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THE JOURNAL OF BECTU

A SECTOR OF PROSPECT

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Stage Screen & Radio

THE JOURNAL OF BECTU
A SECTOR OF PROSPECT
Summer 2020



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This 10-page special reports on how the coronavirus crisis affected our sectors, and how the union has fought for its members and their industries

Cover image: A videographer films Blu Cantrell at the O2 just before lockdown in March

Credit: Ollie Millington/Redferns

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If you haven't logged in before, you will need to request a password by calling the membership department on 020 7346 0900. You will then be sent a link via email, click on the link and you will be prompted to provide your membership number, surname and click submit.

A second link will be sent to your email to reset the password. Click on this link to change the password and provide answers to the security questions.

If you do not know your membership number, please call 020 7346 0900 or email membership@bectu.org.uk

In Brief Keep checking your junk mail folder

Branch reps are keeping in touch with as many members as possible. However it has come to light that some members are not receiving their email, so please check your junk mail folder as some email providers may look at a bulk email as

spam and automatically move it to junk. In order to ensure your contact details are correct please log on and amend your personal details if anything has changed or contact membership if you have difficulty logging in."

Jobs risk at the BBC

The BBC has announced the need to make £125-million of savings this financial year in the nations and regions, with savings to be made from Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England. At the time of writing the union has been advised that around 150 jobs could be 'at risk' and England has not yet confirmed its proposals.

Bectu national secretary Noel McClean said: "During the pandemic, the BBC has shown itself to be the most used and most trusted source of information for the nation. It has achieved that position because of the hard work of Bectu members who will be devastated that jobs are now at risk. We are being consulted on the cuts and we will oppose any compulsory redundancies but



Noel McClean

even if this can be managed by voluntary means there will remain issues about workload with fewer people."

The BBC is facing unprecedented funding challenges as it has been given responsibility for free licence fees for the over-75s as well as looking to make £125-million of savings by the end of the year.

Bectu believes the government should step in and ensure the BBC's funding and output is not compromised by these financial pressures. A good start would be to take back responsibility for licence fees for over-75s.

Covid-19 has put into sharp focus the lack of security for many freelancers in the BBC's current model. Despite Bectu making strong and repeated arguments the BBC refused to move from its view that those working for BBC Public Service are not eligible for furlough. Bectu is determined to work with our freelancers to try and secure positive changes to this. "We have already raised and will continue to raise the need for change within the BBC and across the creative industry," says McClean.

New deal for freelancers

The shocking fallout for so many freelance workers through the lockdown has made clear just how precarious their existence is, and there are major demands that when the industry reopens there must be changes. So assistant national secretary Paul Evans organised six working groups to discuss what is needed in a 'new deal' for film and TV freelancers.

The working groups discussed employment rights and tax, income protection and job security, better management,

welfare, negotiating terms and conditions, equality and diversity.

These areas were identified following analysis of a 'ThoughtExchange' in which almost 2,500 people working in film and TV took part.

Some of the top thoughts generated included:

- An end to unpaid overtime with strict contractual rules on the length of working days that are paid;
- Agreed union rates with no 'buy out' deals forcing you to work extra hours for no pay, ending the gradual shift over

recent years towards longer working days;

- Respected industry ratecards.

WORKING HOURS

The most common theme overall was better working hours and work life balance. Equality and diversity took on a new urgency following the Black Lives Matter protests.

On-line discussions took place over several weeks and involved hundreds of members, and as the journal went to press London Production Division branches were reviewing the results of the marathon



Paul Evans

deliberations. Paul Evans commented: "We are now on the brink of a consensus on how we would like the industry to respond in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. We urge freelance workers to join the union and get behind this new push for a better industry that protects all."



When creatives were asked to perform for the benefit of women confined to abusive homes the response was overwhelming. Musicians and spoken word artists sent in videos of themselves performing for Sing4Safety, raising money for Women's Aid. Briana Corrigan (ex-Bautiful South, main picture) and protest singer Peggy Seeger are just two of the many artists on board.

A different artist performs every day and viewers on facebook, twitter and



In Brief Remembering Felix Schroer

Bectu members in Liverpool and especially those working on *Hollyoaks* are mourning the death of Felix Schroer (right) from a heart attack on 20 March. The senior director of photography at Lime Pictures for 20 years, he was instrumental in working with Bectu in unionising the workplace on *Hollyoaks*. He will be sadly missed. An obituary will appear in the next issue.



Instagram share and/or donate.

The scheme took off when Bectu members Alison Surtees (top) and Suzi Hoffmann (beneath) and two friends got angry via Zoom about the horrific rise in numbers of women killed in their homes. "It just got so depressing hearing that five women a week had been killed in their own homes since lockdown and in London, 100 calls a day to police about domestic violence," they said.

The four women from Salford and Manchester

launched Sing4Safety www.facebook.com/Sing4Safety/ just a couple of days later. Different singer/songwriters and spoken word artists give them a video performance to publish every day.

After two weeks and the kind participation of many artists, the project has raised over £1K! Briana Corrigan is spokesperson. She says: "I'm honoured to be part of this project and want to do everything I can to help it succeed". The target is to raise at least £2,000.

Jobs go at Rivus

Dozens of Prospect managers and supervisors are facing redundancy or have already gone in the wake of the sale BT Fleet Solutions to private equity group Aurelius last August. Around 950 people were transferred into the new company, now called Rivus Fleet Solutions. Of these, 189 were in Prospect grades.

In October eight managers were made redundant plus another eight in spring when the new owner closed 10 of its 55 garages.

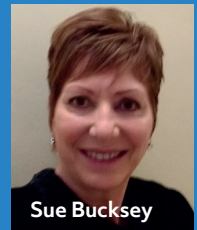
Seven more have gone after restructuring the customer operations teams.

Rivus has asked for remaining staff to volunteer to be furloughed on full pay, and because of coronavirus Rivus is not proposing a pay increase for employees this year.

Prospect negotiator Sue Bucksey expressed disappointment at fresh proposals to change shift patterns in some garages, and the decision against a pay rise, adding:

"These people have shown loyalty over many years and their input is vital to the company's success."

- Bucksey is seeking volunteers for workplace rep at Rivus. Anyone interested should email cmd@prospect.org.uk with "Rivus rep – FAO Sue Bucksey" in the subject line.



Sue Bucksey

FAA pay rise

Bectu has negotiated higher rates of pay and allowances for supporting artists returning to new productions after the Covid-19 lockdown.

The three-year pay agreement made with employer organisation PACT will provide a 2% increase in pay for 2020 and 2% subsequent increases in January 2021 and January 2022.

The increase in pay will apply earlier than usual, hopefully mitigating some loss of income by supporting artists during the pandemic. The changes will not apply to productions that were already scheduled to film before the lockdown.

Night rates, non-performance calls, holiday pay and meal allowances will also increase, along with supplementary fees – after many years of stagnation – and the first ever annual increase for those in categories C, D and E, covering special skills and performance requirements.

Negotiations official Emily Collin said: "We are very pleased with these improvements, which apply to some of the lowest paid and most vulnerable workers in our industry."

"We hope that these increases will help our members mitigate the loss in income which many have suffered."

We must still celebrate Pride

Prospect organiser Rob Lauder says that while Pride will be different this year, it is still as vital as ever. "It won't look like it normally does this year – there are no parades, no parties and a lack of a festival

feeling. However, that does not mean that the LGBT+ community is not pulling together. Celebrating our differences, and remembering that we have more in common than separates us."



Bectu staff and members were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Kate Elliott. Kate was for many years Bectu's training officer, extremely good at her job and very popular among members and staff. An obituary will appear in the next issue.

Head of Bectu



Philippa Childs on the struggles faced and those still ahead

Living in the time of Covid

I know that the last four months have been extremely difficult for many thousands of our members who, almost overnight, saw their employment come to a screeching halt and their incomes either dry up completely or be severely curtailed. The coronavirus pandemic has impacted everyone by placing restrictions on our freedom to work, travel and socialise as we would ideally like. But I can only imagine how stressful it must be for members who have had no support whatsoever from the government support schemes and those who have faced uncertainty about whether they would be furloughed or have access to the Self-Employed Income



Social distancing: queuing to enter B&Q in May. Right: safety sign in Guildford

Support Scheme.

Bectu and Prospect have been unrelenting in our lobbying for all workers to be supported through this crisis and I am full of admiration for groups like ExcludedUK, Forgotten Ltd, ForgottenPAYE and BBCPAYE freelancers that continue to do great work highlighting the unfairness of

those who have fallen between the gaps of government support schemes through no fault of their own. I know that many of our members are in this position and we are determined that the precarious position that they have been placed in should be addressed now and for the future.

members during the pandemic have highlighted the need for a new deal for freelancers working in film and TV and that's an agenda that we've been working on with activists and members.

BROADCASTERS

The broadcasters have also been impacted by the lockdown with the BBC agreeing to fund an extension of the free TV licences for over 75's for an additional period of time and the commercial broadcasters facing huge losses in advertising. We know that there will be long term consequences and cuts are already being announced in the BBC nations and regions. Our aim, as ever, will be to avoid compulsory redundancies but also to ensure that those who remain working in the BBC will not face an increase in their workloads. I will be meeting Tim Davie, the new BBC Director General, at the end of this month and I will be making that point to him, whilst reminding him of the invaluable role our members have played in ensuring excellent output from the BBC under very difficult circumstances.

CHALLENGING

So the last few months have been a very challenging time for our members, representatives and staff and I would like to pay tribute to you all for the support that you have shown to me and to Bectu throughout this period. If there is a positive to these unprecedented times it's been the collaboration that has taken place across the creative industries and the profile that has given to the union and its brilliant and talented members. My hope is that this collaboration and respect continues once this crisis is over and that we can build a better workplace for all our members. ●

CONSEQUENCES

We're entering into another phase now where the economic consequences of the pandemic are being felt across the industry. Theatres have started to lay off casual staff and begin redundancy consultation, some have already gone into liquidation and so the government's announcement of a £1.57-billion recovery package is welcome news. The challenge ahead is to ensure that the grants and loans get to theatres and the arts quickly and efficiently.

