

Book Branch News

NUJ Book Branch

www.nujbook.org

January/February 2008

Diary dates

Tue 5 Feb, 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.

1 February

Close of **ADM** amendments and close of nominations for delegates.

21 February

Training: Representing members stage 2, London.

27 February

ADM Final Agenda published

29 February

Training: Getting started as a freelance, London.

4 March

Branch meeting

1 April

Branch meeting

3–6 April

ADM, Belfast, Europa Hotel.

For more information on any of the above please contact the Branch Chair.

Book Branch chapels

A & C Black
BCA (Book Club Associates)
Faber & faber*
HarperCollins (London)
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

edition edited by
Emma Woods

Please send news for the next issue to editor@nujbook.org

Thinking of working in Oxford?

Bill MacKeith

Oxford is the second largest publishing centre in the UK, after London. It is a major base for some of the world's largest academic publishers, such as Reed Elsevier and Taylor & Francis. Publishing companies in Oxford employ more than 4,000 people.

Some major companies moved from London to Oxford in the 1990s. Most relocated to out-of-town business parks where rent was lower (and distractions like cafés, pubs and shops absent). A more important reason for the moves was the prospect of making cuts in pay, which is why the relocations were accompanied by de-recognition of the National Union of Journalists.

In 1986 editorial salaries at Heinemann started at £8,260, which was 80% of the average for white-collar workers. In 1990, salaries at Butterworth started at £13,564 – 90% of the average for white-collar workers. Both companies were bought by different arms of Reed Elsevier, and moved to Oxford to form the basis of what is now Harcourt Education, recently bought by Pearson's educational publishing, and Elsevier Science and Technology Books. The companies tore up their agreements with the NUJ.

A 2004 NUJ salary survey at these companies showed that salaries started at £16,500 – less than 60% of average white-collar earnings.

At today's prices, that represents a recurring loss to each editorial publishing worker at those companies – and a gain to the shareholder – of over £8,000 a year per worker.

Welcome to the Oxford Branch!

Faced with the need for a vigorous NUJ branch in Oxford, book publishing workers can take some solace from the fact that Oxford & District NUJ Branch is one of the more active in the

union. A membership of over 450 includes people in broadcasting, newspapers, and press and PR as well as books and journals; and there are many freelancers in the branch too.

This means that there is a wide range of experience to draw on and chapel reports are often a stimulating and encouraging part of the branch meetings (second Thursday, every month).

For a few years in the mid 1990s there was not one NUJ agreement in book or journals publishing in Oxford. Then, using the Employment Relations Act 1999, members at journals publisher Carfax in Oxford won recognition. Carfax was then bought by Taylor & Francis and relocated to Milton Park near Oxford.

It was a great victory when NUJ members from the strong Book Branch Chapel at Routledge relocated to Milton Park and built up union membership and organization there, reversing the relocation–derecognition linkage (once and for all we hope).

Today the Taylor & Francis books and journals chapels continue to be well organised and are increasing their links with other parts of the Informa empire. The NUJ has also won joint recognition at Macmillan, and recognition at Harcourt (now part of Pearson) is currently being negotiated.

At Oxford University Press, where Amicus/Unite is recognized but organisation weaker than it was, there are a number of NUJ members. And Blackwells, bought by Wiley from the strongly anti-union Blackwells family earlier this year, will definitely be receiving the Oxford Branch's attention.

Whether you're thinking of moving to Oxford, or you're working there already, do

transfer to your local Oxford Branch – you'll get a warm NUJ welcome. And Oxford has a lot going for it: a strong town community (it's not all 'gown', although there are two unis), countryside and London both nearby (London one hour by train), varied museums, galleries, good music scene, etc.

The Oxford Branch usually meets at 7.30 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month at Oxford Town Hall. The Branch Secretary, Anna Wagstaff, can be reached at oxnuj@aol.com.

Bill MacKeith is an out-of-London representative on the Magazine and Book Industrial Council.

bmackeith@btinternet.com

Principal book and journal publishers in and near Oxford

Taylor & Francis books. Owner: Informa. 250 staff at Milton Park, Abingdon, 175 eligible for NUJ membership. NUJ recognised.

