Close the pay gap!

THE NUJ’s General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet updated July’s LFB meeting on the gender pay gap and what can be done about it. The BBC in last year’s annual report was “forced to publish” details of high earners on over £150k a year. The “absence of women and Black journalists on that list” and the “issue of gender and pay has been in the news ever since”.

A disparity between average earnings for women and for men of 9.3 per cent across the BBC was revealed, provoking outrage that “a public service broadcaster that’s supposed to have higher ideals… could behave in this way.” (For interesting figures on freelances, see page 2.)

Some “very high profile presenters”, but also women in all stages of their careers – “staff and freelance members and new recruits” – had been cheated of pay and lost out on maternity leave and pension contributions. There have been “a number of cases” where women repeatedly raised concerns but nothing happened. Also, “men have been lied to, told the women on the same couch (presenting a show with them) were paid the same.” Often, where male and female presenters co-present a show, the woman is freelance or in a personal service company, while the “guy on the same couch is a staffer”.

Such revelations and the responses they generate are “a real opportunity for the NUJ and other unions.” After a BBC equal pay audit published in October 2017, then a separate On Air Talent review, the BBC eventually realised it “couldn’t just commission an expensive re-

view of some kind”. There have been periods where the NUJ has been in “daily meetings” with the BBC.

The NUJ has launched a collective pay grievance with the BBC on behalf of 181 NUJ members in total. These are “in various stages of reso-

lution” – some cases may well end up at an Industrial Tribunal. As a re-

sult of NUJ action, there have been “fair pay awards” in the BBC, many in the “tens of thousands of pounds”, including a result for former China editor Carrie Gracie. Across the in-

dustry, the NUJ has achieved “quick settlements under the pressure gen-

erated” by the BBC scandal.

Michelle noted that every newspa-

per group running daily stories on BBC pay inequality had “a much worse gender pay gap” themselves. At Trinity Mirror it was over 20 per cent, 24.2 per cent at Channel Four, over 25 per cent at the Economist, 24 per cent at the Telegraph. (The UK average is 9.8 per cent.)

The response to these revelations “can only be good news for women workers in the UK.” Michelle notes a “spike of members joining” the NUJ, “especially at the BBC,” while elsewhere “employers are “on the back foot… they feel exposed.”

In its talks on pay equality with the BBC, the NUJ made it clear, as did sister union Bectu, that “we want freelance collective bargaining” – now more achievable than ever. The NUJ Women network will launch in the autumn. Watch this space.

A copyright crunch point

CRUNCH TIME is coming up for the effort to improve authors’ rights in the European Union. On 12 September the European Parliament is due to vote on a draft Directive on copy-

right. Anti-copyright forces mobilised powerfully to delay the progress of the Directive when the Parliament fairly narrowly rejected the recom-

mendations of its Legal Committee on 5 July.

Please check back at www.

londonfreelance.org/

fl/1808copy.html for suggestions on trying to persuade your Members of the European Parliament that they should pass the Directive. It will af-

fect your rights as writers and pho-

tographers, regardless of what hap-

pens about Brexit.

Many of the anti-copyright organi-

sations involved are quietly funded by internet corporations in an effec-

tive “astroturfing” operation – called that because Astroturf may look like “grass roots” but is not. As we went to press allegations were emerging about the rôles of OpenMedia.org – which counts Google as a “platinum supporter” – in a Brexit-like political spam operation.

What’s the argument about?

First there is Article 11, which would give newspaper publishers a new “neighbouring right” to the copyright in the words and pictures, permitting them to charge internet corporations for licenses to use extracts. European publishers’ asso-

ciations have accepted the argument of the European Federation of Jour-

nalists that this can only go forward if journalists are guaranteed a fair share, in law.

Anti-copyright organisations say this is a “link tax”. This is false. (Is a greengrocer charging you a “carrot tax”?) They say it would stop you from linking to articles from your blog. This is false.

