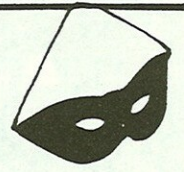




Network



NEWS FROM THE ENGLISH COLLECTIVE OF PROSTITUTES

Double issue No. 4&5 June 1985

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Kerb crawling— new 'sus' law

The Thatcher government wants to increase police control of the streets by extending the prostitution laws and criminalising kerb crawling.

The Sexual Offences Bill is intended as a new 'sus' law against prostitute women, and Black and other working class men.

In response to a massive increase in prostitution in the last few years—due to unemployment and cuts in social services—the police and the courts have stepped up arrests and increased fines. In many cities, magistrates courts have given maximum fines for prostitution offences (£200 until May 1984 and £400 since, see *Network* 2&3). Many girls who had never been inside before prison sentences for loitering and soliciting were abolished in January 1983, have been imprisoned since over debts of several hundred (sometimes several thousand) pounds.

It is part of a general attack on sexual freedom and civil liberties, Madam Maggie's return to 'Victorian values'. The Police Act, police violence against Black people and striking miners, legislation censoring videos, 'clean up' campaigns against prostitute women, sex shops and gay bookshops are all part of economic and political repression.

A woman MP was put up by the government to pose as a fighter for 'the protection of innocent women'. But the Bill was drafted, promoted, and seen through the Commons by the government.

The Bill will not protect women. On the contrary. It's

an attack on prostitute women's right to work. The 'equality' it proposes ('don't complain, girls, your punters are also being nicked') is like awarding women equal pay by cutting men's wages to the same low level. We will lose business when clients are arrested, a particularly hard blow in a time of high unemployment. We will be subject to more violence, blackmail, arrest and persecution.

The Bill will make it illegal for a man to talk to a suspected prostitute. Guilt by association will keep our men friends away while giving us less time to chat up the punters before we go with them. It can mean more girls being assaulted, robbed, raped and murdered.

To escape the police many of us will be forced underground into brothels controlled by pimps and police. Is this the safety they mean?

The police and the government are using the complaints of some residents and the ignorance and prejudice about prostitute women to demand legislation which will increase police powers. Like 'sus' which was used against young Black men, and like the loitering and soliciting laws used against working women and gay men, the charge of kerb crawling will rely on police evidence only: the police will arrest who they like. And since magistrates'

Turn to page two



House of Commons Speak Out against kerb crawling legislation, 16 April 1985.

Against censorship

The women's movement in USA is very divided on the question of pornography.

This is not generally known in Britain because feminist journals and the women's pages of British papers are more likely to reflect Mary Whitehouse's view of feminism. The organising against the Los Angeles ordinance shows the strength of this anti-censorship movement.

A newly formed coalition of women's groups, including *US PROSTITUTES Collective*, succeeded in delaying the vote on an anti-porn ordinance by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in March. It's similar to the ordinance introduced in Minneapolis and now being considered in several cities across the U.S.

This proposed ordinance says that pornography is sex discrimination and that it promotes rape, battery, child sexual abuse and prostitution. It would give women rights to file lawsuits to halt distribution of materials they find degrading. It blames porn for the problems we face as women. We disagree, poverty causes these problems. The present

cuts in welfare, food stamps, health and other human services are increasing the number of sex industry workers. Why not put time and money into establishing homes for juvenile runaways, increased welfare payments, childcare programs and low-income housing so that women aren't forced into the sex industry in the first place? The majority of women who work in the sex industry are single mothers with families to support. This ordinance, forcing the sex industry underground, will make women more vulnerable to abuse and violence on the job and from the police.

The Coalition is continuing to fight new measures being proposed by the anti-porn lobby in Los Angeles. We held press conferences and public meetings to voice our opposition. As a result the vote was delayed until 28 May when a watered down version was presented. The final word hasn't been said yet.



From left to right: Anne Neale (ECP and Wages Due Lesbians), Selma James (ECP and Wages for Housework Campaign) and Nina Lopez-Jones (ECP and CAKCL)

NEW 'SUS'

Continued from page one

courts usually rubber stamp the police story, they will have no trouble in getting convictions.

