

the Journalist

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NEWSROOM MADNESS

Is it a loss?

Contents



Do you remember what you were doing on Budget Day? For thousands of people, the answer would be striking. March 15 saw the biggest show of industrial action in many years as doctors, train drivers, postal workers, journalists, and many others stayed away from work in protest about pay, conditions, and services.

The NUJ's strike saw 1,000 members in BBC Local walk out because of plans to merge local radio programming, thereby reducing the amount of bespoke local content. We have a photo round-up of the widespread action in our news section.

Our cover feature looks at how important a newsroom is to a journalist's work as so many publishers cut them back or axe them altogether. Writer Conrad Landin finds they are not only important for collaborative work, but also for young or inexperienced journalists to gain insights. And for union activists looking to organise, collective workplaces can be crucial.

Other features in this edition include Duncan Campbell on journalists suing other journalists ahead of a motion at the NUJ's delegate meeting and Neil Merrick on the kind of journalism that looks at solutions, not just problems. And our media columnist Raymond Snoddy examines the myriad of difficulties facing the BBC, many of its own making.

I hope you enjoy reading the latest issue of The Journalist.

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Cover picture
Simon Spilsbury

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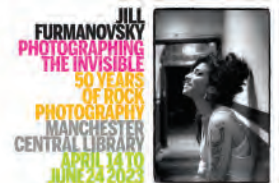


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Access all the latest NUJ news and views by scanning the QR code here or by visiting www.nuj.org.uk



Strike rocks BBC local output in England on Budget Day

NUJ MEMBERS took regional TV bulletins, local radio, and online output in England off the air and screens with a 24-hour strike on Budget Day on March 15 which carried on to the following morning.

The strike by 1,000 NUJ members in BBC Local was staged in protest against plans to merge some local radio shows and therefore reduce the amount of relevant content to listeners.

The journalists are now working to rule, sticking strictly to their employment contracts and not taking on overtime or additional duties. This has disrupted some bulletins.

NUJ general secretary Michelle Stanistreet said: "It's not simply a question about jobs and conditions for our members – they believe passionately in the value that quality local content brings to their audiences, journalism that is trusted and relied upon in the communities they serve. The BBC's raiding of local radio budgets to fund its Digital First strategy is wrongheaded and risks undermining a vital part of our public service broadcasting. People want local relevant news that is accessible, and that should remain a core part of the breadth of BBC output."

The walkout came shortly before BBC local radio presenters were among those who won the jury prize at the Broadcasting Press Guild Awards for their challenging questioning of Liz Truss during her brief premiership last year. She did a series of interviews with



local radio which left her looking substantially weakened.

Picket lines were held outside all local radio centres to build support. Some MPs visited the lines and Jeremy Hunt, the Chancellor, took a leaflet from a striker as he went into Broadcasting House for an interview.

The strike came as the BBC faced controversies over its actions on several fronts from banning Gary Lineker from presenting Match of the Day to growing concerns about the links of Richard Sharp, the chair, and Tim Davie, director general, with the Conservatives.

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inbrief...

BUREAU CHIEF IS HELD IN PAKISTAN

The union has condemned the arrest and detention of Siddique Jan, BOL News Bureau chief, in Pakistan. He is accused of provoking violence against the authorities by posting videos of police attacking supporters of Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan, as he appeared in court for a corruption case.

EDITOR IN CHIEF OF TIME STANDS DOWN

Edward Felsenthal, editor-in-chief of Time, is standing down after six years in the role and four years also as the chief executive. In June, he becomes executive chairman and a contributing editor involving writing and other work at Time.

GB NEWS PAYS LEE ANDERSON £100,000

Lee Anderson, the Conservative Party deputy chair, is to be paid £100,000 a year for hosting a show on GB News. The annual fee, declared in an update to the MPs' register of interests, compares with the £200 weekly payment he received for appearing as a regular on Dan Wootton's GB News show.

Ballot at Radio Foyle

THE UNION is to ballot for industrial action after BBC Northern Ireland decided to change Radio Foyle's morning schedule.

In changes set out in March, the two-hour Morning Show is to be replaced by a

30-minute programme. The union had been in talks with managers about the proposals, but the BBC opted to press ahead leaving 10 staff at risk of redundancy.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary,

said: "The announcement of a new schedule, due to come into effect on April 24, is deeply disappointing and leaves the NUJ with no option but to put this matter into dispute.

"As a result of the strong stand taken by the NUJ and the massive public support

for BBC Radio Foyle across the Northwest region, we have succeeded in securing hourly radio bulletins and retaining the principle of a breakfast news programme. We had proposed a one-hour Breakfast Show for a trial period, but managers have dug in on 30 minutes."

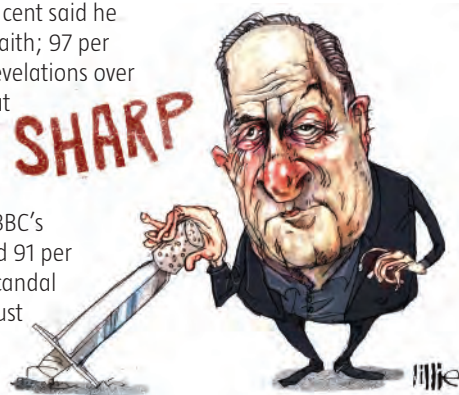
Call for Sharp to quit

RICHARD SHARP, the BBC chair, should resign for failing to disclose his role as a go-between for a £800,000 loan to the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson at a time when Sharp was applying for his role at the corporation, NUJ members have said.

A snapshot poll of members at the BBC revealed strong views over the conduct of Sharp and his ongoing position of BBC chair. Some 95 per cent said he should

resign. This has been mirrored in discussions in chapels and meetings of reps.

Just four per cent said he retained their faith; 97 per cent said the revelations over his behaviour at the time of his appointment and since have damaged the BBC's reputation; and 91 per cent said the scandal undermined trust in the BBC's journalism.



BBC warns against staff using Tiktok

The BBC has advised all staff against using TikTok on corporate devices unless it is for 'editorial and marketing purposes'. It said that the decision followed concerns raised by governments around the world about the platform and data privacy and security. The announcement follows a UK government ban on TikTok for devices belonging to the civil service. The Danish public service broadcaster DR, has also advised staff not to have TikTok on work phones due to security concerns. At the same time, over recent months, BBC News has focused on boosting its editorial presence on TikTok.

National reps report confidence boost and earning wins at work



NUJ national representatives gathered in person for the first time since the pandemic in March, *Bethan Staton writes*. Energising discussions on the cost-of-living crisis, opportunities for organising and the growing connections between unions, showed demands have evolved fast since lockdown.

With inflation still rising and strikes nationwide, winning pay rises headed the agenda and reps brought ideas, experience and drive to secure deals.

National organisers and reps from branches including Reach, the Financial Times and the Press Association (PA) shared their rising confidence among members as well as news of victories. The day before the meeting, Guardian staff secured a general pay rise of 6.5 per cent plus and eight per cent for those earning less than £71,900, plus a lump sum of £2,000 this year which will be consolidated into pay next year.

In the opening session, NUJ national newspaper organiser Laura Davison reported an increase in chapels starting to get organised, often out of outrage at inequalities and cuts.

Those attending heard from Georgina Morris (pictured), rep at National World, on the ‘ripple effect’ of support from other NUJ groups that helped the branch grow despite increasing workloads and reps being lost to redundancy.

The PA chapel has nearly doubled to nearly 130 members, but high staff turnover and fear of repercussions meant this growth was hard won. Rep Sian Harrison said staff mobilised after a proposed 10 per cent pay cut revealed that vast discrepancies between salaries had gone unchallenged because of a culture of not discussing pay, adding: “Not any more because we’re all talking and we’re all furious.”

Lewis Emery, from the Labour Research Department, set out data on pay, settlements and economic trends for branches to use in negotiations. The FT’s Keith Fray showed how, ahead of negotiations last year, the chapel used company data to model pay rises across bands and against inflation, showing what uplifts would mean for staff and, ultimately, winning a 10 per cent increase for the lowest paid. Natasha Wyncarz from Reach also showed how greater transparency could tackle pay inequality where gender gaps are hidden.

An inspiring part of the day was a visit from Amazon workers and the GMB, who this year organised the first strike action at a UK fulfilment centre this year. Amazon employee and new organiser Darren recalled being moved to tears as workers emerged through the fog to join him on the picket line at the midnight start of a walkout in March.

Vast discrepancies between salaries had gone unchallenged because of a culture of not discussing pay - but no more because we’re all talking and we’re all furious

*Sian Harrison
Press Association
chapel*

Call on pay clarity for equality

AT THIS year’s TUC Women’s conference, the NUJ moved motions on pay transparency in job adverts and the attacks on journalists covering protests in Iran, *Cristina Lago writes*.

It also seconded motions on part-time and freelance work and spoke in support of

confidential reporting of sexual harassment in the union movement.

Lack of pay transparency in job adverts is widespread, particularly in the private sector, which is a barrier to women achieving equal pay.

The NUJ called on the TUC to lobby the government to

extend its pilot scheme addressing the gender pay gap and normalise the publication of salaries in job adverts.

The union highlighted the attacks on Iranian journalists covering the death of Mahsa Amini in the custody of the so-called morality police.

The NUJ called on the TUC to condemn the Iranian government’s attacks on women and the right of journalists to report the protests without being labelled as spies and instigators of the demonstrations.

Natasha Hirst also spoke on how online abuse of journalists is highly

gendered and intersectional during a fringe panel on the role of trade unions in tackling misogyny.

The delegation included NUJ equality council members Raj Sangha Ford, Ann Coltart and Cristina Lago, and attendees elected by the last delegate meeting Ann Galpin and Natasha Hirst, NUJ vice-president.

Survey looks at RTÉ salaries

THE UNION is conducting an equal pay survey within RTÉ, Ireland’s public service broadcaster.

Following on from the RTÉ gender pay gap report in December 2022, which indicated a 13.03 per cent pay differential, the NUJ is carrying out a confidential online survey among journalists in RTÉ.

The questionnaire follows calls for action by the Dublin broadcasting branch and its RTÉ NUJ sub-branch. The union said that the survey is part of its ongoing equal pay campaign.

Emma O’Kelly, Dublin broadcasting branch chair, has highlighted branch concerns over

the gender pay gap in RTÉ and drawn attention to the loss of younger women from the workforce.

The survey is for all members and also anyone at the broadcaster who wishes to join the union.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ Irish secretary, said: “Look out for our survey as well as our upcoming seminar on the principles of equal pay, from both legal and industrial relations perspectives.”



Reach plans to cut more than 190 editorial jobs

REACH, publisher of titles including the Mirror, Express, Star and many regional titles, has placed 420 jobs at risk of redundancy with the aim of cutting 192 editorial roles.

It is the second swathe of job losses from Reach after more than 80 jobs were cut following a consultation that ended only two weeks before this round was announced.

The publisher is trying to cut costs at the same time as it is establishing operations in the US for its national titles.

The NUJ Reach chapel passed a vote of no confidence in the company's senior management after the latest planned cuts were announced.

Laura Davison, NUJ national organiser, said: "Members and reps are



VEEKAY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

devastated and angry at the decision to cut such a huge number of jobs. In some cases, half of certain teams are going and, in others, people are not clear about the choices being made.

"The uncertainty created for everyone within the business and the impact on those who may be left behind is affecting everybody, whether they are at risk or not.

"For those who have just spent recent months at risk and then thought their job was secure, to now be told their livelihood is once again at risk and that they are back in the same stressful place is horrendous.

"The no confidence vote is a reflection of the strength of feeling among journalists across the company, and how deeply worried they are about their job security and how the

company's strategy affects them and their families."

In an email to staff, David Higerson, chief digital publisher, and Lloyd Embley, group editor in chief, said 'tough decisions' were needed because of business conditions.

They said the publisher was facing a "combination of unprecedented cost inflation, a challenged consumer economy and an industry-wide decline in open-market advertising yields". They also referred to an 'online attention recession' and that Reach had to grow its digital audience.