There looks to be a very slow and cautious return to film and TV production despite the comprehensive BFC protocols being produced very swiftly and that's understandable, not least because of some of the travel restrictions and insurance issues. We know though, from our survey of members, that they are concerned about the impact this will have on their incomes over the coming months and so we hope that a safe return to production will be possible during late summer and autumn. The difficult situations faced by our



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SURVIVING

Tens of thousands dead, the economy battered, industries closed down or working in previously unheard-of ways: this 10-page special reports on how the coronavirus crisis affected our sectors, and how the union fought for its members and their industries

The coronavirus pandemic, the worst in over a century, has so far resulted in more than 11-million cases worldwide and more than half a million deaths. Economies have been battered as governments across the globe have had to choose between keeping businesses going or keeping their populations safe by making everyone stay home.

In the UK, as lockdown rules eased on 4 July, new cases had reduced to about 500 a day while reported deaths were 136. But the total number of lab-confirmed cases stood at nearly 300,000 in the UK and the number of deaths over 44,000.

How governments have handled the pandemic has obviously had a



huge impact on how each country has fared, and how it will recover economically from this catastrophe.

In this the UK has fared very badly: the OECD last month reported that a slump in the UK's national income of 11.5% this year means it will suffer the worst damage from the crisis of any country in the developed world.

Labour's shadow chancellor Anneliese Dodds has attributed this to the government's "failure to get on top of the health crisis, delay going into lockdown and chaotic mismanagement of the exit from

lockdown." And despite this, the government remains intent on leaving the EU with or without a deal, risking even further, completely avoidable, economic damage.

The TUC has been in contact with the government throughout – and so has our union. General Secretary Mike Clancy and Bectu head Philippa Childs have fought hard for greater support for our members and for our industries.

PRIORITY

When the crisis began in early March the union's priority was to obtain the best available information as quickly as possible and get advice to the members. It immediately became clear that thousands of freelance workers were facing financial ruin, so the union quickly consulted on and drew up solutions and presented them to the Treasury, coming back again and again each time the Treasury made a new change, pressing the case for all those freelancers who were still not covered by the government's furlough or self-employed assistance schemes. The union pressed the independent production sector to furlough as many workers as they could and worked hard with employers to solve problems. Bectu urged the industry to organise a support scheme for workers who were falling through the government's safety net.

With each government change to the support schemes members asked their union what it meant for them. The union quickly adopted the Zoom video conference platform and it has become a key method of communicating with members. Numerous meetings were organised to discuss the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and who

CONTROL THE VIRUS

Strong message:(clockwise) the BT Tower displays government messages; Mike Clancy, *Loose Women* rehearsals in May, temperature testing, Philippa Childs

BECTU resources to help you

Below are links to resources on the Bectu website that give information and guidance on many issues affecting our members.

Advice and resources about coronavirus
<https://bectu.org.uk/coronavirus/>

Information related to health & safety at work during the coronavirus pandemic
<https://bectu.org.uk/topic/health-and-safety-covid-19/>

Listing of online events being run by the union
<https://members.bectu.org.uk/advice-resources/liveevents>

Information about the government's furlough scheme

<https://bectu.org.uk/topic/furloughing-and-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-cjrs/>

Information about the government's support scheme for the self-employed
<https://bectu.org.uk/topic/self-employment-income-support-scheme/>

Your rights at work during the pandemic
<https://bectu.org.uk/topic/rights-at-work-during-covid-19/>

The Film & TV Recovery Plan and other industry specific guidance
<https://bectu.org.uk/topic/returning-to-work-industry-specific-guidance/>

THE CRISIS

might benefit from it; whether and how to apply for Universal Credit; and answering questions about furloughing. Hundreds of members attended each one.

The union's officials and lay reps held ongoing discussions with managements across our industries about the shutdown, how some services would continue or when they might restart.

And of course, for many weeks the Bectu offices were closed and officials and staff were delivering the service to members from their homes.

As the lockdown progressed, the union's communications department organised webinars on a growing range of issues attended by hundreds of members. These included several on the government's schemes, Covid health and safety in art spaces, and when do freelancers need to do a risk assessment. But they also covered issues such as a masterclass in how to negotiate, breaking into post-production and an introduction to intimacy co-ordinating. All these can still be viewed in the members' area of the Bectu website.

Recognising that some members' mental health was beginning to suffer from months of isolation, Bectu ran webinars on mental health, while reps also raised the issue and pointed members to resources that could assist.

The training department had had to scrap its entire training programme as face to face gatherings were out - so training officer Rachel Bennett successfully obtained the funding to run a programme of free bitesize training courses which have been extremely popular (see page 25).

OUR INDUSTRIES' FUTURE

While the government had to be lobbied time and time again to push it into making the right decisions for the creative industries during lockdown, the government has proved so far to have even less



Members have suffered greatly... yet many have devoted their time to helping the NHS

understanding of the needs of our industries between now and when the coronavirus crisis is finally over.

After the government announced changes to the furlough scheme in which employers would have to start paying more towards the costs, the creative industries employers reacted by announcing thousands of redundancies.



In BT, whose workers supported the country by maintaining the telecommunications network, management has announced no annual pay award, a review of redundancy payments and is pushing ahead with redundancies arising from reorganisations, despite pleas from Prospect to defer them (see page 19).

But the outlook for the theatre and live events industry looked particularly bleak: until the government belatedly announced its £1.6-billion support package it was looking at devastation (see page 12).

SOLIDARITY

Bectu's members have suffered greatly during this pandemic. Some have lost friends or relatives; many more have taken a major hit to their incomes and lost jobs. But despite this many members have devoted their time and effort to helping the front line workers in the NHS by sewing masks and other personal protective equipment.

Others, responding to the Black Lives Matter movement, have begun taking positive action within their branches to address the systemic racism of the industry along with the launch of the Bectu black members' network (see page 20).

Philippa Childs says: "The union has tried to do everything in its power to protect our members, fight for their livelihoods, defend their incomes, issue as much advice as widely as it could, lobby the government to bring our members into its safety net, reopen our industries safely, and ensure the survival of our most vulnerable theatre and live entertainment industry.

"We will all continue to face major challenges in the coming months, but our union will continue to fight as hard as it can to ensure that when this pandemic is finally beaten we will have done our best to minimise its impact on our members and our industries."●

No freelancer left behind

This was the call Bectu adopted as it has fought a long and sustained campaign throughout the crisis to try to secure the most protection for freelancers from financial disaster, to ensure a safe return to production, and to lobby for support for the industry.

At the start of 2020 UK film and television production was on course for a record year. Yet in just a few weeks studios were silent, frozen mid-shoot, and thousands of freelance workers were looking in dread at the possibility of financial ruin.

Bectu has fought hard throughout this crisis, intervening with government time after time on behalf of freelance workers and leaving no stone unturned in an effort to ensure as many members as possible were protected.

In early March, Bectu asked the government to lobby insurance companies to cover freelancers for self-isolation, establish a system to cover any lost earnings due to self-isolation that are not covered by insurance or by employers, and guarantee that businesses who cannot afford to cover this kind of absence will be supported.

Then when new measures were announced on 11 March allowing easier access to Statutory Sick Pay and other benefits, head of Bectu Philippa Childs said: "The Chancellor's measures for freelancers, removing the income floor and the need to attend a job centre interview, are welcome but using Universal Credit to deliver this help is simply not up to the scale of the challenge.

"It seems that if you are an employee you get support, if you are a business you get support, but if you are a freelancer you get left behind. It isn't good enough and the government needs to rethink this plan and put in place a proper support package for freelancers before it's too late."

General Secretary Mike Clancy wrote to Chancellor Rishi Sunak asking for more to be done.

Bectu called for interest-free loans, other forms of borrowing such as credit card interest being suspended or slashed to zero, and help for renters.

On 19 March, as productions were being shut down daily and the number of freelancers affected was rocketing, Childs wrote to Sunak again asking the Chancellor to introduce a form of income support proportional to their recent average income through a tax rebate, as well as freelancers and the self-employed having access to the same level of sick pay as other workers.

LOBBYING MPS

On 23 March the union called on all freelancers to write to their MP to urgently ask for additional financial support from the government. The government had announced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) under which it would pay up to 80% of employees' salaries if they were kept on by their employer, but many sole traders, people working from contract to contract and those operating as limited companies felt completely excluded. The government's advice was that freelancers and the self-employed should sign up to Universal Credit which equates to around £94 a week, compared to up to £2,500 per month being offered to those who were employed.

Within 24 hours more than 7,000 freelance workers in the creative industries had written to 592 of the 650 MPs – including every single Conservative. Within a week, 10,000 letters had been sent.

The union surveyed freelance workers on their earnings and used the information in a submission to



I was producing a film which was pulled immediately by the broadcaster and my production company as it's not safe to continue filming.

Bectu member

the Treasury Select Committee demonstrating how freelancers were falling through the net. Bectu urged the government to use the tax data from previous tax returns to build a picture of an average total verifiable income across different streams for each worker who claims and then pay grant payments covering 80%.

The government then announced the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme on 26 March, but many freelancers were still falling through the cracks. A Bectu survey of 1,900 PAYE freelancers found that 47% of them did not expect to be eligible for support through the CJRS.

In early April Bectu wrote to nearly 300 film and TV production companies urging them to furlough PAYE freelancers. Several companies including Warner Bros, HBO and Disney, some broadcasters plus some smaller indies stood out in their support for their freelancers. The

Working in a time of crisis: filming Royal Ascot in March, shortly before the lockdown.

