

## LONDON FREELANCE BRANCH MEETINGS

# Leveson inquiry update & getting paid online

THE LONDON Freelance Branch meeting on **Monday 14 May** will feature the NUJ's General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet, who will update us on the ongoing Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practice and ethics of the press. The NUJ has Core Participant status at the Inquiry and Michelle has already given evidence and made several written submissions, and may well be called upon to do so again.

The union has defeated legal challenges by media groups which aimed to prevent Michelle presenting anonymous testimony from journalists on their experiences of a bullying culture in national newsrooms. Michelle's evidence to Leveson to date, including her written submission with anonymous testimony on bullying, is at [www.levesoninquiry.org](http://www.levesoninquiry.org).

**uk/evidence/?witness=michelle-stanistreet** – and the meeting will also be an opportunity to hear about the NUJ's evolving proposals for regulation of the Press, such as a possible press ombudsperson to succeed the soon-to-be-abolished Press Complaints Commission.

**And** this is also the last meeting which can vote on sending motions and nominations to the NUJ's Delegate Meeting (conference), which will take place on 5-7 October.

On **Monday 11 June** we expect to hear about ways of getting paid for work used online. What's the best way to remind editors that "we have no budget" is, er, inexact in the case of a professional contribution like yours? How to negotiate when an online piece is promoted to print? Watch the *Freelance* website and

the LFB Twitter feed for confirmation of the meeting topic and for more details.

This issue went to press on **27 March**. Deadline for the (online only) May issue is **26 April**.

LFB meetings are 7pm to 9pm at Friends House, Euston Road, which is accessible to people who use wheelchairs. If you need the Branch to pay for care for a child or dependent so you can attend a meeting, call a Branch officer. For updates on meetings see the Branch calendar web page [www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/meetings.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/meetings.html). Volunteer minute-takers are needed for LFB meetings for the rest of the year.

For details of the NUJ London Photographers' Branch meetings, see [londonphotographers.org](http://londonphotographers.org)

## Photographers say work 'doing our back in'

THREE OUT of four NUJ photographers have experienced health problems from carrying their equipment. Reported problems include tendonitis, cracked vertebrae, trapped nerves and chronic back pain. Adam Christie of the NUJ Health and Safety Committee says: "Our survey had one of the highest levels of response from photographers we have seen, suggesting the problem is both serious and widespread". The H&S committee organised the survey with the NUJ's Freelance Industrial Council following a motion at last year's Delegate Meeting (conference).

Though camera technology has been transformed in the last 15 years, the design and weight of cameras has largely remained the same since the days of film: 71 per cent of respondents carry between 5 and 15kg, with nine out of ten frequently carrying additional equipment bags.

A third of those aged 50 or over

have had to take time off work to recover from injuries sustained carrying their equipment.

Only two-fifths of respondents use a main camera bag that employs the approved methods of spreading weight evenly over both shoulders: a third use a main bag with one shoulder strap. Three-quarters of NUJ photographers are freelance, and as one put it: "freelancers cannot afford to be off work for long periods... we struggle on regardless".

One staff photographer reported having to carry cameras openly in a town at night, because their employer refused to provide a wheeled bag.

Photographers also report hearing damage at concert venues, repetitive strain injury and lung damage from working with darkroom chemicals. One added: "I also get piles from sitting about waiting for the phone to ring. Does this count?"

Photographers who had experienced health problems reported that carrying their equipment in camera rucksacks, wheeled bags or

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bicycle panniers had improved their health. Other solutions included using an osteopath, carrying less equipment or improving general fitness. "It's definitely an occupational hazard but it's not life threatening", said one: "I still love it, but I had to radically change my lifestyle and the kind of photography I do."

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Freelance Industrial Council

Photographers in Trafalgar Square, January 2010. We've updated our "Right to Report" index – see [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/r2r.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/r2r.html) – including news of the cops coming to us to facilitate going about our work where there may be cordons. Report assistance or obstruction at [www.londonfreelance.org/policing](http://www.londonfreelance.org/policing)

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**FREELANCE**

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