Reach's full-year results for last year show a fall in operating profit of 27.4 per cent to £106.1 million and a 2.3 per cent fall in revenue to £601.4 million.

The company was hit by a sharp rise in newsprint costs, which accounted for £75.4 million in 2022 compared with £52.9 million in 2021.

inbrief...

ISLAMIC STATE BOMB KILLS JOURNALISTS

Two journalists were killed alongside another person at an event honouring journalists on Afghanistan's National Journalists Day. The targeted bomb attack by the Islamic State in March in the Balkh province also injured 14 media workers.

CLOSER WORKING ON MAIL TITLES

The Daily Mail and the Mail on Sunday are to be brought 'much closer together' and some employees will lose their jobs, staff have been told. Editor Ted Verity said in an email that there would be some reduction in jobs at the print titles. He said other staff may have their working pattern, duties or job titles changed.

OFCOM CHIEF GIVES MPS GB NEWS VIEW

Dame Melanie Dawes, the chief executive of Ofcom, told MPs on a select committee that whether Tory MPs Esther McVey and Philip Davies should have been allowed to interview chancellor Jeremy Hunt for GB News ahead of the Spring Budget depended on whether the programme was a news or a discussion show.

National World pay push

NATIONAL WORLD, which publishes The Scotsman, the Yorkshire Post and Belfast's News Letter among other titles, is being pressed for substantial pay rises after its full-year results for 2022 showing operating profits of above £9 million and a higher cash balance.

Its digital revenue growth rose by 26 per cent and it has invested in a social-first media company, in line with its push for digital income streams.

David Montgomery, executive chairman, said National World's strategy was to become a digital only

business and to promote individual talent assisted by greater automation.

Following consultation with members, NUJ chapels submitted claims for minimum editorial pay rates similar to those agreed at Reach plc after action by NUJ members last September. Chapels are also seeking a minimum pay rise of 10 per cent for all editorial staff.

Ferret recognises NUJ chapel

THE NUJ has signed a recognition agreement with Scottish investigative journalist media cooperative The Ferret. Ferret co-chair Rachel Hamada and new father of the chapel Alastair Brian said they were delighted about the deal.

Alastair said: "Our journalists promote transparency and hold power to account, so it is important to be able to collectively support workers. The chapel believes the agreement offers a unique opportunity to ensure The Ferret's innovative model, offering a greater role for readers and the wider community, can also ensure better conditions for its staff as well as stand up for the right to trade union membership and activism."

Rachel Hamada said: "The Ferret is a cooperative with journalists and readers on the board. We have a mission to ensure investigative journalism is resourced properly. We want The Ferret to be a great organisation to work with so we are delighted to recognise the Ferret chapel of the NUJ and welcome their support."



PIX@ANGELACATLIN.COM

'Chilling' bans on Rwanda trip

Katherine Viner, the Guardian's editor, spoke of a 'chilling' pattern of behaviour from the government after her newspaper was barred from a trip to Rwanda with home secretary Suella Braverman. Alison Phillips, the Mirror's editor, said there would be 'really damaging' consequences from how media places were allocated. The Guardian, Mirror, i and The Independent were all excluded from the trip to Rwandan capital Kigali, which was intended to underline the UK's commitment to its migrant policy and for the home secretary to view facilities being prepared for asylum seekers.



Strikes around the country

A wave of industrial action, not seen for many years, has swept the UK with large scale co-ordinated action from many unions on Budget Day. NUJ members in BBC local radio went out that day over plans to merge programming and cut dedicated local output

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Honours for journalists for their coverage of the war in Ukraine

TWO ASSOCIATED PRESS journalists who reported from Mariupol on Russia's siege of the city and were said to have helped save thousands of lives were honoured at the Royal Television Society's annual awards.

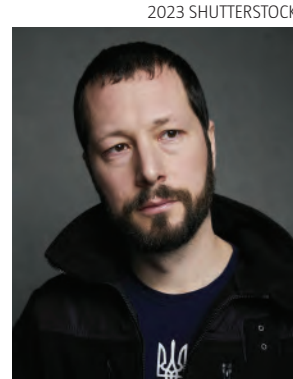
Vasilisa Stepanenko, a producer, was named Young Talent of the Year and Mstyslav Chernov, a video journalist who had won best young talent in 2015, was awarded Camera Operator of the Year.

They were the only journalists from an international news group to remain in Mariupol after the war began. Along with Evgeniy Maloletka, a photographer, they spent 20 days documenting the Russian bombing before they were able to escape.

Chernov was not present at the awards because he was filming near Bakhmut. Derl McCrudden, AP's vice-president for global news production, accepted the award on his behalf and described an 'extraordinary' message AP received from a special adviser to the now-exiled mayor of Mariupol in January this year.

"He thanked us for their work, and he told us that AP's coverage of Mariupol became a central point in the negotiations with Russia over the opening of humanitarian gate corridors for the civilian evacuation of the city. He said, without exaggeration, you saved several tens of thousands of civilians and it's difficult to overestimate your personal contribution here. It's a rare moment where journalism has a real and substantive impact," McCrudden said.

In his speech, sent to McCrudden to read out, Chernov said he 'felt terrible' leaving Ukraine to receive his previous award



eight years ago because he felt he should have been filming the Russian bombing in Ukraine at the time.

He said: "Nine years of fighting and seemingly nothing has changed. But, thanks to the work of international and Ukrainian journalists, the world is finally seeing the truth – the true face and scale of this invasion."

Stepanenko received a standing ovation. She told the audience that at the start of the siege of Mariupol, people approached journalists for information because they were wearing press flak jackets.

She said: "[Then] we had no information. At that moment, I understood that information is even as important as food."

The awards recognised others for their work in Ukraine including CNN, the BBC, Sky News chief correspondent Stuart Ramsay and BBC News presenter Clive Myrie.



Thanks to the work of international and Ukrainian journalists, the world is finally seeing the truth - the true face and scale of this invasion

Mstyslav Chernov

Support fund needs more help

THE INTERNATIONAL Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has stepped up its campaign to raise more funds to support Ukrainian journalists.

As a response to the invasion of Ukraine last year,

the IFJ and European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) launched a Safety Fund in March 2022 to provide vital support to their two affiliates in Ukraine, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) and the

Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine (IMTUU).

The IFJ said: "Thanks to our partnership with UNESCO, we have established six journalists' solidarity centres across Ukraine, managed by

NUJU, which serve as temporary workspaces for journalists, provide them with access to psychological and legal support, and protective and medical equipment, as well as hosting training sessions on safety and first aid, among other services.

"However the IFJ added: The war drags on and money is running low. Ukrainian journalists need our support more than ever." **Please donate to the IFJ/EFJ Safety Fund for Journalists in Ukraine at <https://tinyurl.com/2p967vv9>**



Russia jails reporter over 'fake news'

THE NUJ and the IFJ have called for the immediate release of Maria Ponomarenko, who has been jailed for spreading 'fake news' in a post about a Russian attack on a theatre in Ukraine.

The journalist at the RusNews channel on YouTube has been found guilty of spreading alleged 'fake news' about the Russian army.

Ponomarenko has also been informed by the Leninsky District Court in Siberia that she has "no right to engage in activities related to

the administration of websites, public channels of electronic and information and telecommunication networks, including the internet, for a period of five years".

The Telegram post to an anonymous channel in March 2022 related to an attack described by Amnesty International as a war crime conducted by Russian forces. More than a thousand civilians inside the theatre were seeking shelter from the air raids at the time of bombing.

BBC needs to take a hard look at itself



Managers' actions risk popular support, warns **Raymond Snoddy**

Sometimes you just have to feel sorry for the BBC as traditional enemies and erstwhile friends are brought together across a wide battlefield.

In the past few weeks, the corporation has been rocked by the story over the banning of Gary Lineker, the scandal surrounding the appointment of BBC chairman Richard Sharp and the mishandling of the 'reform' of local broadcasting and subsequent job losses and strikes.

Along the way there was also the plan to cut the number of orchestral musicians employed by the BBC and close down the BBC Singers, the UK's only professional choir, after 99-years. That decision was then paused after a public outcry.

The epitome of public service broadcasting obviously?

For good measure, there was the leak of messages showing how 10 Downing Street under Boris Johnson tried to control the line-up in television news bulletins and even the use of words such as "lockdown" during the pandemic.

Scarcely surprising, then, that David Jordan, BBC director of editorial policy and standards, received unsolicited expressions of sympathy during breaks at the Society of Editors' media freedom conference. Jordan, who has seen it all, was in a phlegmatic mood.

BBC rows come in waves, often after relatively quiet periods.

Jordan batted away the importance of the stories about Number 10 trying to interfere with BBC News. They have always tried to do that. It's only a story if they succeeded and editorial integrity was compromised in return for access to the top.

In the new world of WhatsApp leaking on the Hancock model, the truth will almost certainly emerge before long.

Most of the BBC's travails break down into two distinctive categories – political cock-ups mishandled by management and management making a mess of trying to live within the budget restraints imposed by this government.

The BBC deserved all it got by trying to take on a national treasure such as Gary Lineker over tweets that were not too dissimilar to the truth.

The mishandling of the issue by BBC director general Tim Davie was enough to persuade Greg Dyke to break his silence on the performance of his successors since he was ousted.

Dyke explained he had remained silent for so long because he knew how difficult the job was. But Davie had simply got it wrong on this occasion, he told the Today programme.

Some good might yet emerge if the planned independent review is able to provide some clarity on where the line should be drawn on impartiality and the use of social media by freelance contributors to the BBC.

The appointment of Conservative donor Richard Sharp as BBC chairman at a time when he acted as a go-between in the arrangement of a £800,000 loan for Johnson is a scandal that refuses to go away.

The Sunday Times has pushed Sharp further into the mire with new allegations that he helped a friend to become a paid adviser to the BBC on editorial standards and impartiality.

The next chair should be appointed by an independent body, perhaps even communications regulator Ofcom. The days when prime ministers appoint to the post should now be over.

The future of BBC local broadcasting, local radio in particular, looks bleak and a lot less local. Local speech radio, which truly serves communities and often the elderly, should be at the heart of what the BBC does, not at the centre of cuts.

As usual, reduced services are dressed up as embracing modernity with inappropriate moves online. Have they forgotten already how similar arguments were used to put BBC Three online, only for it having to be brought back as a broadcast channel?

Time for a rethink, not least because the BBC is targeting some of its less well paid younger staff – the very people who did a better job on Liz Truss than their more highly paid London cousins.

Perhaps the biggest scandal and risk to the BBC's reputation was the planned closure of the BBC Singers.

As acting co-directors Jonathan Manners and Rob Johnson put it: "A recurring narrative of toxic culture now exists at the BBC, reflected in the working environment from the director general downwards".

They claimed 'seismic decisions' were taken at speed with no proper analysis or consultation and that only one key executive had heard the choir perform before the closure was announced.

It is hard to imagine more deserving manifestations of public service broadcasting than local radio or historic choirs.

Unless the BBC management has a serious rethink across a wide front from political scandals to managerial misjudgments it is in existential danger.

If it doesn't, in the face of attacks from the right wing of the Conservative Party and their tabloid backers, loyal BBC supporters will have little to say in its defence and little enthusiasm for making its case.

||
A recurring narrative of toxic culture exists at the BBC, reflected in the working environment from the director general downwards
||

Belfast

Ruth Addicott talks to journalists about the reality of life in Belfast, past and present

K

athryn Johnston was at home the night the call came through in October 1988, warning of an IRA plot to kill her husband the following day.

Within an hour, waiting outside their house was an unmarked police car, flanked by armoured police Land Rovers and two armed officers standing guard.

Johnston and her husband, Liam Clarke, then a senior journalist with The Sunday Times, had to leave their home north of Belfast immediately, waking their two boys, then aged eight and five, who were in bed. They never went back.

Clarke continued working as a journalist until he died of cancer, aged 61, in 2015. Johnston, a journalist, author and broadcaster, continues campaign work.

Belfast has become a completely different city since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, but there are scars of the violent 30-year conflict. Behind the multi-million pound regeneration, tensions remain and for some journalists, the dangers are as stark as ever.

