, an expert panel, to look at how the current system could be reformed.

The technical panel is due to report in November.

It is profoundly depressing when one considered that former minister Richard Bruton announced the original commission in 2019, with the objective of reporting in 2020 in good time for

budget plans to be implemented in 2021.

The NUJ successfully argued that the terms of terms of the Bruton commission should be broadened to incorporate all media and not just public service broadcasting. After the 2020 general election, the incoming government accepted the logic of a platform neutral commission, looking at the crisis in all media sectors while maintaining a special focus on public service broadcasting.

When the commission was announced, it excluded relevant trade union or industry representation but lobbying by the NUJ led to the appointment of Siobhan Holliman, chair of the union's Irish Executive Council (IEC) and our representative on the Press Council of Ireland, in a personal capacity, to the commission.

Under the direction of former Dublin City University president Professor Brian MacCraith, Siobhan and her colleagues set to work with alacrity and produced an imaginative report which reflects many of the NUJ's own priorities: clear recognition of the importance of public service journalism, the need for diversity and inclusion, training and development and, crucially, the establishment of a media fund open not just to public service broadcasters. It's a fine body of work available at <https://bit.ly/3OqE653>

It is regrettable that having sat for a year on the report the government has kicked the funding of public broadcasting can down the road again and, in doing so, limited debate on the many fine recommendations which have the capacity to transform the Irish media. The IEC will give detailed consideration to the report and we have already expressed reservations about regulatory issues arising from the proposed expansion of the remit of a new, and confusingly named, Media Commission.

Across nations and regions, the NUJ's thinking, reflected in the News Recovery Plan, is winning acceptance

and as reported in this issue, the union continues to help shape media policy in Scotland and Wales while our work on the safety of journalists through the national safety committee has been widely acclaimed.

The principle that journalism is a public good which must be nurtured and protected is reflected in the work of the Irish commission and has informed deliberations throughout the UK.

Employers are the first to agree of course but, in their response, to pay claims their enthusiasm for the value of our labour is seldom reflected in any meaningful way. That's why any funding of commercial media organisations by state agencies must take into account their compliance with industrial relations norms, with adherence to statutory codes of practice and should contain safeguard to ensure that taxpayers do not become a subsidy for greedy executives and shareholders.

Likewise, there still need to be action to ensure that tech giants pay their share through a levy, an issue dodged to a great extent by the Irish Commission - which advocates engagement with these powerful corporations.

June was an important month for the NUJ on the international stage, with our active participation in the International World Congress in Oman and the EFJ general meeting in Turkey. The re-election of Jim Boumelha as IFJ treasurer and Tim Dawson as a member of the EFJ steering committee are important signals of our ongoing commitment to international solidarity. The union's positive role in shaping debates on the Russian invasion of Kiev at both conferences, with the focus on the protection on journalists and journalism, was widely commended.

It was also the NUJ which raised the issue of human rights violations in Oman, the abuse of SLAPPS and the need to tackle gender discrimination, forcefully articulated at the IFJ by former president Sian Jones.

The NUJ is a founder member of the IFJ



REASONS TO JOIN

Be Part of a Collective Voice

As a member of the NUJ you are part of a united force championing the rights of media workers and defending attacks on press freedom. Successful workplaces are those where the management and workers share the same aims and talk to each other. Being a member of the NUJ means giving yourself and colleagues a real voice at work.

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and EFJ and in Izmir the union strongly opposed amendments to the EFJ rules which would allow the EFJ to admit into membership bodies not affiliated to the IFJ. We were ultimately unsuccessful and as a result we will keep under review our relationship with the European

Federation of Journalists.

Trade union solidarity is the cornerstone of the IFJ and the value of the EFJ is that it provides a European focus for international labour rights and media freedom. We will never countenance a departure from those values.

Update

Why action is needed at Reach

The industrial action threatened by members working for Reach is about pay, but it is not just about money.

Yes, in the present economic climate, with inflation on the rampage, energy prices due to rocket and most other costs on the rise, a 3 per cent increase is not going to cut it. As Chris Morley, NUJ Reach national co-ordinator, says: "Given the amazing work our members are doing, including the heroics they performed during the pandemic as key workers, the company's final offer is an insult."

