



Network



NEWS FROM THE ENGLISH COLLECTIVE OF PROSTITUTES

Double issue No. 2 & 3 June 1984

30p

Australia 50c, USA & Canada 50c, Trinidad and Tobago \$1, all other countries USA \$1

THE COURTS ARE THE BIGGEST PIMP

Prison sentences for loitering and soliciting were officially abolished on 31 January 1983. Unofficially, of course, prostitute women are still being jailed.

Legal or illegal, magistrates' courts are backing the police in their 'clean up prostitution' crackdown, by giving such high fines that most girls can't afford to pay. The first court to step up their fines was Clerkenwell in London. On 1st February, 1983, the day the abolition of prison sentences for loitering and soliciting came into use, they fined a girl £300 for loitering and seven days to pay. Courts all over the country followed their policy. Old Street, another London court, have also put up their fines, to £200 and seven days to pay. In Sheffield girls are being fined £200 each time they're up in court, and they're picked up so often that they end up owing thousands of pounds

in back fines.

The Police say that their policy of crackdowns combined with the courts' exorbitant fines have been successful in getting women off the game. They claim that they're making it non-profitable for women to stay in business and that many girls are giving up prostitution as a result. We should thank them for saving our souls and reducing us to starvation, and ask Scotland Yard for compensation for loss of income due to hyperactive police officers.

POVERTY

What they do not say is what women are doing instead of prostitution. Some of us have been forced back to factory jobs at £60 a week,



Hookers and peace women challenge the courts

to go back on Social Security or being financially dependent on a man. Others, who know they are labelled as 'common prostitutes' for life anyway, may go on to commit other crimes of poverty like SS fraud or theft. But most of us are fighting on in prostitution, working in other ways or from other places. For our own sake and that of our children we have no choice.

OCCUPATION

Prostitution is being shifted from one area to another, one city to another. In January 1983 the police formed a special King's Cross squad to retaliate against the 12-day Occupation of the Holy Cross Church by the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP). The police were furious because prostitutes had shown that we could organise against police illegality and racism, get support from the public and win our demands. They forced many girls out of King's Cross. Now residents in Balham and Bayswater (South and West London) are complaining that prostitutes from King's Cross are working 'their' streets. But who is to blame? They can thank King's Cross spec-

ial police squad and Clerkenwell magistrates' court for being so short-sighted.

It seems that every borough, every court, is working only for itself. All they are concerned with is to keep their area 'clean'! Never mind that prostitute women have the right to live somewhere. In order to clean us all out, the police are themselves breaking the law: policemen are posing as clients and policewomen as prostitutes to arrest girls and punters. And the courts are sending us to prison for non-payment of fines when Parliament has abolished prison sentences.

PIMP

But we have not been taken by surprise. Like Greenham Common peace women who refuse to pay their fines, many working girls are also refusing to pay. Better to go to jail than have the court as your pimp. Especially now that the Home Secretary has doubled the maximum fines given by magistrates' courts. It means that from May prostitutes can be fined up to £400 for loitering or soliciting.

We always told other organisations campaigning for working girls that it wasn't

Turn to page two

cross your legs for peace

Women in New Zealand marched against the arrival of the US nuclear warship Texas. They distributed a leaflet exhorting women to 'Cross your legs for peace'.

'The US Embassy arranges a service called Dial-A-Sailor to put visiting sailors in touch with local women. This is a public relations trick to create the illusion that New Zealanders welcome these troops and their deadly weapons. 'If you want to be a call girl, don't do it for free. The arrival of these ships is the ship girls' 'Christmas bonus'. Don't undercut working women in these hard times. A meal and a few drinks is not enough. Cash or charge. Charge the earth — that's what their visit may cost us.'

(from Broadsheet, September 1983)

THE COURTS

Continued from page one

enough to abolish prison sentences, that something had to be done about the fines. Some people were ready to accept that fines would go up if prison sentences were abolished. We knew that without a ceiling on fines girls would end up paying through the nose in cash and in time — working harder to pay higher fines or going to jail for non-payment.

With the Police Bill going through Parliament which will give the police more powers of stop and search, detention and arrest, any woman can be treated like a whore by the police. Especially since the government wants to criminalize kerb-crawling, *the police will be able to put road blocks in any red light area and stop any man who 'looks' like a client or a pimp,*

and any woman who 'looks' like a prostitute — in fact anybody they don't like. But we are not alone in this fight. We have won support from MPs, councillors, lawyers and many members of the public. We have fought side by side with other women organising for peace and money, and against the police and the government.

We have asked the Magistrates' Association and Sheffield Magistrates to receive a delegation who can put our case to them. We are also arranging to meet the Members of Parliament responsible for the abolition of prison sentences to see what they are ready to do to enforce their own legislation. We will picket any court or do whatever else is necessary in order to be heard. Changes do not happen all at once in one day, you have to keep at it until you win.



