

### **Weak bargaining power of freelance authors**

In 'Fair play for freelances' (Summer 1976) you give the story of the editor of *The Field* who, after accepting a contribution, withdrew the acceptance when the author raised perfectly reasonable questions about the fee. This incident poses the classic dilemma of authors in such situations, and it is not surprising if many of us prefer to hope for the best about the fee rather than jeopardize acceptance of a particular article and, even worse, ongoing relations with the editor concerned.

The freelance writer who is not in strong demand really has no bargaining position on his own. Even if he has an active agent the position is not much better. Only if virtually all writers were unionized would the position be any different. Then the union would be in constant touch with any editor who failed to reach accepted standards, and no one writer's name would be exposed.

We are in the situation which has brought strong unions into being in almost every other field. Perhaps the freelance branch of the National Union of Journalists has the answer, but when I approached them I was told that my own freelance journalism formed an insufficient proportion of my total income to qualify me for membership.