

Book Branch News

NUJ Book Branch

www.nujbook.org

May-June 2007

Diary dates

Tue 5 Jun, 18.30-20.30

Book Branch meeting, Headland House. Members are entitled to expenses for extra public transport costs and any childcare costs related to attending these meetings.

Tue 10 Jul (time tba)

BTBS Walk
www.booktradecharity.demon.co.uk for more information

Book Branch chapels

A & C Black
BCA (Book Club Associates)
Faber & Faber*
LexisNexis Butterworths*
Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
Lonely Planet
Macmillan (Oxford)*
Open University (Milton Keynes)*
Orion*
Penguin/DK*
Random House*
Taylor & Francis Books*
Usborne*
*recognized

Book Branch News

May-June edition edited by Robert Wood

Please send news for the next issue of BBN by 29 May to editor@nujbook.org

NUJ, Headland House,
308-312 Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1X 8DP

Closely observed delegates

Sylvia Kwan reports on the goings on at ADM

I was lucky enough to be invited to attend the 2007 annual delegate meeting as a Book Branch observer. I say lucky, because I am not even an elected chapel official, more of an 'unofficial official' at the HarperCollins chapel, which I hope to revive.

I hoped to bring back some wider knowledge and understanding of the workings and structure of the NUJ which would help us directly at chapel level – as it is, the Union has seemed to me in the past to exist as some nebulous, purely theoretical notion, 'out there somewhere'.

There were many rousing speeches, talk of bosses with their snouts in company troughs, solidarity for Alan Johnston and journalists in Colombia, and much discussion about the ways in which technology is already affecting NUJ members.

Delegates here and there slipped away to the standing orders committee for some arcane process (having their motions put in order or something like that), and Book Branch itself had to send a delegate to SOC to clarify a motion instructing the NEC to

campaign against cuts in funds for the British Library.

There were other motions submitted by Book Branch – motion 39 instructed the NEC to campaign for freedom of expression in Turkey. Late notice motion 5 instructed the NEC to press for improved rights for work experience participants in all sectors. All motions were carried.

Excellent fringe meetings were held. A particularly interesting one was the solidarity for Latin America meeting, with speakers from the Cuban embassy, Venezuela, and a Colombian journalist who looked cowed and nervous in his chair, as if he expected to be dragged from the room by armed officials.

The ADM was basically a parliamentary-like process whereby the union set and amended its goals and operating terms and conditions. There were many interesting speeches and debates. Also, some evening functions such as book launches and art gallery receptions provided a distraction.

ADM provided a fascinating glimpse into the heart of the NUJ, and was an enjoyable and enriching experience.



President Chris Morley (left) with the Book Branch delegation

Chapel news

Harcourt

The chapel is working on voluntary recognition, but is poised to apply for statutory recognition, if necessary. Trade union training sessions are planned. The chapel is working closely with Amicus. Recruitment activity is being spurred on by the knowledge that Reed Elsevier has put Harcourt Education up for sale.

Penguin-DK

Made up most of this month's list of new members following recruitment events earlier in the year. Concern about overuse of rolling short-term contracts.

Scholastic

Pay negotiations continue.

LexisNexis Butterworths

Pay negotiations have stalled with the company's final offer of 3% plus some improvements to minimum salaries. The chapel has instructed its reps to accept nothing less than 4.6%, has rejected the company's offer and invoked the disputes procedure. There will be one final meeting between the two sides before an appointment made with ACAS. The good news is that recruitment is starting to take off and the chapel is resolutely backing its negotiating team. Other developments include a restructure of some editorial teams.

Usborne

The chapel has taken the first step towards this year's pay claim negotiations. Two recruitment events are being held in May. The first is aimed at designers who are under-represented in the chapel. The second is an event for all employees. The chapel has designed its own leaflet for the events.

Harper Collins

The union is holding drop-in sessions at lunchtime once a month, which the branch is funding. Attendance has been growing.

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Contacts

Branch chair
Sylvia Courtnage
scourtnage@btinternet.com

Vice chair
Mitzi Bales
mitzibales@britishlibrary.net

Branch secretary
Cath Rasbash
crasbash@acblack.com

Treasurer
Andy Smith
01322 445551
andy@nujbook.org

Membership secretary
Mitzi Bales
mitzibales@britishlibrary.net

Welfare officer
Kyran Connolly
020 8960 0625
kyran@union.org.za

Equality officer
Helen Ibbotson
editor@nujbook.org

NEC members
Kyran Connolly (Book)
Andy Smith (south-east)