Taylor & Francis journals. Owner: Informa. 200 staff at Milton Park, 160 eligible. NUJ recognized.

Macmillan. Owner: Verlagsgruppe Georg von Holtzbrinck GmbH, Stuttgart. 180 staff in Oxford, about 100 eligible. NUJ and Amicus recognized.

Harcourt Education and Harcourt Global Library (recently bought by Pearson from Reed Elsevier, Library sale to be confirmed). 700 staff in Oxford, 250 eligible. NUJ recognition currently under negotiation.

Elsevier (S&T books) (formerly Butterworth-Heinemann). Owner: Reed Elsevier. 80 staff in Oxford, c.60 eligible.

Oxford University Press. Owner: Oxford University. 1,500 staff in Oxford. Amicus recognized.

Elsevier Science. Owner: Reed Elsevier. 639 staff in Oxford, 255 eligible.

Blackwell Publishing. Owner: Wiley. 400–500 staff in Oxford, 200–250 eligible.

(figures from a February 2006 survey by Oxford Branch's Manuela da Costa Fernandes)

CONTACTS

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Kyran Connolly (Book)
Andy Smith (South East)

Book Branch Website

www.nujbook.org

Freelance Rates

www.nujbook.org/freelance/
freeln01.shtml

NUJ Freelance Directory and Rate for the Job

www.londonfreelance.org.uk

NUJ Head Office

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Discussion paper

Restructuring our Union

Mitzi Bales

This is a response to the document submitted for comment by a subcommittee of the Union's Development Committee. To quote from it:

We have to examine our internal structures to ensure that they reflect our membership and that there is true democratic engagement for every member and sector.

We are looking to you to tell us where you think the democratic structures of the NUJ can be improved upon – and we're open to all ideas and opinions.

We will be taking evidence from across the union early in the New Year as part of this process [consultation] and will bring a discussion paper to ADM [Annual Delegates Meeting] in Belfast next year.

The document initiates the debate by asking a series of questions:

Should large chapels be constituted as branches, with voting rights at our ADM, the key policy-making body within the union?

Do industrial councils have a role to play?

How can we spend less on committees but enhance our democracy?

How do we encourage people to not just be members but active members?

Are branches still a useful tool for conducting union business? Or should there be a radical overhaul of their functions and purpose? And if so, what would you suggest?

And what about freelance members? Are they well serviced by current structures? Are members in PR and books best served by branch structures and a full, equal part of the union?

I put to the branch that the underlying theme of this document is to get rid of branches within the union structure. The three direct

questions about branches can be interpreted in this way. I vigorously oppose this.

First, about large chapels being constituted as branches. This sort of agitation is not new. It went on a few years ago, particularly when the Haymarket magazine chapel was large and active. If large chapels pull out of their current branches to act on their own, where is the solidarity and mutual help that arises from the exchange of ideas and support at branch meetings? They will be talking to themselves about themselves. I see it as a responsibility of large chapels to share their experience, knowledge – and even active members – with smaller chapels within a branch that unites them all.

To the question whether branches are still a useful tool for conducting union business, I say "yes". The funds allocated to it by the national union give it the ability to help chapels finance recruitment campaigns; to support industrial action by other NUJ branches and in the wider labour movement; to affiliate to organisations that further the same social and political (small 'p') aims. But, just as important if not more so, the branch is the forum for that exchange of ideas and support referred to above. It is also the forum for freelance members and those who are not in a chapel, of which there is a large percentage in books. Where do they go if there is no branch? The chapel-branch may not be appropriate.

In addition, the branch sets policies on a local level in the same way that the ADM sets policies on a national level. This then applies to all the chapels within the branch. Who will the large chapel-branch so influence?

The chapel liaison function of book branch committee members keeps chapels informed of policies, assures them of an immediate source

of help and information, and rallies them to participate in branch and national campaigns, such as Stand Up for Journalism. This in turn helps reduce the casework load of the national organisers, as recommended in the currently circulating document on strategy.

The branch elects delegates to the ADM. To do this, a branch that is formed by multiple chapels rather than only one can draw on a much wider pool of candidates. Indeed, this raises the question of how many delegates a chapel-branch would be allotted. Would it result in a disproportionate representation?