It's not that Reach can't afford it. The company's 2021 full year results indicate a £24m rise in cash balances with operating profits of more than £146m. The pay package of its chief executive, Jim Mullen, was £4m last year – which would pay for 117 trainee journalists. At the company's annual general meeting in May, a group of union officials and reps took the CEO and Reach's board to task over his remuneration deal.

A letter handed out to shareholders said: "We think there is something very wrong when the remuneration of the



NUJ officials and reps at the Reach AGM

chief executive has gone from a ratio of 43:1 of the lowest percentile employees in 2019 to 117:1 in 2021. During that time the Reach share price has doubled – but the CEO's pay package has rocketed by 600 per cent plus. We don't mind reward for success, but it should cut both ways. So, if the board argue this is success, then why is it trying to fob off incredibly hard-working employees with a woeful pay increase when we are experiencing runaway inflation at its worst for 30 years?"

The members have had enough. They have shown themselves ultra flexible, adapting at very short notice to the company's scramble to collect

the millions of extra digital page views, their working conditions have been completely changed as Reach shut offices and expected many to work from home. This made the company annual savings of £8m, with their staff left to pick up the heating bills and they have suffered the stress of the Accelerating Personal Development pilot scheme which monitors writers' page views.

When times have been financially tough in the past, members have tightened their belts. But they can't anymore. That is why the chapels turned down the 3 per cent offer. Since then, the threat of action has galvanised non-union staff to join the NUJ to get their views represented. One member told the union they "needed a better deal to feed their children".

Chris Morley said: "We had a further meeting with Reach management at their behest, together with ACAS, the arbitrator, but they were unable to revise their offer to reflect what their journalists deserve. This was a wasted opportunity to make progress as we now head to a ballot for industrial action of all our members in Reach."

'Got to keep the pay down, PM? Try telling this lot!'

It was vintage campaigning journalism. The Daily Mirror was calling out the fat cat bosses "raking in up to 86 times the wages of their average workers".

"While millions of workers struggle with the cost of living," it said, "Britain's' fat cat bosses have never had it so good."

There was rail chief, Andrew Haines, making more than 20 times the amount

of one of his guards, and last year BT group chief executive, Phillip Jansen, earned 97 times more than his lower-paid staff.

But there was one fat cat missing, pointed out the NUJ Reach group chapel, saying:



"The hypocrisy between the Mirror's editorial line and Reach plc's corporate policy is breath-taking when our own chief executive, Jim Mullen, received a £4m-plus pay package worth

104 times that of the average Reach worker.

"Reach must practice what it preaches and get round the table to negotiate a better pay package that will start to level up the obscene pay inequalities within the company to decent and respectful levels."

Update

BBC battle continues



BBC

The NUJ is mobilising for a long fight over a raft of proposals at the BBC which include closing channels, shutting radio stations and cutting about 1,000 jobs.

The government's decision to freeze the licence fee for two years had cost the BBC £285million, said its director general, Tim Davie, and this would affect frontline output and cause reductions across the corporation. He has since slashed the existing television and radio services budget by £500m and invested the savings in new, digital-only services.

He proposes to close the BBC News and BBC World channels and create a single BBC News channel, resulting in 143 journalism roles and 19 presenter positions being axed. The BBC says the proposals will lead to the loss of around 70 UK posts as new roles will be created at the new channel. The union is concerned that, while the BBC News channel has provided viewers with coverage of UK elections, party conferences, by-elections, local events and Covid-19 briefings, such coverage could be lost in a combined channel where global events are competing for airtime. The World Service budget will be cut by £30m and many foreign language services will become online only.

More programme output is to be shared between neighbouring local radio stations and regional TV news bulletins in Cambridge and Oxford cancelled. CBBC, BBC Four and Radio 4 Extra will become online-only services.

Paul Siegert said: "These proposals will have a huge effect on the breadth and quality of journalistic content and programming across the BBC and have an impact on members. The NUJ will be fighting to seek solutions to maintain standards and resist the corporation's plans which appear to be merely a management of decline."