Greenham Common, 11 Dec 1983

Gigi Turner

THE CASE FOR ABOLITION

"The prostitution laws have the effect of discrediting and devaluing all that we say and do . . . They say we are worthless and thereby allow, even encourage, others to hide our worth. This is perhaps the most hurtful effect of the laws and the most important argument for their abolition."

The ECP's Response to the Criminal Law Revision Committee's Working Paper on Prostitution is out! It's a detailed and documented study based on our experience as both prostitutes and organisers.

Available from King's Cross Women's Centre. Price £2.00 + 30p postage.

The police are taking away from me the only thing I need to survive, which is my little wander. I can't cope with being harassed by the police and I've been putting pressure on the council to move."

Because of this conviction, this woman was arrested three more times. The second time she was found not guilty, but the third, she was punched in the stomach by

the police and fined £25. Her last case has been remanded to a later date. With LAW's help she has been rehoused outside of the red light area in safe, dry accommodation. She has also lodged an official complaint against the police. Anne Neale, the lesbian co-opted member on Camden Council Women's Committee and a spokeswoman for the ECP has asked the council to write to the police condemning such victimisation.

LEGAL ACTION FOR WOMEN LAW

advice on:

social security, child custody, immigration, loitering, soliciting, brothel keeping and other prostitution charges, police illegality and racism, divorce, rape, battering, sexual assault, compensation, health, employment, peace, legal aid and other questions.

King's X Women's Centre

71 Tonbridge Street, (corner of Argyle Walk),
London WC1. Tel: 01-837 7509.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE

King's X — Police harassment

When the police moved into King's Cross to "clean up prostitution" they had no intention of moving out again. After forcing prostitute women to move out by stepping up their illegal arrests, they are now arresting women who are not prostitutes. A woman who lives in King's Cross has been arrested several times for loitering. This is her account:

"One night in my flat I heard a knock on the door, then it went away. So I went out to empty my rubbish and a man pushed me in the flat and punched me in the stomach. When I managed to get out two men grabbed my legs through the banisters. They grabbed my arms and I had to struggle to get away. I was sitting on the pavement really upset when a man in a sedan car asked 'What's the matter?' Two coppers saw this — a man and a woman. They were standing by a rubbish bin eating a bag of chips. The WPC said 'You're under arrest for prostitution'. I told them I had just been attacked, to go back to the flat because the door was open and they could see the struggle. They just arrested me and took me to the police station. The woman copper denied at the station that I had said anything about

being attacked.

The next day I went to Legal Action for Women (LAW) and they helped me to get legal aid. In court the WPC admitted I was very upset, sitting on a kerb. She admitted that I had complained about being assaulted and that they hadn't done anything about it. When the barrister helped me the police got their stories mixed up and anyone could see that they had lied. The woman copper asked me why I didn't dial 999. I said I was in a terrible state and I had seen them just after it happened. But the magistrate didn't want to know, he switched off and found me guilty. I was given a year's conditional discharge.

As a local King's Cross resident because of the police lies I have got a criminal record and I am labelled a 'common prostitute' although I've never done it in my life. How can I go shopping or walking now? Since they gave me tablets for my health I need to go out. I need the fresh air because it helps me to think better. It's the only way I survive. I could end up with a nervous breakdown and get swellings in my legs if I can't go out for walks.

The police and a couple of neighbours keep threatening to put me in a mental home.

Edited and designed by Nina Lopez-Jones
Production assistance by Gigi Turner

Finsbury Park LEGAL OR ILLEGAL

One evening two months ago, my friend and I went into the Blackstock pub across the road. We left at about 11pm. Two policemen followed us as we left. We were going to see a friend who lives in a squat up the road. The girl we came to see wasn't in, so we sat on the bed and waited.

Then we both heard a commotion outside the building. My friend went to see what was going on. While she was away I went to the toilet. I heard somebody kicking in the flat door, and my friend ran into the toilet and we stayed there. It was the officers that had followed us earlier on. They are always picking on us for something or another.

The police asked if we were coming out. We didn't reply and we heard them radio for reinforcements. After about 15 minutes we heard a policeman's voice saying 'you have two minutes to get out or we'll kick down the door'. We knew his voice, he had assaulted us in the cells on a previous occasion.

They kicked the door down. One of them grabbed me by the neck and threw me out on the bed. Another grabbed my friend and threw her to the other side of the room. There were 16 police present at this time. They put us in the van and took us to the police station. I asked one of the officers what they were charging us with and he said 'suspicion of burglary'.

Then the police who had arrested us said to me: 'I know you were out there tomming and if it's the last thing I do, I'm going to stitch you up. I'm going to plant you with American Express, Barclay cards, the lot' and he stuck his hand in my pocket, 'and stand up straight when I'm talking to you! If I've got to nick you for a brothel, get someone for poncing off you, I'm going to get you legal or illegal. I'm on tom squad for a year. You won't put your feet on Finsbury Park by the time I finish with you.'

