EU not trying to ban photos

A PETITION circulated through change.org catapulted one of the most obscure corners of authors’ rights into the limelight. It’s headed “EU to ban holiday pics”. No, no, no. This is untrue.

The petition, a classic of scaremongering lobbying, referred to the “Reda report” and may have been inspired by two letters to the Times, both signed by Wikimedia/Wikipedia people. One letter appears to have misread the Reda report. As Wikipedia in 2012, the authors of letters require better references.

The petition wondered aloud whether photographers would in future have to get clearance from architects before taking street scenes. But the report was merely non-binding advice from the Parliament to the Commission, which would be trumped in the UK and Ireland anyway by the “exception” to copyright allowing reasonable reproduction for the purpose of reporting “news and current affairs”.

In the unlikely event that the provision protecting architects in Belgium were extended elsewhere, advertising agencies would possibly have to get clearance before using images of the National Theatre to promote their clients. Poor dears.

More alarmingly, the Reda report’s call for fair contracts for authors was watered down at the very last minute to weaken its call for fair contracts for authors. A cuddly-sounding phrase on “freedom of contract” was inserted – read “freedom for powerful corporations to impose contracts on individual creators”.

Anyway, this paragraph of the Reda report fell in the European Parliament vote. The bits in it calling for fair contracts for creators survived.© Mike Holderness

Attention!
Any NUJ member contemplating work for Arise TV Limited should first telephone the Freelance Office on 020 7843 3706.

New members’ meeting
There’s a meeting for new and recently-joined members of NUJ London Freelance Branch on Thursday 29 October. It’s a chance to meet other people new to the Branch, and there will also be some more experienced working journalist Branch members on hand with advice and tips. The meeting’s from 6pm at the Camera Café, Museum Street, London WC1 (nearest Tube Holborn). It has to end at 8pm – turn up any time before then if you can’t make it at 6.

Information on Morton contracts, please
Could NUJ members who have been issued with a contract by Mortons Media Group Ltd please contacting the Freelance Office at freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk – we’d like to see the contract(s) and to know what title you work for – in strict confidence, naturally.

High court overturns copyright change

THE UK Government acted illegally by introducing a new exception to copyright law allowing private copying for personal use, as it failed to provide fair compensation for rights-holders. That was the ruling of the UK High Court on 19 July in a judicial review brought by the Musicians Union (MU), the British Academy of Songwriters, Composer and Authors (BASCa) and UK Music.

These organisations had welcomed a revision of the law enabling copying for “private use” but had repeatedly warned the Government of “significant harm” to the rights-holders if compensation was not included, and alerted the Government also to the fact that compensation to rights-holders is required by European law. In most European countries this is paid for by a “levy” on the price equipment used for copying.

The High Court agreed with MU, BASCA and UK Music that the Government’s case was based on “wholly inadequate evidence.” Oddly enough, that was the Freelance’s reaction to the “evidence” when it was published. The Government must now reconsider. It is likely to take its time.

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Trade Union Bill – bad!

THE TRADE Union Bill – the most restrictive legislation on trade unions for 30 years, is now being prepared for its second reading in Parliament.

The Bill would make it harder to strike. It specifies a percentage of the workforce that needs to vote in favour of a strike before it becomes legal. This is considerably higher than the proportion of the electorate with which the Tories won the general election. The supervisor a trade union picket would have to give their name to the police – rather alarming given revelations about their contributions to the trade union blacklist used by construction companies.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC, of which the NUJ is a member) will hold a rally at Westminster Central Hall, Storeys Gate, London SW1H 9NH, on Monday 2 November and a lobby of Parliament.

© Matt Salusbury

London Freelance Salon Thursday 15 October – book now while stocks last

SALON from p 1 “jobs” – into a progressive portfolio of opportunities, new ideas of new work streams and how to make our careers work: and so LFB and Freelance Industrial Council proudly present London’s Freelance Salon.

For our first London Freelance Salon edition the speakers are:

● Alex Wood, Editor in Chief, The Memo – “a new [online] publication for people curious about the future, reporting on the individuals, technology and ideas changing the world”. The magazine, partly financed by advertising, commissions freelance writers on fees or retainers, and acts as an agency hiring out “inhouse” writers, sub-editors, video-makers, and designers to corporate clients.

● A former freelance, Alex also played a part in establishing the online commercial success of news and listings site Tech City News.

● A trio from Byline, a crowdfunded platform for news represented at Salon by founders Daniel Tudor and Seung-yeon Lee with consultant Peter Jukes. Their slogan is “Nothing between you and the news”. In brief the model is that journalists pitch their stories online to the public who may pledge money to support their work, stage by stage. Copyright remains with the writers; Byline’s commission is 15 per cent.

● London Freelance Salon makes its debut on Thursday 15 October at NUJ HQ, Headland House, 308-312 Gray’s Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP (nearest station: King’s Cross). Arrive at 6.30pm – the speakers are on promptly at 7pm and we close at 9pm.

There will also be a Salon in Manchester on Friday 25 September and there are plans for an event in Scotland. Follow www.twitter.com/#NUJSalon and return to www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1508salo.html for details. You can book and pay on that page.