We Are England, BBC England's weekly current affairs programme which started only a year ago, replacing the award-winning Inside Out, is to be axed and the BBC will create a new network of investigative journalists to chase local stories. The NUJ says the BBC's plan to reallocate funding to ensure growth in iPlayer viewership makes sense in terms of viewership trends, but it should not come at the cost of broadcast radio and television programmes being cast aside.

The BBC faces a review of the future of the TV licence. A Lords' committee has published a report dismissing the introduction of subscriptions and adverts.

Not so happy birthday...

It was the BBC's 100th birthday, but there has not been lot to celebrate this year. The corporation's annual report tried to put a gloss on it. It said the BBC continued to reach 90 per cent of UK adults on average each week, BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds attracted record audiences and BBC Studios, the corporation's commercial arm, hit a record profit.

The BBC remains a cornerstone of the creative sector – every £1 of the BBC's economic activity generates a total of £2.63 for the wider economy. But Tim Davie, director general, could not put a gloss on his budget which for UK services is 30 per cent lower than a decade ago in real terms. He said the BBC had saved more than £1bn over the past five years but, because of the frozen licence fee and rising inflation, he anticipated annual savings of £285m would be needed by 2027/28.

The union has staved off compulsory redundancies, but those left struggle with high workloads. A Sunday Times report revealed the BBC had lost more than 2,500 years of experience in news and management, since January 2020. High-profile names to go include Jon Sopel, Emily Maitlis and Andrew Marr, plus specialist reporters Rory Cellan-Jones and Roger Harrabin.

The BBC said it was on track to meet its workforce diversity targets for female and black, Asian and minority ethnic staff but behind on its disability goals. Its pay gap increased for women and disabled and black, Asian and minority ethnic staff. The BBC said its gender pay gap [5.9 per cent] was lower than the national average median gap of 15.4 per cent.

Update

So farewell Nadine...

She was almost the last fan standing as she cooed at the Prime Minister's baby while he made his not-quite resignation speech at 10 Downing Street.

Nadine Dorries (pictured) stayed loyal to the end as her colleagues resigned in droves to force Boris Johnson out of his job. And while for now she remains as Culture Secretary, it is extremely unlikely she will remain in her post. Indeed, according to *The Sunday Times*, she will be made a peer by Johnson and return to writing more of her shawl and clogs sagas.

There have been 10 culture secretaries in the past decade and Dorries will probably go down as, if not the worst, certainly the most ill-informed of her brief. She famously said Channel 4, which she wants to be privatised, was funded by the taxpayer, when giving evidence to an MPs' committee. When told that the broadcaster's revenue was almost totally from advertising, she gave a startled look towards her Permanent



Nadine Dorries

Secretary Sarah Healey, who somehow managed to deadpan. She later told MPs that the public consultation showed 96 per cent supported privatisation when in fact 96 per cent were against.

She shocked a Rugby League audience in St Helens by referring to Jonny Wilkinson – who plays for the different code. A DCMS insider said she wrongly thought she was clever enough to ad lib from the briefs prepared for her by staff.

Optimists in the industry, overwhelmingly against the sell-off of

Channel 4, hope the proposal will be dropped with her departure. It was to be part of a media bill, now expected in the next Parliamentary session. The Online Safety Bill could also be in jeopardy, as its progress through Parliament has been halted. Failed prime ministerial candidate Kemi Badenoch said she would ditch it. The NUJ believes it is a "dog's dinner of a bill" which could threaten journalistic content on the internet and gives too many powers to the Secretary of State. One of its conundrums is how to ban content that is legal but harmful – perhaps Dorries' toe-curling TikTok rap explaining the legislation would have qualified.

After going absent without leave to appear on *It's a Celebrity Get me Out of Here*, and being kicked out first, but not before eating an ostrich's anus, she could never have dreamed of attaining high office – but her Brexiteer views and blind loyalty to Johnson paid off. In 2019, DCMS estimated that the creative industries contributed £115.9 billion to the UK, but Nadine Dorries was too busy bashing the BBC to do anything constructive. Let's see what yet another Culture Secretary will bring to the job.