Below: Philippa Childs, right: Spencer MacDonald, bottom right: filming restarts on Coronation Street in June



union asked the industry to furlough workers, retain staff where possible, avoid unnecessary contract terminations, and compensate crew hired on daily contracts in line with those on weekly contracts.

One freelance head of department on PAYE normally worked with a pre-Covid crew of 15 - 20 men. "I'm PAYE so I was furloughed," he said. "As soon as the scheme was announced HBO contacted all of us and told us this was what was going to happen. They filled in all the forms, all I had to do was email them a reply saying I agree to it and it was all done."

Disney furloughed crew working across its latest productions including those being produced by Lucas Films and Marvel. The studio informed crew on 20 March that they were terminating contracts. but on 31 March they wrote again rescinding the terminations so that people could become a 'furloughed crew member'.

One freelance worker was working on *Fantastic Beasts* in March. "My partner was pregnant and the midwife told us on 13 March that we should start locking ourselves down now. The baby was born on 26 March and we were in a bubble until then. I am a personal services company, I'm the director and the employee and I furloughed myself. If you're freelance and a limited company you loan yourself out to the production, so because I get a wage from my company I had to furlough myself."

Bectu worked through problems with production companies and asked them to help lobby the government to bring more freelance workers into the safety net.

With the government changing the rules so often, Bectu officials received thousands of emails and calls from members. A series of meetings providing guidance took place on Zoom, attended by hundreds of members.

For some freelance workers their exclusion from financial support has been simply down to how their accountants do their books. One rigger told the journal that he had not had a penny from the government because his accountant calculates his PAYE wages on a yearly basis rather than monthly.

BUILDING SUPPORT

The union joined forces with many companies and organisations in the creative industries to put the strongest pressure on the government to try to bring the thousands of excluded freelance workers into the safety net. Bectu has been working with ExcludedUK, a pressure group supporting the self-employed across many different sectors, which is continuing to lobby the Government about those who have fallen through the gaps. And support grew in Parliament.

In May Bectu held meetings with Treasury officials and with Labour's shadow culture team which then lobbied the Treasury, and Mike Clancy and Philippa Childs put forward solutions in a meeting with Treasury officials organised for Bectu to feed back continued concerns.

And both the DCMS and Treasury Select Committees urged the Chancellor to fill the gaps. On 7 July the inaugural meeting took place of an All Party Parliamentary Group that has been pulled together to try to address the 1.7-million who are still excluded.

BACK TO WORK

As the industry began planning the return to work the union's key role in the industry was highlighted through its involvement in almost every single piece of guidance.

Guidance for film and high-end TV drama, post-production and VFX were released on 1 June following broadcaster guidance in May.

Bectu has also produced a 90-page document providing further detail for specific departments and crew

I am now without work and supporting three kids under eight while my husband is trying to keep his business afloat.

Bectu member



working in film and high-end TV.

Bectu national secretary Spencer MacDonald said: "Being able to deliver guidance which provides a uniform set of standards for productions to follow is a huge achievement. The industry is now entering a period of planning for work to resume. We know there are many questions still to be answered and that members' experiences will remain crucial to how productions continue to adapt."

Despite some productions restarting, many have not and workers still need financial support. But since the government announced the increased employer contributions required, the union is concerned that employers will end it. "We encourage the employers to continue supporting the crew," says MacDonald.

And alongside the financial worry is the other worry about catching the virus and how badly someone and their family might suffer. One freelance had to isolate herself and her family, but she also started on antidepressants. "My case is one of 100,000 people going through something like this." ●



Last-minute lifeline

The government's £1.6-billion package has come after months of pressure by an industry facing ruin without it

As the journal went to press, Bectu was studying the details of a 1.6-billion support package announced by DCMS Secretary of State Oliver Dowden, in response to months of pressure from the theatre and live entertainment industry and the unions. Until the announcement came workers were looking with dread at the prospects for their industry whose business model is filling enclosed spaces with people, in the absence of any government support. When the announcement came on 5 July close to 3,000 theatre jobs were at risk of redundancy and many more had been expected.

These figures – officially notified to Bectu by employers – do not include freelancers, who make up around 70% of the theatre workforce.

The affected theatres and venues include Southampton Nuffield, Theatre Royal Plymouth, the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Opera House, Lyceum Edinburgh, National Theatre, Nimax Theatres, Cameron Mackintosh and

Delfont Mackintosh, Birmingham Hippodrome, Coventry Belgrade and Theatre Royal Newcastle.

Announcing the support package, the DCMS stated: "Thousands of organisations across a range of sectors including the performing arts and theatres, heritage, historic palaces, museums, galleries, live music and independent cinema will be able to access emergency grants and loans."

The funding includes £1.15-billion of grants and loans for cultural institutions in England; £100-million for the national cultural institutions in England and the English Heritage Trust; £120-million to restart construction on cultural infrastructure and heritage construction projects in England; an extra £18-million for Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

IMMEDIATE TALKS

As the crisis hit in March and theatres closed their doors, the union had immediately held talks with the theatre industry on ensuring financial support for our members.

Many theatre workers were furloughed, and the union worked closely with the employers to ensure that maximum advantage was taken of the government's furlough scheme.

But many workers did not qualify. "As a lighting designer working in theatre, live music and corporate markets my livelihood has disappeared overnight," said one. "I had a full diary spanning March, April and May and within the space of three days all of the work has been cancelled.

"I now have no income and because I am a sole-trader with no business premises I am unable to get any grants or support from the government, apart from means-tested Universal Credit which falls massively below a living or even minimum wage, meaning I am unable to support myself."

The union went back to the Treasury and the DCMS time after time to press for more assistance for casual workers and to bring more excluded people into the government safety net.

On 24 March Arts Council

England announced it would make a £160-million Emergency Response Package available through three Emergency Response Funds. These funds were designed to help alleviate the immediate pressures faced by artists, arts organisations, creative practitioners, museums, and libraries over the summer. Almost 90% of this investment was made up of National Lottery funding. By 9 June ACE had awarded almost 10,000 grants to 7,484 individuals and 2,182 organisations, totally £64.8-million.

Nevertheless, by the end of May nearly 30 theatres and venues had warned Bectu that they were considering redundancies. These included Leicester Haymarket, Southport Theatre, Edinburgh theatres and Watershed Bristol. The National Theatre was proposing 20-30% redundancies. As thousands of Bectu members were furloughed, the notices effectively meant that employers were preparing to lose staff as the Coronavirus

Live events fight for survival

The coronavirus crisis has left the live events sector fighting for its survival. Bectu official Naomi Taylor explained: "The sector is characterised by many small companies who simply don't have the money to remain closed for months without going bust. They can't break even unless they have 60% capacity; the promoters need 80% to break even." The reduction to a 1m social distancing rule might improve matters. However: "The real problem comes with the smaller venues where people are standing to watch the band. You can't have a club night and

socially distance effectively, and even if you can you're not going to turn a profit.

"Across the country we are looking at grassroots music venues already under pressure and threat."

The live events workers had everything cancelled. Most things for the entire year have gone. A small number have one or two things still there for the end of the year.

Most live events workers

were working on a self-employed basis and received no cancellation fee as they were not booked far enough in advance. With the crews it was even more precarious as their pay is so low.

The union received many calls from people as their company could not afford the mandatory payments to the furlough scheme from August so they were being made redundant. "A lot of companies aren't going to last," says Taylor.

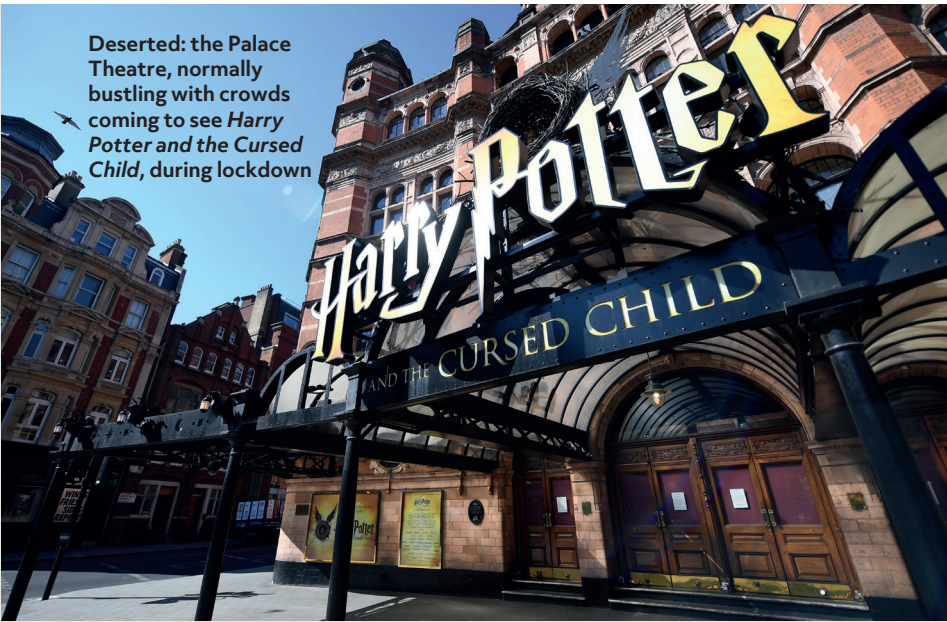
The free entry

policy for art galleries means less reliance on people coming through the door; many receive project funding. Most art gallery staff were furloughed. However, revenue from cafes, shops and bookshops on the premises has been lost and a lot of funding is coming to an end; the Arts Council's emergency funding is a lifeline many are trying to access. But they are struggling and finding it extremely difficult.