In fact, in red light areas all over the country where the police have cracked down on kerb crawlers, working women have been the first to get arrested. In areas like King's Cross, London, saturation policing has forced most women out, but the police have stayed behind in great numbers and they are now harassing anyone they please. Young people have been accused of stealing their own bikes, innocent Black men have been stopped and beaten up for pimping. Others have been arrested while collecting money for the miners' strike, and non-prostitute women walking alone have been charged with loitering or soliciting.

There are already laws to deal with nuisance, obstruction, insulting behaviour, breach of the peace and assault. But the police use them only for their own purposes.

When women report rape, pimping, battering, assault or other violent crimes to the police, we are told that the police are too busy to help us. We are accused of being on the game and even arrested while the dangerous men we have come to report go free. Tightening the prostitution laws and increasing police powers will make it worse: in 1983, 30% of Wandsworth police force was dealing with prostitution and therefore not available for violent crimes. How many more police will be put on our case now?

Unfortunately the government has been able to draw support from Labour MPs and many feminists who are refusing to take a stand against police violence, illegality and racism. All women would be safer if the prostitution laws were abolished and if more police time and resources were put into protecting women and children from rape, sexual assault and other violent crimes rather than into persecuting girls and punters.

But these feminists are not concerned with women, especially if we're prostitutes. They're concerned with their careers. And demanding more police powers to deal with the punter, the kerb crawler, the man in the street, 'the man next door'—who may also happen to be Black, immigrant, gay or on strike—is more 'popular'.

Everywoman, a new feminist journal, gave Janet Fookes a whole page—with photo—to tell us about the delights of her kerb crawling Bill; and at the same time the editorial acknowledged that the Bill 'could be used as a new "sus" law against young Black men in particular'. With feminists like that who needs racist 'male chauvinist pigs'!

In the last few years prostitute women have shown that we can organise successfully. **Legal Action for Women (LAW)** gave a voice and strength to a whole movement of women pleading 'not guilty' and appealing against unjust sentences. In November 1982, we occupied the Holy Cross Church in King's Cross, London (see *Network 1* and *Hookers in the House of the Lord* by Selma James) to protest against police illegality

and racism. We were the first who called the police illegal and accused Thatcher of putting women on the game.

But Madam Maggie doesn't care if her economic policies result in more prostitution, as long as we keep quiet and plead guilty every time we're nicked. Now she's preparing herself for a showdown with massive Social Security cuts, and the public outcry and street violence it will cause. Where the Sexual Offences Bill will criminalise the individual on the streets, the proposed Public Order Act will criminalise the public in groups.

But the Bill may still be stopped. In June 1984, the **English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP)** got together Black and white women and men, prostitutes, probation officers, lawyers, civil rights organisers, trade unionists and members of political parties. We formed the **Campaign Against Kerb Crawling Legislation (CAKCL)** and started writing letters, lobbying MPs and organising meetings. On 16 April we held a Speak Out in the House of Commons attended by over 130 people. The room was so packed that many people were standing by the door and in the aisle. Five MPs also came.

As a result of our pressure the Bill was almost defeated on 10 May when two Tories talked it out. But the government was so furious that they slipped the Bill back into the Commons a week later. They knew that if they kept it secret enough, nobody would be watching them or the Labour Party who, after a few noises, had no intention

of stopping it.

The Sexual Offences Bill is now going through the House of Lords. The government hopes it will be law by the summer. Whether we succeed in stopping it or not, it is not the end of the story.

When we first opposed kerb crawling legislation some years ago, we were alone. Increasingly, women's and other organisations are becoming conscious of how ignoring the safety of prostitute women puts all women in danger resulting in greater police powers against everyone.

Bristol

A crucial part of CAKCL's organising against the Sexual Offences Bill was done in Bristol.

After putting pressure on the Labour Party, two of Bristol LP constituencies passed resolutions against the Bill. Following discussions with the ECP, Bristol Council for Civil Liberties organised a public meeting on 22 January.