“None of us would be doing our job properly if we didn’t speak truth to power and continue to shine a light into dark places,” says Johnston.

“Like the dogs on the streets who pee to mark their territory on every street corner, paramilitaries, criminals and others issue threats in local areas to intimidate and frighten journalists, photographers and other media workers. This is a global – and growing – issue, which can have very serious consequences.”

Northern Ireland has seen more journalists killed than anywhere in the UK. They include Sunday World journalist Martin O’Hagan, shot in front of his wife as he walked home

from a pub in Lurgan in September 2001. More recently, Lyra McKee was killed in Derry in April 2019 while observing a riot.

Both were NUJ members. O’Hagan was secretary of Belfast and District NUJ branch. No one has been held to account for his murder.

“We still have paramilitaries, we still have sectarianism and journalists have to try and negotiate their way through that,” says Robin Wilson, outgoing chair of Belfast and District NUJ branch.

“Many, many of us have been threatened by paramilitaries and forced to move house,” says Johnston. “Every worker has a right to earn a living free of intimidation and fear. Journalists are no exception.”

While there have been brutal killings of international correspondents such as Marie Colvin, Johnston observes that most journalists who are murdered are local.

A number of reporters covering activities by paramilitary and organised crime groups in Northern Ireland have received threats in recent years, including Sunday World reporter Patricia Devlin, whose name was sprayed on a wall alongside an image of a crosshair of a gun. Devlin lodged an official complaint with the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland in 2020, frustrated by the failure to investigate a threat to rape her newborn baby.

Graffiti appeared in Belfast city centre showing an image of the game hangman alongside the word ‘journalists’.

“We are concerned about the way a lot of this has not been dealt with effectively by the criminal justice system,” says Wilson. “We are now over two decades on from the killing of Martin O’ Hagan by the Loyalist Volunteer Force and nobody has been brought to book for that murder.”

The NUJ has called for a fresh investigation, alongside Amnesty International. Vigils were held in Belfast and Derry in 2021 to mark the 20th anniversary of his death and call for justice.

Women journalists are particularly vulnerable to trolling and serious online abuse.

KEVIN COOPER



Frozen out by officials

Avoiding scrutiny

"Politicians and government bodies are notorious for restricting access to press conferences, briefings and interviews," says journalist and broadcaster Kathryn

Johnston. "Many journalists have found themselves frozen out by those they hold up to scrutiny." She also describes the representation of women in broadcasting as 'poor'.

House and home

Northern Ireland has the lowest house prices in the UK (after the north east of England), although prices rose 7.1 per cent in 2022. "You can rent a nice two-bed

terrace within a 15-minute drive from the city centre for £600-£650 a month," says Matt Sterling, producer and journalist at UTV.

Safety tools

Any journalists subjected to threats or abuse should contact the NUJ. A safety

toolkit and app can be downloaded from the union's website. The Belfast and District NUJ branch has met with the European Commissioner of Human Rights, who highlighted in a report that journalists' safety needed to be guaranteed by government.

Wilson cites the recent film about McKee, showing the challenges she faced, including discrimination against LGBT+ individuals and social exclusion in a working class neighbourhood like the one where she grew up.

He believes one problem Belfast has is that few people move there: "It needs inward migrants to provide a kind of leavening influence and widen perspectives other than the very narrow, provincial sectarianism that often prevails here."

Challenges aside, Belfast has a proud tradition of newspapers. The Irish News, established in 1891, is Northern Ireland's largest-selling morning newspaper, owned by the Fitzpatrick family. It was in Donegall Street, Belfast's old press district, since 1905 and moved offices last year.

The Belfast Telegraph, founded in 1870, is published by Mediahuis, alongside the weekly tabloids Sunday World and Sunday Life. The News Letter, owned by National World, was founded in 1737 and is the world's oldest English language newspaper. Reach also has an office for the Northern Ireland Daily Mirror and Belfast Live website.

Magazines include Ulster Tatler, Ulster Business and Farm Week. Ulster Grocer closed last year following its 50th anniversary, but politics, culture and art magazine Fortnight has been revived.

There is also investigative news and analysis not-for-profit online platform The Detail.

The city is home to BBC Northern Ireland, which produces programmes across radio, TV and online.

The BBC has proposed cuts elsewhere in Northern Ireland as part of a plan to save £2.3m, which the NUJ has opposed. The daily breakfast news programme and regional news bulletins on Derry-based station BBC Radio Foyle are to be scrapped. The weekly Inside Business programme on Radio Ulster is also due to go, with more investment made in digital output.

"If members of paramilitary organisations feel they can enjoy impunity for killing journalists, then journalists have no reason to feel secure."

Robin Wilson,
outgoing chair of
Belfast and District
NUJ branch

"The people of Belfast are among the friendliest and finest on earth, but it remains a patriarchal society with major issues including sectarianism and dysfunction."

Amanda Ferguson,
journalist, writer
and broadcaster

"Freelance gigs are like hen's teeth."

Kathryn Johnston,
journalist, author
and broadcaster

UTV (owned by ITV) is a major employer and the most popular news source in Northern Ireland, according to Ofcom. Broadcasters include U105, Q Radio, local public service community TV station NVTV (Northern Visions Television) and Radio Failte – Belfast's only Irish language radio station.

Matt Sterling, producer and journalist at UTV, grew up in Belfast and says attitudes are changing. "There are bars and coffee shops that are very welcoming and don't care what religion you are or what community you're from," he says.

After starting on the Belfast Telegraph, Amanda Ferguson is now freelance Northern Ireland correspondent and Ireland stringer for major media outlets across Britain and Ireland. She co-founded Women in Media Belfast.

"I love it here," she says. "It's a post-conflict society and a complex beat that requires detailed explanation that doesn't always make sense to those living outside, so it's our job to break it down and pack in as much information as possible."

Thanks to the rejuvenated Titanic Quarter, Game of Thrones Trail, Cathedral Quarter and Botanical Gardens, the city is a popular tourist destination, with museums, street art, music, spa hotels and magnificent Victorian pubs.

Although opportunities can be limited, Ferguson would recommend Belfast to other journalists: "The money could be better and some colleagues can present as territorial, standoffish and insecure, but you'll work with some of the best of the best. Don't expect everyone to be happy for your success, focus on those who are and do good-quality work."

Wilson offers a word of caution: "Sometimes it's easy to romanticise a place like Belfast or Sarajevo or other trouble spots. I've lived through the violence nearly all of my life and, when you see it up close, it doesn't look romantic.

"If any journalists want to come to Belfast, they need to have their eyes wide open."





Duncan Campbell looks at the issue of journalists suing each other

Should journalists sue other journalists for libel for attacking their work? This question is due to be asked at this year's delegate meeting in London in late April.

The debate has been prompted by the libel action brought by John Ware (pictured), who made the 2019 BBC Panorama programme, *Is Labour Anti-Semitic?*, against freelance Paddy French, author of a pamphlet that heavily criticised the programme under the title, *Is the BBC anti-Labour?* and accused Ware of being a 'rogue journalist'.

In November, Ware was awarded £90,000 in damages and £300,000 in costs after French declined to attend court on the day the trial was due to start. The case prompted the call from the London Freelance Branch – of which French is a member – for the union to seek other ways of resolving such disputes.

Last year was the year of the libel. In July, Rebekah Vardy lost her multi-million-pound action against Coleen Rooney over the latter's claim that she had leaked information about her to the Sun. By November, this had inspired both a West End play and a Channel 4 drama. Meanwhile, the government said it planned to legislate over strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) as they had a 'chilling effect' on media freedom.

For journalists, two libel cases were of particular interest.

In June, the Observer's Carole Cadwalladr won the action brought against her by Brexiteer Arron Banks over what she had said about him in a TED talk in 2019. Banks appealed against this decision and in February the appeal court ruled in his favour on one of three grounds. This means he will receive damages, yet to be assessed, although the court found against him on the other two grounds.

It was the Ware v French case that raised the issue of whether journalists should sue each other. Ware was asked about this during the brief court hearing last November by

Mr Justice Knowles, who told the court that his father had been a journalist. Ware said this was "whiskery nostalgia... a pre-social media unwritten rule but it certainly doesn't apply now". He said French had 'slithered away' by his non-attendance: this failure to attend court led the judge to award an additional £40,000 to the £50,000 Ware had sought.

French says of his non-attendance: "After a two-and-a-half-year battle, I reluctantly took the decision to withdraw... Ever since juries were dispensed with in libel actions, the public interest defence has been left to judges to decide.

The case should never have been brought. The pamphlet... had a print run of just 300 copies and cost a mere £140. The number of people who read it is probably around the 10,000 mark. Compare that with the media firepower John Ware can command. In July 2020, for example, he wrote an article for the Daily Mail entitled 'Why I had to go to war with Labour's vile attack dogs'. This includes me as one of the 'pro-Corbyn conspiracy theorists' who 'disregard the most basic rules that govern mainstream journalism'. The readership of this will have been over a million. Ware defends his action, saying "the world has indeed changed, and French and others seem to have been emboldened by this... He accused me of fundamental dishonesty, that I had deliberately set out to deceive, that although I'd known X, I deliberately disseminated Y. It doesn't get more serious than that in our trade. And, in this particular case, it was especially serious since I was working for the publicly funded BBC... Suing was a last resort. Even after I issued a claim, French chose to double and treble down by standing by his false thesis... for me, the key was not money but a proper apology."

He now says he would have been happy to accept £500 in damages had French apologised, agreed to discuss costs and publish the court's judgment. "I agree that there are other ways

95%

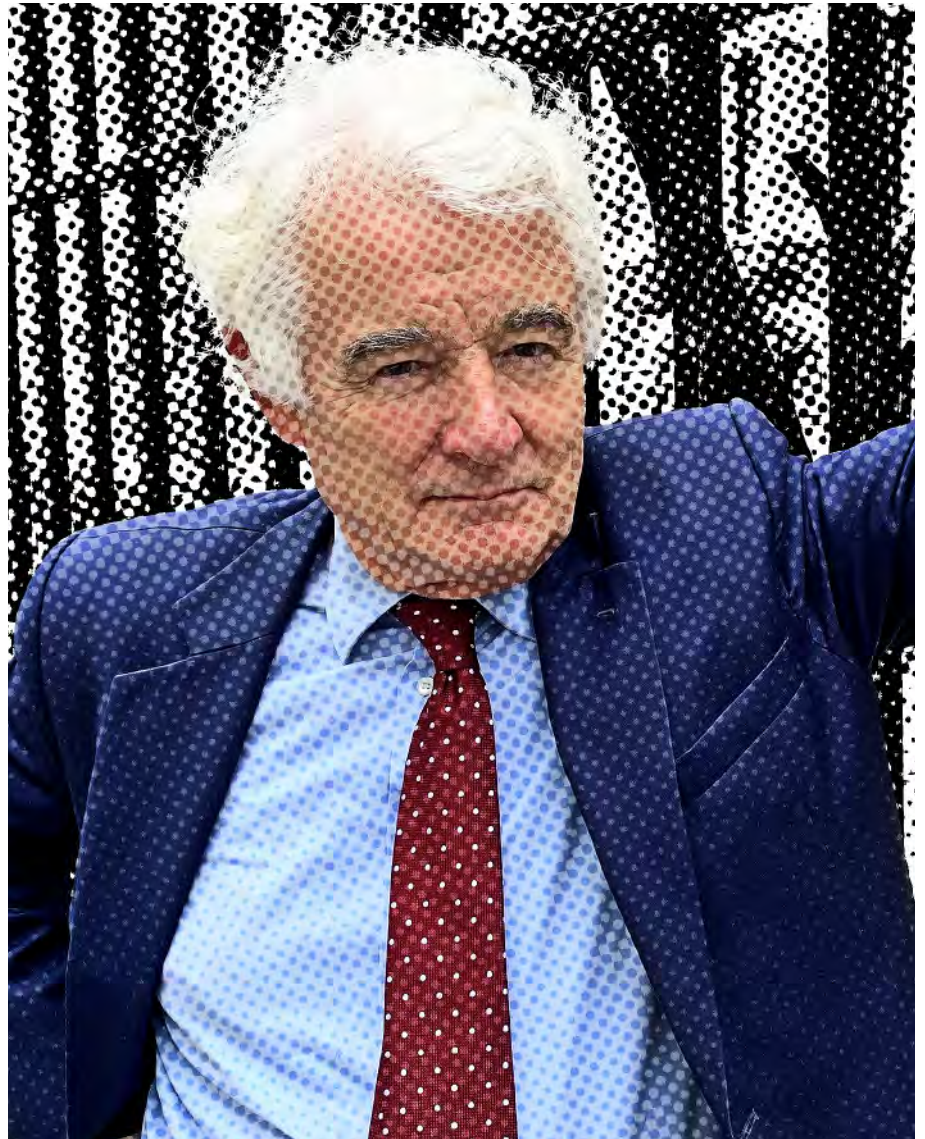
of the cases are won or settled on terms that require the allegation to be withdrawn

of solving disputes, but French chose not to do so. [He] left me no choice but to continue with my proceedings... as he unwisely kept trying to stand by what he must by now know was wrong."

