Choose committee, copyright at Commons?

IF THIS arrives in time, know that the London Freelance Branch gathering on Monday 13 December is a seasonal party, with free food and drink laid on. The venue is the fifth floor of the NUJ HQ at Headland House, 308-312 Gray’s Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP, nearest Tube King’s Cross. Kick off is (or will have been) at the usual 7pm. The party is hosted jointly with NUJ London Magazine Branch. Our guests include journalist Charles Atananga, fighting deportation to Cameroon.

The London Freelance Branch meeting on Monday 10 January 2011 is the Branch AGM, in which we elect the Branch committee for the next year, and two auditors to examine the Branch accounts. For details, see www.londonfreelance.org/flb/jobs.html. We offer support for potential committee members: see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1001jobs.html – and NUJ Training hopes to run a course for freelance activists and reps in 2011.

Freelance strike – in football

AS WE go to press, Scottish football referees who are members of the Scottish Senior Football Referees’ Association are on strike as part of a dispute with the Scottish Football Association over alleged attacks on their integrity. While this has received much media attention, few media outlets have noted that the Scottish football referees are in fact freelances. As such, they do not have to comply with Employment Act regulations on balloting and giving notice of strike action. Broadcasting skills training body Skillset estimated that as of November there are 128,000 freelances working in “Creative Media Industries”, about one quarter of the creative workforce. Skillset calculates that 34 per cent of the film workforce and 28 per cent of the TV workforce are freelance.

Google News

GOOGLE seems to be making the news as much as, if not more, distributing it. As the Freelance went to press the EU Commission, announced an inquiry into whether it has “abused its dominant position” – whether it has acted as a harmful monopoly.

Back on 16 November its technical people announced a new code “standard” for inclusion in web pages to ensure that “publishers and readers both benefit when journalists get proper credit for their work.” But their examples largely deal with publishers taking credit.

A week later the French Senate approved a one per cent tax on internet advertising – source of almost all Google’s revenue. As Deutsche Welle notes, the plan “fails to meet its original goal: to tax the French operations of internet giants such as Google... which are located strategically in European countries with low corporate tax rates, such as Ireland and Luxembourg.” Instead it would target French advertisers.

Still no news of the Google Books Settlement: pity Judge Chin who must, eventually, rule on it, and see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1002goog.html for a checklist of things to do if you have contributed work to a book.

We hope to have a meeting on investigative journalism sometime in early 2011. Watch this space.

This issue went to press on 30 November. Deadline for the February print edition is 28 January.

LONDON FREELANCE BRANCH MEETINGS

January’s meeting also features elections for members of the Branch delegation to the Union’s Delegate Meeting (DM, its conference) on 8-10 April 2011 in sunny Southport, Lancashire. For information on what the Delegate Meeting does, see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/0912adm.html.

The LFB meeting on Monday February 14 is provisionally at the House of Commons, on the subject of yet another review of copyright legislation. Or two copyright reviews, as different bits of the state are reviewing this area of the law. There’s the “Hargreaves Review” (page 1) and the Select Committee on Culture Media and Sport review of intellectual property law, both of which have implications for “creators” like us.

Watch online for confirmation of the venue and for more details of the meeting, and make sure you get our monthly email by visiting www.londonfreelance.org/linkup.

Euro for youro

THE European Commission has launched a call for investigative journalism projects. These should have a “cross-border” element and scrutinise government policy or the workings of business, or draw attention to social trends or to the “violations of laws”. There’s a total of Euro 1.1 million in funding for these, funding up to three-quarters of each project. The deadline for submissions is 15 January 2011: See www.eu-sleuths.notlong.com. And do let us know how the Euro-bureaucracy and form filling goes if you apply.

UNCLASSIFIED ADS

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WANT TO TRY YOUR HAND at writing fiction? The Complete Creative Writing Course at the Groucho Club offers courses in creative writing and also in screenwriting and writing for children. Courses start in January. Cost: £295 including VAT for six three-hour sessions. We also offer intermediate and advanced level courses at other venues. For full details go to www.writingschools.co.uk or ring Maggie on 0207 503 6285.

FREELANCE MEDIA GROUP – journalists, writers, editors, artists, meets monthly at the Groucho Club: www.freelancemedia-group.co.uk for details.

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More online:

• How to survive Xmas
• Journalists jailed in Turkey, gassed in Greece

Contests without rights grabs

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) – of which the NUJ is a part – has now set a set of guidelines for organisers of competitions. These are in response to increasing rights grabs around photographic (and other creative) competitions. Please use and circulate these model terms and condition: see www.efjcompetition.notlong.com.