Whistleblowers

WORKING with whistleblowers was the topic of May’s London Freelance Branch meeting. Eileen Chubb, who founded Compassion in Care, has moved from being a whistleblower to be an investigative journalist and join London Freelance Branch. With her was her colleague Christine England. Starting work as a care assistant in a care home in Bromley 20 years ago, Eileen said “I loved my job…. everything was wonderful until I saw the first person being hit. It seemed the norm to hit people and scream at them.” Eileen described a “ring of abusers” at work. She and colleagues immediately raised it with management, then “went outside… to Social Services”. They were the first group to use the Public Interest Disclosure Act, although she says “the law does not protect people.”

Eileen was “saved by the Daily Express”, who “named all the abusers” and Private Eye, who “followed it for years all the way through”. Since Compassion in Care (CIC) was set up, 5000 whistleblowers have come to it. It’s spun off The Whistler, dealing with whistleblowing outside healthcare, since workers from other professions – the army, the police, education – made contact over issues common to all these sectors.

The “barriers to justice” are enormous for whistleblowers. According to Christine, “nine out of ten whistleblowers never make it to court.” Most are expected to represent themselves. Getting justice, according to Eileen, “really does rely on negotiation between you and the employer on how much you want to settle for to keep quiet”. She’s “never came across a whistleblower who would take any amount of money to keep quiet.”

Most whistleblowers are not sacked, she says, but forced out of their jobs – their “lives made a misery”. Eileen described being spat at, not being paid “by mistake” and facing “danger in a dark car park” after work. Christine told how she was forced out of job as a senior medical secretary at the hospital where she worked in the 1990s after she and colleagues tried to query thousands of patients’ radiology reports going out with inaccuracies when new IT was introduced at the Hammer Smith Hospital Trust. Reports giving a patient the all clear were sent out for the wrong patients. Christine says some patients received unnecessary radiotherapy as a result of errors in scan or X-ray reports. Journalists have been “extremely supportive… a great help,” says Eileen: “It’s the journalists that can help us to save lives.”

What is best practice for journalists dealing with whistleblowers? Assure them “their name will never be exposed”. On going to the Express, Eileen recalls, “I was so scared… It's a very traumatic experience for someone who’s never been to the media.” Christine adds that if you don’t protect your sources, whistleblowers won’t come to you – and so wrongdoers and abusive people will thrive in the shadows.

It takes time to build trust between whistleblowers and journalists. It took Eileen three months to get one group of whistleblowers to give names. She also recommends running the final draft of your story past your whistleblower.

Defending your copyright in Brussels and Geneva

THE EDITING of this Freelance has been interleaved with urgent requests from the European Federation of Journalists. We have to form views on amendments to the draft European Directive on copyright matters, on which the Legal Committee of the European Parliament was voting on 20 June.

Will the proposed measure decimate the income authors – including textual and visual journalists – get from copying of our works in educational institutions? We are hopeful of averting this. See the campaign site at www.contentforeducation.org – it seeks your testimonials on the importance of this matter.

Should newspaper publishers and agencies get a new right to charge internet services for using extracts of our works? Only if the new law guarantees us a fair share – and that is predictably under attack from the publishers. Will we get new rights to transparent accounting of how our work is used? The EFJ welcomes the Committee’s support for this.

The Draft Directive also includes a measure requiring internet services to watch out for unauthorised uploads. This could be quite useful to musicians and film-makers. The fact that it has attracted a claim from internet patriarchs such as Tim Berners-Lee and Vint Cerf that it would “break the internet” suggests that it is, in fact, harmless to the internet and, rather, annoying to Facebook and Google/YouTube.

As EU negotiators are fond of saying “the law does not protect people.” Getting justice, according to Eileen, “really does rely on negotiation between you and the employer on how much you want to settle for to keep quiet.” She’s “never came across a whistleblower who would take any amount of money to keep quiet.”

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Crack troops: send your unfair contracts now!

Recent NUJ President Tim Dawson updated the June Branch meeting on the campaign to row back publishers’ payment-on-publication policy (see the May Freelance). He has met the new Small Business Commissioner Paul Uppal who was “incredibly keen”. “Late payment,” Tim reported, “is the single greatest impediment to the economy taking off into the stratosphere and we are the crack troops who will lead the charge” against it. To take this forward the Freelance appeals for reports of late payments through www.londonfreelance.org/rates/submit and for you to send examples of unfair contracts that have been imposed on you to unfair@londonfreelance.org

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LFB meetings
9 July
NUJ General Secretary speaks on winning women’s pay equality
August
No meeting
See back page & @NUJ_LFB

See COPYRIGHT on page 3
The Rate for the Job

FINALLY, WE have some rates for picture editing and research. That means we can legitimately update the rates in the Freelance Fees Guide. Your mission this month is to supply rates for use of photos online. via www.londonfreelance.org/rates/submit please.

Thinking about work for a company you’ve not dealt with before? Simply look at the Rate for the Job to find out what companies in similar niches have paid. Then aim higher. You can 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 – or for print if it’s a Rate for the Online Job. We now record rates paid in Euro as well. Rates marked are, in the editor’s fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even the happy few.

Electronic Press Kits: (filmed interviews with artist for album PR) indie record label or artist, £250; major record label with successful artist – from £600 to £1000.