About an hour later we were released without being charged.

We went to LAW and told them what happened. We've lodged an official complaint against the police.

A majority of girls who work in Finsbury Park on the beat have had the following treatment from the Stoke Newington police.

Two girls who were pregnant when they were arrested for hustling were taken to the police station, detained in custody and refused bail. The police questioned them and they were asked to name the Black man they were working for. They were hit and called 'Black man's meat' and told to plead guilty.

The police only presumed the girls were with Black men, they had no conclusive proof of it.

A few girls were beaten up on the beat, dragged into the black maria and placed in cells on arrival to the police station. If they defended themselves they were beaten up again at the station. Common practice now in Finsbury Park is that, when the police stop a girl on the beat and caution her or arrest her, they want to know the following:

1. your name and address
2. who's the Black man you're working for.

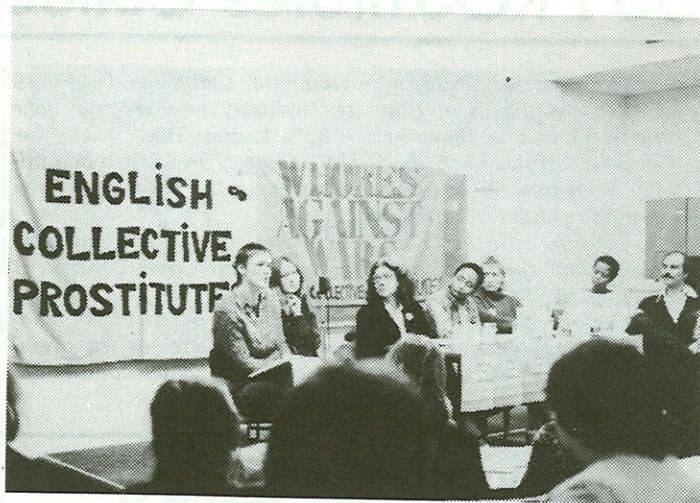
If you say you're not with a Black man they say they will detain you if they are not convinced you're working for yourself. Also any known girl who happens to be working the beat, if she's seen when she's not working, like if she was going to the shop or laundry, or going to pay the landlord, the police will either tell her to get off the beat or arrest her.

Also any girl known to drink in a pub that Black people frequent is assumed to be working for a Black man. She's followed out of the pub, picked up and questioned: 'Which of those Black pimps from the pub is yours? If you tell us we will allow you bail, if not you will remain in custody until court tomorrow.'

I hope you will be able to use this to help the girls in Finsbury Park. Sorry I cannot supply names as the police might victimise us worse.

Yours faithfully,
FREEDOM

Teach-in on prostitution



Jo Pacino

From left to right: Anne Neale (ECP), Juliet Yelverton (Molesworth Peace Camp), Selma James (ECP), Wilmette Brown (King's Cross Women's Centre), Beatrice Schmidt (Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp), Sara Callaway (North London Poly Women's Group) and Pat Woollard (Payday).

On 17 November 1982, the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) with the support of Black Women for Wages for Housework and Women Against Rape, occupied the Church of Holy Cross in protest against police illegality and racism in King's Cross. The Occupation ended on 29 November after all our demands were met. (See *Network* No.1)

To celebrate the first anniversary of the Occupation, in Nov 1983 the ECP and the Polytechnic of North London Women's Group, organised a Teach-in on prostitution. The three days of discussion included: workshops, videos, debates, a photo exhibition and bookstall.

An enthusiastic crowd of over 100 women, and a few men, participated. These are some of their comments:

"A dynamic gathering of women who really understand what living is about. Best of all, whether prostitute, poor, Black, or lesbian, we were certainly not in the business of apologising for who we are and what we are."

Margaret Morton, trainee priest in the Church of England

"Prostitution affects all women but has been a taboo subject until now. The teach-in was an encouragement and a stride forward in overcoming the taboo."

Janet Wade, ex-prostitute

"We are all involved in prostitution. We will continue to be as long as racism, oppression and war exist. This is what I learnt from the Teach-in. If we want to heal a sick society, we must first understand the nature of the illness. It's not enough to treat a solitary symptom."

Juliet Yelverton, Molesworth Peace Camp

"The Teach-in reaffirmed the victories and the lessons of the Church Occupation, and re-established that when prostitutes organise their experience gives all of us more power to organise, particularly on the issue of the police. As a Black woman, I felt good that it exposed those in the 'morality' and feminist movements who make careers by denying and limiting our sexuality, while ignoring the real poverty many women face."

Sara Callaway, North London Poly Women's Group

US PROStitutes Collective – USA

On September 16, 1983, in Sacramento, California, US PROS joined a contingent of other sex industry workers and their supporters calling themselves '80's Ladies Take Back the Night' in a 'Take Back the Night' march. The women had initially been told by anti-porn organizers of the March that they 'were not wanted' on the march.

