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 result 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 indus-
try, the NUJ has achieved “quick settlements under the pressure gen-
erated” by the BBC scandal.

Michelle noted that every news-
paper 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/
f/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 photo-
tographers, regardless of what hap-

pens about Brexit.

Many of the anti-copyright organ-

isations 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 rôle 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 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...