

STAND UP FOR Journalism

With media companies chasing profits instead of stories, the NUJ is asking its members to *Stand Up For Journalism* on November 5th.

Former NUJ President Tim Lezard explains why

Why did you become a journalist? Was it to sit in an office all day, regurgitating other people's work? Or was it because you wanted to get out there, meet people, tell their stories and make a difference?

If it was the latter, I wouldn't be surprised if you were reconsidering your career options. Hundreds of us leave journalism every year, either because we can't afford it or because we're fed up being chained to our desks like workers in a call centre; and all this while editors demand a higher story count even as managing directors slash editorial budgets. Our world has changed, wherever we work. The chase for savings, not stories, is slowly but surely suffocating the life out of journalism.

The slashing of jobs and budgets are seriously damaging our industry, eroding public trust and compromising quality and standards as we struggle to cover unfilled or abolished posts. We're working longer hours due to increased workloads and, due to digital convergence, we're under increasing pressure to produce additional web packages such as podcasts, vidcasts and blogs.

Most of us welcome these new technologies but the extra demands placed on us - often without adequate training - compromise our ability to do our core job. As a result standards are slipping and health and safety problems such as stress and RSI are on the increase. On top of this, pensions are under attack, with company after company weakening or wiping out this key asset. Our quality of life, already compromised by poor pay, is now being damaged for the future.

Many of us are leaving the profession as we perceive we have no chance of buying a house, maintaining a decent quality of life or having any real hope of security in later life. The NUJ isn't prepared to sit on the sidelines

and watch as profiteers and asset-strippers transform our once-proud news-led organisations into consumer-led media conglomerates.

So that's why we're fighting back, asking you to join us in restoring some pride in our profession. The November 5th day of action is *your* chance to highlight the issues of concern in *your* workplace.

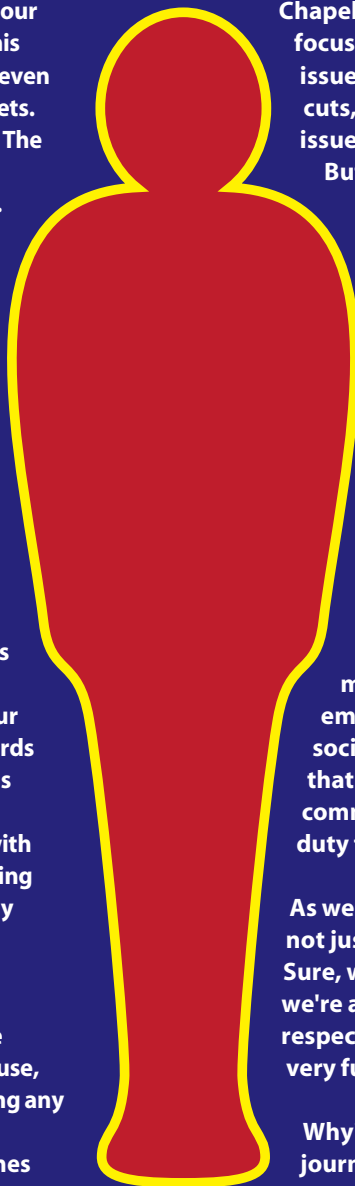
Chapels and branches across the country will focus their action on a range of different issues - pay, pensions, staffing levels, job cuts, workloads, working hours and other issues affecting quality and standards.

But it's about more than that. It's about encouraging our editors to take action to defend quality journalism, supporting them when they stand up to their accountant bosses and backing them when they resist cuts in our newsrooms, refusing to give advertisers and sponsors influence over news agendas.

The media is a central pillar of democracy, yet a growing number of people - politicians, opinion-formers and the general public as well as journalists - are concerned about what is happening. They recognise quality media means well-informed and empowered citizens, that the media has a social, cultural and democratic value and that the treatment of it merely as a commercial commodity interferes with our duty to inform them.

As we've said before: journalism matters, not just to journalists but to everyone. Sure, we're standing up for our jobs, but we're also standing up for integrity, for respect and for the heart and soul - the very future - of journalism.

Why? Because if we don't stand up for journalism, no-one will.



Standing up for

also means standi



Photo: John Harris

"I'll be standing up for journalism in Wales because a strong press is vital to our flourishing nation. Wales has come so far socially and politically in the last decade - but what is the point of having more power and great achievements if the people don't get to hear about it because the UK media bosses are so London-focused? They forget many people are actually interested in news from ALL the UK's nations."