Refusing to tolerate such prejudice, the sex industry workers and their supporters organized their own contingent carrying US PROS and 80's Ladies banners.

The cheering of the crowd showed that prostitutes' organizing and insistence on justice once more overcame the prejudice of a few. For more info on the 80's Ladies contact US PROS.

DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

Well of the two major U.S. political parties the Democrats are considered to be more liberal! Anyway, they are holding their national convention to decide on a Presidential candidate this July. As usual when these conventions happen – the police come down really heavy – cleaning up the streets to give the conventioners a 'good' image of the

city. Anyway as one delegate of the last democratic convention held in N.Y. in 1980 told an US PROS member – sweeps of prostitutes are just a waste of taxpayers' money. US PROS has some surprises in mind for the S.F. Police Department during the convention period. Check with us for info on our plans. S.F.P.D. we'll be watching you.

SEXUAL OUTLAWS

On October 26, 1983 a women's benefit for US PROS was held in a lesbian bar in San Francisco.

The theme was "Sexual Outlaws" and since it was close to Hallowe'en (All Saints' Day) women were invited to dress in costume – which many did, wearing everything from strip-tease outfits to bondage wear, complete with leash and whip.

Colorful U.S. PROStitutes Collective and Whores Against Wars banners hung from the ceiling and covered the walls, brightening up the place for the 100 women who came. All were pleased to see an US PROS benefit happening in a lesbian bar and some women said they had never felt so comfortable in a lesbian bar before.

There was dancing till late and Mistress S, an erotic dancer, thrilled everyone with a titillating strip-tease show.

The benefit was both a financial success for US PROS and a good time for all the 'Sexual Outlaws' who came. Wages Due Lesbians co-sponsored the benefit.

SEXUAL OUTLAWS
Women's Benefit for US PROS

erotic Dance by Mistress S

WED. OCT 26
8-2am
\$5 donation
\$5 w/refresh

GUEST BJ Pace Model

Clementinas
1190 Folsom

Sponsored by US PROStitutes Collective
- Wages Due Lesbians

dominant mistress

Pam Gitthens, a Sacramento California teacher's aide was arrested and charged with prostitution. In fact she was a dominant mistress. Pam is fighting her case in court charging that S/M between consenting adults is not illegal and wants a trial to prove her case. US PROS fully supports Pam and her right to practice her trade as a dominant mistress without persecution. If you want to support Pam by sending a donation, write to Pam Gitthens Defence Committee, c/o SMC Box 94, 1800 Market St, S.F. Ca. 94102.



Bee photos by Michael Williamson

cat houses

Excerpts from an interview with a woman who had worked 10 years on the ranches or 'cat houses' in Nevada where prostitution is legalized, by Margaret Prescod of US PROS. We wanted to find out exactly what it's like to work in state-controlled prostitution.

ON WORKING CONDITIONS:

"A girl has to agree to work for an average of 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, 3 weeks a month. And she must also agree to take no less than 7 days off for her vacation . .

A girl might come in her first day from vacation and work an 8 hour shift. She then has 10 hours off, gets up at noon and begins a full day that may end up becoming a 12 hour day or a 13 or 14 hour day. Every day more hours are tapped on until she's doing something like a 20 hour day . . . So it takes a tremendous amount of stamina and self-discipline for a girl to pull those types of shifts."

ON PAY

"I think throughout most of the state (Nevada) that the bottom-line price is 20 dollars (about £14). That entitles a man to a choice of "french", or he can get a half-and-half, or he can get a straight lay. He can't stay for as long as he wants. There's a time limit. Generally it's a dollar a minute. The girl gets half the amount of money. Some of the other houses do a 60/40 split . . . You have to

do the negotiations with the customer. If he says, well I want it for 15 dollars, the girl has every right to walk him. If she says 50 dollars and he says 30 dollars, and thirty dollars is, let's say that's a minimum for something he wants to do, then the house says you have to stay with him. You have to stay with him, that's just business."

ON INTERCOMMS IN THE ROOMS

"You know the room is bugged with a listening device, you just don't know if it's turned on. When you are in there you don't know if they (the management of the house) are really listening. And it can pick up the drop of a pin, it's very very sensitive . . . So you never know if the guy wants to give you a tip if management knows about it. Most of the girls keep the tip, though you are supposed to give up half of it. My concern was the total invasion of privacy and it was usually the guards, who I thought were kinky assholes that they hired, straight men, who did not have any right to be listening . . ."

We will be publishing more interviews with other women who have worked in Nevada.

LEGAL SERVICE LAUNCHED in San Francisco

U.S. PROS has co-ordinated a legal service called **Legal Action for Women (L.A.W.)** which is accountable not only to prostitutes but any woman in trouble.

In our dealings with the police and courts we find our civil rights are frequently violated with little or no access to legal help.

L.A.W. was founded by our sister organization in

Britain the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP). We discussed with them their experience with their legal service which has been operating successfully for the past two years.