Welcome trend

John Barsby, NUJ honorary treasurer, told the NEC with hope tinged with caution that the NUJ's finances were the healthiest for many years owing to tight budget controls and savings made during the pandemic. The net surplus for the first six months of the financial year was £905,000. However, upcoming big-ticket items included Delegate Meeting costs, replacement of windows in the NUJ's London headquarters, and servicing the debt in the staff pension fund. On that basis

the treasurer emphasised the need for continued prudent management of the unions finance. Owing to the pandemic, 520 freelancers left the union as did 300 members from newspapers, mainly through redundancies; recruitment in other sectors had increased..

Student bursaries

Applications to the George Viner Memorial Fund, the NUJ's charity which improves the diversity of journalists working in the British and Irish media by

providing bursaries to help with studies and subsistence, close on Monday 25 July. Find out more and hear BBC reporter and presenter, Monika Plaha, talk about the amazing opportunities the scheme has given her. <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/george-viner-memorial-fund-2022.html>

Google training

The union, in partnership with Google News Lab, is launching a new training programme to improve journalists' digital skills and also develop the

management skills of members in the UK and Ireland during their mid-career. Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary said: "This partnership is an opportunity to improve the digital skills of our members by using technology to verify the authenticity and accuracy of images, and training will be available to help members progress towards leadership roles, with a particular emphasis on groups under-represented within the industry's management."

Press freedom

A third of world has no freedom of expression

Just 15 per cent of the world lives in countries where they can express themselves freely, with over one-third (35 per cent) of people living in places where free expression is “in crisis”, according to the 2022 Global Expression Report by human rights organisation Article 19.

Five new entries in the crisis category were: Myanmar, Afghanistan, Sudan, Hong Kong and Chad.

Countries at the bottom of the freedom of expression league include: North Korea, China, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia and Equatorial Guinea. All the top 10 were European and not one country in Africa gained a top rating. Russia, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Brazil were named as countries which have ramped up repression in the past year. There were 644 attacks on the Mexican press in

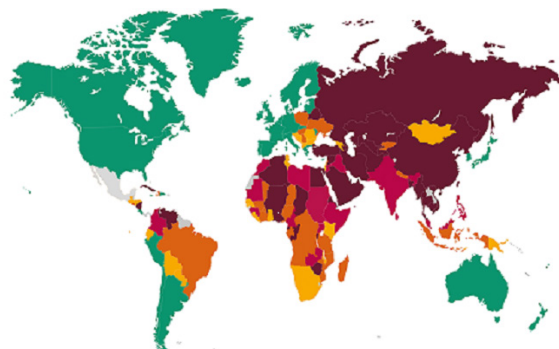
2021; 43 per cent involved the country's public authorities.

The top jailers of journalists were China (50 detainees), Myanmar (26), Egypt (25), Vietnam (23), and Belarus (19).

A new favourite tool of the digital-era autocrat is internet shutdowns – those happened 182 times in 2021 in 34 countries. The global leader was India, followed by Myanmar and Iran.

The report singled out the UK as an international hotspot for people taking out Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), aggressive legal action against journalists, with 10 per cent of cases recorded in 2021 originating in Britain.

“The international community continues to turn a blind eye, prioritising profit over people,” the report writers concluded. “Governments rightly condemn Russia at the same time as discussing trade with Saudi Arabia. This hypocrisy feeds the cycle of democratic decline and comes at a great long-term cost.” www.article19.org/gxr-22/



Journalists' safety

The NUJ has created a mini-app for its digital safety toolkit to be launched in September, together with a video of members talking about their experiences of threats and abuse and the results of the government's second safety survey. Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, continues to represent the union on the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists and introduced officials at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to a team in Canada, led by PEN Canada writers group, civil

liberties associations and Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, who are working on a press freedom tracker which monitors incidents and collects data on attacks and harassment of journalists in real time. Strong support has been received from Catherine Martin, the Irish media minister, for the formation of a national safety forum modelled on the UK committee.