Another serious problem is that although workers were furloughed, the pay is very low in the sector and they are now on 80% of that. ●



Deserted: the Palace Theatre, normally bustling with crowds coming to see *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, during lockdown



Bectu worked with the cinema trade body the UK Cinema Association, the BFI Screen Sector Task Force and others to arrive at government-endorsed guidelines for reopening cinemas on 4 July in England. The UKCA estimated that the sector lost about £5.7-million a day through loss of box office and advertising revenue. In Scotland the reopening date is 15 July.

Cineworld did not improve its reputation at the beginning of the crisis in March by announcing largescale redundancies. After an outcry, they backtracked and promised that all those paid by the hour would be offered the furlough scheme.

Job Retention Scheme tapered off, amid prolonged closures.

Government guidance indicated that the end of the scheme was because more people would be returning to work. This completely ignored the reality facing the theatre industry's predicament, that its business depended on filling venues with people, and that even if venues reopened, the social distancing measures requiring limits of 30% or 50% capacity were going to make businesses unviable.

A consultation of Bectu theatre and live entertainment members showed how deeply worried the members are.

"Theatres don't have the money to keep paying employees and I and others won't be able to afford rent. We need furlough until fully operational again," said one.

"If the furlough scheme is reduced, that could mean many people are facing the real possibility of becoming homeless," said another. "A whole industry of people with no way to live means there is little chance of the industry bouncing back."

In June Bectu wrote to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport outlining concerns that were highlighted in a webinar with theatre employers. Polls during

the webinar confirmed that 88% supported a coordinated industry-wide joint employer-unions call for government funding as the industry continues to understand how it will operate.

DEVASTATION

The devastation being wrought on the theatre industry was laid bare by a study for the Creative Industries Federation in June which projected that the theatre industry would lose £3-billion in revenue and 26% of permanent jobs (12,000), although this estimate only takes into account current cancellations and does not account for the reluctance of

audiences to return to venues. Further research from the theatre employers' association UK Theatres and SOLT shows that, without further intervention, job losses in theatre across permanent and freelance roles is likely to number over 200,000.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden was condemned in June for publishing a five-point plan for theatres to reopen, failing to recognise that they are not viable with reduced audience limits, and with no financial support package.

Bectu will now be discussing with employers how the support package will impact them .●

Members of the Royal Opera House costume team have volunteered hours of their time and skills to make personal protective equipment for the NHS. Between 20 and 30 people from across the ROH costume teams, including dressers for the Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera, technicians from the production workshops, and both the running teams, created a range of essential PPE including scrubs and hats as well as bespoke items such as bags, ear protectors and masks, for local NHS trusts and charitable groups across the country.

Working from home using official NHS trust-coloured and sourced

materials from online crowd funding projects, as well as from local businesses and charitable organisations, they have supplied hundreds of items to those who need them on the frontline of the national fight against coronavirus.

Carine Marrot, ballet wardrobe technician and volunteer, said: "In order to make myself useful at home, help the NHS and use my sewing skills, I made a set of scrubs, via a local workshop, where they had them ordered. I'm so pleased that they have now been sent and are being used by frontline NHS workers at St Joseph Hospice, as well as in care homes and NHS Trusts in the local area'.



COURTESY ROH

Finding new solutions

Staff employed at the BBC had to quickly find new ways to deliver the service with thousands working from home

The BBC's response to the crisis has demonstrated the vital role it plays; it has substantially increased its standing not only in the eyes of the public, but also politicians. The millions of people who tuned in to watch or listen to the corporation's coverage of the crisis, and the BBC's overnight redesigning of its output to assist the education of millions of children no longer at school, have shown how it can respond to national need.

PLANNING

While lockdown had caught many by surprise in the UK, the BBC had been planning for it. An operations engineer at the BBC in Hull – a full TV regional centre and the base of Radio Humberside – said: "We were aware of what was going on across the globe, and while we thought it might have an impact here we never dreamed it would have an impact anything like it has. It has moved the goalposts on everything we do.

"Basically once we got to the point of lockdown being announced here, the engineering team had come up with our game plan."

Ordinarily their team of four worked a four-day week, on some days all four depending on the working pattern. They arranged for one person to work in the building with the other three working from home, so if one became ill the other three would not be affected.

The team had to ensure that people had the right hardware and kit, adapting the building to what was needed and the reduced number of people working there, moving items around, and then sorting out the technical needs of those switching to working from home. "It was flat out, we were constantly juggling stuff.

"From an engineering technological standpoint we've had to dream up a whole manner of ways of shooting interviews we haven't had to face before: it's changed the face of newsgathering for ever. It's accelerated ways of news gathering relying on Skype and Zoom in ways we've never thought possible."

Interviewees who were going to be interviewed in their homes were helped with setting up their technology and making it as good as it could be, checking backgrounds and lighting for example. "There's a lot more to consider – you've less control over it, no-one there to visualise what the options are. You're reliant on what the interviewee offers you."

NEWS

Bectu reps have been busier than ever during lockdown. Sharon Rigby, a Bectu lay official and former TV News director at New Broadcasting House in London said: "I found myself in the strange position of not being a broadcast critical member of staff,

so have been working from home since the beginning of lockdown.

"I'm on the BBC national joint council [where the unions negotiate with the corporation] and we have been having bi-weekly Zoom meetings alongside fellow unions, updating us on health and safety, policy amendments and so on."

Bectu were very quick off the mark getting clarification and guidance around how it was going to work, what needed to be implemented, making sure people could work safely in BBC buildings, and to ensure that all of those working from home were fully supported with all of the equipment they needed.

SHIELDING

The union also wanted to ensure support for staff who were shielding and needed to be at home to look after family members. "Bectu has played a really important role in what has been achieved for furloughed staff.

"This whole experience has shown how important it is to be a member of a union. Bectu has been absolutely amazing in supporting members."

The commercial arms of the BBC were able to access the furlough scheme while the main BBC operation was not, but permanently employed staff at the BBC were protected. PAYE freelances employed by the studios could be furloughed – but those employed by areas that could not access the furlough scheme fell through the net.

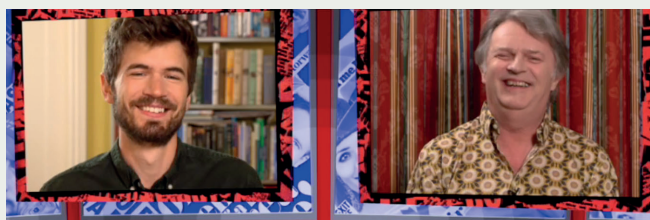
Also affected were Schedule D freelances unable to be furloughed and who also did not qualify for the government's self-employment income support scheme.

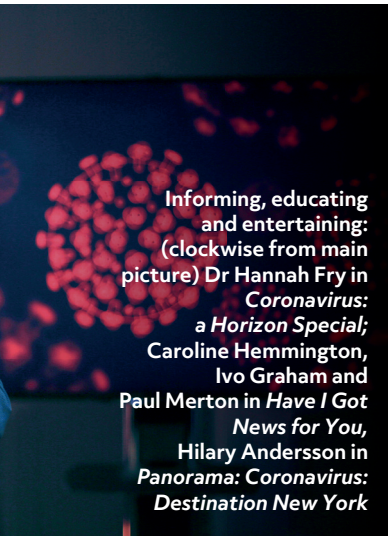


Mary McGreevy is a studio floor manager, union rep and health and safety rep in News.

"At NBH we have five operational news studios which are used daily. Two of those were closed, leaving three operational, for domestic, world and London news." One of the main studios, which is used for *Newsnight* and *Marr* and is crewed daily by studio floor technical staff, was shut and these programmes moved to another main studio. Shifts were curtailed to correlate with the new streamlined output, and extra crew were often on standby at home thus meaning fewer people in the workplace.

As a health & safety rep McGreevy played an important role in ensuring that the members could raise their concerns and have them dealt with, and coming up with imaginative solutions to problems. One such rule was no physical contact with presenters, so this was managed by the presenters mic'ing themselves, while





Informing, educating and entertaining: (clockwise from main picture) Dr Hannah Fry in *Coronavirus: a Horizon Special*; Caroline Hemmington, Ivo Graham and Paul Merton in *Have I Got News for You*; Hilary Andersson in *Panorama: Coronavirus*; *Destination New York*

correspondents were able to use a desk mic which was assembled by the sound team, again ensuring no physical contact.

"We highlighted mental health first aiders and signposted where people can go if they felt they needed support".

"So in my area overall I felt that the support was there, and as a union rep I could question things and they would respond adequately and well." On some days as few as 7% of BBC staff were in BBC buildings with 93% working from home or shielding. "It was unbelievable."

ADAPTING WELL

She is proud of the way colleagues adapted so well to the need for a totally different approach. "The BBC responded well as a whole, for example the Bitesize online education service for home schooling happened so quickly, and VE Day was going to be a huge BBC OB, which of course all went by the wayside, and an online production was turned around in a few weeks, and it worked brilliantly on the day".

"Overall a very challenging time for all, but people performing together as a team made this work."

Another member at New Broadcasting House said: "They were playing catch-up early on." One major issue was ensuring that editorial managers kept their programme ambitions

appropriate to the reduced staffing. "Some programmes were expected to be simpler bulletins but some producers were not aware of this and continued to try to build the same kind of programme and with the presenter at home. That put pressure on the remaining staff; eventually this was sorted out and proposals had to be sanctioned by the news board. This brought in more control."

As staff begin to go back in to work and programme-making expands and restarts, the costs incurred by the crisis have made the BBC's financial situation worse (see *news*, page 4). As the over-75s had been told to stay at home with little to do but watch TV, the BBC postponed introducing its new over-75s licence fee



policy which would have required all those not on pension credit to pay for a licence. This benefit, while free to the over-75s, had been paid to the BBC by the government which has now stopped and the union believes that delaying introduction of the change was costing the corporation about £40-million a month.