The meeting got a lot of media coverage. A local radio phone-in interviewed **Suzie Fleming** speaking for the ECP and CAKCL. Of the phone calls that followed, all but one supported our position. It goes to show how once the issues are aired and people know what this is about, the so-called general public is dead against this Bill.

You can contact Bristol ECP and CAKCL on 0272-550887.

Dear Mr. Cox,

Letter to Tom Cox,
MP for Tooting

I understand there is a Bill going through on kerb crawling. As a working girl I urge you to vote against it. It would no more protect women than the loitering law does at present. And what about the children?

Not long ago when I was at work in Balham there was a 16-car Police Patrol on. A small boy was sexually assaulted in Streatham. Surely you and your Police Force should busy yourselves looking for people who commit REAL crimes instead of harassing prostitutes.

We have a hard enough time. Most of us only hustle because we can't afford to live on the money received from DHSS, and there is no other work. I have three 'O' levels, seven CSE's and I am bilingual, and I cannot find a job. It's getting increasingly difficult as I now also have a Police record for loitering.

Loitering is only trading without a street licence: surely my body is my own and if I wish to sell it I have the right to without being arrested. Prostitution itself is not illegal and if the kerb crawling legislation is passed you are denying me my work, and I see it as an attack on me personally.

Maybe you would rather prostitutes become muggers instead.

*Yours faithfully,
A WORKING GIRL*

PS: Think twice before voting.

Edited and designed by Nina Lopez-Jones.

Production assistance by Selma James, Anne Neale, Jewel Taylor, Gigi Turner and Rachel West.

LAW Legal Action for Women

A service for all women where legal problems are dealt with as part of our whole lives.

Advice and support, a chance to discuss your case with experienced grassroots women, access to sympathetic solicitors, a second legal opinion and campaigning back-up.

advice on:

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

King's Cross Women's Centre,
71 Tonbridge Street, London WC1

01 837 7509

Big Brother

In *Legalising Kidnapping* (*Network 1*), a single mother wrote how she was charged with brothel keeping and her daughter was kidnapped by social services as a result. She was fined £225. LAW helped her to fight her case and get her daughter back.

I am under a three year supervision order by the social services. So I have to 'behave' myself now or I risk losing my daughter again. The child-custody court case took all day and my daughter had to attend court briefly. They brought all the police evidence up and I was 'told off' like a naughty child and publicly humiliated. It was the most horrible, degrading experience I had ever been through.

But at least I have had my

daughter returned to me.

I am very nervous now every time there is a knock at the door in case it is the social worker. I'm really frightened of having any men friends (not clients) in case the social services misunderstand the situation and take her again. It really is a 'big brother' situation.

I feel such a different person to what I was before all this happened. I really thought that we lived in a 'free society'—not a 'police state'—but the realisation is hard to adjust to. Thank you all for your interest and help. I just hope that somehow these outdated laws will be changed soon, and that one day we may all be allowed to do what we want with our own bodies, and so be treated like 'adults' not naughty little children.

Inland Revenue is a Pimp

The ECP and supporters picketed the High Court in Strand on 7 November 1984 in support of Lindi St. Claire, an independent prostitute woman who is being charged £56,000 by the Inland Revenue for back taxes. We accused the IR of pimping.

Lindi is not the only girl who's being harassed by the IR. Helen Buckingham, founder of **Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense (PLAN)** and a long time organiser for prostitute women's rights, has been charged £10,000 in back taxes. Helen and her two-year-old son have been living on Supplementary Benefit for the past three years.

We are deprived of our civil and legal rights. We are treated as criminals by the police and the courts who arrest, fine and imprison us. When we are assaul-

ted or raped, the police tell us not to complain—it's all part of the job. Why should we pay taxes for services we are being denied? If the government wants our money they had better give us our rights.

Legal Action for Women got free representation for Lindi in November. On appeal legal aid

LAW is not funded. The advice and support we give, and the cases we take up are all unpaid work.

Our grant application to the GLC Women's Committee for four full-time workers and running expenses was given a high priority in May 1984 (see *Network 2&3*). We have not seen one penny yet. We know why.