LAW's office will be open on **THURSDAYS** from 6-8 pm. You can come to the office or make an appointment by calling us.

PROSTITUTES COMPLAINTS BUREAU

Along with LAW, US PROS in SF has established a **Prostitutes Complaints Bureau**. If you've ever been the victim of illegal arrest, police harassment, brutality or racism or if a client has ever attacked, raped, maimed, threatened or blackmailed you in any way, you can file with us, anonymously if you have to. An US PROS member will be available to be

your advocate when you meet with the lawyer. LAW is also being sponsored by **Wages Due Lesbians** and the **SF Wages for Housework Committee**. Members of those organizations can be present at your appointment upon request.

We were thrilled to have a spokeswoman for the ECP speak at the public meeting to launch LAW in SF!

NO BAD WOMEN — JUST BAD LAWS

In April of 1983, **No Bad Women — Just Bad Laws Coalitions** were established in Boston and Tulsa, and recently in New Haven, Connecticut. These groups, along with the **Wages for Housework Campaign**, are circulating a nationwide petition to remove all the laws against prostitutes. In Tulsa, the Coalition recently organized a stand-in to protest the harassment of prostitutes which forced the mayor of the city to admit that prostitutes should not be jailed. Their action appeared in *Time Magazine*!

WOMEN PROTEST GREEN RIVER MURDERS

The **Women's Coalition to Stop the Green River Murders** organized a March 16 'Take Back the Night' march to protest the mass murders of prostitutes in Seattle Washington area. **Margaret Prescod** of **US PROS**, and a member of **ECP** spoke at the march. The ECP spokeswoman drew parallels with the Yorkshire Ripper case in England, describing the protest the ECP organised against the handling of the Ripper case by police, courts and media.

Since June 1981, the bodies of 16 women have been found in or near the Green River and an additional 12 women are listed as missing. US PROS contacts in Seattle say the count is really 50 women. The police

have been slow to respond to the murders. Instead they have been cracking down on women working the 'strip', a road near the Seattle airport where a number of the victims were last seen.

The Coalition is demanding that the police make public all the time and money spent on the case, along with what evidence they have obtained and what their present course of action is.

US PROS
P.O. Box 14512
San Francisco
Ca. 94114
Tel. (415) 5589628



On the steps of the Hall of "Injustice"

Not guilty victory

Protesting the illegal arrest and brutalization of a prostitute woman by the police, **US PROSTITUTES COLLECTIVE** picketed the Hall of Justice in SF July last year. We wanted to bring out into the open the constant brutal and illegal acts we're subject to by the police, particularly if we're Black or Third World. At the picket we renamed the 'Hall of Justice' the 'Hall of Injustice'. It's in the Hall of Injustice they make us wait endless hours on hard benches, book us and lock us up in jail, insult, threaten and beat us, all part of routine police behaviour.

Our picket was part of fighting the case of a woman illegally arrested. We decided to fight the case both on the picket line as well as in court. In court a not guilty plea was made. Not only didn't the police have evidence against her, but they in fact solicited her! Anyway they were forced to drop charges against her.

Women are fed up with having to plead guilty. We will be fighting more cases in court as a part of our legal service (L.A.W.). We intend to fight in the courts as well as organize in the streets. If you are fed up with having to plead guilty contact us.

AUSTRALIA

Dear Sisters,

While you were busy preparing your first 'Network' newspaper, over here we were busy forming the 1st political body of prostitutes in Australia, the **Collective of Australian Prostitutes**, using the anagram CAP and aligning it with international trends. Our first meeting on 13th July took us by surprise because we had expected many weeks to pass before a group formed. But there we were with 30 names on a list, including 10 current workers and 6 ex-workers. We are still reeling from the response. In our second meeting, 27th July, we acquired temporary premises in Darlinghurst, Sydney, complete with phone answering service and post box. So we are finally on

our way in a hurry.

Your 'Network' copies will be distributed among workers and I am sure it will give them heart. By coincidence we have a newsletter called 'Street Network'. Already I sense a rising hope and resistance in the area as some of the brothels charged with double rates as 'commercial premises' or taken to court as 'disorderly houses' by City Council are going to fight against these actions.

The governments of this country have a particularly bad track record in coming to terms with prostitution. We are going to need as much advice you can offer to deal with tough times ahead.

Sincerely and appreciatively,
Roberta

WEST GERMANY

In April 1983, Angelika Birk, Hamburg councillor for the Green Party and spokeswoman for the Wages for Housework Campaign, asked the ECP to support her in demanding that the German government finance research into the persecution of people under Nazism. Jo Pacino, whose grand-mother worked as a prostitute under Nazism, wrote to the Senator of Culture:

"It is very important that what happened to prostitute women under Nazism comes to light . . . Part of the discrimination against prostitutes is that because we are illegal workers we are often invisible . . . We are made into nameless, face-less, history-less people.