Bectu assistant national secretary Caroline Hemmington said: "We know things have been tough and there are challenging times ahead. Every measure shows that the BBC has been the most used and most trusted source of information during the Covid-19 crisis. We are immensely proud of how our BBC members delivered, demonstrating the value of the BBC to the nation at this crucial time." ●

Working from home

Ngozi Ugochukwu works in BBC Education in Salford where she works on a Digital wellbeing app that helps children deal with being bullied and how to cope with online behaviour.

She has been working from home since March. "It's been pretty full-on really."

"We had to change some of our ideas, but we carried on getting celebrities to work with us on our apps. We've almost doubled our content from making one or two videos, articles or quizzes a week to three or four."

Ugochukwu uses a wheelchair and since she was released from the effort of getting herself to work and back, her energy levels have soared.

"I think it's what I've been waiting for all my life. As a



Ngozi Ugochukwu

disabled person you are always on the fringes of everything. Just having a conversation with someone they're always so much taller than you. Stand-up meetings are the worst as everyone is looking down on me and all you see is their crotches.

"I do like going in the office and being with people. It would be great to find a balance."

She adds that Zoom has been a great leveller. "Everyone is equal on a Zoom. They don't even know you're disabled." ●

ITV and Channel 4

Keith Stokes, who works at ITV Regional News in Norwich, continued working during lockdown with reduced hours, mostly working at home.

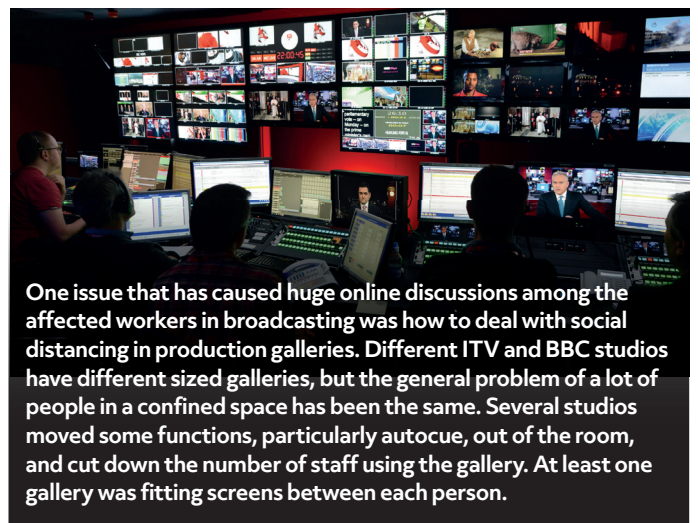
"To be fair to ITV they had already begun making suggestions about smart working such as offering late or early start times. Coronavirus may have accelerated that."

The regional opt-out programmes were dropped to produce one programme for the Anglia region as a whole, allowing fewer staff and fewer technical staff in the building.

"Tyne Tees and Border were different – they continued to have separate programmes."

Others opted a few minutes of their programmes.

"The biggest problem in all of this was that individuals' assessment of risk varied enormously," said Stokes, adding there was little top-down advice laying the law down. "Overall ITV handled the crisis as well as they possibly could. Actually the welfare of the staff genuinely has been paramount, and this will have ramifications in the future." ●



One issue that has caused huge online discussions among the affected workers in broadcasting was how to deal with social distancing in production galleries. Different ITV and BBC studios have different sized galleries, but the general problem of a lot of people in a confined space has been the same. Several studios moved some functions, particularly autocue, out of the room, and cut down the number of staff using the gallery. At least one gallery was fitting screens between each person.

JEFF OVRES ©BBC, MARK DINMOCK

Keeping the UK connected: Prospect members in BT

An army of BT employees are quietly supporting the UK through the coronavirus pandemic, as more people rely on technology to survive lockdown. **Carolyn Spence** (below) and other Prospect members tell **Penny Vevers** how life has changed

“I am proud of our unsung heroes”

Carolyn Spence, Prospect BT committee chair

“We want to call out the incredible work our members are doing to play their part in guiding the UK through this crisis,” says Carolyn Spence, who chairs the Prospect BT committee.

“I am very proud of what they are doing to keep the UK connected.

“Behind the scenes these people are providing and maintaining the infrastructure to enable work to go on during these unprecedented times, via telephony, video calling, high-speed broadband and other means of communication.”

Carolyn herself has a full-time union facility time role within BT. She is in lockdown with her husband, a key worker in the RAF, who is still going out to work.

“I was working from home

even before lockdown and have my screens and equipment with me, while we are going through People Framework consultations,” says Carolyn.

“No new reorganisations have started since the lockdown, but we continue supporting members through those already announced – BT has refused our request for a pause. It’s been, in some cases, traumatic.

“They are facing redundancy rather than the option of being redeployed, as many parts of BT have removed vacancies due to uncertainty of how Covid -19 will affect the business longer term.”

BT has also disengaged from pay negotiations. Unlike their teams, managers will receive no pay rise, only performance related bonuses.

“I never fail to be awed and re-energised by the reps in BT,” says Carolyn. “Their dedication has been really tested but they continue to support and advise members. They demonstrate daily that together we really are stronger in the union, especially in these troubled and frightening times.”

Carolyn herself has survived lockdown by baking and gardening, walking her dog, and supporting vulnerable family members. Hardest has been not seeing her children or grandchildren until recently – and even then at distance.

“However, technology has been brilliant and a mood changer and we have been having daily catch-ups and games sessions at weekends. Small interactions make a huge difference.”



Through her own experiences she understands what members and reps are going through. “I am fully aware that they have their own worries yet are continuing to express concern for members’ welfare and doing their best to support them.

“Many of the heroes saving lives and caring for people are supported by an unsung army of call centre workers, managers, technology experts, engineers and countless other BT employees.”

Read a longer interview here:
<https://bit.ly/carolyn-spence>

“Doing my duty in extraordinary times”

Paul Fitchett, engineering services patch manager, London Southbank



“I am helping to keep our people safe and at work so they can repair, maintain and provide extra capacity in our network,” says Paul Fitchett.

His team members have needed extra encouragement and support as they face the challenges of continuing to come into work.

“My normal eight to nine-hour day has increased

to 11-12 hours – of course without any recompense. However, I feel this is my duty in these extraordinary times.”

Paul is a key worker. In his role he can work from home and has done so because the decision was made to limit travel to reduce transmission of the virus.

This makes it harder to switch off when the normal

working day is over. “But I keep my phone on because if one of my people calls me I will always pick up.”

The business decided to only focus on critically essential work, such as urgent repairs and maintenance. “I have been focused on looking after our people and ensuring they have the correct safety equipment.

“My people are generally

“Using tech and union skills to support community”

James Hughes, BT Openreach data specialist

James Hughes, a Prospect rep and BT Openreach data specialist, has always been home based so his working day looks similar to before the coronavirus pandemic.

However, his life outside work has changed immensely as he uses the skills acquired both in his job and as a union rep to contribute to his local community in Llanelli, Wales.

“At work, what’s changed is I don’t travel to meetings any more,” he says. “My role is mainly concerned with data – looking at how many people are still unable to get fibre broadband speeds and how to make this happen.”

“This is vital during lockdown because of the need to be connected. Fibre enables people to have video conversations and join in all sorts of things that enhance communication in this difficult time.”

Being in lockdown has affected him more than he expected – he particularly misses sport, including coaching an under-12s football team.

James believes the union is vital in these unstable times. “We need members throughout BT so that they are not disadvantaged by all

the organisational changes still going on.

“I understand the pay freeze but the inconsistent approach between managers and team members means we are disadvantaged.”

Outside work his skills are proving invaluable. “We have set up IT initiatives to keep people in the community in touch. These are based around the local church and include coffee mornings online, quiz nights and support for people without access to the internet.

“We have created a ‘thought for the day’, accessible via a telephone line. This helps those without internet, many them older and alone. The skills of interacting and listening to people have come in handy.”

Read a longer interview here: <https://bit.ly/jameshughes>



working on the equipment floors managing the local exchanges, rather than out in the streets. The numbers going in have been limited and social distancing observed.”

Paul wants the public to understand the vital work of IT and telecoms professionals behind the scenes. “It’s a shame the only time they got into the news was the silliness around 5G and threats being made towards our people.

“If our backbone goes down, there will be no mobile phone network or Zooming, and all the other ways people are staying in touch.”

Given that people are going the extra mile, Paul is also disappointed by BT’s decision not to award a pay rise to managers – only performance-related bonuses – despite giving team members a rise.

Read a longer interview here: <https://bit.ly/paul-fitchett>

“I know the importance of coming in to support my team and service”

Michael Courtney, manager and Prospect rep, 999 call centre

Not many people know that when you dial 999 you will be put through to a BT call centre, where the person who answers your call will then transfer you to the relevant emergency service.

Michael Courtney, a Prospect member and rep, has been a people manager at his 999 BT call centre – one of six across the UK – for 15 years. Michael lives in Nottingham with his wife and two girls, aged 10 and 12.

At work, the staff play a key role by filtering out misdials before they even get connected to the fire, police, ambulance or coastguard services (*pictured*) in the relevant geographical area.

As team leader, Voice Services, Michael’s normal duties are to coach and manage people, hold one-to-ones, and ensure calls are handled correctly and safely.

“When we get busy, I may take over the main supervisor desk, helping to manage critical call shouts.”

Before the pandemic, busy times included England international football matches, after terrorist attacks and during the Grenfell fire, to name a few. Calls go to the first handler



available, regardless of which UK centre they are based at.

Michael is helping support new people brought in to provide cover for those off work to socially isolate.

He has trained new fire wardens and is involved in getting social distancing right.