I put it to the branch that the current branch structure is sound, that book members are well served by it, and that a branch structure should be retained.

As for industrial councils, I have mixed feelings. I don't think the Magazine and Book Industrial Council (MABIC) has ever quite managed to be much more than another bureaucratic layer, though I don't denigrate the work attempted by MABIC members. We should turn to our current MABIC members for guidance on this question.

How do we encourage people to be active members? This question always exercises the minds of branch activists and the branch committee always seeks and welcomes new ideas. This discussion should be uppermost during the period that the Development Committee is allowing before it brings its final recommendations to ADM.

**Next meeting
6:30-8:00, 5 February
Headland House**

No-one is illegal

Sheila Cohen

No-One Is Illegal (NOII) in the UK was founded alongside a number of campaigns which sprang up across Europe and North America to resist increasingly draconian immigration controls in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The campaign means what it says – rather than campaigns for ‘amnesty’ or cautious moves towards citizenship for selected groups, the objective is to promote acceptance of the controversial idea that, as human beings, we are entitled to live wherever we choose – or, in current circumstances, find ourselves compelled – to be.

In the words of one NOII pamphlet, *Workers Control Not Immigration Controls* (published for a trade union audience in May 2006), “No

One Is Illegal is an organisation of people who have been fighting immigration controls for many years...We thought it important to highlight why controls need to be opposed in their totality.” Reasons include the fact that “there cannot be such an animal as fair or just, or benign or reasonable or non-racist controls. All controls are in their nature oppressive and racist.”

Those who agree with these arguments – and I do – are urged to join the campaign. NOII has held a number of conferences and issued several publications, including pamphlets of legal advice for migrant workers. Participants include solicitors, trade union activists and, of course,

migrant workers themselves. NOII acts directly against deportations, in some cases securing consent in allowing those facing torture or death in their ‘home’ countries to remain in Britain.

There is a strong emphasis on the right to work, with activists campaigning inside the unions for acceptance of the human rights of undocumented workers. Now that still more draconian laws are on the books, it remains vital to secure solidarity for so-called ‘illegal’ workers – human beings tossed around the world against their will by the forces of globalisation and war – from within the trade union movement, one of the few with any power to secure change in this inhumane and tragic scenario.

After a successful conference in Liverpool last year attended by over 100 trade unionists, London NOII activists are working towards a similar event in March 2008. Sponsored by the Finsbury Park branch of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) which has been active and successful in recruiting cleaners on the Underground, the conference will take place at SOAS on 29.3.08.*

Further details are available from davidlandau9@aol.com or NOII, c/o Bolton Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street, Bolton, BL1 1DY.

*Date and venue subject to confirmation.

Conference Report

The First Casualty: War, Truth and the Media, 17 November 2007

Walking into the LSE to attend the conference organised by the Media Workers Against War, a little frisson of nostalgia assailed me, for the Book Branch used to meet monthly at the LSE.

A short but compelling video, narrated by General Secretary Jeremy Dear and featuring well known media figures, set the context for the conference with wise words about the media’s role to seek and report the truth.

On the speaker’s rostrum with President Michelle Stanistreet, who chaired the session, were Tony Benn; Peter Wilby, *Media Guardian*; and Sami Ramadami, a senior lecturer at London Metropolitan University, political exile from Iraq and anti-war activist. Each gave a brief and cogent talk, but I only belatedly started to take notes when Sami Ramadami spoke. What he said is worth recording.

He declared that the UK media has been “seriously complicit” in presenting the

government’s views, repeating the mainstream narrative “until we believe it.” This gives a distorted picture “that ultimately silences us”. He pointed out that the critical voices are fringe voices, given a token hearing but contained.

Delegates then dispersed to workshops, mine being *The Media and the Anti-war Movement*. It was facilitated by Betty Brandford of the BBC and led by Peter Wilby and Jane Shallice of the Stop the War Coalition. Jane Shallice quoted from Shakespeare’s *King Henry Part II* to good effect: “...stuffing our ears with false reports”, using it to caution us to doubt everything we read.