Next, and subject of the most bit-

ter opposition, is article 13, which would require said internet corpo-

rations to obtain licences for user uploads – presumably through col-

lecting societies, in a way similar to public performances of music. In the absence of a licence, they would have
The Rate for the Job

LOOKING to update the less-frequented corners of the Freelance Fees Guide, we tracked down some rates for compiling crosswords. Yes, that’s a branch of journalism. All we found are agreed rates at the Guardian – dated 2012.

Your mission this month is to peruse any crossword-compilers you know to supply going rates for these; and, somewhat more commonly, to remind photographer colleagues that we particularly want rates for use of photos online. Go to www.londonfreelance.org/rates/submit and tell us, 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 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 Euro as well.

Rates marked X are, in the editor’s fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even perhaps the happy few.


Photography: Western Mail, day £150, booking minimum £75; Johnston Press NE England papers, day £100, so-called “half day” £50 XXX. Rex Features photo agency, use of single photo, probably re-licensing to other agencies £0.28 XXXX.

Shifts: Money Saving Expert, 7.5 hours £160; Pink News, 9 hours, £100 XXX; British Dental Association, editing lecture transcripts for book, £200; Johnston Press NE England papers, reporting or subbing day £100 XX; NE England local freesheets, reporting or subbing day, £100 and up; NE England local paper, reporting day (cover for Local Democracy Reporter paid by BBC) £100 X.

Words, per 1000: Empire £300; Modern Railways, 2000-word feature talked up from £350 to £370, no terms agreed = £185 X; Planet Rock, author keeps copyright £200.

Words, other: Daily Mail Max Hastings column, (according to Private Eye) £3000.

The Trireme Award

THE TRIREME Award is for the “worst terms since I was last chained to the oars”, in the words of one freelance. This month’s Trireme Award goes to Rex Features photography agency, now owned by US stock photography, stock footage, stock music, and editing tools provider Shutterstock®. The Freelance has seen a quarterly statement received by one photographer including a payment for the re-use of a single photo, after a 50 per cent deduction for the agency’s cut, of an insulting £0.28 pence. We think it is likely that the photo was then probably re-licensed to another agency.

Women doing less badly

WOMEN have caught up with men in the rates they get paid for writing. That’s good news: the bad news is that part of the reason is that the average rates reported in the Rates for the Job (above) by journalists who identify as men has fallen, and no-one’s doing very well once we take inflation into account.

Our aim here was to see whether we could detect discrimination between women and men in freelance rates actually paid – complementing the General Secretary’s presentation (see page 1). Examining the more recent rates in detail, we are able to suggest increases in the Freelance Fees Guide – see page 3. We processed data for the past 10 years – July 2008 to June 2018.

The trend line for rates achieved by women from national newspapers is from about £320 per 1000 words to about £400. In the same period the Consumer Price Index has gone from about £320 per 1000 words to £360, £170 and flat at £280 respectively. By the time the ink is dry on this we hope to produce an equivalent chart for editorial shifts. This takes longer because we have to hand-convert each rate to a standard 7-hour day so that they are comparable with each other.

So: is there discrimination? Probably not, perhaps surprisingly, for the average working freelance. And the trends for “unknown” rates are comparable with there not being a massive reporting bias. Of course, our figures don’t include direct reports from “star” journalists, most of the best-paid of whom are men. The moral of the story for everyone is: always ask for more. We are working on further training courses and putting into practice the negotiation skills: see page 4 for some.

We aren’t even going to try to work out statistical significance for these figures. We can’t do similar exercises for other kinds of work – in most cases the rates simply aren’t comparable with each other and we don’t have enough reports for, for example, photography paid by the day. You can help by submitting the rates you’ve been paid to www.londonfreelance.org/rates/submit – in strict confidence.

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Moral rights and fake news

WE HAVE another reminder that for many citizens the most important of their authors’ rights is the right to object to manipulation and distortion of their works – and to its use in damaging contexts. In July one Nigel Farage Tweeted out a version of a photo a woman wearing a sandwich-board saying “my door is open for refugees”. It had been manipulated, very badly, to make the slogan offensive.