“In the beginning, many calls were because of the worry and panic. Now it’s calmed down. We are still getting coronavirus calls, but for example, fewer road accidents as people have not been travelling.”

Michael says that in the early stages of the outbreak he felt guilty about going home after being in contact with people at work. “But now we have the distancing right and I know the importance of coming in to support the centre, my team and the 999 service.”

Read a longer interview here: <https://bit.ly/michael-courtney>



Why “business as usual” is bad news for BT members

Despite employees’ dedication to keeping the UK connected during the Covid-19 crisis, BT continues to attack pay, jobs and redundancy terms, writes **John Ferrett**



Unlike much of the economy, which has been closed down or severely restricted by the Covid-19 pandemic, BT has almost felt like business as usual over the past three months.

The vast majority of Prospect members have moved to home working and the company recently announced that those who can work from home should continue to do so until the end of August.

Notwithstanding the effective shutdown of the BT office estate, Prospect members in BT have been at the forefront of keeping the UK connected at a time when remote working has become the new normal for many workers.

In the context of our members in BT working so hard to maintain business continuity and the delivery of a vital public service, a couple of decisions taken by the company of late do not appear to reciprocate the commitment shown by our members.

NO PAY RISE

The first of these was the decision to abruptly terminate pay negotiations with the union and announce that there would be no annual award in 2020 for the manager grades covered by Prospect.

Furthermore, this became a particularly divisive decision when the company announced it would be awarding a pay increase of 1.5% for team members. Understandably, this approach has not been well received by members, who are frequently told they are part of “One BT” and working collaboratively for a common purpose.

Prospect is determined not to let this matter lie and will continue to consult with members on how we challenge the company on this issue.

Part of the company’s rationale for

not paying an annual award was that it would continue to pay bonuses to those who qualified.

While this offered some reassurance to members, it should be remembered that bonuses are based on both company and personal performance measures. Therefore, they should be paid out if those measures are met. At the time of writing members were still waiting to hear what the level of bonus would be.

REDUNDANCIES CONTINUE

Another contentious issue has been redundancies within BT. Although BT made a public statement that no one would be made redundant as a result of Covid-19 – at least until the end of June – it has continued with redundancies in areas where reorganisations had already been under way prior to the pandemic.

Despite several pleas from Prospect to defer these redundancies, the company decided to push ahead. While those impacted were relatively small in number, the effect of enforcing redundancies at this time does not reflect well on BT.

ATTACK ON PAYMENTS

Finally, BT has just announced a review of redundancy payments in the company. Such announcements are always a matter for concern, not least because such a review rarely sees them being improved.

In the context of BT it is particularly concerning, given that the current terms were agreed two years ago and have only been in operation for the past 18 months, with the advent of the People Framework reorganisation.

The current terms came about as part of a commitment made to members by BT when the company decided to close the defined benefit pension scheme.



Woman with a mobile phone during the coronavirus pandemic – it’s BT people that are keeping the UK connected

Prospect’s view is that the reorganisation policy has worked relatively well during the People Framework changes by minimising compulsory redundancies to almost zero.

The level of enhanced voluntary redundancy (EVR) payments has enabled those who were content to leave the business to do so on acceptable terms, while at the same time creating opportunities for those who wish to remain with BT.

As throughout the whole economy, the coronavirus pandemic has increased pressure on BT in relation to future job opportunities, making the chance of being redeployed less likely.

To seek to change the terms after only two years does not appear justified. It will increase uncertainty and anxiety among those affected in what are already unprecedented times.

We have written to BT calling for transparency and proper negotiations with the union before making any changes.

We can see no good reason for changing the current terms – unless BT wants to improve them, of course. ●

John Ferrett is national secretary for the union’s BT and Digital divisions.

“To seek to change the redundancy terms after only two years... will increase uncertainty and anxiety for those affected”



Myth versus logic in the time of Covid-19

Telecoms workers are playing a key role in protecting the public during the pandemic. So why are conspiracy theorists attacking them?

Calvin Allen suggests this is not a new phenomenon

Few have any living memory of times as extraordinary as the ones we are living in under the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic.

I don't know whether the post-World War I flu epidemic of 1918 brought about any particular conspiracy theories, although I suspect that the more unusual the surrounding events, the stranger the theories that gain circulation.

In the early weeks of the pandemic and lockdown, one such theory directly connected 5G mobile technology to the spread of Covid-19.

This led to attacks on mobile mast installations – idiotically, but poignantly, ones that had no 5G capability – and also to the harassment of telecoms workers who were going about their jobs.

It was therefore good to see Scotland's First Minister take the time to praise telecoms workers as key workers.

The contribution that our members are making right across the UK to ensure that people can stay connected and working has been a major factor in slowing the spread of the virus and, in the process, helping our wellbeing to hold up.

Interestingly the telephone has always been a bit of a bellwether for our relationship with technology.

The *British Medical Journal* reported – in 1889 – on concerns that spending long periods on the telephone could cause "nervous excitability, with buzzing noises in the ear, giddiness and neuralgic pains".



UNEASY RELATIONSHIP

Radio broadcasting, which was developed in the early 1900s and shares a common technological root with modern cellphones, was thought to cause sickness. Coming up to date, apart from our cellphones, there is similar noise about our home wi-fi and smart meters.

Many do not understand the technology we rely on, and which has become central to how we organise and live in our world. This has led us to develop an uneasy and unsettled relationship with something whose ubiquitous invisibility makes it an easy

'Viruses cannot spread over radio waves; they are spread by human contact'

target when things go wrong. There is a lot more work to do to settle that relationship and ensure emerging technologies work for people. One organisation doing good work is the Ada Lovelace Institute (<https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/>).

Furthermore, with mobile

technology continually evolving – 3G in the 2000s, 4G in the 2010s, 5G now and 6G already being spoken about – there is always room to find new grounds for conspiracy or a fresh angle.

The less easy the relationship, the more easy it is to distrust something – not least at a time of a generalised lack of trust.

Our members know there is indeed no magic about mobile technology. It is more a case of "observation and logic", as Ramesh cutely puts it in the end-of-year school show at the close of series two of BBC drama *The A Word* (which I have been catching up with during the lockdown). Both are qualities in short supply during the pandemic.

The increasingly tortuous way we use language doesn't help. It is evident that viruses cannot spread over radio waves; they spread by human contact.

Both government guidance (<https://bit.ly/gov-5G>) and a statement from the four mobile operators have declared: "There is no scientific evidence of any link between 5G and coronavirus." However, this doesn't seem to be enough to persuade the conspiracy theorists or those vulnerable to their theories.

Meanwhile, especially for those working from home more than usual, it is good to remind ourselves to unplug outside working hours. Giving ourselves downtime is valuable for our own mental health and helps our colleagues do the same.

Stay safe – and do encourage anyone you know who is not a union member to join one. ●

New campaigns on race equality have been springing up in Bectu in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. The killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and the worldwide protests that followed have rippled across the UK creative industries: an unprecedented surge of people have come forward in Bectu, and people and organisations approaching Bectu, wanting to take action for race equality. The union's black members' committee's launch of a black members' network on 26 June has been designed to foster the exchange of information and coordinate action where appropriate.

WHO YOU KNOW

One of the issues facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers in film and broadcasting has been lack of contacts and not being in the right networks, in an industry where 'who you know' is as important as what you know. To address this, over 12 years the black members' committee and diversity officer Janice Turner ran 10 huge events called Move on Up during which they timetabled about 6,000 meetings between 2,000 BAME professionals and 800 executives from across television, film, radio and news. People went on to gain jobs, programme commissions and other opportunities as a result of these contacts.

Camera branch had shown early this year that the union's craft branches have the power within themselves to bring about change in their area of the industry. Those who hire camera crews are in the same union branch as the under-represented groups who should be getting an equal opportunity to be hired and develop their careers. So the branch had run a smallscale equivalent of Move on Up, introducing BAME camera people and women, who in camera are also in a minority, to cinematographers and some focus pullers, to enable everyone to make new contacts. It was a great success.

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic face to face meetings are out of the question, but black members committee chair Faisal Qureshi recognised the possibility of running a smaller Move on Up event on Zoom.

As more and more members emailed in, discussions were held with individuals and branches to look at possible actions. First off the



The black lives matter protests in London's Hyde Park on 20 June

YOU HAVE THE POWER

Bectu's branch committees have started organising new action on race equality in response to the Black Lives Matter protests

The black members' network aims to foster the exchange of information and coordinate action. Join by emailing bbn@bectu.org.uk

blocks was costume and wardrobe branch – the first in the union to organise a Move on Up on Zoom – or “Zoom on Up” as it has become known (see box, right).

FURTHER ACTION

Next up was the hair and makeup branch which had also formed a diversity subcommittee, and which is actively planning a similar event to costume and wardrobe. Other branches are discussing similar initiatives. Any branch that would like to explore action it might take can email jturner@bectu.org.uk.

Camera branch held an online meeting to discuss equality, attended by 160 people, and several BAME camerapeople came forward afterwards. A discussion resulted in a proposal to try to help the British Society of Cinematographers to become more diverse.

In addition to the branch activity, members of the London and Regional production divisions came together to develop the equality strand of the union's “New Deal for Freelancers” (see page 5). The black members' committee held a webinar on race equality in film and television with speakers Marcus Ryder, Tinge Krishna, Kolton Lee and Orson Navas. Other webinars focussed on mental health during coronavirus and on the impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities.

FILM AND HIGH-END TV DRAMA

For feature films and high-end TV drama, the black members' committee had adapted for the UK the diversity section of an agreement between the Directors Guild of America and the US film and TV trade association the AMPTP, expanding it to cover all

Bectu branch making change happen

Costume & wardrobe branch and the black members' committee had a meeting in June to discuss what campaigns the branch could run to increase BAME representation in the costume department. The BMC have had great success with their Move on Up initiative, which they were hoping to move online.