She also made a telling comparison with media coverage of the Vietnam war and the current Iraq invasion: Vietnam was visual coverage, with all the horrors of napalm bombings and black body bags and killing fields directly before viewers’ eyes. A momentous public revulsion followed. This taught governments to conceal rather than reveal – and Alistair Campbell was an adept at this, in an entirely

new role as the manipulator supreme. She touched on the erosion of civil liberties and the danger in the growing Islamophobia, returning to the role that can be played by the media by attributing much of the success of the mass 2003 demonstration to the *Mirror*’s constant promotion of it.

Peter Wilby added his lament that the media is so dismissive of the anti-war movement and, in fact, often tries to discredit it. The ensuing discussion didn’t raise any new ideas or issues, but was intelligent and lively.

The final plenary was chaired by Dave Crouch who introduced Andrew Murray, Stop the War Coalition chair; Nick Davies, author; and Andrew Gilligan, formerly BBC and now freelance. Andrew Murray warned that the negative role of the media in 2002 is being repeated and is so dangerous because the conditions leading to the Iraq invasion are the same now in relation to Iran. Nick Davies worried that media workers are “passive processors” of hand-out news which PR is shaping. He declared that falsehoods, distortions and propaganda has increased. Andrew Gilligan

pointed out that the demand for news rises in wartime and puts journalists under greater stress.

The other two book branch delegates reported on their workshops at the branch meeting.

Delegates took away a conference statement that reads:

We the undersigned believe that there has been up to now a damaging imbalance in media coverage of the “war on terror” in favour of governments and the powerful.

We call on you to join with us in ensuring that in future a much wider diversity of opinion is represented in the media, and in particular that anti-war views – those held by the majority in society – are given their due weight.

I am convinced of the need for the conference and of its value for those who attended. I wonder about the rather lame statement.

Mitzi Bales

What do you think?

Do you come to branch meetings? Are you part of an active chapel? Ever been to an ADM?

Take a few minutes to tell us about you're your involvement with the Branch and the Union by filling in the on-line questionnaire at <http://tinyurl.com/3dfuc4>

And if you'd like to be kept in touch with Branch news and events you can leave us your e-mail address.

NUJ BOOK BRANCH MEETING

4 December 2007 minutes (abridged)

1) present A & C Black; freelance; Lexis Nexis; NEC; Ofsted

2) previous minutes accepted as correct.

3) matters arising: among the nominations we made last month were some for Professional Training Committee. We have now been notified that as this body was elected last year for a two year term, there will be no election this year.

4) new members: list agreed.

5) workplaces: Orion: *Motion: 'Book Branch agrees to fund Orion chapel up to £100 for recruitment events'.* Prop Kyran, sec Mitzi. Passed; Pinwheel; Lexis Nexis;

6) officers' reports: a) treasurer: balance is £5,200 including latest tranche of management allowance. Andy will check situation regarding our subs to various bodies we are affiliated to. A written report will be supplied next month.

b) NEC: The Stand Up for Journalism launch on 5 November was reported – a massive success, lots of activities in all sectors and internationally. The French event involved several other media unions. At the Guardian and the Observer a massive renegotiation of terms and conditions is almost complete; it seems that quite a lot of good stuff has been included; however, new staff employed from Jan 2008 will have to work 40 hours rather than 35. Contingency authority for industrial action was given to BBC chapels, where a strike ballot is in progress and finishes on 9 January; this is a very serious situation and there will probably be an ongoing sequence of industrial actions. The union's finances are not looking good as recruitment is static and membership is starting to fall; if the trend is not reversed cutbacks are

British Library campaign success

Following a Branch motion to ADM 2007, the Union backed the British Library's campaign against funding cuts. The following thank you is from Lynne Brindley, Chief Executive at the BL:

"We have received incredible support over the past year with regard to the British Library's spending review allocation, the result of which has been confirmed. I am delighted to report that our Grant-in-Aid will rise in line with inflation (at 2.7% per annum) and we will

receive a sustained level of capital funding.

