

Media worker  
Autumn 2012



NUJ DELEGATE MEETING SPECIAL EDITION

# Alliance for Workers' Liberty

## Newsquest: battle over pay

WILL Lodge, FoC of the Newsquest Essex (north) NUJ chapel, speaks about his chapel's current dispute over pay:

"At our centre, like Newsquest regions across the country, we have endured three years of pay freeze and a paltry 2% last year - way below inflation.

"Time after time we are given the same excuses: the economy is in decline, profits are fragile, sales are falling, advertising revenue is poor. And we must keep paying off the Newsquest mortgage, some mystery debt we owe for bad business decisions made years ago.

*"We are not 'lucky' to have a job. We are paid to do something, and we are not paid enough."*

"But if the mortgage is there then are so are the utility bills - us - and these costs are also rising.

"Some chapel members feel guilty about asking for more pay when they see endless reports of redundancies elsewhere in the public or private sector. They particularly worry what the wider public will think. But as one member put it, "We're not 'lucky' to have a job. We are paid to do something, and we are not paid enough."

"Our chapel voted for strike action and called a day's walk-out in February, but called it off to give regional managers more

time to find cash for a pay rise. In August we found ourselves no better off, and

again voted for both strike action and industrial action short of a strike.

"So far we have held two mandatory chapel meetings and have logged our hours for a month to show management just how much goodwill we give to the job: goodwill they will lose soon if something is not forthcoming.

"The Newsquest centre in York has voted in favour of action, and the chapel in Bradford was balloting as we went to press, which is good news for us. I hope we can join up our actions and push what remains a profitable company for at least some recognition in our pay packets.

**"Unity is strength and through collective action we hope to be justly rewarded. Or do these companies exist just to line directors' pockets?"**

## Fight the job cuts at Johnston Press and BBC!

BAD news for staff at Johnston Press seems a daily occurrence now. No part of the industrial process is safe with writers, printers, advertising reps and, in the latest move, the web team all being centralised, "consolidated", outsourced or plain old cut.

We should resist all efforts by companies to make job cuts such as those witnessed at Johnston Press, or those at the BBC. Whether in the private or public sector we must stand firm.

Why? First on the grounds of quality. As NUJ members we should be in the frontline of the battle to ensure the wider public get a good product from our labours. When staff levels fall

so does the quality of what we produce.

Second, we should also not endure these cuts as workers ourselves. While the media will rush to report on closures and job losses on our patches all too often we do not reflect upon our own industry.

When jobs are cut those still in work often find their workload increases. We are media workers who produce a valuable product; we are also members of a class of people - the working class - who can only live by working. We have a duty to defend jobs.

**Build solidarity with all media workers facing job cuts or worsening pay and conditions in their workplace!**

### Contact the AWL:

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**AWL is an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.**

# No cuts at NUJ - for a fighting union

NEWS of redundancies at the National Union of Journalists shocked members and sympathisers of Workers' Liberty.

How can rank and file activists effectively fight cuts and redundancies in their own workplaces when their union, the very organisation set up to oppose such attacks on the working class, is doing the same thing?

A review of spending priorities is a sensible thing to do but neither the elected leadership, nor, crucially, the membership, should lose sight of the political aims and principles of a trade union - to fight for workers' rights, a job for all and to uphold and improve wages.

The severance package paid to the previous general secretary Jeremy Dear also requires further scrutiny by members. Overall Jeremy Dear was a good, strong and generally principled union leader, who stood by his decision not to stand for more than two terms despite

much support for him to remain.

However a payment of more than £45,000 to an outgoing general secretary - at a time when union finances were precarious and members were facing more and more cuts by a Tory-led coalition government - seems bizarre and needs examining further.

Democracy also demands an active membership and a union led by grassroots activists, not a bureaucracy. Delegates should therefore resist moves to make DM a biennial event, and restore it to a yearly conference.

*To this end Workers' Liberty urges you to vote against motion 73, and in favour of all amendments put to the motion (in case it should pass).*

*We urge you to support motion 80 and the amendment which runs with it. Support Late Notice Motion 6. Vote in favour of the London Freelance*

*amendments to motion 84, and against the motion if these fail.*

**Vote for a fighting union working for its members, not a union with its hands tied by the banks - and the enemies of our class who run them.**

## For working-class anti-fascism

Motion 136 outlines the far-right threat & supports Unite Against Fascism. The NEC amendment which attempts to save union cash - £500 - also removes a key instrument of defeating fascists: street mobilisations. Neither motion nor amendment recognises fascism's social roots. The alarming rise of Golden Dawn in Greece shows how social crisis breeds fascism. Anti-fascist and social struggles are entwined; there cannot be anti-fascist unity with political classes perpetuating economic crisis and inequality.

**We must strike at fascism's social roots and build a working-class anti-fascist movement.**

## Socialists and the media

SOCIALISTS argue in favour of a free press, capable of holding politicians to account, but the reality in Britain today is a far cry from this ideal.

The majority of newspapers, both regional and national, are owned by a select group of multi-billion pound companies.

Some, such as the Evening Standard, are not owned by corporations but are the playthings of millionaires.

The regional press is no different, with four companies holding most of the market. Between them Trinity Mirror, Northcliffe, Johnston Press and

Newsquest control 92% of local newspaper titles. The Murdoch newspapers' scandals underline where this grotesque imbalance in media ownership can lead.

So what ideal should we be striving for? Just as in any other industry our primary call is for workers' control of the media - both broadcast and print - and regulation through the NUJ Code of Conduct.

Journalists should be free to choose which stories they cover based on the public interest, not with their hands tied to protect commercial interests or promoting sales with sensationalist hogwash.

Reporters should be able to spend time properly scrutinising public spending, political funding and the like, not be forced to re-hash press releases because they have barely enough staff to produce articles to fill papers or schedules.

**Democracy could even be brought to the industry, with access to the media for all through nationalisation. But most importantly the media should be controlled by the class as a whole - kicking out the bourgeoisie who currently own it, and using it to hold both them and our own leadership to account.**

## Events

**Mon Oct 15 6-7.45pm:** Women & cuts: what sort of feminism do we need?  
Sheffield AWL; Red Deer, Pitt Street, Sheffield



**Mon Oct 15 6.30-8.30pm:** Marxist reading group.  
London AWL; 67 Grayson House, Radnor Street, EC1V 3SS

**Mon Oct 15 7pm:** Workers' Fightback! Women's Fightback.  
Stoke AWL; Burslem School of Art, Queen Street, Burslem, ST6 3EJ

**Fri Oct 19 1-3pm:** Fight for Sites: Mass Action.  
Traveller Solidarity; Victoria Station, London

**Sat Oct 20 11am-4pm:** 'A Future that Works' march.  
TUC; assemble Embankment, London

**Wed Oct 24 7-9pm:** Book launch. The Gramscian Moment by Peter Thomas.  
AWL London Forum; Lucas Arms, 245a Grays Inn Road, WC1X 8QY

**Thur Nov 1 6pm:** Was Marx right?  
Newcastle AWL; Bar Loco, Leazes Park Road, NE1 4PG