Assange extradition

The UK press belatedly joined the NUJ and other campaigners in protesting against the extradition of

WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, to the US, calling the move an attack on press freedom. The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, gave the go-ahead for Assange's dispatch to America to face charges under the Espionage Act. Further appeals will be vigorously pursued says NEC member Tim Dawson, who has followed his case on behalf of the union. “How many more days must Assange languish in jail? And, most important, how much damage to free expression and the democracy it supports will we tolerate?” he said. Sign

the Speak Out petition: <https://speak-up-for-assange.org/>

SLAPPED down

The union has welcomed new measures to prevent legislation used to intimidate journalists by wealthy litigants aiming to suppress press freedom. A new three-part test, which considers public interest, will be used to strike out such cases before they reach court. There will also be a cap on costs. Michelle Stanistreet said they were a significant step in tackling these chilling lawsuits.

Update

Scotland explores public interest journalism body

The NUJ will be part of a steering group to set up the Scottish Public Interest Journalism Institute (SPIJI) to champion quality journalism, increase media literacy and examine fresh ways to fund news provision in Scotland.

This was one of a set of recommendations made by an independent working group drawn from the industry. However, the enthusiasm for SPIJI demonstrated by Angus Robertson, the cabinet secretary for constitution, external affairs and culture, was not matched by hard cash. He said the government would pay for the steering group which would “explore funding options”. The working group had said the government should be lobbying the tech companies to support journalism in Scotland. The minister agreed to investigate legislation to allow community groups to take over a local newspaper threatened with closure. However, he turned down a recommendation for charitable status to be available for certain publications



and was unable to give guarantees on government spending on advertising and public notices.

John Toner, NUJ national organiser Scotland, said: “Scotland desperately needs an organisation to champion public interest news following year-on-year cuts and loss of many titles.” He added that the government should provide start-up money to establish SPIJI.

The long-awaited report of the Irish Future of Media Commission, published this month, was greeted with grave disappointment by the NUJ. The cabinet rejected the commission's recommendation to abolish the TV licence from 2024 and replace it

with exchequer funding. While the government accepted 49 of the 50 recommendations, the failure to immediately act to reform the funding system was profoundly disappointing, said Séamus Dooley, NUJ Irish Secretary. He feared many worthwhile initiatives in the comprehensive report would wither on the vine of political inertia.

The recommendations included tax breaks for media start-ups, a review of the provision of Irish language services, an obligation by 2024 for public service media to gather and publish diversity data and a new media fund to support the press and broadcasting. Séamus Dooley was happier with the Press Council of Ireland's choice of the new Press Ombudsman, Susan McKay, saying her energy, independence of thought and journalistic experience will be enormously valuable.

Meanwhile, a public interest journalism working group in Wales continues to meet to set out ways to stem the crisis in news provision and will report at the end of the year.

Public order training

Members of the NUJ have been invited by Avon & Somerset police to take part in public order training this September. This follows a similar exercise with the Metropolitan Police in May, when an NUJ delegation visited the specialist training centre in Gravesend. Members witnessed police officers equipped with shields, helmets, fire-retardant uniforms and stab vests being pelted

with abuse, missiles and petrol bombs, as instructors shouted orders and monitored reactions. NUJ members joined discussions on how best journalists and officers can work together at large scale events. David Ayrton, NUJ senior organiser, said the NUJ had put a lot of work into building its relationship with the Met in recent years, adding: “The Gravesend training centre is an extraordinary facility and gives a real sense of the

challenges that public-order officers face.”

Verso recognition

Verso Books, which describes itself as the largest independent, radical publishing house in the English-speaking world, has agreed to recognise the NUJ, so it can negotiate on staff pay and terms and conditions on behalf of employees at the company. The NUJ Verso chapel said: “In deciding to

unionise, our staff looks to combine radical publishing with organising and real solidarity with the wider trade union movement. We hope that fellow book workers continue pushing for more dignified terms and conditions in their own workplaces.”

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, said it was a positive step and he looked forward to Verso working in genuine partnership with the union.

Update

NUJ wins £1.2m compensation for members

The NUJ has won more than £1.2m for members this year in compensation on claims ranging from discrimination to unfair dismissal and includes more than £872,000 in equal pay cases.

At Newsquest Scotland the union brought an equal pay case on behalf of a member who discovered she was being paid significantly less than a man while dealing with exactly the same workload. The Scottish office filed for an employment tribunal claim at the same time as lodging a grievance complaint and her employer quickly agreed to a generous pre-litigation settlement without admission of liability.