Following her election to the BMC, Rianna Charles and fellow equality and diversity rep Sarah Dutton decided to pilot Zoom on Up in the costume & wardrobe branch.

The idea was to invite mentors and mentees to a Zoom video call, and then use the breakout room function to pair people for 20-minute one-to-one meetings. This was done three times per session, to maximise the contacts made.

Through branch emails and social media, designers and supervisors from all walks of life were invited to sign up as mentors.

Zoom on Up was open to BAME mentees at every grade of the costume department (or people trying to get into the industry!) who would benefit from networking with a costume designer or supervisor.

FANTASTIC FEEDBACK

Zoom on Up has been a great success. The feedback received has been 100% positive from both mentors and mentees: more than 180 meetings were held with an amazing line-up of 60 designers

Zoom on up is an amazing resource for costume designers and supervisors to bring change into the industry, after all actions speak louder than words



and supervisors. The feedback includes:

- "I think this event is very good because it is relevant to the current times. Giving people from a BAME background an opportunity to meet experienced professionals is really good to expand our networks and hopefully help us progress in our career!"
- "This was a brilliant opportunity to be face to face with people who could offer me advice, access and open up my network of people! I got so much confidence from sharing my ideas with people who had carved out the time to engage with me and the work I create. This was an invaluable and unique experience that I think should be replicated across the whole

industry! Well done Rianna and Sarah for creating a safe space to share and meet new people and find much needed mentors!"

- "This was absolutely fantastic! I found it invaluable to be able to connect with so many different people in such a small space of time!"
- "Zoom on up is an amazing resource for costume designers and supervisors to bring change into the industry, after all actions speak louder than words!"
- "Zoom on up was a great space to meet talent that you may not have when you are in your normal work situation"
- "I really think sessions like these are a step in the right direction for bringing more diversity that is very much needed!"

grades rather than just directors. The reasoning was that since the major feature film employers in the UK were already signatories to the agreement in the US it should make it easier for them to agree over here.

Bectu's negotiating committee for the Major Motion Picture Agreement had put it forward in early 2019. It was agreed that separate meetings would be held on the diversity proposal in order to ensure enough time was devoted to it.

However as months went by Pact was reluctant to discuss it with the Bectu negotiating committee.

After the Black Lives Matter movement arose and the film and television production companies



Black members' committee chair Faisal Qureshi: recognising the potential of Move on Up going online. To join the Black Members' Network email bbn@bectu.org.uk

issued many statements in support, the union thought that Pact and their members would finally see the necessity of this. But despite several reminders, by July Pact had still not agreed to meet the union to discuss adopting a joint agreement that would commit the signatories to the MMPA to working jointly with the union. The proposal echoed the DGA agreement in covering women as well as BAME workers and it committed the signatories to recruiting and developing BAME and female talent at both head of department level and grades below. It also envisaged the employers enabling networking opportunities for these under-represented groups.

In contrast to this reluctance the Advertising Producers' Association, the industry trade body for companies that make commercials, approached Bectu and offered to work in partnership to increase BAME representation in the commercials sector.

Bectu diversity officer Janice Turner commented: "In the United States many of the major feature film producers and television companies put black squares on their websites and stated their support for Black Lives Matter. It's time they turned that into real action to improve BAME representation in UK film and television production. The time to act is now."●

Hi tech

This month's round-up of products, gadgets and suppliers



VENICE 6.0

Sony is expanding the capabilities of its digital motion picture camera VENICE and FX9 full-frame camcorder. Version 6.0 of VENICE firmware will allow the import of Advanced Rendering Transform (.art) files that improve monitoring picture quality and viewing options on-set.

Sony is also collaborating with Technicolor to create a new "look library" for the VENICE, to be available online as a resource for creatives wishing to quickly access some of Technicolor's premier established looks inspired by their cinematic history.

Further details: www.pro.sony/en_GB/home



Home studio treatment

How can we get a studio reproducing audio in the most accurate way possible, for a fraction of the cost of Abbey Road? Vicoustic has a versatile range of on-wall and in-room treatment. With the release of the VicStudio Kit, now their treatments are available to home studio owners in a way that makes improving the sound of your room that much easier. Vicoustic panels were recently used to upgrade a previously untreated studio in the heart of Soho. On the advice of Vicoustic, who provide a bespoke design service starting from 50 Euros per room, a mixture of products were applied. Cinema Round Premium, a traditional absorber, was placed on the walls while Wavewood, a hybrid absorber was put on the ceiling. Multifusers were put on the back wall to scatter the reflected soundwaves with the longest paths, while Super Base Extreme was put in the corner to absorb low frequency sound.

Further details: <https://hhb.co.uk>

NHS light show

Leisuretec UK headed by Phil Jameson lit up Wigan's DW Stadium in a variety of vibrant colour combinations showing support for the NHS and essential workers. Leisuretec UK is the preferred event technical supplier for the stadium.

They had started firing up some lights at their own premises and when the neighbours started cheering them on Jameson proposed a pilot session at the stadium. The first week, the 12 Pointes were positioned on the roof of the stadium's retail area and blasted beams into the sky. The second week they took the lights inside the stadium and shot beams in the air and also projected a rainbow and other colouring onto the roof gantry of the East stand.

Further details: www.robe.cz



Sully luminaires

Robert Juliat has launched Sully, a new range of luminaires based around the same exclusive 115W white LED engine, with an output that equals or exceeds that of a traditional 1kW tungsten fixture.

Robert Juliat has developed a new LED compartment which will enable customers to upgrade current traditional profile installations to LED by simply swapping the tungsten lamp base on their existing RJ 600SX series for the new T650SX LED module. The new accessory is also compatible with Robert Juliat's Aledin series, Figaro, and Quincy, and with its tungsten Cricket and MSD Buxie followspots.

This development is kinder to the planet. Any 600SX series profiles can be transformed from tungsten to LED sources whilst retaining the steel bodywork.

Further details: www.robertjuliat.com



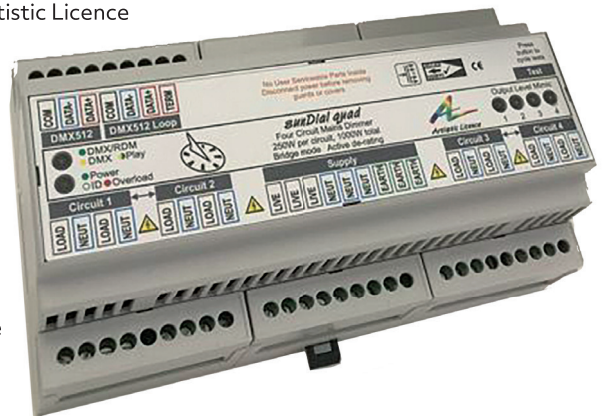
Mini LED

The Source Four Mini LED from ETC is a miniature version of their classic stage spot. It uses a 12W LED and some clever optics to provide impressive projection, aimed at the museum, retail and restaurant markets. It has an onboard LED driver that can be controlled with mains phase dimming – as such, it is compatible with the sunDial quad dimmer.

Curious to see the results, Artistic Licence trialed the Source Four using sunDial's default linear curve.

The dimming was excellent, but limited to the central 70-80% of the DMX512 range. Additionally, the linear curve provides limited control over the critical low light end of the curve. Artistic Licence then used its photometric lab to create a custom dimming curve for the Source Four Mini LED.

Further details: www.artisticlicence.com



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Obituary

Peter Fuller cameraman

I am very sad to announce the death, at the age of 93, of my father Peter Fuller.

Dad was born in Fulham in 1926 and his links with the film and television industry started early. His stepfather, Joe Devery, was a joiner and then model maker at Denham Studios. In 1939 Peter was a schoolboy extra in *Goodbye Mr Chips*, starring Robert Donat and Greer Garson. Dad can be seen laughing at the back of the class when Mr Chips tells his first joke. In 1941 Dad worked as a door boy on *Old Bill and Son*.

During the war Dad was dispatched to India. As he was boarding ship Lionel Jeffries asked him to be his batman, a request only denied according to Dad because of naval regulations. Subsequently Dad walked in on a film set to be greeted by Lionel Jeffries booming: "Private Fuller, what the bloody hell are you doing here man!"

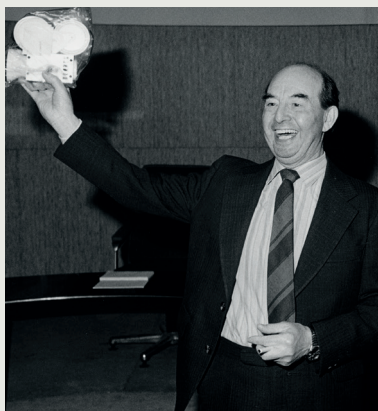
Having obtained engineering qualifications at night school Peter rejoined the film industry in camera maintenance working variously at Pinewood, Denham and Elstree studios. He often recalled the harmonica player for the *Genevieve* theme coming into the workshops to play the tune. This must have been Larry Adler. Dad also travelled to Sudan for the filming of the 1955 production *Storm over the Nile*. This was a challenge for camera maintenance especially when aircraft engines were reversed to create a sandstorm.

Dad joined Anglia Television in Norwich at its start in 1959. One of his first roles for Anglia was a role on a promotional film for the new service in which he is seen jumping into an Anglia dormobile to speed off to collect news. He later recalled that his assistant trapped his finger during the filming and had to be taken to hospital.

Peter worked for Anglia until his retirement in 1988. He worked on all the great Anglia productions including *Farming Diary*, *About Anglia*, *Bygones* and *Survival*. He helped to make beautiful documentaries such as *Gone to Burton* and *A Man Between Three Rivers*, capturing the spirit of a rural world that was passing into history.