Illustrations: Expressions, per job, US$25 + expenses.

Photography: 33Shake, day doing photos for website £200; XX, Express, one image £80; X, Financial Times, day £160; ITV, one archive photo, worldwide usage £400 X; PR company, cheque presentation photo £200.

Picture editing shifts: Daily Mail, day £180; Daily Telegraph, day £150; Financial Times, day £139 XX; Guardian, day £160; Guardian Labs (advertorial), day, up to £210; TLS newspaper, day £150; Independent day £150; Sunday Times, day £150; TLS day £150; Times day £145 X; BBC News, day £165; Discovery Channel, day (some research) £150; ITV, archive and picture research, day, £140-$250 depending on the shift.

Words, per 1000: Sunday Mirror, exclusive true-life feature, first newspaper rights, once-only use print and online, £2000; BMJ, 1300 words @ £395 = £304; Economist, Espresso email briefing, £150-word news piece @ £100, all rights = £666; Guardian weekend, “The Secret to…” 350 words @ £200 = £571; Q, reuse of features published 25 years ago, license to former owner with agreed reuse rate £120; The Economist, 600-word news piece @ £400, all rights demanded for £666; The Week Junior Big Debate 600 words @ £175 = £292.

The Trireme

The Trireme is awarded for “the worst terms since I was last chained to the oars,” in the words of one freelance.

This month’s The Trireme goes to The Spectator, who – according to a freelance submitting to the Rate for the Job – paid just £50 for a 1000-word online blog piece.

The Group would like to hear from all types of writers, by Thursday 2 August. For more see www.allpartywritersgroup.co.uk/apwg-call-for-evidence

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Brexit — a million different stories

WHAT happens to our many EU national colleagues after Brexit? That was the question posed at the June LFB meeting – roughly two years after the EU referendum, and on the eve of Parliament’s EU Withdrawal Bill amendments omnishambles. Our speakers included Claudia Delpiero, founder of Europe Street News (www.europestreetnews.com) and a former European Parliament press officer on constitutional affairs. We also heard from barrister Adrian Berry (see above.)

Claudia described in the weeks immediately after the EU referendum an atmosphere of “disbelief” around her. People were asking, “What is happening now?” Since then, there has been a largely “dehumanised debate” on our relationship with the EU, about trade, for example, but “not so much about the people involved” – the 3.2 million EU nationals in the UK and the 1.2 million UK nationals in the EU, plus families, friends, employers and colleagues, who add up to “a large group of people”.

There was a lot of reporting on “agreements on paper… when it meets reality there are a million different stories.”

Claudia also highlighted the work of the EU Parliament’s Special Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union, which works closely with the House of Commons. The committee has a remit to “set out a vision for the future relationship of the Union with the United Kingdom and to establish the framework for future talks.”

Claudia concluded with the EU Immigration, Asylum and Integration Law Practitioners’ Association, which is “preparing to represent member states’ interests…”

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BYLINE: Hazel Dunlop
Gender gap, summer holidays, Afghanistan

THE GENDER pay gap recently revealed in many newsgathering institutions is on the agenda at the LFB meeting on Monday 9 July.

Our speaker is the NUJ’s General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet. She’ll update us on the NUJ’s campaign fighting to end what she described as “pay inequity, a scourge in the media industry.”

While there has been a lot of attention on the gender pay gap revealed at the BBC, an analysis by Press Gazette in April showed that NUJ’s gender pay gap campaign on gender pay gap.

There’s much more detail on the NUJ’s gender pay gap campaign on the main Union site at www.nuj.org.uk/campaigns/equal-pay-and-gender-pay-gap

There is no meeting of London Freelance Branch in August.

Branch meetings resume with a gathering on Monday 10 September that will include a report back on the situation facing journalists in Afghanistan, where 10 journalists were killed in a series of targeted attacks in April. We will look at practical ways in which journalists can support colleagues in Afghanistan.

Our speakers will be LFB’s own Safiullah Tazib, just returned from that country and, from Brussels, Ernest Sagaga, Head of Human Rights and Safety for the International Federation of Journalists.

This went to press on 20 June. Your deadline for the August online only issue: 1 August.

LFB meetings (except for new members’ meetings) are always on the second Monday of the month, from 7pm to 9pm in the basement of the NUJ’s HQ at Headland House, 72 Acton Street London WC1X 9NB, which is accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The nearest tube stations are King’s Cross and Chancery Lane.

If you need the Branch to pay for care for a child or dependent so you can attend a meeting, contact a Branch officer.

For updates on meetings and for confirmation of themes and speakers for forthcoming meetings, see the Branch calendar web page www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/meetings.html and LFB’s Twitter feed www.twitter.com/NUJ_LFB

Can members who have difficulty reading the agenda on paper please contact us to get the agenda in electronic form ahead of the meeting!”

We draw members’ attention to the microphone that will be passed to you if you indicate you wish to speak at a meeting. This is so that our members with hearing problems can hear you via the induction loop.

For updated guidance on etiquette on recording or live-tweeting from LFB meetings, please see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1805film.html

If you have difficulty getting into the microphone that will be passed to you if you indicate you wish to speak at a meeting, please contact us.

Forbes, the travel journalist and blogger be...