LAW, the ECP and Wilmette Brown from **Black Women for Wages for Housework** based at our Centre and a co-opted member on the GLC Women's Committee have consistently opposed racism and careerism within the Women's Committee. We are being punished for speaking out.



Jackie Berkeley picket and 'Speakout' outside the Magistrates Association.

POLICE RAPE

The ECP and LAW were two of the many groups who supported the picket for Jackie Berkeley, a Black woman raped in Mosside police station by two white policemen while two white policewomen held her down. When Jackie complained of the rape the police brought seven charges against her, including that of 'wasting police time'. What happened to Jackie Berkeley has happened to many other women, especially prostitute women. The London picket was organised by **Black Women for Wages for Housework and Women Against Rape**, and it was on every day of Jackie's court case.

In spite of all the evidence, magistrate Glynmore Jones found Jackie guilty. In protest against the verdict, Black Women for Wages for Housework and Women Against Rape held a picket and 'Speakout'

was finally granted and we are working with Lindi's solicitor and barrister. The date for the hearing hasn't been fixed yet but it's likely to be in July.

outside the Magistrates Association the day before Jackie was sentenced. Speakers from the ECP and LAW were there to say how magistrates rubber-stamp police illegality and racism against prostitute women. A rubber stamp was presented to the Magistrates Association saying 'I Believe the Police Story'. Graffiti saying 'Jones the Rapist' sprayed on the walls of the Association had been whitewashed over that morning. The next day Jackie was given a three month suspended sentence. She is going to appeal.

APPEALING FINES

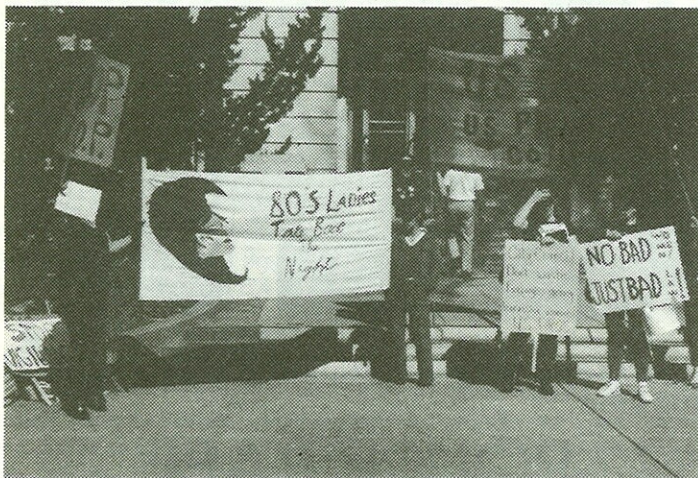
If you can't keep up with paying your fines you can now appeal against them.

Until recently you could only appeal within weeks of having been sentenced. This is no longer true. A new legal precedent was set in March when five Law Lords unanimously allowed an appeal by David Wilson, an unemployed man who hadn't paid the instalments on his motoring fines because his financial situation had got worse.

If you've lost a straight job, have been cut off from Social Security, or if police 'clean ups' mean that you can't go back on the streets to get the money to pay the fines, you can appeal your fines too. Don't let them put you away for non-payment without trying.

US PROStitutes Collective – U S A

Sacramento



US PROS and 80's Ladies picket Sacramento's City Council

ILLEGAL ARREST

US PROS and 80's Ladies (a Sacramento based group of sex industry workers) picketed the Court House in Sacramento in January, in support of Pam Githens. Pam, a dominant mistress, was later sentenced to 90 days in jail even though the judge admitted there was nothing incriminating about the evidence seized from her house.

We protested the court's approval of the blatant illegal actions of the police. 'The arrest was illegal, the search illegal, the evidence was illegally seized. The actions of the Sacramento Police Department should be on trial, not Pam', said US PROS. 'Once again the prostitution laws are being used to harass women who are outspoken against the injustice they and other women are receiving', said 80's Ladies.

New York

In March 1985, thousands of women lawyers, legal workers and other professionals, gathered at the 16th annual national conference on *Women and the Law* in New York City.

There was a massive debate on pornography where many women opposed feminist anti-

STOP S.T.O.P.