Alex Lloyd, Secretary, Cardiff branch, member of the Wales Executive Council.

"As Scotland moves into a new political age, its press - whether in the form of newspapers or new media - has never been more important. The Herald and its sister papers should be growing, not being cut back. We, the staff, are standing together to protect something vital: quality journalism." **Herald production journalist**



Photo: John Harris

"New technologies offer media organisations ways to reach a whole new audience in exciting and different ways - by simply using technology to cut costs and do things on the cheap, they're squandering these opportunities."

Donnacha DeLong, Senior Site Editor, Amnesty International website



Photo: Jason Harris

"Whilst politicians and journalists often have an uneasy relationship, it is vital we have a strong and robust media able to hold to account those who are elected to act on behalf of the public. Journalists can only do that if they are given the resources necessary, yet all too often we see local

newspapers, broadcast organisations and magazine companies cutting staff and allowing the quality of their coverage to be put in jeopardy. Readers, viewers, listeners and our democracy deserve better. That is why I support the NUJ's Stand Up for Journalism campaign."

John McDonnell MP, Secretary of NUJ Parliamentary Group



Photo: John Harris

"Online media and concentration of ownership mean difficult times ahead for magazine and book staff. More work for no extra pay and insufficient training could see

the quality of publications falling and magazines losing the confidence of the communities they serve. We need to act now to bring quality back to the fore."

Bill MacKeith, MABIC.

When you work for a Northcliffe title, you are in no doubt about the importance of standing up and being counted. Journalists at the Bristol Evening Post and Western Daily Press have done just that this year - by a resounding majority they voted for the NUJ to represent them for pay bargaining despite a vigorous campaign by the management which tarred the union as a "third party" and a "business" and spread misinformation about the kind of pay deal union-represented staff would get.

Management in Bristol see no shame in admitting that they won't do a scrap more for the union than they are forced to by law. Though we've won legal recognition, we face a battle at every turn to convince the company that we're entitled to represent staff when, for example, a new edition is proposed or staff tell us they want more training. As we write we're waiting for arbitration at ACAS to settle whether the union is entitled to email staff at their company email addresses to keep them in touch with the bargaining process. Yes, that's right, we are fighting for the right to do the electronic equivalent of putting a letter through the company's mailbox.

You might think this tends to discourage people from union membership and leave them

For journalism

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and Steven Baxter,
y Press and Evening Post

dispirited about what the NUJ can achieve for them. Far from it. When we were about to ballot over union recognition, the company boasted that the NUJ had not achieved anything for its members at the Bristol titles and had never influenced a single significant management decision. A decisive blow? Far from it. We were able to reel off a long list of achievements: improved pay allowance; overturning unfair contract terms: negotiating compulsory redundancies into voluntary ones; dramatically improving payments to laid-off casual staff; and so on. Management never used that line of argument again.

Besides, staff know the value of the stuff that keeps us busy the rest of the time, from speaking out whenever needed to representing them at individual meetings and - a challenge for the future this - resisting the increasing influence of advertisers and sponsors over editorial copy.

Most importantly the management knows that we are here, we are strong and we are vigilant. Who knows what Northcliffe managers would propose if they knew that the union wasn't there to challenge them? Now that's a worrying thought.

Paul Breeden and Steven Baxter, Joint FoCs,
Western Daily Press and Evening Post



“PR jobs and standards are under threat in local government. Consultants often do not have local knowledge and usually cost considerably more for a service which isn't necessarily better than that provided by in-house PR and Information Officers. It is time for all press office staff to stand up for journalism and protect their work from political bias and falling standards.” **Tim Jones, PRIC.**

Photo: John Harris

“It's important for members to stand up both for the quality of the papers they work for and their own pay and conditions. The two go hand in hand. At the Coventry Telegraph management decisions either not to replace staff or to delay replacing staff put pressure on everybody. It's considered quite acceptable by managers that everybody does more work every time somebody leaves and isn't replaced. But why should members accept an ever increasing workload and ever increasing pressure because our company

can't or won't replace people? It's also important for members working on local papers to campaign on staffing and resources so their titles have the numbers to cover the best and sometimes time consuming stories such as court cases, council matters and punchy human interests stories. We have to fight against a culture of relying on press releases for the future of the papers we work on and for the future of our jobs.”
Lucy Lynch, MoC, Coventry Newspapers.



