

Aug 2010

FREELANCE

Newsletter of
London Freelance
Branch, NUJ

LFB meetings
No meeting
in August:
take time off!

Time to
think about
pensions
13 Sept
See back page

Investigation cash!

THE BUREAU of Investigative Journalism invites freelancers to pitch (paid-for) stories. Its editor-in-chief, Iain Overton, assured July's LFB meeting the Bureau pays fairly. Even if you have a tip and not the time or inclination to work on it, if the story develops into a partnership with a paper or broadcaster they'll pay a "finder's fee".

Iain is a former *Channel Four* News commissioning editor. Based at City University, the BIJ launched in April with a £2 million grant for its first five years, from the Potter Foundation. Why give £2 million? "Investigative journalism needs a financial shot in the arm": it's so eroded that "even public service people say, we haven't got the money" to do stories that take weeks or months of investigation.

The *Sunday Times* told Iain it has a limit of £2000 or £3000 for a story – a fact which Iain feels "should be investigated itself." When Iain points out to these editors that they seem to have vast sums available for exclusive coverage of celebrity weddings, "I get a scornful look."

Iain hopes the BIJ will make editors see there is a market for investigative journalism – as with "the *Telegraph* expenses thing". He also hopes that after five years a "financial model through which organisations can move forward" will have been found for the media industry.

For example, the BIJ and the *Financial Times* each put up half the cost of hiring journalists for a Europe-wide investigation into the

EU's "Structural Funds": are they allocated to "the wrong people"? If the BIJ can sell the story to another outlet, such as Arte in France, this covers staff for future investigations.

Meanwhile, the BIJ has 20 journalists, mostly freelance, working at any given time. They pay above the London living wage to new recruits



An editor listens!

Photo © Matt Salusbury

to the industry and interns, unlike many of today's media industry entry-level jobs. "Junior" journalists with around five years' experience are on the pro rata equivalent of £30k, usually on three- to nine-month contracts.

In a front-page *Guardian*/BIJ story, ex-generals who recently fled from Iran's Revolutionary Guard revealed President Ahmadinejad's orders for helicopter gunships to attack civilians if demonstrations in Tehran had continued for longer.

BIJ's most exciting investigations are yet to come. A "very big story" involving "Tory MPs in the public eye" and a report on NHS whistleblowers were imminent, both with *Channel Four News*. And stay tuned for Al Jazeera's American pharmaceuticals story.

What interests the BIJ? Human

rights abuses, "centres of power being held to account", health, open society, miscarriages of justice, freedom of information, local and central government waste, and subjects that aren't being done extensively elsewhere.

Iain decided against working on a BP oil spill

story, as US investigative foundation Pro Publica were covering it quite well already.

"We never steal ideas", and the Bureau will respond promptly to ask for development of ideas and evidence if interested. If freelancers have good relationships with newspapers, Iain's happy to speak to their editor about a share. While entrapment isn't the BIJ's style, "Straightforward undercover stuff? Absolutely, and plenty of it."

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Section 44 is no more

HOME SECRETARY Theresa May announced in Parliament on 8 July that police are instructed not to use Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to search people without needing "reasonable suspicion".

The provision had been much used to stop those trying to report events on the streets, including photographers; and anyone else who, in the words of Law Lords, fell foul of an officer's "professional intuition" –

many of whom were, oddly, not of Anglo-Saxon heritage.

Section 44 will now be used only to search vehicles, and areas will be "designated" for searches only when "necessary", not when "expedient" as at present.

This admission of defeat follows the decision – predicted here – of the European Court of Human Rights Grand Chamber to reject the UK government's attempt to chal-

lenge the Court's ruling in favour of London Freelance Branch member Pennie Quinton and protester Kevin Gillan. Pennie told the *Freelance* "there will be champagne".

The *Freelance* doesn't think we've quite seen the last of Section 44: we wouldn't be surprised if it were used to search all vehicles in the Olympic Games exclusion area

See **HUMAN RIGHTS** on p 2

Copyright matters

DESPITE the demise of the part of the Digital Economy Bill that would have affected copyright, the world of copyright and authors' rights law remains distressingly interesting. Now is, however, clearly the time to return to basic principles.

With this issue we present a simple pull-out-and-keep guide to the two faces of copyright: your owner-

ship of your work; and what you can do with other authors' work.

Most of the rest of the news is about policy debates for the future, is much more detailed and is in the online edition of the *Freelance*.

Developments include the International Federation of Journalists intervention at the responsible UN body, the World Intellectual Prop-

erty Organization. It argues that, in a world in which practically every citizen is publishing their words, pictures or music online, authors' rights must be re-thought as essential rights for everyone. See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1007wipo.html – and see the links on that story for more.

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