There was – as he must have intended – a Twitter storm. It caught the attention of Lasia Kretzel, who took the photo while reporting on a rally three years ago in Saskatchewan, Canada, in support of refugees in Syria. Lasia is now a digital reporter for News 1130 in Vancouver and Tweets as @lkretzel1130

Many suggested that she sue Farage. The Freelance contacted her to point out that under UK law he owes her not only for the value of the use of the photo in political campaigning – whatever that might be – but extra for distributing a distorted version, breaching her moral rights. Arguably, just putting your photo near his name is an act “contrary to her honour or reputation”.

We pointed out that she could bring a case at reasonable cost through the Small Claims procedure – which the NUJ had a hand in bringing into being. She decided not to take legal action.

She did get a piece in the Guardian out of the affair. There she wrote that “as a reporter… I thought about how in an era of instant information-sharing it is more important than ever that we verify what we are spreading and own up to our mistakes when we falter.”

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LFB’s mission to Afghanistan

LFB’s OWN Safiullah Tazib has recently returned from a visit to Kabul, Afghanistan where he made contact – on behalf of the NUJ and LFB in particular – with independent journalists’ organisations.

His visit followed a series of targeted attacks on nine Afghan journalists in Kabul on 30 April, with another journalist, from the BBC, shot dead the same day.

Safi brought with him a letter from LFB which included the words, “News of the nine reporters killed in Kabul on April 30 shocked all of us… Our hearts go out to the families, colleagues and friends of those who died… NUJ London Freelance Branch expresses its solidarity and a wish to help in any way we can. We would like to hear what the needs of Afghan colleagues are, apart from raising the voices of journalists around the world calling on governments to put a stop to these attacks, by bringing perpetrators to justice, where possible, and resolving the bitter disputes that lead to war: We will certainly make this case whenever we can. Our colleague Safiullah Tazib has kept us informed about Afghan media and through him we hope to build firm ties between us. Please keep in touch and let us know anything we can do to help. In solidarity.” In the photo Safi is second from right, wearing a traditional Pakol hat. He was “advised by some to go ‘completely native’ to divert muggers’ attention. For that I was mercilessly mocked by the journos at every encounter.”

© Lasia Kretzel

Jenny Gets Gold

LFB Branch Treasurer (centre) was awarded the NUJ’s Gold Badge for more than 45 years of activist work with the NUJ. There was a surprise presentation at the July Branch meeting. General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet (left) said Jenny’s award was “richly deserved.” Jenny said she only joined back in 1973 because she had to – journalism then was a closed shop, with NUJ membership a prerequisite for many jobs. Photo © Matt Salusbury

COPYRIGHT from page 1

to screen uploaded files to filter out infringing material.

The astroturfers are claiming this would be censorship. This is false. Returning to our metaphorical greengrocer: is prevention of theft “carrot censorship”?

Best for journalists would be articles 14 to 16, which would give us the right to know what use is made of our work, and to “windfall” payments if it was unexpectedly successful. Intriguingly, no-one is making a great fuss about this at present.

What happens now?

The effect of the July vote is that the entire Directive is up for amendment in the full EU Parliament on 12 September. If a very large number of amendments is put forward, the Directive may be referred back to the Committee – which could lead to it running out of time before the Parliament elections in May. Each amendment must be signed by dozens of MEPs – but the astroturfers managed to get a large number to sign up to force a vote in July. If it, or most of it, is passed, it’s not out of the woods: it then goes to a “conciliation committee” of the Parliament and the Council that is made up of the governments of EU member states.

What can I do?

Organisations representing journalists and other creators will be launching a campaign at the end of August, when MEPs return from holiday. Check back at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1808copy.html for suggestions.

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The original photo showing the Amnesty International slogan

Photo © Lasia Kretzel

L to R: Hujatullah Mujadidi, Afghan Independent Journalists’ Association; Abdusamad Hamed Poya, Media Bazaa; Sadi; Sardar Mohammad Dindarkhail, Gaheez Forum of Writers; Aziz Tassal, Kabul Press Club; Ahmad Zia Rahimzai, Satre Awal weekly; and Abdul Majeed Khalvatgar, NAI.