We are speaking on behalf of all the women who were forced to work as prostitutes under Nazism, either by the economic depression or by physical coercion and who suffered great persecution. They include Jewish, German and immigrant women and all the women who were forced to service Nazis in countries where the German army was. We are speaking on behalf of their daughters, grand-daughters and the rest of their families — some of whom are members of our organisation.

Bristol

On January 25th, police in Bristol made their first arrests of kerb crawlers using police 'decoys' to charge men under 600 year old laws.

The ECP protested to the press, and got wide (though often inaccurate) coverage including a TV interview on the local 6pm news.

We pointed out that:

- kerb crawling arrests are a cover for increased police activity in St Paul's where women have suffered continuous police harassment;
- this kerb crawling law allows police to arrest any man as a kerb crawler and get convictions on the word of police only. They do it to prostitute women already — now they're doing it when they fancy to any man;
- the prostitution laws are being used by the police as a cover to introduce saturation policing in St Paul's, Bristol's inner city area and heart of the Black community;
- many prostitute women and young men in St Paul's are under 'house arrest' from 7pm to 7am with curfew bail conditions.

. . . It seems a very small compensation for the suffering prostitute women had to go through, that our history be known, that the world be able to see what prostitute women's contribution against Nazism has been . . .

This research as well as research into older people, people with disabilities, Gypsies and gay people has been agreed and is now under way.

CANADA

Women in Vancouver, Canada are organising to get all laws against prostitutes abolished. Their campaigning includes regular 'street walks' through Vancouver's red-light areas, producing a monthly newsletter "Whorganiser" and a 'Bad Tricks' sheet as well as giving evidence on the laws to government commissions.

ASP — The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes,
M.P.O. Box 2288,
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3W5
Canada.

The ECP's stand against this extension of police powers has been supported by **Bristol Women Against Rape**. We're also calling on the local Labour Party to support us by demanding a review of police priorities so that police time and money be spent protecting women from rape and violence rather than harassing Black and working class women and men in St Paul's.

In 1979 the St Paul's Labour Party called for a police crackdown on prostitutes and evictions from council housing. This time, thanks to our organising, they are 'divided' on the issues, and we've been invited to their meeting to help them make up their minds.

For more information contact:

Suzie Fleming,
79 Richmond Road,
Montpelier,
BRISTOL 6.
Tel: 0272-422116

AGAINST NEW 'SUS' LAW

On February 16th, 1984, Anne Neale of the ECP spoke at a public meeting about prostitution in Balham. The meeting was organised by the **Wandsworth Policing Campaign**. Alf Dubs M.P., a feminist historian and representatives of the police and local residents also spoke.

The discussion raised that 30 percent of the police force in Tooting are involved in arresting girls and punters — which means that they are not available to protect 'ordinary' women and men from violent crimes — and that £100,000 are being spent by Wandsworth Council to 'clean up' Bedford Hill. The people at the meeting were divided on what should be done. But it was clear that many local residents do not support saturation policing and crackdowns against prostitutes. However the police, the M.P., the residents' speaker and the 'feminist' called for laws against kerb crawlers to be brought in. The ECP is totally opposed to any laws against clients which would increase the enormous powers given to the police by the Police Bill. We are mobilising all civil rights groups against what can only be a new 'sus' law.

PIMPING BARON

On 31st October 1983, Greenham Common women organised a picket of Fleet Street to protest about the way the press distorts women's organising. The ECP joined a crowd of about 40 women carrying placards which said: "MURDOCH THE PIMPING BARON" and "NEWS OF THE WORLD SUPER GRASS"

High Class Pimping

In February 1983 a London madam was done for conspiring to control the movements of prostitutes. The *News of the World* investigators had been responsible for getting her done by exposing her as a 'vice queen'. Two months ago she was sentenced to 18 months suspended and ordered to pay £85,000 fine and costs. The Inland Revenue demanded £100,000. How do you like that, the State accusing a woman of pimping and then pimping off her so-called immoral earnings to the tune of £185,000. As the French prostitutes said in their 1975 national strike 'The State is the biggest pimp'.

The *News of the World*, who were praised by the judge for their 'valuable public service', seemed very concerned that the girls were making good money. What's wrong with women getting high wages from willing wealthy clients who could easily afford to pay much more? In-

stead of making a good living, we girls are now unemployed — is that supposed to be a help?

The *News of the World* are also part of the sex industry: they make much of their money by 'exposing' prostitute women. Many have been victims of the NoW/police team. Another woman was recently sent down for 2½ years for being a 'top vice queen'. What the judge calls 'a valuable public service' includes breaking up families and forcing women to move out after their picture appeared in the paper and NoW reporters posing as clients to get information. Women making an honest living out of selling their skills as masseuses or prostitutes — often within the law — are insulted and endangered. To whom is this service 'valuable'? Certainly not to the women who are forced on the dole queue as a result. But then we don't make £185,000 out of every madam who is prosecuted or millions of pounds out of publishing people's private lives without their consent. *All we sell is ourselves, not other people.*

sexual deviants

"The local inhabitants of . . . are enraged about the women who are polluting a beautiful part of . . . The violence perpetrated by these [women] on the residents of . . . when they are opposed is well known here and it is also a fact that they are driving the ratepaying residents and their families from the local swimming pool and leisure centre because of their disgusting and unnatural behaviour . . . They take drugs, they are filthy dirty, they are sexual deviants . . .

