The Trireme

THE TRIREMES Award is for the “worst terms since I was last chained to the oars”, in the words of one freelance. This month it’s awarded to the Evening Standard.

Given how sexy and important video and “visual content” is supposed to be among newspapers these days, it’s noteworthy that – as one freelance reports, above – the Standard only considers a nine-hour shift as one. 

Submit rates online, in confidence, at any time, at www.londonfreelance.org/rates – please give not only the basic rate (e.g. for FBS, First British Serial rights) but extra payments negotiated for extra uses, like the Web. These are shown as (eg) £400 + 100. We now record rates paid in £ as well. Rates marked X are, in the editor’s fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even perhaps the happy few.

Jailing journos for “receiving” official secrets?

A PROPOSED “update” of the Official Secrets Act, announced by the Law Commission in mid-February to widespread outcry, could result in long prison sentences for journalists doing their jobs by making disclosures that are in the public interest.

Crucially, the proposed new definition of “espionage” would include receiving as well as passing on “confidential material” with the definition also expanded to include “sensitive economic data.”

The context for this is the imminent Brexit negotiations, which follow numerous leaks about Brexit, with an investigation underway into a leak of a Government memo about Brexit leaks, which’d be a meta-leak.

At this stage, the plans are still very provisional. The NUJ has already responded to say it “will be robustly defending the rights of its members who face being criminalised for doing their jobs under proposals to update the Official Secrets Act.” An initial Law Commission consultation into the plans closed on 3 April.

Law Commissioner Professor David Ormerod QC said on the Commission’s website that “we welcome views,” indeed “a wide range of views”, especially from “the media.” Press Gazette reported that soon after the announce-ment, a “deputy spokesperson” for Prime Minister Theresa May was already seeking to play down its impact, insisting it would not “restrict the freedom of journalists”. Watch this space.

More online

You will find at www.londonfreelance.org:
- More complete versions of the stories here;
- How to get a free ebook explaining the importance of copyright to you;
- Action to pressure Google on the way it lists photographs without credits or licensing information; and
- A report of the Photographers’ Summit.

A case study of our need for a right of integrity

UK LAW provides that writers and photographers have a “right to object to derogatory treatment of work” – which is defined as treatment that “amounts to distortion or mutilation of the work or is otherwise prejudicial to the honour or reputation of the author.”

That “otherwise” means we can – in theory – “object” if our work is used in a context that harms our reputation. There’s no clearer recent example of that than the experience of photographer Jamie Lorriman, one of whose photos following the attack on Westminster Bridge on 22 March showed a woman in a headscarf, clearly distressed. The photo was used by a notorious far-right troll, to whom the Freelance will not give further publicity, to claim that, as a Muslim, she was unconcerned.

The woman later publicly thanked Jamie for objecting loudly in the press. She asked that the image not be used further. Freelance’s Industrial Council Chair, the photographer Nick McGowan Lowe, tells the Freelance that “this case demonstrates precisely why photographers and other authors need to be able to object to our work being used in contexts that damage our reputations.”

Freelance Organiser John Toner said: “It’s hard enough to enforce the theoretical right in UK law. The perpetrator seems to be living in the US, where there is no such right. In the internet age we need these rights to be unenforceable and enforceable worldwide.”

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