Brexit happened... a bit

YES, BREXIT has finally happened. But don’t panic, because it’s not finished. Freedom of Movement, along with the rights of EU nationals in the UK – and UK nationals in the EU – remain in place under existing EU directives until the end of the Brexit Transition Period on 31 December 2020. The complexity of making any post-Brexit trade deal makes it possible this period may be extended.

The prospect of the UK crashing out with no deal on 31 December, having failed to agree a post-Brexit trade deal, also remains. In October, the UK Government also said that it would deport EU nationals who fail to register under the EU Settlement Scheme by 31 December 2020. Secondary legislation passed by the UK Government that appears to strip EU nationals in the UK of some of their rights to work in self-employment (see the January Freelance) appears only to affect EU national freelancers who have limited companies. The NUJ is consulting its lawyers on this.

Watch www.londonfreelance.org for revised and updated legal advice from the NUJ for its members in the UK who are EU nationals. © Matt Salisbury

How can media work for a functioning democracy?

ACTIVISTS – including NUJ members – need problem awareness before solution finding. That was the message of Media North’s all-day meeting at Leeds Art Gallery on Saturday 8 February: “It’s The Media. Stupid!” was financially supported by London Freelance Branch, to discuss how newspapers and supposedly-neutral broadcast media reinforced each other in emitting pro-Conservative messages and marginalising others during the 2019 election.

Professor Dominic Wring, co-director of Loughborough University’s 2019 Election Survey, told the 100-plus audience it was no surprise that most national newspapers were hostile to Labour. This was reflected in story choice. Education, environment, and housing were largely ignored, despite huge public interest.

Dr Justin Schlosberg of the Media Reform Coalition spoke of “a fundamental democratic deficit in the media, more so than any other time, with a systematic balance towards the establishment… “This distorts considering controversy,” he continued “as Corbyn challenged this consensus. Deference to certain sources resulted in egregious disinformation and an unparalleled litany of falsehoods.”

Former BBC industrial reporter Nicholas Jones said falling circulation had no effect on agenda-setting: “The 24-hour news cycle needs constant feeding, while BBC online news repeats national newspaper headlines, many breaking rules on impartiality. There was a master-class in vilification with a constant hammering of anti-semitism and secu-

Copyright from page 1

that is the Press. We heard in October that Prince Harry and Meghan Markle are suing the Mail on Sunday for copyright infringement – as well as misuse of private information and breach of the Data Protection Act 2018 – in publishing extracts of a private letter to Meghan’s father (October Freelance online).

Now the paper has filed an outline of its defence to the claim. As noted Twitter lawyer David Allen Green (@davidallengreen) observes, it argues “that because in her letter she was stating pre-existing facts, her letter cannot qualify for copyright protection as an ‘original work.’” This is a “remarkable submission for a news organisation… presumably no news organisation – or non-fiction writer – can enjoy copyright protection for their work…” I think this paragraph may be the most extraordinary submission I have ever seen in any media law of some rights to work in self-employment (see the January Freelance) appears only to affect EU national freelancers who have limited companies. The NUJ is consulting its lawyers on this.

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Louisa Bull of Unite’s Graphical, Paper, Media and IT Sector addresses the conference as Tony Lennon of BECTU and Granville Williams look on.

Photo © Catherine Ryan

NUJ gets freelancers access to PiL

Pride In London (PiL) organisers refused accreditation to many freelance photographers in 2019. A challenge by the NUJ led to a climbdown and access being granted to many more photographers. We’ve since had a very constructive meeting with the PiL Communications team on how they can better support media access and seek a more transparent accreditation process for PiL 2020. The organisations are building more raised platforms for photographers along the route to provide unobstructed views.

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