It is our intention to put such pressure on the responsible authorities that they will find it impossible to neglect their duty to remove [these women] from this area for good."

Who wrote this? Some residents from a red light area? Wrong! It's an organisation of Newbury residents attacking the Greenham Common women.

However we fight for survival there are always a few who are ready to call the police on prostitutes, Black people, peace demonstrators, pickets, punks, junkies, gays, lesbians and other so-called freaks. Although these residents are a minority they have the ear of central and often local government. But we have 'our' residents too. Read on . . .



Stop The City — a protest against war, 29 Sept 1983.

'Good' and 'bad' residents meet

On February 14th, members and supporters of the ECP, including prostitute women who live and work in Finsbury Park, and of the King's Cross Women's Centre attended a women only meeting of the Finsbury Park Action Group.

For the first time women residents met with prostitutes who are also resident, to discuss problems of living and working in a red light area. Women talked about their different experiences of police harassment and of being approached by men looking for business. Many women

residents did not want more police in their areas especially since Finsbury Park has a large Black population which is constantly being picked on by the police.

The meeting started to discuss the ECP's campaign to get all the laws against prostitutes abolished as the only way to get rid of red light areas because prostitute women would be able to advertise and get in touch with clients easily, legally and discreetly.

We hope to attend future meetings and continue the discussion.

LIVING IN A RED LIGHT AREA — a Black resident's view

I am a resident of Balham. I was born in Balham, brought up in Balham and have lived in Balham ever since. I have become increasingly incensed by so-called 'residents' groups' saying that they speak for the residents of Balham when they talk about the issues of living in a red light area. Well I'd like them to know that they do not speak for the residents of Balham — not for this resident anyway!

What incenses me most about these 'resident groups' is that they are not part of the community of Balham. These so called residents have come to live in Balham in the last few years as Balham has become a 'trendy' and up and coming area to live in. They can afford to live in Bedford Hill because of Wandsworth Council's Tory dream of selling all housing stock. They can just afford it on the edge of their incomes. At this level everything becomes a threat — at present it is prostitutes, next it will be the older working class residents of Balham, the Black people and the Asian people. How can these newcomers then turn round and say that they speak for the residents of Balham?

When I was younger, my mother had a friend who was a prostitute. She used to visit our home with her own daughter and that daughter and I grew up together and also became friends. Now that daughter is also a prostitute and I'm a teacher. But we're still friends. We were all friends be-

fore and still are now, because we live in the same community. Prostitutes have always been part of the community.

I have never seen such a large police presence in Balham as there has been since the arrival of these new 'residents'. Many people are not against the 'prostitute presence', but against the police presence. People in Balham have always been wary of drawing police attention to themselves and now these new 'residents' are welcoming the police with open arms!

Many people in Balham are immigrants, Black or Asian, involved in various struggles such as the peace movement, saving local services and the right to a local vote. The last thing we want is a massive police presence in the area who will inevitably interfere with this political activity.

On the other hand, when people in Balham have required the use of a 'boy in blue', have we ever been able to get one? Of course not. And why? Because they're all harassing the prostitutes, that's why. As a Black woman I know only too well that racial and sexual attacks and harassment are all matters *not* worthy of police attention.

Will the police and the new 'residents' ever learn that the people of Balham see the prostitutes as part of Balham? That the prostitutes have as much, even more of a say about Balham than either the

police or these new 'residents'? It is true to say that there are more prostitutes but this is economic. Thatcherism causes prostitution not just of the women but of all of us. We become poorer.

The new 'residents' and the concern the police have shown for their worries have caused many problems for Balham and solved none: the destruction of services, poor housing, lax policing of serious local concerns, a waste of police time and serious infringement of people's liberty by road blocks. And none of this helps the people of Balham and has no effect on prostitution.

PROSTITUTES and SUPPORTERS

Prostitutes and Supporters, a working group of Camden Council Women's Committee initiated by the ECP meets regularly at the King's Cross Women's Centre. Our aim is to bring together women in the sex industry with other women interested in learning from our experience.

The working group has focused around censorship and its implications for women: loss of jobs, more police crackdowns and arrests, increasing dependency on pimps and employers, and more sexual and economic repression for all. Our latest discussion was on 'Shielding children from pornography — protection or repression?'

Our meetings are open to all women. If you are interested phone the King's Cross Women's Centre 01-837 7509.