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the programme and the response – both journalists have distinguished histories and I have known the latter since the 1980s when he edited radical Welsh magazine *Rebecca* – the question remains about the use of the law to settle a journalistic dispute. In April, the NUJ will debate a motion that suggests, "the libel laws, and their inevitable costs of tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds, are not the way to solve disputes between journalists".

Journalists have sued each other before. Andrew Neil, while editor of the *Sunday Times*, brought an action in 1990 against former *Sunday Telegraph* editor Peregrine Worsthorpe over an article headlined 'Playboys as Editors', which criticised Neil's social life. Neil had a token victory with £1,000 in damages. A couple of years ago, Neil, after a suggestion he should sue a columnist who had been rude about him, said: "Journalists shouldn't sue journalists. I did once and it was a huge mistake."

Former BBC Middle East correspondent Tim Llewellyn wrote to the BBC about the *Ware v French* case in 2020 saying, "when journalists put themselves in the public sphere [on] a BBC platform... they must take the knocks. I did, for many years. I could never have imagined going to court, or indeed the BBC allowing me or encouraging me to do so. Journalists are sued; they do not sue, or not in my long experience."



In his new book, 'Lawfare: How Russians, the Rich and the Government Try to Prevent Free Speech and How to Stop Them', Geoffrey Robertson KC argues that current libel laws 'deter and diminish investigative journalism'.

He points out that libel is the only part of the law where the burden of proof is on the defendant and that 95 per cent of cases are won or settled on terms that require the allegation to be withdrawn. He also notes that since the Defamation Act 2013, which introduced the 'public interest' defence, juries no longer feature.

In 1995, *The Guardian* was sued by five police officers, backed by the Police Federation, over an article I wrote three years earlier about a police corruption investigation in Stoke Newington, north London. At the time, the federation had won the 95 successive libel actions it had brought against the press. Only one had gone to trial since almost all papers opted to settle and pay 'substantial' damages – in reality, usually around £5,000 – rather than risk the costs of a full-blown trial.

In our case, the judge, the late Mr Justice French, was very sympathetic to the police and told the jury they could award each officer £125,000. We had a supportive editor in Alan Rusbridger and a fine legal team led by the late George Carman, and, crucially, a jury that came down in our favour 10-2. Had we lost – as we would have done had it been the judge's decision – *The Guardian* would have faced costs and damages of well over £1 million. The federation was left with a bill of £700,000.

Libel cases and the issues that provoke them can take years to resolve. On December 14 last year, more than three years after the *Panorama* broadcast, the BBC, in its corrections and clarifications column, referred to a contentious interview in

the programme. It suggested that if it were to be re-broadcast 'to give viewers further context', the full interview would be printed (this can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/mwhw6ykv>). Ware has said the comments 'became mixed up in the editing... a relatively minor slip'. French sees it differently.

Can the NUJ open the debate on how best to reach a resolution without incurring vast costs when a journalist feels badly damaged by another's work? Ideas have been floated: one Leveson recommendation – never implemented – was for anyone seeking to sue a news publisher that belonged to a recognised regulator, to be obliged to go through low-cost arbitration. Another could be a forum where former readers' editors or media lawyers negotiate corrections and apologies.

What better place to launch the discussion than within the union whose members are most affected by it and in London, the city now known derisively in US legal circles as 'a town called Sue'.

Duncan Campbell is a former Guardian crime correspondent and author of *We'll All Be Murdered in Our Beds!* a history of crime reporting



Kill the newsroom

Will journalism be undermined by the loss of physical newsrooms? asks **Conrad Landin**

Whether it's because of the grotty state of the kitchen, staplers flung by irate editors or the personal hygiene of a colleague, most journalists will have a clear memory of their first day in the newsroom. On work experience, many (like me) will recall sitting in silence pretending to look busy or being ignored in the tea run – before realising it's because you were supposed to be the one making it.

But perhaps no longer. In March 2021, Reach announced that the “new normal” of pandemic home working would become permanent. Staff were instructed to work from home, and dozens of newspaper offices in smaller towns would close. Staff in East Anglia who wanted to work in an office would have to commute to London; for the East Midlands, the nearest outpost would be in Birmingham.

Reach said this would increase flexibility while allowing people to collaborate face to face and provide a social element.

The concepts of newspaper headquarters and newsrooms have been central to journalism almost since its inception. From shop-front reception desks for tip-offs and ad sales to the mentoring of new recruits, the spatial geography of the newspaper office has been key to its function in society. So can news survive without the newsroom?

Office closures have been a running theme of local news for some years but, for many media organisations, the pandemic provided a catalyst to close or scale down their offices.

Glasgow's Herald and other Newsquest titles moved out of their city centre HQ with no replacement while independent publications – the Morning Star and New Internationalist among them – found that home working cut overheads and allowed recruitment beyond commuting distance.

In their book, 'Newspaper Building Design and Journalism Cultures in Australia and the UK: 1855-2010', Carole O'Reilly and Josie Vine present a colourful, considered assessment of what we might be losing. They connect the death of the newsroom to the “so-called de-professionalisation of the journalism industry”. Journalism cannot be taught, they argue and, until recently, its “subcultural values and beliefs were imparted in the raucous,

Collective power under threat

THERE are clear benefits to working from home, including significant savings in both the costs of commuting and the time it takes.

The Office for National Statistics survey in February 2022 reported that 78 per cent of home workers said being able to work from home improved their work-life balance. Just eight per cent thought there were no advantages.

According to a recent Financial Times column by Tim Harford, “most of the people working from home are no longer doing so out of caution or social responsibility”, but are “doing

it because they like it”.

That ignores the fact that many businesses – media organisations among them – have moved to home working to save on office overheads.

Workers themselves don't always have a choice, and – if no home working allowance is offered – end up footing the bill for costs previously covered by their employer.

Whether it's intentional or not, home working also provides new challenges for union organisers.

Alan Jones, who as well as covering the world of work was formerly chapel father at PA, says: “There's no

question it's harder [to organise people]. I'm not sure it's made a lot of difference to the bigger unions – they've still got access to the workplaces, they still hold meetings – but I'd say, for a lot of unions, it's made it much more difficult, definitely.”

During strikes, employers are likely to encourage

strikebreaking journalists to work from home, limiting both the effectiveness of pickets and the chapel's ability to assess the situation.

Many NUJ chapels have quickly adapted to the new reality, holding virtual or hybrid meetings and recruiting new members individually.

But the decline of the newsroom has the potential to seriously hurt the collective identity of journalists, which can be a significant factor in the success of union campaigns.

Traditional newsrooms offered, not only a space for meeting and mentoring, but also an alternative locus of power to the executive offices upstairs, known as Mahogany

Row in the Australian newsrooms discussed by O'Reilly and Vine. As newsrooms have contracted, editorial staff, advertising salespeople and management have often found themselves sharing open-plan offices.

Virtual working can offer rebellious spaces too, and could even embolden staff to speak to colleagues about their conditions without management surveillance.

But journalists should be cautious of using company hardware and software, including work email addresses and Slack channels, to organise. It is safer to establish alternative online channels and opt for verbal communications – by phone, for instance – where possible.



, kill the news?

messy and, above all, rebellious space called a newsroom”.

Even before home working became so commonplace, ‘paper palaces’ were being replaced by ‘bland, corporate structures’ amid the “hollowing out of journalistic endeavours and their replacement by profit- and metric-driven imperatives”.

Working from home is not new to many journalists, especially freelancers. But many will have spent decades in the office beforehand. For Alan Jones, PA’s industrial correspondent, time served in newsrooms gave him the skills and experience that allow him to work largely from home today. His first job was at “a local paper... an upstairs, windowless room” where “everybody smoked and drank”. He recalls: “[On] the one-day work experience I had there as a dewy-eyed 15-year-old, two of the reporters had a stand-up fight... right in front of me. One of them set fire to the other one’s newspaper that he was reading. From that second on, that’s all I wanted to do.”

Perhaps counterintuitively, a physical office can provide opportunities to get out. “We used to spend a lot of time out of the office, with people, covering meetings or courts, or meeting your contacts, doing vox pops in the street, doing door-knocking,” Jones says. “That was the kind of run-of-the-mill stuff and I just loved it, that was when I got the best stories and that’s the culture I’ve always kept really.”

Journalists today, however, may rarely get the chance to leave their desks in the office or at home alike. “The difference is quite staggering, and I think working from home has just speeded up that culture,” Jones adds. “I still speak to people all the time, but speaking to people [face to face] is so different to speaking to them on the phone. When I’m up in London, I always arrange to meet a couple of my contacts, and that’s where I, anyway, have always got the best stories, the best gossip.”

Jones fears for the future. “The lockdown forced working from home but it’s largely stayed. I honestly think it’s going to damage the quality of journalism, because – getting back to that first few days of my

first job – it was drummed into me that you have to get out and meet people, meet contacts.”

Not all organisations are heading the same way. Some, like DMG Media, owner of the *i*, the *Mail* titles and the *Metro*, encouraged staff to return once pandemic restrictions were lifted. Greater Govanhill magazine and *The Ferret*, a Scottish investigative journalism platform, recently moved from blanket home-working to a “community newsroom” in Glasgow.

“When I first started Greater Govanhill, it was just me working on it, so it wasn’t about newsroom culture per se - it was about being open to members of the public,” says founding editor Rhiannon Davies. “It came out of working with *The Ferret*, working on a collaborative project together about health inequalities and the solutions to them. We wanted it to be community-led so it seemed logical to think about creating a public space in the heart of the community.”

The space, a shopfront on a small parade in a poor but vibrant neighbourhood, also offers co-working spaces, “ideally [to] people working in the media and people who might be open to collaboration”.

Davies explains: “There are so many huge differences and benefits – having had conversations with other people who use newsrooms as well, there’s so much learning you can do, particularly for more junior people.”

“There’s lots of training that happens just from sitting in the same room as others. That’s a huge benefit. That’s being lost in terms of the training of new generations of journalists.”

In the view of O’Reilly and Vine, “journalism in a liberal western democracy... cannot exist without a social licence”, obtained by communicating values to both journalists and the public through, at least partially, the design of newsrooms and their buildings. Amid worsening trust in media and the spread of corporate disinformation, renewing that licence is perhaps more important than ever. Whether the virtual newsroom has the tools to pull it off, however, is another matter.



There are calls for the news to be made more positive. **Neil Merrick** reports

Always look on the bright side of life ...

Journalists are used to highlighting the world's problems. Yet, with many people switching off from the news because it is too depressing, is it time to focus more on possible solutions?

In Bristol, readers of a community newspaper are voting with their direct debits and demanding more solution-type stories, covering ways individuals and communities can overcome adversity.

Members of The Bristol Cable, who pay monthly or annual subscriptions, told staff at its last annual general meeting they wanted to see an expansion of 'solutions journalism', alongside the investigative reporting for which the paper is renowned.