The union negotiated a sum of £18,500 for one member following an unfair dismissal case.

Another has the union to thank for recovering almost £4,000 from Associated News for unauthorised use of their articles.

The NUJ's freelance office continues to pursue companies which do not pay up and publications using pictures without permission. The Daily Mail agreed to take down an image used without consent and paid a photographer member £100 in compensation. The union also managed to recoup £576 for a member in unpaid copyright fees.



Two members of a publishing house both received redundancy payments of more than £100,000. A disabled member who was not getting the support they were entitled to from their employer won £5,000 following intervention by the NUJ.

The union offers a comprehensive range of legal services to its members – not just on workplace issues. It has an in-house legal department that works alongside Thompsons Solicitors which recently dealt with a member who had been involved in a road accident, saying: “A payment for £5,000 has been sent to your member. Cases such as this show the value of the union's legal service. It also shows that the union is prepared to take cases that claim companies and no win/no fee solicitors will not.” NUJ legal services:

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/advice/legal-assistance.html>

Climate reporting

The media is a long way from providing adequate coverage of the severity of the climate crisis, while journalists need more training to improve their reporting, an International Federation of Journalists global survey reveals. It showed 81 per cent were “very concerned” about climate change. However, only one in four believe the media is doing an adequate job of covering the crisis with more than half saying their own news organisation do not dedicate special coverage to climate change.

Menopause webinar

The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life so why is it still a taboo subject in the workplace? The NUJ held an informative online workshop with Dr Clare Spencer and Helen Normoyle, the co-founders of My Menopause Centre, to demystify the menopause and discuss ways NUJ reps and members can improve the experience of women going through the menopause while at work. You can watch it here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1ZLmhJIAT4

Wilson case celebrated

A collection of essays has been published to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Wilson and Palmer case which established the right to be represented by a trade union. NUJ member Dave Wilson was employed by Associated Newspapers at the Daily Mail. The editor wrote to staff derecognising the NUJ and offering a 4.5 per cent pay rise to all staff who signed new contracts giving up the right to have terms and conditions set by collective bargaining. Dave Wilson refused to sign. He

was denied the pay increase. This led to an 11-year legal case to assert his rights as a trade union member. (Palmer was a member of the RMT at the Associated British Ports where staff were ‘offered’ personal contracts.) It was one of the most important labour law cases of its generation which held that, by permitting employers to discriminate against trade unionists, British law violated the European Convention on Human Rights.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/building-worker-power>

Spotlight

Matt Kenyon



Magazine make-over

Ian Burrell leafs through the glossies and hobby titles and finds that, while celebrities are no longer hot, gardening and golf trolleys are on trend.

When the chief executive of the world's most famous magazine company stated recently that it was "no longer a magazine company" the declaration stoked an identity dilemma that permeated the whole sector.

Roger Lynch, CEO of Condé Nast, home to such bywords in luxury publishing as Vogue, GQ, Tatler and The New Yorker, appeared to be suggesting that the 70m readers who still engage with its titles in print format are of little consequence. "Our audience is already telling us that's not the way they interact with us," he told The New York Times. Instead, his focus was on the 300m who read Condé Nast content online and the 450m who engage with its brands on social media.

Lynch's blunt comments caused shock but will not have surprised the staff on British editions of Vogue, GQ, Wired and Condé Nast Traveller who were

made redundant last year in a painful restructuring process at the 113-year-old publisher. Veteran British GQ editor, Dylan Jones, stood down as part of the cost-cutting merger of editorial teams in the US and the rest of the world.

Fat and glossy magazines have been hit hard by the pandemic's impact on newsstand sales and a shrinkage in luxury advertising. These nice-to-have purchases are threatened by the cost of living crisis. From women's lifestyle monthlies to celebrity weeklies, glossy prints are "getting thinner and thinner" observes Pamela Morton, NUJ senior organiser for books and magazines.

