

Women Chainmakers' Festival

☒ Last Saturday I was one of the NUJ members carrying the banner alongside thousands of trade union members at the Women Chainmakers' Festival at the Black Country Museum.

The rally commemorated the centenary of the Chainmakers' strike for a minimum wage. In 1910 some 800 women chainmakers – aged 10 to 79 years of age – went on strike for ten weeks. They were desperate to earn more than starvation wages. What they achieved was a piece work rate of two and a half old pence an hour. This was the first minimum wage. ☒

As former MP and lifetime Socialist Tony Benn pointed out, the appalling conditions of the women chainmakers' became internationally known thanks to the power of the press. With the arrival of Pathe News at the cinema, the women's local struggle began to receive support from national politicians, from nearby industrialists like the Quaker Cadbury family and even from author John Galsworthy who had begun to publish his Forsyte Saga novels.

Tony Benn is an honorary life member of the NUJ and both he and Labour leader contender Diane Abbott agreed to be photographed with the NUJ banner and with Sal McKeown, Barbara Goulden and Mick Archer from the Birmingham and Coventry branch.

Photographs courtesy of Stalingrad O'Neill

Pitching and Dealing in

Manchester!

Yesterday I went on a Pitch and Deal course run by the National Union of Journalists in Manchester. I chose Manchester for family reasons and had a great night out at Dimitris Tapas Taverna – a cross cultural confusion if I ever I saw one. Check out their website <http://www.dimitris.co.uk/>. You won't thank me for this but it's fine once you get past the first page.

Role Play

✘ Anyway, on to the course. There were only 7 of us so we got a lot of practice at role play. I started the day off pitching a piece about technology for older people. Lisa, a freelance music journalist and photographer, obligingly played an editor. Each time the group stopped me and we started again, Lisa sounded more abrupt and short tempered – so like real life. In the end I would rather have chewed my arm off than pitch to her again. I resisted the urge to apologise for troubling her and tried very hard not to waffle on about my experience and why I was the only person who could produce the copy.

Good Networking Opportunities

☒ One of the other course members was Louise Bolotin. We got talking about epilepsy. I have just finished a big article of *Special Children* and won a *Responsible Reporting Award* from the *National Society for Epilepsy* 2 years ago so it is a subject dear to my heart. Louise developed epilepsy a few years ago and has written *Epilepsy: The Essential Guide*. It was published by Need2Know earlier this year and the first edition sold out within a week. Louise is a very interesting person and in addition to her experience as a music journalist and a finance writer, she is also editor of *Skin Two*, a fetish magazine which produces a 'coffee table' hard back year book. Check out this multi talented woman at <http://louisebolotin.com/>

Armed and Ready

The Pitch and Deal course was really good. Humphrey Evans & Phil Sutcliffe, the tutors, really know their stuff and after surviving the day none of us are going to be palmed off by magazines which say they have no budget. Oh no – we know the inside story now. For future courses, have a look on the NUJ site .

☒ The only worrying thing about the course is that the group reckoned I had a natural talent as a commissioning editor, so maybe I need to look for another job now.