"It's important for people to have hope and understand not only what can be done, but also that there are people already doing it," says journalist Eliz Mizon, who acts as the paper's comms lead.

The Bristol Cable is one of five UK titles that received money in 2022/23 from the European Journalism Centre (EJC) as part of a three-year programme to promote solutions journalism (see box). Its grants, which are worth €130,000, also went to media in France and Germany.

Tradition states that bad news attracts larger audiences and, thanks to the advertising, it helps fund the media. However, last year's Reuters digital news report found people in the UK were more likely to see the media as having a negative effect on their mood than in any other country.

Among media recognising the value in problem solving is Glasgow community magazine Greater Govanhill.

Editor Rhiannon Davies acknowledges that finding solution stories can be difficult, but believes journalists are capable of seeking out ideas and weighing up their effectiveness.

"Sometimes, the solutions exist on a small scale," she says. "They may work within one community – but that doesn't mean they will work everywhere. It's about opening people's eyes."

Reporting solutions does not mean regurgitating fluffy PR

stories, stresses Davies, who delivers training to student journalists and independent publishers. Rather, it is about looking through a critical lens, and explaining why something works – or not.

"Aspiring and practising journalists are interested in new ways to frame stories and follow-ups," she says.

Greater Govanhill, set up three years ago, is sharing an EJC grant with The Ferret, also based in Scotland, for a joint project on health inequalities. Grants were made under the Solutions Journalism Accelerator scheme, run in conjunction with the US-based Solutions Journalism Network and funded by the Gates Foundation.

Money also went to the Evening Standard for a series about girls' education in the developing world and to New Internationalist for stories on decolonisation.

The EJC, set up in 1992, supports journalism across Europe through grants, training and other initiatives. Zlatina Siderova. Who is in charge of the accelerator scheme, says solutions journalism is increasingly common in France, Germany and Italy (as well as in the UK), with growing interest in central and eastern Europe.

"It brings about more optimistic reporting and overcomes news fatigue and the negative bias in the news," says Siderova. "The problem is at the core of the story, but by reporting on something that complements the story, it conveys the message that positive change is possible."

When it comes to climate change, many editors cry out for stories featuring solutions to accompany warnings about the effects of global warming. Libération, a French newspaper, carries a monthly story on responses in countries such as Tunisia, which are feeling the direct impact of the climate emergency.

Research by academics in the US suggests solution-orientated reporting can make audiences feel less anxious and more energised. They may also be more willing to discuss issues and hold those in authority to account.

But how are journalists meant to uncover stories based around solutions when the pressure is on to meet a deadline and a bad news headline is seen as the best way to generate the necessary clicks?

Sometimes a solution can be found by journalists asking an extra question, says Jodie Jackson, founder of the News Literacy Network.

"Often people affected by a problem are aware of the most effective solutions," she says. "Ask if anybody is doing anything about it. Maybe the answer is no, but you may find that people say yes. The story will find you."

Jackson set up the News Literacy Network to help young people navigate the news more effectively. The news audience, she says, plays an important role in ensuring journalists place more emphasis on solution stories.

One problem for journalists is that so-called good news cannot always be taken at face value. There is corporate PR to contend with, not to mention government spin, industry lobbying and questionable claims by scientists and research bodies.

“The media is used to giving priority to things that are going wrong. They may not see the resonance in stories about things that are going right”

25%

more time spent by readers
on a story when it included a
solution to the problem
it covered

THE BRISTOL CABLE



Journalists, adds Jackson, can get around this by slowing down, stepping away from the breaking news culture and carefully analysing the claims being made.

“Solutions may not always exist in the same time frame,” she says. “Sometimes, there may not be an immediate response.”

In the US, an online newspaper placed two different stories on the same topic in front of readers. Both concerned the struggles of the working poor, were of the same length and used identical headlines.

But, while one of the stories carried by Deseret News focused solely on hardship, the other looked at both hardship and some of the assistance offered to poorer households in Utah, where the paper is based. Readers who accessed the second version of the story spent 25 per cent more time reading it.

Headlines for solution-type articles should flag up the solution on offer, rather than the problem. Eye-catching stats often draw in readers, while a question with a hook (such as ‘Feeling down?: here is how one woman overcame depression’) can be particularly effective.

Online and print magazine Positive News has been showcasing solutions journalism for three decades. Based in the UK, it was relaunched in 2015 as an international cooperative, with readers in 33 countries.

A quarterly magazine, it is funded via subscriptions and voluntary payments from online readers. “We’re trying to show the industry it’s something that can make a viable

business model,” explains chief executive Sean Wood.

Typical stories look at ways to tackle homelessness or make streets safer for women at night. If a celebrity is interviewed, they are likely to be asked what brings them joy or makes them feel optimistic.

While positive, its stories are not designed to make people smile in the same way as the ‘And finally...’ item at the end of the TV news. They may come from groups advocating social and environmental change, or by following up news that is covered in a superficial way by nationals.

“The national media is used to giving priority to things that are going wrong,” says Wood. “They may not see the resonance in stories about things that are going right.”

What is probably required is a change in mindset across the media, not so much by the news audience but to some extent among journalists (who may need to shed some of their inherent newsroom cynicism).

More than anything, problem-solving reporters require a more enlightened approach by publishers, who often dictate how a story is presented or whether it appears at all.

As Wood says: “Journalists need to be able to do their job and pursue accuracy and truth without ignoring positive stories.”

Positive about solving problems

PEOPLE in Bristol know the city faces a housing crisis. What they are less aware of is the option of co-designing a home and renting it from the council.

Co-designed housing was featured by The Bristol Cable in October 2022 in the first in a series of articles looking at the future of cities.

The newspaper, a co-operative funded by subscriptions, received a €130,000 grant from the European Journalism Centre to fund the year-long project.

The Cable is publishing one article each month highlighting possible ways

to address problems around housing, transport and resources such as water and energy. Many ideas come from readers, who flag up options and may feature in stories.

In the first article, a mother, who lives with her daughter in a bungalow built in the garden of her parents’ council home,

described how she advised builders over its size and layout.

A second article looked at rent controls in cities such as Lille, in northern France, and asked whether it was a solution to Bristol’s housing problems. The article pointed out the downsides as well as advantages.

At the end of each article, a box sets out how readers can take action, perhaps by joining a discussion forum or lobbying local politicians.

Eliz Mizon, who has written for the paper since its launch eight years ago, says articles flag up positives but include critical evaluation of the ideas put forward.

“All good solutions journalism should reflect the limitations of any solution,” she says.



The Sunday Times top brass could have paid closer attention, says **Jonathan Sale**

DIARY OF A HITLER HOAX

The Führer would have been furious had he somehow foreseen it: the Hitler Diaries hoax was the gift that went on giving. Forty years ago, it was the biggest media story in town, inspiring countless articles, a non-fiction book by novelist Robert Harris and an unmissable (particularly to journalists) television series with Barry Humphreys playing Rupert Murdoch, Jonathan Price as duped reporter Gerd Heidemann and Alexei Sayle as Konrad Kujau, the forger who turned out bogus documents on an almost while-you-wait basis.

Yet it was no joke to the poor journalists of The Sunday Times and The Times, who were lumbered with a forgery taken as gospel truth by the less professional staff on the German news magazine Stern.

The dodgy diaries surfaced recently when German public broadcaster NDR put them all online. They turned out to be absurdly anodyne: Eva Braun has got a couple of puppies; Hitler has bad breath. They were so lacking in unpleasant details like, well, gas chambers, that an early theory, now revived, is that they were a PR plot by neo-Nazis to whitewash Hitler's posthumous reputation. By contrast, Radio Moscow declared that the CIA was in fact behind the creation of these memoirs.

Against this, it could be said that the forger of the Führer fantasy was the sole creator, interested only in the cash they brought him, and was totally without convictions (apart from, of course, his own for fraud). Either way, the faked Führer jottings were far less gripping than the storm their publication created.

"On The Sunday Times, we had picked up word that Hitler was alleged to have left behind not the Hitler Diaries but some documents," recalls the then features editor Magnus Linklater. Later the editor of The Scotsman, he is still exasperated after the passage of 40 years.

This rumour turned out to relate to alleged diaries and, in December 1982, it reached Linklater in the shape of an offer from 'the dreaded David Irving', the far right Holocaust

The forger of fascist artefacts

KONRAD KUJAU was the forger who dashed off and sold Hitler's diaries to Stern, the German news magazine that sold the syndication rights to Murdoch for The Sunday Times.

A window cleaner and petty crook, Kujau started out forging luncheon vouchers and ended up forging the diaries of Adolf Hitler. A compulsive liar, he was a collector - and forger - of Fascist artefacts, which he smuggled from

East to West Germany. They were often accompanied by letters of authentication from eminent (and safely dead) Nazis; these were forged too.

After a while, he put the word about that he could get his hands on the hitherto unknown diaries allegedly written by the Führer.

This reached the eager ears of an obsessive collector of Nazi memorabilia named Gerd

denier who knocked around with ex-Nazis (to use that prefix very loosely).

"Would you," Irving asked, "like me to research it?" In view of Irving's 'toxic reputation', Linklater replied, "We'll stand back from that."

A much better researcher was Gitta Sereny, the paper's go-to expert on the Nazi nightmare. She flew to Hamburg, where she spoke - on the phone - to a professor who had seen 'an interesting yearbook' and could introduce her to some equally interesting people.

These contacts could well have blown the gaff on the forgery by revealing the official Nazi publications from which much of the info in the diaries had actually been copied. Sadly, these informed folk were in Stuttgart and the 'rabid economy drive' of the paper's new owner, Rupert Murdoch, ruled out the frittering away of another airline ticket to visit them.

"If The Sunday Times had not decided on this false economy, the events of the next three months might have been very different", according to Robert Harris, who was to join The Sunday Times much later. His factual Selling Hitler begins like a PG Wodehouse story: "On April Fool's Day 1983, the distinguished British historian Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper, first Baron Dacre of Glanton (no, not a relation of Paul - Ed) was telephoned at his country home in Scotland by the Assistant Editor of The Times, Mr Colin Webb."

Yes, April 1. It was as if the calendar was trying to warn him. The former Oxford history professor

Heidemann, a staffer on Stern.

Going behind the back of a highly sceptical editor, the gullible Heidemann persuaded a handful of equally gullible executives to hand over a cool nine

million marks as a payment to Kujau.

The forger, who had deceived Heidemann big time, was furious that the journalist would turn out to have kept much of the nine million in cash for himself.

The set of 60-plus diaries took time to cobble together. After all, Kujau had to wait for the ink to dry, not to mention the tea he poured over them to give a suitably antique look.

When his wheeze was rumbled, Murdoch got his money back from Stern. Plus The Sunday Times put on 60,000 readers.



1985 SHUTTERSTOCK

1983 SHUTTERSTOCK

was – pause for laughter – an “independent” director of Murdoch’s Times. Webb’s message was highly confidential. Stern magazine had acquired the handwritten diaries of Hitler and was selling the rights but Murdoch needed an expert to vouch they were kosher.

Trevor-Roper was the witchfinder-general for notorious Nazis. Initially dubious, he was shown specimen pages of the diaries in a Swiss bank vault by overconfident Stern executives who exaggerated, to put it mildly, some of their provenance. He phoned Times editor Charles Douglas-Home to say, “I think they’re genuine.” Months later, he wrote he should have added one word: “superficially. What I should have done was insist on waiting for a transcript.”

The text was written in an archaic Germanic script that few could decipher, let alone Trevor-Roper, whose German wasn’t much cop anyway. But his hurried verdict was good enough for Murdoch, who was champing at the bit to start bidding for the rights from Stern.

“I was the Times correspondent in Berlin,” recalls Michael Binyon, today a Times leader writer, “when the news editor rang to say, please would I go to Hamburg – and please don’t tell the foreign desk.” At the Four Seasons Hotel, he met the chairman of Murdoch’s Australian operation, who said: “I suppose you know what all this is about.” Secrecy had been so tight that Binyon had no idea: “I thought they’d got a Russian spy or something.” Murdoch arrived the next day and won a ferocious bidding war with Newsweek over the syndication rights. “The key issue was: how do we know they are authentic?” Stern’s answer was: “When you sign the contract, we will give the proof.”