This settlement means we will be able to continue to give free access to the reading rooms and serve all our users well – the novelists, business people, scientists, academics and family historians who use our great Library every day. The capital settlement will enable us to take a major step towards safeguarding the finest newspaper collection in the world."



likely; recruitment is more vital than ever. A press officer at Manchester Airport who sought NUJ advice when she was victimized has rejected a compromise agreement and is determined to go to tribunal; a motion to continue NUJ legal support for her was defeated. The Irish Organiser has handed in his notice. In the NEC nominations for 2008-9, Kyran was the only nominee for Book member and Andy is confirmed as one of the South East members; there will be a ballot for the London seats with 6 candidates for 4 seats.

c) MABIC: some discussion of future activities.

d) First Casualty conference: reporting before, during and after the Iraq war. Michelle chaired first plenary; Jeremy narrated the video. Tony Benn was one of the speakers. Concerns were expressed about media complicity in promoting government line. The process we saw in Iraq is being reiterated in Iran. Although the conference was interesting and lively, no real action was proposed by the final resolution.

e) Hands Off Venezuela conference: very well-attended; inspiring and enthusiastic; speakers included a Green Party representative, the new Venezuelan Ambassador and the General Secretary of the FBU.

f) Latin America conference: speakers included Diane Abbot, George Galloway, Tony Benn, the Cuban, Bolivian and Venezuelan Ambassadors, and Nicaraguan youth representatives.

g) freelancers: branch officers will continue with preparatory work on campaign to boost freelance involvement in chapels and branch.

h) chapel booklet: pdf has been completed; committee will sign off after Annie and Mitzi give it a final read-through.

7) structure review: although the aim of the review is ostensibly to increase democracy in the union, it appears to be leaning towards a proposal to get rid of branches.

Mitzi's paper counters this view. Function of Industrial Councils is weakened, now that they no longer have to ratify house agreements (just be notified of them). Our blooming email list is an example of ways to increase involvement in branch and union from chapel level upwards. Tom Davies, one of the originators of the structure review, will speak at February branch meeting.

8) BBN: Andy will do production liaison for next issue.

Mitzi/Annie/Emma will liaise.

9) motions: 'This Branch notes:

1. That Karen Reissmann, community psychiatric nurse, Unison branch chair and member of the UNISON Health Service Group Executive, has been sacked by Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust.

2. That she was found guilty of bringing the Trust into disrepute by giving an interview in December 2006 criticising the transfer of NHS work to the voluntary sector. She was further found guilty of telling people that she was suspended; of protesting her innocence and for allowing the .press to print information about her case. A further charge of misusing time was dropped.

3. That 700 members of Karen's branch voted 87 percent in favour of striking in her support, and have taken a total of 14 days of strike action during the last three months. Some 150 are on indefinite strike from 8 November until she is reinstated.

This Branch believes:

1. That the sacking is directly linked to Karen's UNISON activity in defence of the NHS and its staff over the last year.

2. That health workers have a right to criticise and oppose government policy. Patients, staff and service users are put at risk when workers fear to speak out.

3. That she should be reinstated immediately.

4. That the sacking of Karen is a threat to all trade unionists and to all those who want to defend the

NHS.

5. That it is the Trust which is causing distress to service users and their families by their attacks on the union and the workforce, and it is Karen and her supporters who are defending the service.

This Branch resolves:

1. To give our full support to Karen and to make a donation of £100 to the campaign.

2. To send a message of support to karen@reissmann.fsnet.co.uk

4. To send a message of protest to Sheila Foley, Chief Executive of Manchester Mental Health & Social Care Trust. Email sheila.foley@mhsc.nhs.uk or write to Sheila Foley, Chief Executive, Manchester Mental Health & Social Care Trust, Trust HQ, Chorlton House, 70 Manchester Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 9UN

*Note: Send donations payable to Manchester Community and Mental Health branch UNISON to Union Office, Chorlton House, 70 Manchester Rd, Manchester M21 9UN. If you want a speaker at your next union meeting please contact unison@zen.co.uk or Richard on 07737 300859.' – prop Annie, sec Mitzi, passed.

10) correspondence: Climate Change march takes place on Saturday 8 December, starting 12.00 Millbank. NUJ is affiliated to the campaign.

11) AOB: No One Is Illegal: public meeting Sunday 9 December, 10.00, UNITE offices, Theobalds Rd (former T&G building), launching campaign to change laws relating to migrants. More events are planned for 2008.

Details from davidlandu9@aol.com

12) next meeting: 8 January 2008: confirm ADM motions and amendments; elect ADM delegates.