Book Branch website
www.nujbook.org

Freelance rates online
www.nujbook.org/freeln01.htm

NUJ freelance directory and rate for the job
www.londonfreelance.org.uk

NUJ head office
www.nuj.org.uk
02072 787916

**National Organiser
Magazines, Books and Public
Relations**
Sue Harris
sueh@nuj.org.uk
02078 433714

**Freelance Organiser
John Toner**
johnnt@nuj.org.uk
02078 433703

Change of job or address
John Eaton
02078 433732
johnne@nuj.org.uk

NUJ Book Branch meeting 3 Apr 2006 minutes (abridged)

Present: A & C Black; Brown Reference Group; Freelance; JKP; Lexis Nexis; MABIC/NEC; National Organiser; Ofsted;

1) Previous minutes accepted as correct.

2) matters arising:

a) ADM: all delegates and our observer have registered. Delegation will make itself available to support Sue Harris as necessary in running the Sector Conference.

b) Chapel booklet: Final PDF is due, aiming for delivery of printed copies in time for branch AGM on 1 May.

c) mentoring scheme: 3 volunteers have been notified to the GS, and now await further news.

d) Trade Unions Freedom Bill – should branch become a sponsor?: this did not make it through the Private Members Bill ballot, so issue is once more on the parliamentary back burner. Suggestion that whole area of Trade Union law be considered for branch discussion later in the year.

3) new members: list agreed, with addition of three names subject to Head Office approval.

4) workplace reports: (see Chapel news) Brown Reference: plans for 8 redundancies were announced a few weeks ago. Company is not following procedures properly – people were not informed that they have the right to be accompanied into meetings; redundancy letters were issued midway through the announced consultation period.

Usborne: recruitment event is planned. Motion: 'Book Branch agrees to provide up to £50 for recruitment activities to be undertaken by Usborne chapel'. Prop Cath, sec Mitzi. Passed.

5) officers' reports: secretary: we have been notified of numerous events which may be of interest to members. A list of these will be sent to the branch email list. Diversity In Publishing newsletter to be forwarded to branch committee for consideration.

National organiser: the assistant organiser post has not been filled, but ad hoc support has been arranged. Sue, the GS and MABIC have come up with a strategy for her work in the sector over the next two or three years, initially focusing on building up communications

between existing chapels within industry-wide groups such as Reed and Informa, then creating more chapels in as-yet unorganized areas of these groups; subsequently looking at organizing and working for recognition in other areas of the industry. A database of existing agreements is being built up; a model house agreement will be made available. Training is vital, particularly courses at weekends. A database could be created of people who have already had trade union training and are willing to put their expertise to use as needed, for example in personal cases or in isolated workplaces – Sue can't be everywhere at once.

MABIC: still working on sector history display. Need to work out how to stop the material disappearing back into dusty archives afterwards....

6) AOB: May Day March: branch banner will be on the march from Clerkenwell.

7) next meeting: 1 May 2007: branch AGM: new committee will be elected (nominations are sought). We will drink the several bottles of wine still remaining from our last year's recruitment campaign prize.

ADM instructs NEC to campaign against library cuts

One of the many resolutions passed at ADM 2007 in Birmingham instructed the NEC to campaign to oppose the erosion of public library provision, and specifically to campaign against cuts to funding for the British Library.

Already local public libraries around the country are closing down and voluntary organisations are being encouraged to try to run the service (BBC news story November 2006, Devon).

The British Library made significant cuts in 2005 and has now set up a supporters forum in an effort to rally public support in its negotiations with the Treasury. The focus of campaigning is the Treasury's spending review but at the heart of the problem is the serious miscalculation as to the value of the printed book as a

resource. There is a widespread prejudice against books arising from the fallacy that they are redundant since the arrival of the internet.

Please email the BBN editor with your views on this issue and the whole subject of reading and libraries. Perhaps we could collate them as evidence of our attitude and present the package to the NUJ's parliamentary representatives.

Composite K (covers motions 122 and LNM4)

Passed at ADM 2007, Birmingham

This ADM deplores the erosion of public library provision in Britain. ADM believes that the closure of local libraries and cutting of acquisitions budgets for alleged economic reasons

deprives communities of access to information, culture and entertainment.

ADM instructs the NEC to campaign, in conjunction with relevant public service unions, to oppose such library cuts and closures and defend adequate library provision for the public.

ADM is further alarmed at the proposed cuts to the State funding of the British Library as reported in the Guardian on 29th January 2007. The British Library is the principal repository of books and other elements of our international cultural heritage.

ADM instructs the NEC, as a matter of urgency, to campaign against any cuts in the financial provision for the British Library, in conjunction with other relevant interested parties.