Binyon wrote the splash for that Saturday’s Times: “Hitler’s secret diaries to be published: sixty volumes of hitherto unknown diaries kept by Adolf Hitler throughout his 12-year dictatorship have been discovered after lying for almost 35 years concealed in an undisclosed location in East Germany.”

The story went on: “The documents are of momentous historical significance. They are now in a Swiss bank vault and have been painstakingly tested and analysed by experts.”

Police officers search the store of Konrad Kujau, filled with artifacts from WW II, in Stuttgart, West Germany



SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG PHOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



ULSTEIN BILD - LENGEMANN/WEIT

Magnus Linklater



But, as Binyon now explains, “The second paragraph was actually tosh. This is what Stern told Murdoch. In fact, no tests had been done on them at all.”

Meanwhile, over at The Sunday Times, “We were appalled that we had to run it without researching it,” says Linklater. “We were assured that the eminent historian Hugh Trevor-Roper was going to check the story. We were landed with the stuff on, I think, the Friday. It was full of tittle-tattle. Myself and [eminent journalist]

Hugo Young went to [editor] Frank Giles, and said, ‘We have to research this stuff.’ He said, ‘There is no need to do that: Rupert Murdoch has given me his personal assurance that Trevor-Roper has certified the diaries.’

“He literally put his hands over his ears – this was symbolic,” continues Linklater. “At one stage I said, ‘The only honourable thing is to resign,’ but we were too craven.

“The front page designed by the art editor Michael Rand was a magnificent piece of work. As dawn broke on Saturday morning I said, ‘I must speak to Trevor-Roper,’ and I rang him at 8 in the morning and said, ‘I have to hear that you are entirely confident.’ He said, ‘I’m 100% confident. Well, 99%.’”

In the early evening, the top team gathered as usual in the editor’s office to leap on the first copies of the paper, only to hear Frank Giles gasping on the phone to Trevor-Roper, “Don’t tell me you’ve begun to harbour doubts...”

“We didn’t immediately realise that the game was up,” relates Linklater. “But it was.

As an epilogue to this hoax, it must be said that Binyon wrote a piece rather different to his earlier one on the Diaries, explaining how the two papers had been hoodwinked.

He adds: “They arrested Konrad a year later and he was put on trial in Hamburg. I went up to him and said, ‘I’m from The Times.’ He said, ‘You should have told me you were here. I would have written something special for you.’”

Looking back 40 years, can’t we say that surely it was, as it were, a victimless crime? Linklater retorts: “I feel a victim! I know that when and if my obituary is written, the Hitler Diaries will be in the first paragraph. I’m not sure that’s the greatest of legacies...”



TechDownload

Chris Merriman on technology for journalists

byte size...

POSH BRIEFCASE FOR EVERYDAY USE

I'm a bit besotted with this Harber London's Everyday laptop-friendly briefcase, so much so that I've been carrying it around for months and forgot to review it. It's calf leather is ridiculously soft, and it has magnetically sealed, padded compartments for your gadgets, plus a magnetic keyring attachment so your keys never get lost at the bottom. It's a bit pricey but it'll last for years.

www.harberlondon.com, £349

WHAT HAPPENED TO ITVX NEWS?

When ITV replaced its rather shonky streaming service ITV Hub with the almost-as-shonky ITVX, one of the promises made was that there would be a 24/7 feed of rolling reports from ITV News - a presenterless ITV News Channel. But, as yet, it has failed to materialise. Given the BBC is effectively largely reducing its UK news channel by stealth, this failure to launch couldn't have come at a worse time.

CHARGER IS PRETTY AS A PICTURE

Wireless charging for phones has been a gamechanger, but most wireless mats and docks are fairly uninspiring to look at. Twelvesouth have solved that with its Powerpic Mod 20w Qi charger, which is built into a picture frame that will hold a 4"x6" photo. Plonk your phone in front of the picture and it starts charging. Works with any phone that supports wireless charging.

www.twelvesouth.com, £59.99

THIS DOES MATTER

This year sees something extremely rare in tech – consensus. Anyone old enough to have bought a Betamax VCR instead of VHS or HD-DVD player instead of Blu-ray will know that, when it comes to tech, it's more than possible to back the wrong format and end up with an expensive paperweight.

For once, the big tech firms are as one. Matter is the new, agreed standard for smart home devices and is backed by Google, Apple, Microsoft, Meta, Amazon and over 200 companies. In other words, you can buy any brand of device and (at least in theory) it will be able to talk to everything else in the building.

So you'll be able to trigger your lights to dim as soon as you turn on a movie, or set the heating to turn down as soon as you're snuggly in bed using one app.

In reality, however, it's a bit of a fudge. It brings together a bunch of existing standards and, thanks to some clever work under the hood, lets certain devices in your home (some routers, Amazon Echo and Google Nest devices) act like a Rosetta Stone.



However, as you might expect, it's not as simple as all that, and there are a few things you need to know before you plough money into an all-singing, all-dancing smart home.

First, Matter is still in its infancy. At the time of writing, it can only handle basic devices such as smart plugs and light bulbs. Other product categories are due to come on stream, but we're not there yet.

Second, devices may get upgraded to support Matter, but probably won't. Many companies are using Matter as an excuse for built-in obsolescence, so you'll need to replace devices instead of waiting for a software update.

Third, while many products are advertised as supporting Matter or have a software update in the pipeline, many won't be activated until the whole platform is more mature.

Matter is important and will touch our lives. But, for most, it's still the tech of tomorrow. Keep Matter in mind if you're investing in gadgets this year – but don't expect the revolution just yet.

<https://csa-iot.org/all-solutions/matter/>

> Twitter trims text test

Twitter is a crucial tool for journalists, which also makes it a target for hackers.

Owner Elon Musk's latest change will affect you if you secure your account using two-factor authentication,

where you are sent a code via text message to log in.

From now on, this option will be available only to users of the paid Twitter Blue service.

If you're on the free service (as most of us are) act now to protect your account by switching to an authenticator app or FIDO key in your account settings.

BBC ONE NEWS GOES HD

BBC's big, late technical upgrade

After 14 years of the 'red slide of doom', BBC viewers in England will soon see their local BBC One news bulletins in high definition (HD), as BBC One HD becomes the norm. The standard definition (SD) service is being replaced by a national 'nightlight' BBC One service, which will remain until 2025 to allow stragglers time to upgrade their TVs. The process on satellite and Freeview will be completed by late spring. To find out if you can receive HD, go to channel 799 (on any platform) for a checker tool.

Windows 10 pulled from sale

Microsoft has withdrawn Windows 10 from sale, but before you start panicking, it will provide support and security patches until October 14 2025 while it pushes Windows 11. We've talked about Windows 11 before. It relies on security features only found in newer microchips, so Microsoft has effectively given a death date for older (pre-circa 2015) computers.

More secure computers? Great. But Microsoft stands to be responsible for a tidal wave of e-waste, so it's time to think about this. There are organisations that repurpose old devices and charities that convert them to Chromebooks for kids in developing nations. Also, manufacturers are obliged to recycle e-waste if you return it to them. But please – don't make more landfill for the sake of a bit of software, OK?





Malcolm Race looks back on starting out as a local journalist in the 1940s

Stories of war, heroism and censorship



It was on an August day in 1942 that, as a rather nervous 16-year-old, fresh out of Middlesbrough High School, I first entered the grey stone headquarters of the Gazette in the centre of the town.

I was to begin a job as a junior reporter at a princely wage of 15 shillings (75 pence) a week. Little did I realise that I would still be there 47 years later.

The paper had adapted to wartime conditions. All the heavy machinery, including 26 Linotype machines, each weighing almost a tonne, had been transferred to the basement in case of air raids, involving moving 100 tonnes of paper to make way.

The head office reporting staff consisted of the chief reporter, two seniors and two juniors, of whom I was to become one.

The size of the paper and number of pages had been reduced and even the title cut back from North Eastern Evening Gazette to Evening Gazette (it is now simply The Gazette).

This meant stories had to be condensed. The intro was expected to include what, where and when, which sometimes led to lengthy first sentences of up to eighty words. Most copy was handwritten in pencil. You became popular with the subs if they could read your writing. Words such as kids and cops were taboo, considered slang.

In addition to the daily round of courts, inquests, meetings and so on there were gallantry awards, casualties, prisoner of war repatriations and air raid reports.

The day I started, the Gazette was allowed by the censor to publish details of Middlesbrough's most devastating air raid, which had occurred the previous month.

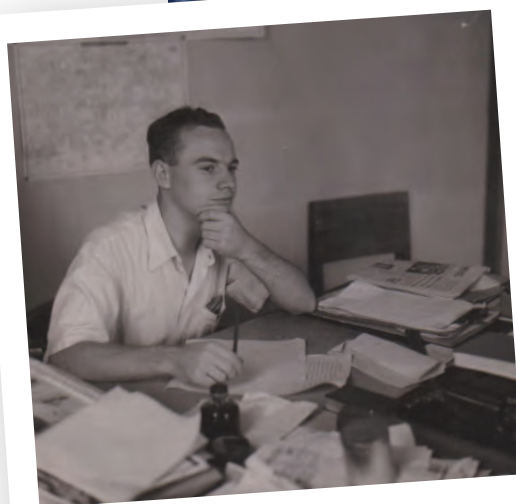
There were stories of tragedy and heroism, like that of the doctor who, in the middle of the raid, had climbed a drainpipe to the roof in his pyjamas to tackle incendiary bombs, using the girdle of his dressing gown to haul up buckets of water.

Three weeks before I arrived, at lunchtime on August bank holiday Monday, a lone German raider had dropped bombs on Middlesbrough railway station.

Later, the chief photographer, Teddy Baxter, told me how he had been in the canteen on the top floor of the Gazette building and had seen the bombs fall and rushed in his car to the scene.

He took some very dramatic photographs which were later widely circulated – but was reprimanded by the transport manager because he had driven along a road covered in shattered glass from the explosions that had punctured his tyres, which were difficult to replace in wartime.

It was some time before the censor allowed details to be published. Readers became accustomed to seeing headlines announcing that 'a north-east town' had been bombed.



Malcolm Race in Cairo in 1947

Courts were still 'police courts' and the chief constable himself would regularly prosecute cases in Middlesbrough, with officers of varying ranks doing duty at outlying courts.

Court cases had a wartime flavour. Defendants were prosecuted: for wasting electricity (one man had left an electric fire burning in a storeroom for four-and-a-half hours on a Sunday); for wasting

food (a woman was fined after mouldy bread and teacakes were found in her back yard); and for wasting petrol (a North Yorkshire farmer was fined for using petrol to go to the races and told he should have gone by bus). There were fines for breaching the blackout and failing to turn up for Home Guard or fire-watching duties, or for absenteeism from essential work.

One of the oddest stories I can recall was the auction of six bananas and two lemons over three nights at the town's Empire Theatre, the proceeds going to 'the national war effort'.

After two years I was called up and spent three and a half years in the army, including a year and a half working on an army magazine, Parade, in Cairo before returning to the Gazette in 1948 – but that is another story.