Hearst UK, publisher of Cosmopolitan, which in February reported a 26 per cent year-on-year fall in circulation, carried out its own restructuring last year, putting a reported 200 jobs under threat. Its then CEO, James Wildman, also fought shy of the word "magazine", telling The Daily Telegraph last year that Hearst UK was a "marketing services business".

The shift to digital is undeniable and magazine businesses have had to respond. Lynch, whose background was not in publishing but in streaming companies, has brought loss-making Condé Nast back into the black.

Other publishers have shown great invention in creating new revenue streams from the digital revolution. Future plc, which includes Homes & Gardens, Country Life and PC Gamer in its fast-growing portfolio, has developed e-commerce technology which helped to make almost £1 billion in sales for its retail partners last year, generating £216m in commission for the publisher. It employs 180 people in its tech development department.

The publisher has its own price comparison platform, Hawk, and on a typical day its readers purchase more than 40,000 items, from headphones to gym equipment and golf trolleys.

In the six months to March this year, the publisher increased adjusted operating profits to £134.5m, up 51 per cent year-on-year. Pre-tax profits for this

half-year were £81m compared to just £200,000 for the whole year in 2017. Under its CEO, Zillah Byng-Thorne (see box), it has pursued a policy of relentless acquisition, most recently completing the purchase of TI Media for £140m in April 2020 and then Dennis Publishing for £300m in August 2021. The deals have brought famous titles, including Country Life and The Week, into Future's portfolio of 163 brands (plus 43 in the US).

But the acquisition spree, which means the UK magazine sector is increasingly dominated by three publishers (Future, Bauer Media and Immediate Media), is not necessarily good news for journalists. "There are concerns among members that, when there is consolidation in the industry, redundancies follow that process of rationalisation," says Pamela Morton. "There can also be a worsening of contractual terms."

Bauer, part of a media group headquartered in Hamburg, has announced the relocation of its UK business to a new home, "The Lantern", in London's Euston. Chris Duncan, who moved from The Times to become head of Bauer's magazine arm, described the move as "a pivotal moment" that enables closer relationships between the company's publishing brands and other media properties with the company which owns the Absolute and Kiss radio networks.

Lockdown did lasting damage to celebrity magazines since readers were still able to access entertainment news online. Bauer's Heat and Closer both posted big circulation falls at the last ABCs but specialist hobby titles benefited from people having more time at home. Bauer's Garden Answers, a monthly, increased subscriptions by 62 per cent although its newsstand sales faltered slightly as a likely consequence of Covid-19 restrictions.

Gardeners' World, published by Immediate, has been one of the standout magazine sector successes, growing circulation last year by 36 per cent to 301,026. As Covid regulations have

been lifted, publishers have been able to bring back live events. "Gardeners' World Live" was held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham in June and the magazine hosted a Spring Fair at Beaulieu in the New Forest. It also plans an Autumn Fair at Audley End in Essex in September.

Immediate also has a German owner, Munich-based Hubert Burda Media, which acquired the Radio Times publisher in 2017. Last year was its strongest performance ever, with combined print and digital circulation up by 13 per cent and subscriptions by 20 per cent. It, too, has moved into commerce on its digital editions. Gardeners' World helps readers to buy tools, Good Food reviews kitchen appliances and offers the chance to buy, while the Radio Times site makes money with affiliate deals on games consoles.

Immediate chief revenue officer, Duncan Tickell, says that while the company is not immune to the rising costs of energy, transport and materials, its brands have proved remarkably

resilient during the pandemic and it will focus on "things which are within our control", such as building its content offering.

In a period where a surge in digital magazine sales has at least partly compensated for the continued downturn in print sales, no title has fared better than The Economist. In June, the publisher posted record revenues, with subscriptions to the tile at 1,185,000 and digital income making up 55 per cent of revenues.

But The Economist Group is now far more than just the magazine (or "newspaper"), which makes up just one of four pillars of the business. The rest are in education courses, client solutions and research/analysis.

New ways of working are creating extra pressure, says Liz Else, chair of the NUJ's Magazines and Books Industrial Council, with tighter deadlines, new technology to master and unrealistic targets.

In the face of adversity, the magazine sector fights on, even if it no longer seems to know quite what to call itself.