Photo: Colin McPherson

Photo: John Harris

“I'm standing up for journalism to fight the everlasting cuts, stop reductions in working conditions and to fight for a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Without a good quality, locally-based media, local politicians and companies would get away with whatever they wanted.”
Keith Murray, FoC, BBC Radio Cambridge.



“The convergence of news agendas means journalism can become dull and repetitive, while important angles on big stories are overlooked. So I think we face a common problem in the industry. With budget cuts and redundancies, resources and people are so stretched that journalists must struggle to provide a quality public service. Integration of print, broadcasting and the web only adds to the pressure for fewer and fewer journalists to produce more and more output. The result is that the profession and its members are suffering.”
David Crouch, Assistant News Editor, Financial Times website.



Photo: John Harris

So what can YOU do?

NUJ members all over the UK and Ireland will be taking action on November 5th. Here are some ideas for your branch or chapel to follow up before the day itself ...

Start planning now!
Organise a chapel or branch meeting to discuss plans and ask for volunteers to form a committee responsible for ensuring your event is a success.

Sign a petition ... and get others to do the same

Sign up to the online petition at www.standupforjournalism.org.uk
Use the link to do a workplace email to get people involved on the day.
Urge everyone in your workplace to sign the petition because it's our chance to send a loud and clear message to all media owners about the importance we, as professionals, attach to having the necessary resources – staff, terms and conditions, budgets – to enable us to produce quality media.
Get members to sign a workplace petition and present it to

management on November 5th. This could be around issues that specifically affect your members. www.standupforjournalism.org.uk has some ideas of workplace specific petitions.

Do a workplace survey – and use the results

You can do a survey of members at work to find out about pay, workload, pensions and other issues that affect them ... then get them published in other media. We can help you set up an on-line survey if you email campaigns@nuj.org.uk

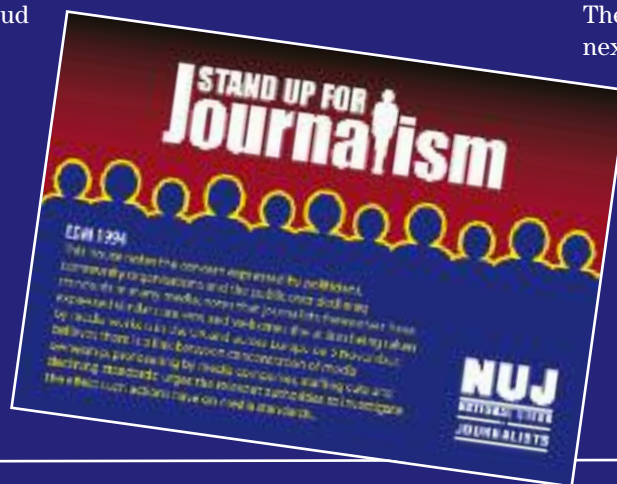
Send your MP a postcard, urging them to sign Early Day Motion 1994 backing our campaign.

Above all, be creative

Use your imagination and local contacts to come up with your own, unique ideas. Previous demonstrations have involved chapels putting their newspaper up for sale on eBay, inviting the Grim Reaper to a protest and hiring the local town crier to spread the message about their activity. NUI President Michelle Stanistreet will be presenting a prize for the best chapel or branch campaign.

There will be another supplement in next month's Journalist, focusing on what branches and chapels are doing on the day itself. To include your event contact campaigns@nuj.org.uk

Remember, we can only build a successful day of action with the active participation of as many members as possible, so make sure you play your part on November 5th.



STAND UP IN MANCHESTER

We expect there will be several public demonstrations on November 5th, the biggest of which will be in Manchester outside of the Society of Editors' Conference where editors will be joined by media owners and commentators as they discuss the future of the industry.

We believe that whilst media technology and the industry inevitably change, quality content remains central to future success. As more and more companies cut staff, hold down pay, increase workloads, reduce budgets, axe pensions or compromise quality, journalists and editors should be united in campaigning for more resources.

That's why we're lobbying the conference – to urge them to join with us in standing up for quality media and standing up for journalism. It is in all our interests to persuade our owners to stop cutting and start investing.

We're urging each chapel and branch to send a representative to the lobby in Manchester. Transport will be provided from London and some other centres. Where chapels cannot afford to send someone, we shall help out. Let us know who will be attending from your chapel or branch by emailing campaigns@nuj.org.uk. It's important we show on November 5th the breadth of support from across the union and industry for our campaign.