Fees Guide update

WE HAVE updated the Freelance Fees Guide suggested rates for print media – chiefly writing and doing shifts for newspapers and magazines – and illustrations and cartoons. The Fees Guide is based on the Rate for the Job market survey (see page 2). Examining recently-paid rates that are not clearly below par, we are able to suggest increases for many types of work – but in many cases sadly not keeping pace with inflation. See www.londonfreelance.org/feesguide
Afghan journalists in peril; press sustainability

SHOULD THIS arrive on your doorstep by the second Monday of August, note that there is no August meeting of London Freelance Branch.

Branch meetings resume on Monday 10 September, with a look at how we can support journalists facing violence worldwide.

It’ll include a report from Afghanistan, where 10 journalists were killed in a series of targeted attacks in April. LFB’s own Saffullah Tazib, who has just returned from that country, will tell us about his meeting with Afghan journalists’ associations: see page 3. From Brussels comes our other speaker, Ernest Sagaga, Head of Human Rights and Safety for the International Federation of Journalists.

If you’re interested in standing for the Branch Committee, come to this meeting. We have three vacancies.

The sustainability of high quality journalism back in the UK is on the agenda at the Monday 8 October LFB gathering. This is the remit of the Government’s Caircross Review focussing on the survival of the press: see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1807cair.html

We’ll examine issues around this inquiry – in particular our constant struggle to make a living in a challenging media landscape. Are these opportunities for us to input into the Caircross Review follow-up? Speakers are to be confirmed: watch this space.

LFB meetings (except 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, accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The nearest Tube is King’s Cross or Chancery Lane.

If you need the Branch to pay for care for a child or dependent, so you can attend, call 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?

If during the meeting you indicate you wish to speak, a microphone will be passed to you. This is so that our members with hearing problems can hear you via the induction loop.

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

This went to press on 31 July. Your deadline for the September online only issue: 20 August.

NUJ PROFESSIONAL training courses resume this autumn with Winning and Negotiating Freelance Work on Monday 10 September at the NUJ’s HQ (Headland House, see below). It’s from 10am-6pm and costs £70 for NUJ members, with a discount for student members.

Details are at www.nuj.org.uk/events/2018/09/21

There’s a talk and seminar on being self-employed and your tax affairs, for freelances, on Monday 24 September. It’s free to book: see www.nuj.org.uk/events/2018/09/24

There’s a free NUJ professional training course on Understanding Pension Schemes at Headland House on Thursday 27 September from 10-4. It’s members only. For details: www.nuj.org.uk/events/2018/09/27

First Steps in Freelancing, a course for those starting out as freelance journalists, is on Friday 5 October from 10:30 to 6, also at Headland House. It’s £60 for NUJ members. Find out more at www.nuj.org.uk/events/first-steps-in-freelancing-october-2018

The Federation of Entertainment Unions runs FEU Training, with courses free for NUJ members. For a webinar on Strategies for Success at 1pm on Thursday 23 August see www.feutraining.org/2018/webinar-strategies-for-success-11am-23-aug

And on Friday 17 August the FEU has a face-to-face course on Effective Communication to improve your terms and conditions: see www.feutraining.org/2018/effective-communication-17-aug-london

There’s a meeting for members new to LFB or recently joined, on Thursday 25 October. It’s from 6.30pm at the Camera Museum, Museum St, London WC1A 1LY. The nearest Tube is Holborn. It’s a chance to get acquainted with other new members, also to meet members of the LFB Committee including some more experienced freelance journalists who can offer advice. Shown here is a recent and successful new members’ meeting at the end of July.

Six new members came, as well as two non-members looking to join. Four old hands from the Committee were on hand to share knowledge and experience: the conversation was seen as inspiring and useful. New members asked for information about the NUJ Fees Guide, the Rate for the Job and freelance contracts.

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WANT TO TRY YOUR HAND at writing fiction? Courses at The Groucho Club in Soho will inspire you, teach you the tricks of the trade and help you develop and polish your work. Our tutors are mainstream published authors. Our next term starts in January – for details go to www.writingcourses.org.uk