Colourful career: Peter Fuller (left) in a Hunter Jet, 76 Squadron at RAF Coltishall, in November 1959 for Anglia's first documentary, and below upon his retirement from Anglia in 1988



He filmed farm labourers in North Walsham who had taken part in the 1923 agricultural workers' strike.

Dad worked with a hugely talented team including drivers, lighting engineers, assistant camera staff, PAs, directors and producers. He was especially fond of the presenter Bob Wellings and, of course, Dick Joyce. Dick interviewed Peter on *About Anglia* after he returned from filming Anglia's entry for the Monte Carlo rally – a yellow Ford Anglia I seem to recall.

However, filming the rally was not the fastest he travelled in his career. He joined a pilot in a Lightning fighter and featured subsequently in the *TV Times* where he was dubbed "Flying Fuller". In sharp contrast, Dad had much quieter times filming the great naturalist, Ted Eales, on Blakeney

He recalled a piece he worked on about homemade horseradish sauce. The fumes from the cooking led his assistant to keel over

Point. He also recalled a piece he worked on about homemade horseradish sauce. The fumes from the cooking led his then assistant to keel over in the kitchen.

When I was growing up Dad was often away filming. He went far and wide to the Grand Canyon, Singapore and many European countries. But his favourite was always his trek in Nepal to film the Ghurkhas.

Peter was a solid trade union member. He took part in the lengthy Anglia TV strike in 1976 over pensions, a dispute that the union won. Until his death he received the *Bectu* magazine which he loved for its updates about his old colleagues.

Dad passed away peacefully with my mum, Betty, holding his hand. They were married for over 71 years and he always had a photo of her, taken just after they met, beside him. He was a lovely Dad to myself, my brother Adrian and sister Viv and doted on his four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

There will be a small family funeral followed by a memorial service to be announced at a later date.

Chris Fuller

Learning online

With the union's entire face-to-face training course schedule wiped out, the training dept has quickly developed a whole new offering

Bectu's training department responded very quickly to the Covid-19 crisis, having had to cancel its entire training programme, by putting together a whole new offering of online courses.

The creative and cultural free online vocational programme is funded by the ULF and aimed at members based within the English regions. The programme offers the union's membership a range of bitesize 90-minute learning sessions via the Zoom platform.

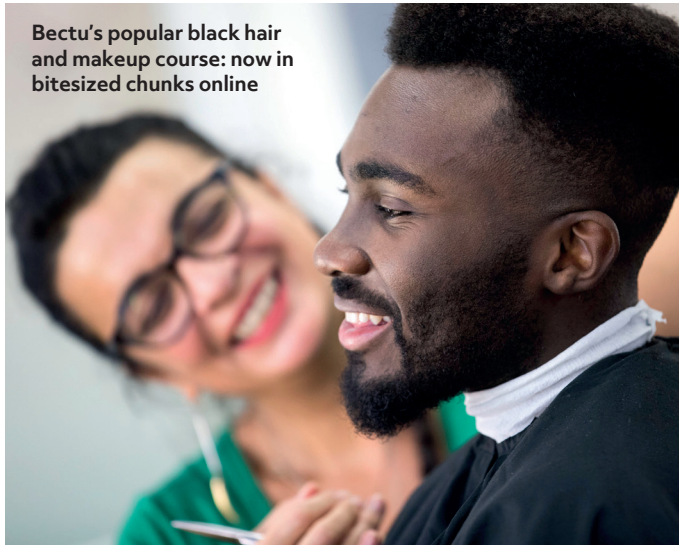
The initial objective was to arrange and deliver 30 sessions in the first month. In May, the pilot month of operation, the actual number of sessions was 43 and attracted more than 300 members. This demonstrated that there was tremendous appetite for this initiative and feedback has been very positive.

The project launched phase two of the programme in mid-June, diversifying the offer of sessions. The programme now offers 10 sessions per week, including a Saturday morning feature slot.

The range of topics covered is vast. They include electrical safety with a chartered engineer, heritage modules on community archaeology and identifying historic buildings; managing remote working teams, mentalhealth & wellbeing; and introduction to models & miniatures in film & TV.

For live events workers there is a course on Capture 2020,

Bectu's popular black hair and makeup course: now in bitesized chunks online



one of the most commonly used lighting design and visualisation programmes used in light shows during live events. And a way has been found to convert the union's courses on black hair and makeup into bite-sized training on individual techniques.

MENTORING

The project is also offering a mentoring programme aimed at young members and those who are new entrants to the sector.

The third area of work is support for those who are negatively impacted by Covid-19 and now exploring other career options.

The union's free career focused website, careersmart (www.careersmart.org.uk), offers a range of tools and short articles which can help members make informed

decisions about their careers and developmental needs.

The short articles are structured in themed sections as self-contained modules, often with at least one podcast to download and where there is a crossover subject matter link to another part of the site.

The second key element is the inclusion and use of data, specifically government big data source called "LMI". Guy Bishop, who has been setting up the bite-sized learning programme, is hopeful that once the industry is back in production that the online learning will continue. "Many people are away from home working and online learning during a lunchhour for example is a way to enable more union members to access this knowledge." ●

Wellbeing and resilience

The Bectu led CULT Cymru (www.cultcymru.org/training-2/) joint union learning programme in Wales has adapted to working online. New wellbeing and resilience workshops have been piloted along with a coaching and mentoring programme.

CRISP Health and Safety is available. The Mental Health First Aid Wales will be available online later in the summer along with more skills based courses. Working with a range of partners, the Cult Cymru project is also promoting over 900 free Learndirect courses via Cardiff and Vale College that all Prospect/ Bectu members living in Wales can access. Visit the Cult Cymru site for more details.

Members who are based in Scotland are encouraged to keep an eye on the union's website, tweets and FB comments to find out what's happening there: <https://bectu.org.uk/bectu-vision/>.

Siân Gale,
learning and
development
manager,
CULT Cymru



In brief

• The union will continue to offer its very popular online reps training in Reps Part 1 and Part 2 plus freelancer Reps 1 training courses. The courses are fully booked till end of July and a limited programme will operate in August with full resumption of the online programme from September onwards.

• **H&S for Freelancers** – CRISP is back! The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health has approved the union's CRISP (Creative Industries Safety Passport) course conversion for online delivery. This full day online course is now available for students to book. The online programme will be available on a Monday only for the foreseeable future

• **Covid-19 Ready?** Any freelancers returning to work and wanting to refresh their knowledge and experience on risk assessment are recommended to watch union's Covid-19 video <https://vimeo.com/425415503/2efdf12d01> And they can join a Friday morning "Safe Working" workshop, <https://bectu.org.uk/free-bitesize-vocational-learning/>

...and
finally

Send entries to editor@bectu.org.uk
or post them to Caption Contest,
Stage Screen & Radio at Bectu,
373-377 Clapham Road, London SW9 9BT

Caption competition



Sound branch seems to have been particularly inspired by last issue's picture (below) as several entries came from among their membership.

Keith Upton, the Bristol soundie, kicks off with several including: "I can't stay. This is the worst Punch and Judy show I've ever seen."

John Jones, who is apparently a "very quiet freelance propman" from Cardiff, suggested the man behind the screen saying: "It's your own fault I told you not to look."

Senior post-production editor Michael Simon sent: "Look, I'm sorry I broke wind but at least I made sure I was socially distanced!"

Christopher Biggs suggested: "Sorry, Harold. I'm upset you have hung the curtains in the wrong frame", while Simon Attar offered: "I know you had to self-isolate, but you didn't have to steal my sheets."

"President! President! What do you mean you're off to be President!" came from Stan Goodall, retired Decca sound engineer, while Stephen T Kelly proposed: "But Mr President as your Secret Service bodyguard I have to be close at all times." Clive Copland, also from the sound

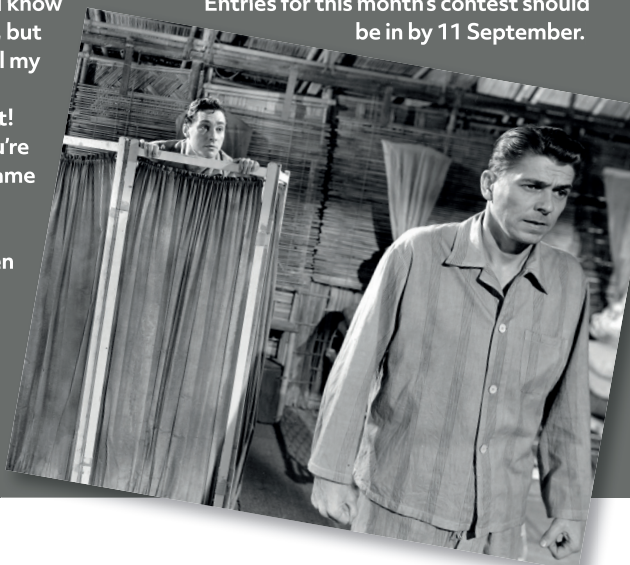
section contingent, sent: "Hey Ronald, you ain't seen nothin' yet!" while Dick Fiddy of BFI Southbank proposed: "Come back, you clueless buffoon! All is forgiven."

Freelance writer Jon Morris sent: "Ronald, come back to your hospital bed. We need to continue the counselling on your delusion about leading the Western World in the future as President!"

"With only one pair of pyjama bottoms available, cooperation on set was crucial!" came from retired sound recordist Ron Garson.

But this month's winner came from John Sandy with: "Ya think that's crazy Gipper? Wait till ya hear about the guy who becomes the 45th President!"

The £15 book token is on its way. Entries for this month's contest should be in by 11 September.



bectu **prospect**

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www.bectu.org.uk/get-involved/dignity-at-work-campaign