Six bananas and two lemons were auctioned over three nights at the Empire Theatre to support 'the national war effort'



by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books >

A Glorious History – the Printing and Papermaking Trade Unions in the UK and Ireland

Tony Burke and Ann Field
Available now
Unite the Union

Two former union officials tell the story of the 250-year struggle by printing and paper workers to establish collective bargaining, equality and a single voice. The NUJ is part of the tale. This volume highlights issues that were common to all parts of the industry and how trade unionists fought against poverty, injustice, and exploitation.
<https://tinyurl.com/2z6wcy3q>

Politics: a Survivor's Guide: How to Stay Engaged Without Getting Enraged

Rafael Behr
May 4
Atlantic

The Guardian's political commentator resists switching off the news over the state of politics and makes a democratic plea for everyone to stay engaged.
<https://tinyurl.com/2jjegetj>

Dance >

Figures in Extinction [1.0]
Sadler's Wells, London
April 19–22

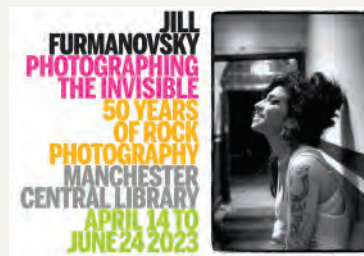
Part of a triple bill, this piece by

Nederlands Dans Theater is informed by melting ice caps and climate-change deniers. It is a collaboration between Canadian choreographer Crystal Pite and director Simon McBurney.
<https://tinyurl.com/2nnyl9wl>

Exhibitions >

Photographing the Invisible: 50 Years of Rock Photography
Manchester Central Library
April 14-June 24

Long-standing NUJ member Jill Furmanovsky has photographed everyone from Joan Armatrading to Amy Winehouse, from Bjork to Stevie Wonder. Here, she picks highlights of a peerless half-century collection.
<https://tinyurl.com/2f69mqwk>



When the Apple Ripens: Peter Howson at 65
City Art Centre, Edinburgh
May 27-October 1

The official British war artist for Bosnia in 1993 enjoys a birthday retrospective, bringing together around 100 works that take an unflinching look at trauma, conflict and the human condition.
<https://tinyurl.com/2mmvbwbd>



Festivals >

Tradfest
Traverse, Assembly Rooms and Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh
April 28-May 9

As well as being a photographer, NUJ member Douglas Robertson is a co-organiser with Jane-Ann Purdy of this annual roots festival. Highlights include Shooglenifty, Karine Polwart and Martin and Eliza Carthy.
<https://tinyurl.com/2mdbsb85>

Hay Festival
Hay-on-Wye
May 25-June 4

Journalists at this year's book bonanza include Gary Younge, talking about race, Misha Gleny, interviewing experts on Europe, and Jon Snow, stressing the importance of journalism in turbulent times. Also appearing are Michael Parkinson, Jeremy Bowen and Marina Hyde.
<https://tinyurl.com/2fdagvhs>

Films >

Pamfir
In cinemas
May 5

Filmed just before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk's debut feature has been raking in international awards. It is about crime, corruption and paganism in a Ukrainian border town.
<https://tinyurl.com/2osmekrr>

Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power
In cinemas
May 12

Writer-director Nina Menkes trawls

In depth >

A matter of fact

IT HAS been seven years since the release of Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake*, so you would have hoped such a grim story about a benefits claimant would need significant updating for a stage adaptation in 2023.

Not so, says Dave Johns, the movie's star, who is adapting the acclaimed movie for the theatre.

"The only thing that's changed is the on-hold music," he says, recalling the scene when Daniel graffiti's, "I, Daniel Blake, demand my appeal date before I starve and change the shit music on the phones!"

"It's not Vivaldi any more," he laughs. "It's some kind of pop song. That's what they got from

the film – they just changed the music."

If anything, the situation at the present is even bleaker.

When Johns played the part of Daniel Blake – his first screen role – he had never heard of a food bank. Today, they are ubiquitous.

Throw in a cost-of-living crisis and Loach's vision is all the more prescient.

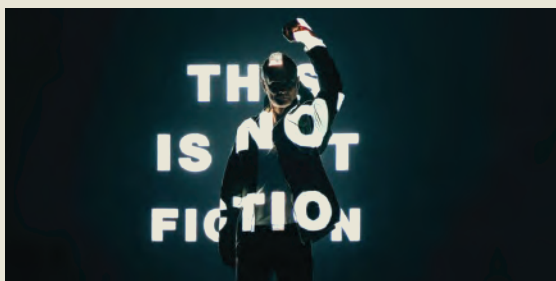
"The film had such an impact because a lot of

people didn't know about food banks and were stunned that the system was there to thwart you," he says.

"I wanted to explore what was happening now. There are more food banks in the UK than there are branches of McDonald's.

"The narrative now is that food banks are normal. It's like when workhouses were normal."

With the blessing of Loach and screenwriter Paul Laverty, Johns has revisited the script for Newcastle's Northern Stage – and a tour –



through 120 years of movies to show the pervasiveness of sexist framing and makes a connection to sexual harassment, assault and discrimination. "This system of shot design disempowers women," says Menkes. <https://tinyurl.com/2phzv66r>

Television >

Waco: a British Tragedy

ITV

April 13

Two-part documentary about an overlooked detail of the longest-running non-military siege in US history: one third of the Branch Davidians led by David Koresh were British.

<https://tinyurl.com/2kzuyq2y>

The Hunt for Raoul Moat

ITV

April

Reporters from Newcastle's Evening Chronicle were first on the scene when news broke in 2010 about Raoul Moat going on the run after a two-day shooting spree. Their story is part of this three-part dramatisation.

<https://tinyurl.com/2ldmdah2>

Theatre >

Protest

Northern Stage, Newcastle

April 27-6 May and touring

Three girls stand up for what they believe is right in Hannah Lavery's new play about young people resisting injustice. Natalie Ibu's production calls into Edinburgh's Imagine Children's Festival as part of its UK tour.

<https://tinyurl.com/2e49b6bb>



Hate Radio

Battersea Arts Centre, London

April 19-22

Darling of the festival circuit, director Milo Rau makes the connection between an a broadcast on Rwandan radio station RTLM and the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

<https://tinyurl.com/2k7kkd2g>

Spotlight >

Becoming visible

IN THE middle of *Troublemaking*, a galvanising book about workers' rights, authors Lydia Hughes and Jamie Woodcock unexpectedly turn the tables on the reader.

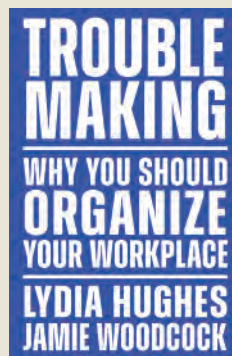
You know who wrote the book, they tell us, "but who edited it? Designed the cover? Typeset it? Checked for errors? Printed the copies? Distributed and sold them?"

It sounds like a trick - but they are showing how labour takes place all around us, often unseen.

And as it is unseen, it can take industrial

action for workers to become visible. The recent protests by NHS staff, rail workers and teachers show how much that is true.

Subtitled *Why You Should Organize Your Workplace*, the book is as timely as it is lucid. With a Marxist



perspective on labour relations, it gives examples of workers agitating for better conditions, be that gig-economy couriers in London or waste collectors in Mumbai.

Aware that many people know little about organising and unions, they describe the baby steps on the road from exploitation to collective action. They highlight the hazards while showing how resistance is possible.

Troublemaking:
Why You Should Organize Your Workplace
April 25

Verso
<https://tinyurl.com/2ge77n2t>

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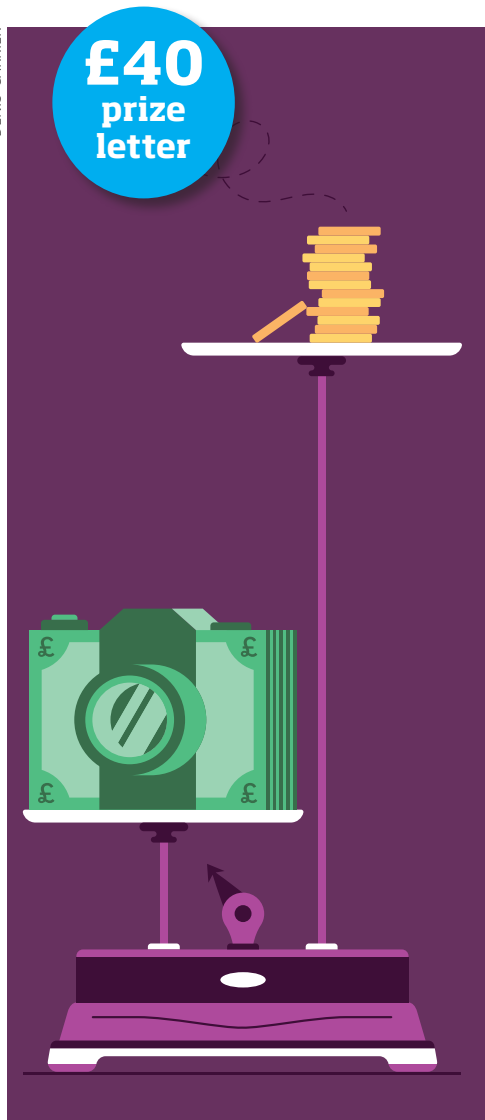
Please keep comments to 350 words maximum

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



DENIS CARRIER

£40 prize letter



Photography costs rise while pay rates slump

On a 'Fleet Street' photographers' social media forum recently, a senior photographer asked the question: "Does anyone know how cutbacks at Reach affect photographers?"

How indeed. To start with, back in 1994, I was receiving a rate of £165 from most commissioning newspapers (Telegraph, Guardian, Times, Mail, Express etc). A couple paid slightly more and a couple slightly less.

The rates being paid this year are the same (or less) than the rates I was being paid 30 years ago. Every year that the rates have remained static they have, in effect, been cut back a few per cent.

I believe inflation since 1994 has equated to 94.16 per cent, which means a rate of £165 back then would be £320.36 today (see <https://www.inflationtool.com/british-pound/1994-to-present-value>). I am still regularly offered £165 to do a newspaper job so, yes, there have been cutbacks.

And, of course, there is more to it than static rates.

In 1994, the photographer shot on film, whereas today a photographer is expected to own and use a collection of digital equipment - such as a DSLR camera, computer, mobile hub and software.

This is all much more expensive than the 1994 toolkit and, of course, these newer items have to be updated regularly.

As newspapers embraced the new digital and internet ages, pagination and paper size were reduced, meaning fewer opportunities for photographers

To answer that initial question: the cost of working as a photographer has dramatically increased and the remuneration has plummeted.

Pete Jenkins
Nottingham

The whole kit would probably have cost about £12,000. A couple of years later, each staff photographer was issued with improved versions of digital cameras.

Photography would never be the same again. Digital cameras and the Internet changed everything. It brought an end to the wet processing method that had been around for more than a century and would eventually see the end of film and hard copy prints - at least in newspaper press photography - and also the closure of the darkroom.

But more on that in a later edition of The Journalist.

Bill Batchelor
Bournemouth

Christine Keeler: a fascinating TV guest

I was intrigued by Jonathan Sale's piece on the Keeler story (The Keeler Instinct, February/March).

I was only six when this explosive story broke, but it made an impact on my middle-class parents at the time so it didn't go unnoticed by me.

Much, much later, I co-produced Notes & Queries with Clive Anderson for BBC2 where we attempted to answer: "Should sexual indiscretion lead to the downfall of government?"

This was an irresistible challenge to our studio guests, who included Michael Dobbs and Andrew Neil.

But it could not have been the same without Christine Keeler who participated thanks to the series editor Lila Creswell. Keeler was by then completely broke, living in a basement in Battersea and being looked after by one of her sons.

Creswell met her a few times and talked to her at length, eventually persuading her to come on the programme.

At the studio, she was completely charming, but when she saw Neil was billed to appear, she took umbrage and told us that she would never appear together with him. She got a private green room well away from him and was well looked after.



Image evolution from darkrooms to digital

I enjoyed reading Peter Popham's piece (It's another world now, February/March). Peter was writing from a writer's point of view and it got me thinking about how things have changed for press photographers.

As a retired former staff photographer at the Manchester Evening News (MEN) from 1969 to 1997 and, before that, from 1962 to 1965 at the Southport Press Agency then and from 1965 to

1989 at the Chronicle, Wigan, I have seen quite a few changes.

Although I never had to use a plate camera as a photographer myself, I was involved with other photographers who did use them during my five-year apprenticeship in the darkroom at the MEN. My own use of plate cameras was when doing copies of pictures during my apprenticeship years so I do know the procedure for their use.

My years as a photographer began when using my own Rolleicord 2.25

square roll film camera until progressing to using Minolta, Nikon and Canon 35mm cameras, all involving the wet processing and printing method.