Future Leader

So stratospheric has been her ascent that The Daily Mail refers to Future's former finance officer, Zillah Byng-Thorne, as "the Queen of Publishing". Certainly, she enjoys a royal income. With total remuneration of more than £8.8m in 2002-21, she was the magazine sector's highest performer in a media rich list compiled by Press Gazette. Is she worth it?

Having joined Future in 2014 as a part-time head of finances, Byng-Thorne was asked to step up to CEO just months later, replacing the former ITN chief, Mark Wood, as it was posting profit warnings. She has described the business then as "a little bit broke in terms of its morale". In her previous job at Autotrader she became adept at turning print operations into

digital e-commerce platforms.

Under her leadership Future has surged to undreamed of revenues and profits following a determined strategy of acquisition that ate up a series of rival publishing stables, from TI Media to Dennis Publishing, and even the money comparison website, GoCompare. But not everyone was happy -- she faced a shareholder backlash over a package that could see her paid £40m in shares by 2025.

Matthew Earl, managing partner of hedge fund ShadowFall, claimed the CEO and her colleagues had "cashed in" on Future's growth and that its shares were overvalued. Byng-Thorne argues that the company is "incredibly robust" and Sir Peter Wood, former chair of GoCompare and a major Future shareholder, told the Financial Times she is "worth every penny".

International

Shireen Abu Akleh and Dom Phillips mourned

Tim Dawson pays tribute to lost colleagues and calls for justice to be done.

The International Federation of Journalists has sought permission to examine the bullet which killed Shireen Abu Akleh, an Al Jazeera journalist, working in Jenin, Palestine, in May while reporting on Israeli military action.

Jim Boumelha, IFJ treasurer, said lawyers had requested the Israeli Minister of Defence, on behalf of Abu Akleh's family, to allow an independent ballistics expert to examine the firearm and the bullet.

The NUJ has backed a call by the IFJ for her murder to be investigated by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The complaint to the ICC adds Abu Akleh's death to those of four Palestinian journalists killed or maimed by Israeli snipers while covering demonstrations in Gaza. All were wearing vests marked Press. Journalist Ali Samoudi, who was with Shireen when she was killed, was shot in the shoulder.

Tayab Ali, the partner of law firm Bindmans co-ordinating the case, said:



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"Shireen's family have trusted us to bring what happened to them to the ICC. She is not anonymous or a statistic. She was not a terrorist. She was one of us. She dedicated her life to one of the most important principles in a democracy - freedom of speech."

Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary, said: "The IFJ is determined to shed light on the true circumstances of her killing and hold the Israeli accountable for their crimes against Palestinian journalists."

Michelle Stanistreet praised the work of the IFJ and said the union would always take up the cases of journalists targeted in the field. The NEC passed a motion condemning the killing of NUJ member, Dom Phillips, the freelance who was murdered in the Brazilian Amazon in June, together with Bruno Pereira, a culture activist. Dom had lived and reported from Brazil since 2007, focusing on deforestation and its impact on Indigenous communities.

The motion said Dom was "among the most innovative, determined and principled reporters" and his work had shone a light on the environmental and humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Brazil's Amazon region. The union agreed to support the efforts of his family and friends to create a suitable memorial to Dom and keep his work alive.

Tribute to Dom Phillips: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/dom-phillips-the-subterranean.html>

Women elected to top posts in world journalism

For the first time, women will lead the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) for the next three years. At meetings in Oman

and Turkey, Dominique Pradalié from France was elected IFJ president, and Maja Sever from Croatia became EFJ president.

The IFJ's triannual congress assembled 250 delegates from 92 countries. The NUJ's Jim Boumelha was re-elected treasurer. Russian's press accounts about its invasion of Ukraine

were denounced, and spying on journalists' phones with software such as Pegasus condemned. The NUJ's motion calling for the UK's national safety plan for journalists to be copied elsewhere was unanimously adopted, likewise the demand for the release of WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, raised the issue of human rights in Oman, drawing particular attention to the LGBTQ+ community. The NUJ delegation challenged a ban on LGBTQ+ activism by distributing rainbow badges. NEC member Tim Dawson was elected on to the EFJ's steering committee.