Bedford Hill

I was arrested with a girlfriend and put in a van. As they were driving, the police saw three girls coming out of a shop and decided to arrest them as well. There were six girls in the van and eight police officers, all men. Another van came along and the police wanted to split us up, three girls in each van. We wanted to stay together. So they grabbed us out of the van, pulling one girl's hair, and punching and kicking me in the face.

When we got to the police station they wanted to give me a strip search. I wanted to see a doctor first because I was bleeding where they had kicked me. They took me by each leg and arm and kicked me into the cell. They had turned the radio up full blast so nobody could hear me scream. I got the doctor to take pictures of my legs and face in the end. You can see the boot marks on my face. I told the police I was going to do them for it.

They charged us with breach of the peace.

When we pleaded not guilty the magistrate in Lavender Hill (South London) wouldn't allow us to have the case adjourned to see a solicitor. We had to run across the road to this solicitor for him to come over. The solicitor asked for time but he was refused also so we couldn't be represented.

I asked the police in court why they had arrested me. They said that I was likely to cause a disturbance. I asked them if they had seen me do anything to cause a disturbance. They said no, but just being a 'common prostitute' in a known red light area I

was inciting the residents, causing friction. So I asked, did that mean that I couldn't go to Balham, Park Lane, Finsbury Park, Paddington, because I am a 'common prostitute'? The magistrate said 'yes'. We were all bound over for £50.

Police terrorists

The police are saying that the residents have to wear funny masks and walk in twos because they are so frightened to be recognised. But in fact they are using the residents as an excuse to cover up for what they're doing. Last summer the police was going around asking the residents if they had been approached by any Black man or punter.

The police are trying to terrorise us. A guy was mugging my friend the other night. The police came and told him to go away. They arrested her for soliciting. And when a car came up the pavement and tried to run us down, the police didn't do anything about the car and arrested us for soliciting instead.

The courts are backing the police and being really hard on us. My friend was kept in custody for a week for breaking her radius* even though she has a baby. But I plead not guilty most of the time anyway because I get arrested on sight. I've won three not guilty pleas one after another recently — the police were going mad! I told the police I would get the prostitutes' association on to them and plead not guilty every time I'm arrested on sight. They won't terrorise me.

* a system of internal deportation imposed by the courts.

Black — No time to pay

Things have got pretty hot down here lately and the courts are getting harder. One of my punters asked me last night "How come these police-women who are posing as hustlers aren't getting arrested? After all they're loitering on the street supposedly for the purpose but they are nicking girls and punters instead."

The other week when I was in court they locked up one of the Black girls. She had £15 outstanding from another court plus £50 which was fabricated, plus the £50 from that day. They told her that she was to find all the money there and then or go to prison. She told them that she had paid all her fines ex-

cept for £15 which was apparently from Earl's Court, and that she didn't have any money on her. Obviously the court didn't believe her — although she had her four-year-old son with her. Luckily one of her friends was with her and she took the child home. But if she hadn't been there they would have taken the child away from her. I don't think this is fair.

I don't understand why the court wasn't willing to give the Black girl time to pay. They gave me 12 days to pay and another white girl 28 days to pay. This looks like discrimination against the Black women that work the beat, as if things aren't hard enough already.



March against the Police Bill, 21 January 1984

Pimping money

Since the ECP brought prostitute women to public attention with the Church Occupation in November 1982, prostitution has become a feminist career option. Rights of Women (ROW) a group of so-called feminist lawyers has applied for £44,421 from the Greater London Council Women's Committee to monitor prostitution.

ROW's record on women's rights is not a good one: they have refused their services to prostitutes in the past; they don't know what they think of the police; they are racist and don't care that many prostitute women are Black and that the police use the prostitution laws to harass Black men for pimping; they think that punters should be arrested and they have sided with right wing residents against prostitute women. ROW's prostitution project is dangerous to prostitute women Black and white, and

to Black women and men who live or work in red light areas.

Because we have opposed ROW's prostitution project, Legal Action for Women (LAW) has been refused funds by the GLC's Women's Committee. LAW has been running successfully for two years on unpaid work, but we need money to expand it. Prostitutes who organise don't deserve money — we're only whores. But lawyers who make their careers off our struggle do — they're only pimps.

STOP PRESS

Only today (22 May 1984), because of the work of Wilmette Brown — a Black lesbian co-opted member of the GLC Women's Committee — and the support of some councillors and employees, has the Women's Committee agreed in principle to fund LAW. We are now waiting to see the money.

ECP 'the girls' union'

The English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) is a voluntary organisation. We are not, and never have been, funded. Support our campaign for the abolition of all laws against prostitutes by sending a financial contribution — any amount is welcome, however large or small. You can also subscribe to *Network* (£1.00 for three issues inc. p&p:

ECP, c/o King's Cross Women's Centre,
71 Tonbridge Street, London WC1.
Tel: 01-837 7509

The Centre is open Monday — Friday, 11am — 5pm. Members of the ECP are there most days. You are welcome to come and see us at any time.