Then - at the MEN at least - along came digital and, in 1996, the MEN bought its first (and only one at the time) professional digital camera. It was a rather heavy Canon Kodak camera body with, I think, about two or three megapixels which I think cost £8,000, plus laptop and mobile phone.

Come recording time, we couldn't find either Keeler or Neil easily, but discovered them in another room downing gin and tonics together and having a ball...

She was a fascinating guest, discussing her role in that pivotal bit of early 1960s political history, and even the occasionally acerbic and cynical Anderson seemed overawed by her, as were we all. Neil was unusually dumbstruck.

Creswell's cousin Peter Rawlinson was in the audience. He had asked to be there as he'd never met Christine, despite having been centrally involved in John Profumo's political downfall as solicitor general.

Altogether, it was a fascinating evening for all. Keeler was above all else dignified, amusing and deeply hurt by all that had passed years before – but brave and willing to be exposed once more. Good for her.

Philippe Bassett
Surrey

I never said that: when recall turns out poor

I was fascinated to read James Fair's feature on whether to allow

interviewees to approve quotes (Don't quote me on that, December/January).

I think there are limited occasions when it is reasonable to do so, for example on complex technical issues, or matters of historical accuracy.

I encountered a similar, but slightly different issue recently. I agreed to check quotes with a historian I'd interviewed for a story.

She had mentioned beforehand about always being misquoted by journalists, but was also the foremost authority on an obscure subject and I wanted to check my facts were correct.

I took notes and, with her agreement, recorded our conversation. However, when I showed her the quotes I used, she denied flatly (in three cases) having said what was written. Concerned, I checked the recording. The quotes were correct, word for word. But no, she insisted she'd never use those terms and could I change them?

I could, of course, and because I had no actual reason to use her original words – the subject wasn't in any way contentious, simply an

interesting historical piece – it made little difference.

She wasn't some Trumpian politician attempting to wriggle out of a hole by simply denying what she had clearly uttered. She genuinely believed she hadn't said what she had.

I let it lie. But it raised a question I had never considered. People sometimes, through error, misunderstanding or failure of memory, do not recall what they once said.

She wasn't lying – she was a sincere individual who believed she hadn't said the words I used. What, in such circumstances, should a journalist do?

In this case, it was simple. It made no difference whether I used her original quotes or her new ones.

I could have embarrassed her by playing the recording, but I felt it unnecessary.

That said, doubtless she again felt misrepresented by a journalist. You have to decide whether you can live with such ignominy.

The conclusion I came to was always, if you don't already do so, record interviews (rarely is permission not granted) and archive them.

At least, even if you never need them as evidence, your personal and professional sense of integrity will remain intact.

Michael O'Hare
Northwood, Middlesex



Is this a record for number of names in one byline?

What is the longest byline you have come across? Here is mine. A story of a visit to Newcastle by the Queen and Prince Philip, on July 15, 1977, has 14 names crowded into a single byline.

Those were the days before mobile phones, but thankfully, the 14 reporters, including me, didn't have to cram into the same public phone box to get their copy across in time to beat the deadline for that night's edition

Vince Gledhill
Ashington

STEVE BELL

THE OWNERS





Peter O'Rourke

Life member Peter O'Rourke died in February in his 90th year at home in Larne, Northern Ireland. His passing breaks a link to the Northern Irish local press of the 1950s.

For years, Peter was a stalwart of the union in Northern Ireland. He held the onerous office of Belfast Branch treasurer for 15 years and served two terms on the Irish executive council. He was also a chapel officer in Belfast daily the Irish News.

A friend of his daughter Fiona told her: "The first time I met your dad, the first thing he said to me was: 'Are you in a union?'"

He was both a fine production journalist and a fine writer. His column on traditional Irish music, *Dúchas* (Heritage), ran for many years in the Irish News. He was a fine singer, mostly of Irish traditional and folk songs, and sang in a local church choir. The Armagh Festival of Traditional Song gave him an award for his work in promoting Irish music.

Sometimes he turned his musical talents to the union's benefit. Irish secretary Séamus Dooley remembers a sharp disagreement with him – and Peter singing Eileen O'Grady in the bar afterwards and some old ballads, with both joining in.

Peter's contributions to debates were short and touched with humour. He was a sports fan, especially of horse-racing.

He entered journalism accidentally. His first career choice was hotel management. Then he thumbed a lift from a local newspaperman. After asking a few questions, the driver said: "We could do with a fella like you." Thus began his career in the Observer group of local papers.

Peter was born in Carrickfergus, Co Antrim, in 1933. As a boarder at St Patrick's College, Armagh, his first signs of trade union spirit appeared when students went on strike over poor food.

In his mid-20s, he moved to England, working on several local papers in the South East. In 1974, he returned to Ireland as editor of the Carrickfergus Advertiser; he was then at the Irish News until retirement.

He is survived by his wife Rita, daughters Fiona, Grainne and Siobhan, son Eamonn and grandchildren Rachel and Freddie.

Anton McCabe



Pat Bowman

Pat Bowman, life member of the NUJ, died suddenly at home in November aged 95.

Like many journalists of his generation, he left school at 16 and joined the local paper. It was the start of what became a distinguished career in public relations. He was active in the union in his younger years, attending 15 annual conferences and doing a lot of committee work and training.

He chaired the press and public relations branch, and was praised for taking difficult decisions without causing a riot. He was a prime mover for cooperation with the Institute of Journalists and the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) and for five years sat on a committee helping to modernise the union's operations.

Through the NUJ, he met Nigel Ellis. They edited *The Handbook of Public Relations*; this was translated into three languages. Next, they wrote *Manual of Public Relations* (they are pictured at its book launch – Pat is on the right). The book stayed in print for 25 years – Nigel calculated it earned them just £48 a year over this period.

It is hard to understand how new the idea of PR was then. At both British Aluminium then Lloyds Bank from 1972, Pat set up a PR department and established the role as a senior management function. At Lloyds, he directed the sponsorship programme, and stayed in contact with Riding for the Disabled, Action Research and the National Youth Orchestra after he left. In spite of a damaged arm (from polio as a teenager) he learnt to ride.

He became a fellow of the IPR and put a lot of work into the push for it to gain chartered status. The then-president Peter Smith remembers him as a 'consummate professional' with an 'impish sense of humour' when things were difficult.

At the British Association of Industrial Editors, he contributed to a course and judged awards.

In retirement, his interests in the theatre, film and jazz revived, and he volunteered with the arts cinema in Chichester. His speaking skills were put to good use with Talking Books, compering the local jazz club and being the announcer at the village summer show.

He leaves behind four children, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Alison Blair



David Phillips

For decades, freelance reporter and photographer David Phillips was a familiar face around Perthshire. Until his recent death at the age of 84 in Dundee's Ninewells Hospital following a short illness, he was still covering community events in the county town of Blairgowrie for the local press.

Among those at his funeral at Blairgowrie Parish Church were former colleagues and fellow members of the Perth and District branch NUJ, local politicians of various hues and Scotland's deputy first minister and MSP John Swinney.

After leaving the town's high school aged 14, David was a compositor at the Blairgowrie Advertiser before and after national service with the Black Watch. A love of Edinburgh, forged during his time barracked at the castle, tempted him back to the capital for two years with book publishers Maurice and Gibb. But Perthshire and in particular Blairgowrie were in his DNA.

David was still a compositor when he started reporting in 1969 and, for the rest of his days, he was to be seen in and around the town with a camera around his neck, while adamant he was 'a journalist that just happened to take photos'.

He was editor of the *Alyth Gazette* and *Guardian* and worked as a freelance charting the full gamut of local events, managing the Blairie office from 1987 until its closure and covering his patch for national and regional papers including *The Courier* and the *Press and Journal*.

In his red anorak, David was a weel-kent face at county events, including the Aberfeldy Show and Strathardle Highland Gathering. He played an integral role in community life; he served the cricket club for over four decades, as a player, captain, secretary and honorary vice-president. He relished his trips to Australia for The Ashes, telling people his happy place was the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Warm tributes were paid by clubs and societies in Blairgowrie and beyond.

At the funeral, Rev Brian Dingwall said family man David, known as Scoop, had been 'an iconic figure' in the town, and that most locals aged under 60 were sure to have been photographed by him while at primary school or involved in organisations that are central to any community.

Gordon Bannerman

Rich or powerful? Expect our curiosity



We'll dig into your backstory – it's our job, says **Chris Proctor**.

There used to be a character called Eddie Yates in Coronation Street. When he was working as a bin man, he came home every evening to his lodgings at Hilda Ogden's house bearing gifts: large black plastic bags. They were starting to fill the small house and Hilda complained. Would he stop bringing bags home?

Crestfallen, Eddie said: "But if you're a bin man, there's nothing else to pinch."

It's a fair point made well.

I was thinking of petty criminal Eddie as the news broke about former chancellor Nadhim Zahawi's dealings with the Revenue, Owen Paterson's insider lobbying, David Cameron's dealings with Greensill Capital, Boris Johnson's Mustique holiday and the strange case of an £800,000 loan and the appointment of Richard Sharp as BBC chair.

In my class at school, I had a mate called Bernie whose dad worked at the Crawford's biscuit factory in Old Swan, Liverpool. It was no coincidence that Bernard, myself and our close confederates were flush with broken Penguins. It's the same with Nadhim and Boris. Except Bernie's dad had paid for the broken biscuits.

I feel sorry for Sir Laurie Magnus, who has the most challenging of jobs – advising the Conservative Party on ethics.

He has nothing to slip into his briefcase on his way out of the office apart from moral principles, which, as Owen Paterson would tell you, aren't worth a mouldy carrot, even in these days of salad shortages.

Advising any government on ethics is tricky, but dealing with the present

one makes Mission Impossible look pretty routine.

I'm sure Rishi Sunak meant it when he said he'd like his premiership to be marked by 'integrity, professionalism and accountability'.

But, freshly appointed, he must have looked down the cabinet table at his mates in the enterprise and despaired. Which one of them isn't just a little bit dodgy?

Which is where we journalists come in. We look along that table as well. And ask the same questions. It's the ethical bit of our job. We help to hold the rich and powerful to account.

We don't just report that someone is filthy rich. Or hugely talented. Or interestingly hospitalised. Or married at 92. We're also interested in how they got there: and that is where reporting meets journalism.

This is why staff cuts at newspapers are so desperately damaging. They are bad for writers and photographers, because they prevent us from doing our jobs; and desperately bad for our readers, who are given half the information and service they should be able to expect. For a short-term profit, the industry is being jettisoned.

Happily, there is no need for undue concern as we are shortly to be saved.

Yes, Henry Charles Albert David Windsor (retired) has announced that reforming the British press is now his life's work. So we can relax, trusting our prince in the Golden State. (That is where he lives, not his condition.)

Or can we? Some of his views and our concerns don't entirely tally.

For example, he thinks the press (you, me, us) are "a dreadful mob of dweebs and crones and cut-rate

criminals and clinically diagnosable sadists along Fleet Street". I can see something of myself there, but definitely not (most of) my colleagues.

On the other hand, he is right to point to the folly of a media that swallows, unedited, press releases from Buckingham Palace or any other corporate business.

By extension, he would presumably argue that we must be cagey about government pronouncements, such as 'I'm innocent' from Nadhim or his mates. It is only right that we probe these statements, poke around a bit and find out the full story.

However, in Henry's world, there is a proviso, which is basically that it doesn't apply to him. Anything uttered by him or his wife should be printed verbatim. And everyone should look away when he is not engaged in uttering.

I have difficulties with this. I mean, if he wants to be a private person, he can achieve this easily. He can shut up.

If, however, he wants to be a public figure, he should expect media curiosity. We are intrigued by people of no particular talent who can afford a film-star lifestyle: it fascinates us.

Besides, Harry needn't worry. He won't be interesting for long. Once he runs out of royal dirt to dish, he'll be just another bloke with a beard.

In the interim, he's just going to have to accept that his snooping is my research; his prying is my investigation; and his intrusion is my inspection.

I don't apologise for this. Investigating the powerful is part of our remit. We're back-up for Sir Laurie even if we look like Eddie Yates.

“
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by people of no
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”



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