

Zero hour

ZERO-HOURS CONTRACTS have been in the news a lot of late. The NUJ is investigating whether any members are on – or know of employers in the industry who are using – zero-hours contracts.

Freelancers occasionally find themselves working on short, temporary contracts of employment – alongside or temporarily instead of freelance work – including work on “rolling” contracts.

Of course being paid by the article or by the image could be seen as the ultimate zero-hours contract. The

Freelance thinks the key distinction is an element of exclusivity or of obligation – a contract under which you are not free to submit work, or work days, for others.

The obligation in a zero hour contract usually works only in one direction. They are not obliged to offer you work: you are obliged to accept it when offered. This is probably stretching the concept of “offer”.

Also, you can be called at short notice to go into the workplace, and then be told after a couple of hours that there is no more work for you.

A member at the September London Freelance Branch meeting reported she was on a zero-hours contract, under which “if you turned down work three times it’s viewed quite seriously, but [there’s] no formal bar on working for anybody else.”

She described zero-hours contracts as “not good practice,” and said they should be challenged.

If you encounter any such contracts that are zero-hour, let the NUJ know by email: campaigns@nuj.org.uk

New members meet

There’s a meeting for new and recently-joined members of NUJ London Freelance Branch on **Thursday 31 October**. It’s a chance to meet others new to the Branch, with experienced working journalist Branch members on hand for advice and tips. It’s from 6pm at the Camera Café, Museum Street, London WC1 (nearest Tube Holborn). Apologies to anyone who turned up on 29 July, the date given out at the July meeting: that given in the *Freelance* was correct. These meetings take place on the last Thursday of each third month. First coffee on us.

Training alert – and tutors needed

THE EVER-POPULAR *Getting Started* as a Freelance course, initiated by London Freelance Branch, has its next outing on **Friday 1 November**. It will once more be led by our own Phil Sutcliffe and Humphrey Evans as tutors.

Whether you’re starting out in journalism as a freelance, or whether you’re moving from a staff position to the greater, er, freedom of freelancing, this course is for you.

Then on Friday **15 November** we have the Pitch & Deal course on negotiation, which includes a section on how to “Always ask for more.” It will be led by the same Sutcliffe and Evans double-act. Some of you may have had a recent taster of the sort of thing that goes on in the course, having experienced Phil and Humphrey’s “Pitch & Deal Show” at October’s LFB meeting.

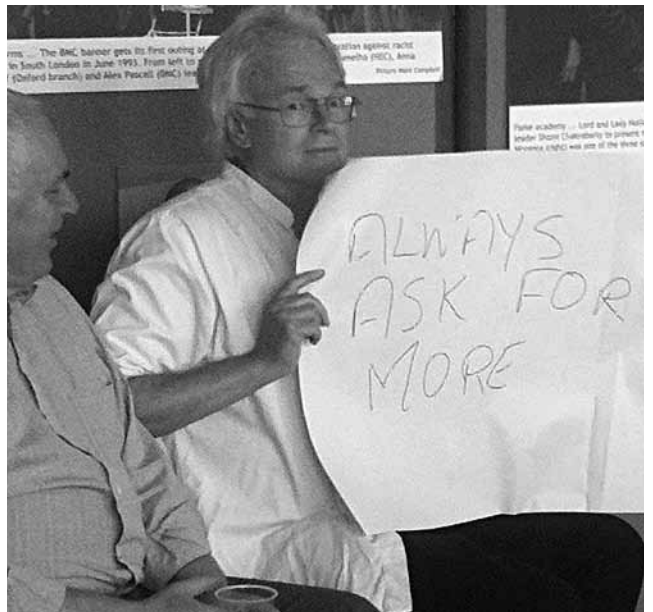
Both courses are at the NUJ HQ, 308 Gray’s Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. For more details see www.nuj.org.uk.

www.nuj.org.uk/work/training and to sign up email training@nuj.org.uk for the attention of Judith Jackson. For belt and braces it may be wise also to contact one of the tutors: Phil at philsutcliffe47@gmail.com

Fees for the *Getting Started* course are £60 for NUJ members, £50 for NUJ student members and £110 for non-members; for Pitch & Deal £70 / £60 / £130 respectively.

Other upcoming NUJ training courses include (provisionally), Making Internet Journalism Pay and Writing Your First Book (both **13 November**) and Business for Journalists (**29 November**): details are at www.nuj.org.uk/tags/professional+training

And: do you have the talent and experience to improve the professional skills of NUJ members in the UK and Ireland? If so, then you should consider becoming an NUJ professional training course tutor, teaching on NUJ training courses.



More details at www.nuj.org.uk/work/training/tutors-wanted, from the training department via the email above or via 020 7520 8340.

Pitch & Deal tutor Humphrey Evans (left) looks on as his partner in crime Phil Sutcliffe (right) holds up “Always ask for more” sign.

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Watch out for survey alert

Have you had work ripped off?

TO PLAGIARISE is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as “to take or use (the thoughts, writings, inventions etc of another person) as one’s own”. In the context of journalism, that would typically be someone else writing up your story, on which you worked so hard, without crediting you.

That’s annoying. In academia, a flagrant culprit would be liable to be expelled for a serious breach of ethics. But it’s not necessarily illegal. (And, as far as we can tell, the word “plagiarism” does not appear in any UK law and nor do “plagiarise”, “plagiarize”, etc.)

Nor should it necessarily be illegal: think for a moment about the times when you have had to draw on other

journalists’ work as background for a story; or when you have been grateful for one newspaper alerting you to another’s exclusive. See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/quotng.html for a brief guide to the rules on quoting.

It is, of course, a breach of copyright when someone uses the whole, or “a substantial part”, of your work without asking or paying. What is “a substantial part” can only be decided with certainty by going to court: any part of a photo is likely to be regarded as “substantial”. And it’s illegal for someone to put their byline on your words or picture under their name, though there’s distressingly little case-law to clarify what the letter of the law means.

Following a vote at the last NUJ Delegate Meeting, the union’s Freelance Industrial Council will soon be surveying members to find out who has suffered plagiarism. It’ll be asking for details of rip-offs of both the annoying and the illegal variety. Watch your inbox – or come back to this story online at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1310plag.html – for details, and please do complete the survey.

And see the letter on page 6, also, about the interesting challenge of finding rip-offs of work that has been translated into other languages. In case it hadn’t occurred to you, those who want to translate your work must seek your permission and negotiate payment with you.