

What right to be forgotten?

MAJOR KERFUFFLES broke out on 13 May when the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that a Spanish citizen had the right to demand that Google remove references to his past financial troubles. Reading the initial coverage, you'd think that some brand-new right had been created for the benefit of the nefarious and intended to make journalists' work impossible.

Immediately after the ruling, a number of UK news outlets ran identical stories about how those who had asked to have information on them de-indexed included a paedophile and a Member of Parliament (not alleging they were the same person, we hasten to add). While the journalists who had bylines on these stories cannot of course discuss their confidential sources, it is clear that there is only one possible source for this information.

Google responded to the ruling by putting up a form for those wanting to have information about them removed from its indexes – demanding proof of identity. On 2 May it said it

had received 41,000 requests – and that these included a politician with a murky past, a convicted paedophile and a man who had attempted to murder his family.

Some freedom of expression campaigners immediately piled in in support of Google and others who would have to do extra work as a result of the ruling. Wikipedia high profile Jimmy Wales called it “one of the most wide-sweeping internet censorship rulings”.

And the facts? It was Google that brought proceedings against the Spanish data protection agency, seeking to be exempt from European laws. These include data protection law, under which the agency had ruled that the information Google was linking to was, among other things, out of date under existing EU and Spanish law.

The “right to be forgotten” is something rather different: it is the subject of currently rather diffuse debate in the European Parliament about possible changes to the law. Other existing laws that could cause

information to be de-indexed include the UK's Rehabilitation of Offenders Act of 1974, which is generally held to be a good thing on balance.

There is also a connection to authors' rights: in some countries including France authors have a *droit de repentir* – a right to withdraw a work. The Spanish case did not concern a document in which the plaintiff held authors' rights, but some future cases will.

The threat to journalism seems to the *Freelance* to be moderate. Data protection authorities and national courts will ultimately be responsible – and have a duty to balance data protection with the public interest. The threat to Google seems to be more that it might be subject to European tax laws, and to the recent German law giving publishers (not, sadly, journalists) a right to payment for material presented through its news indexes. Other search engines are available.

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• Please see the Note to editors on the online version of this

Insufficient guide

The International Federation of Journalists has condemned the recent EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline for “failure to recognise the right of the public to access information held by public authorities,” for having been developed without consulting trades unions, and for “the absence of recognition of the role of journalists unions and associations in protecting the rights and conditions of the journalists' profession”. The guidelines instead focus on criteria for judging the behaviour of non-member states.

Book and film aided by LFB

TWO WORKS looking at the history of the trade union movement have appeared with support from London Freelance Branch.

The documentary film *Still the Enemy Within* looks back at the 1984-1985 Miner's Strike almost thirty years on, with interviews with many of the (ex-)miners who took part. It recently had its premiere in Sheffield, and is now on release. LFB voted to make a small contribution to its production costs, and a number of NUJ photographers have given their permission for their photos of the strike to be used.

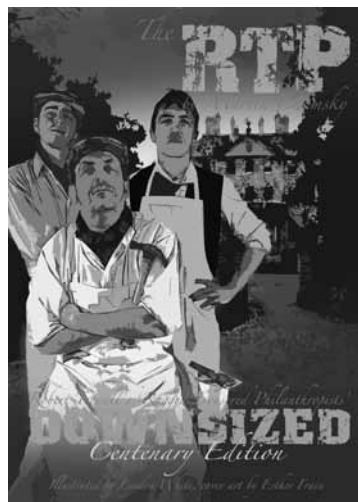
There's a trailer at the-enemy-within.org.uk – if you've seen it in

its entirety, the *Freelance* would like a short review of it, please.

Another cultural project to which the LFB modestly contributed is the book *RTP – Downsized*, an updated, centenary illustrated retelling of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* aimed at a young, 21st-century audience, which – we are told – bears an acknowledgement of LFB's support. It's already available via Amazon and will be on Kindle and as an audio book performance in the autumn, preceded by some live performances of extracts of the book. Details are at @RTPdownsized on Twitter

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Joan of Art

Modern British Black Jewish Joan travels back to medieval France, in a new play by Branch member Julia Pascal: can Joan overturn slavery and mass murder? Can she even save one life? It's at Venue 49, Bedlam Theatre, 11b Bristo Place Edinburgh EH1 1EZ from 2-11 and 13-24 August at 16:30. See www.stjoantheplay.com

From stress to success: an October event

WHAT ARE THE tools and knowledge you need to identify the causes and effects of stress and to help you to deal with it and insulate themselves against its effects? London Freelance Branch is running a one-day event on **Saturday 18 October 2014** at the London Welsh Centre. It is, initially, open to LFB members and photographers. Depending on the initial response, we will open it to selected others, such as Welfare Officers from other branches and the Union in general.

Participants will be asked to complete (and return) a pre-course questionnaire by email – to help fine-tune the day, plan specific exer-

cises and to be sure that it will cover what will be most beneficial to the majority. Clearly, this event will not be a replacement in any way for therapy or intervention wanted or needed by any individual.

The way the information will be presented will be suitable for whatever size group we have (up to a maximum of around 150 in the venue). There will be no “one-to-one” interactions.

We will learn some techniques to help with relaxation, sleep loss and how to avoid and deal with stress, a natural part of our lives. There will be at least three presenters with professional experience of dealing

with issues related to stress and someone who will tell us of their experiences and successes as a “case study”.

The recent Freelance Survey indicated that around 50 per cent of respondents have, at some stage, felt it necessary to seek help for what they considered as stress. The was set as an NUJ priority, as stated at the 2014 Delegate Meeting (the Union's biennial conference) earlier this year.

We hope to find some sponsorship to keep the costs for participants to a minimum so that nobody is excluded on the basis of cost.

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LFB Welfare Officer