US PROS and 80's Ladies also called a joint picket outside the City Council in Sacramento to protest the Council's support of vigilante group S.T.O.P. (Sick and Tired of Prostitution) which harasses street prostitutes. At a time when violent crime is on the increase in Sacramento, and police are blaming it on cutbacks, why are police resources being wasted to support S.T.O.P.?

'Let's end the hypocrisy of those who persecute working ladies during the day, but seek them out at night' said 80's Ladies. Since our protests, the Latino community has publicly opposed 'S.T.O.P.'s racist vigilante tactics'.

porn legislation on the grounds that it was racist and that it was giving the State more power to control our sex lives. In order to get these laws passed some feminists have made an alliance with right wing forces like the 'moral majority'—the American version of Mary Whitehouse. They pretend to challenge the sex industry without challenging the economic system which forces women to work in it in the first place.

Margaret Prescod of US PROS was a panelist at two workshops.

Oklahoma

Winning Against Rape

Charlotte Sango and her reporters have forced Oklahoma City District Attorney Robert Macy to reopen the investigation of Charlotte's rape.

Charlotte reported the rape to police last December. Her jaw was broken by the rapist and both legs were broken in her attempt to escape by jumping from a two-storey window. The rapist was released without charges. Charlotte was told by the DA's office that there was not enough evidence to prosecute and that her arrest record would be 'embarrassing' to her in court.

On February 28, No Bad Women—Just Bad Laws, directed by US PROS, picketed the Oklahoma County Court House together with other groups. We charged DA Robert Macy with:

condoning rape, issuing a licence to rape, making all women more vulnerable to violence and prejudice. We asked him: 'Is it a woman's right to report rape or what? Does being Black and having a charge of prostitution on your record mean open season for rapists?'

A week later Charlotte Sango herself faced the DA from her wheelchair and gave her account of the rape. Ruth Todasco, spokeswoman for No Bad Women—Just Bad Laws which organised the protest, was also present.

Through picketing and confrontation, letters to officials, and donations we succeeded in demanding our right to press charges for rape whether we have a record for prostitution or not.

San Francisco

US PROS held our second 'Sexual Outlaws' Benefit in a lesbian bar in San Francisco in March. The benefit was a great success—the erotic dancers did and strip-tease and show, and everybody had a great time.

We're planning our next benefit as part of Lesbian Gay Freedom Week on June 26.

SEXUAL OUTLAWS

Margaret Prescod of Black Women for Wages for Housework spoke at USPROS' forum on prostitution in June. The forum entitled *Sexual Outlaws Proposition World Governments* focused on the United Nations Women's End of Decade Conference which is taking place in Nairobi in July, and issues affecting sex industry workers in particular: vigilante harassment, illegal ticketing and arrests, and working conditions in porn and clubs.

The meeting was held in the red light area of San Francisco where many women live and work and where most police harassment takes place.

LAW Legal Action

Legal Action for Women (LAW) co-ordinated by US PROS, has been going for over a year! We've located new premises—we're in the Unitarian Church on Thursday evenings.

Since we opened, we've received hundreds of calls from women needing legal help with custody cases, divorces, arrests, situations of domestic violence and other questions.

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

ASP — CANADA



The ECP picketing the Canadian Embassy in London, 23rd July 1984, in support of the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP) who occupied Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver on Friday 20th.

ASP were protesting against a recent ruling by the Supreme Court which gives the police powers to arrest any woman or man considered to be a 'public nuisance' by the police, that is primarily prostitute women, Black and immigrant people, lesbian women, gay men and other working-class people. Their occupation was supported by Rape Crisis (?). We were delighted to know that ASP got much of their inspiration from Selma James' account of the ECP's church occupation

Hookers in the House of the Lord. That's just what we wrote it for: to share our experience and help others to do the same.

ASP is part of our international network and has been working closely with US PROS.

ASP
M.P.O. Box 2288,
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3W5
Canada

For years now some Halifax residents have been trying to 'get prostitutes off the streets'. An attempt to introduce a by-law was thrown out by the High Court. So they got an interim injunction against 48 women whose names were printed on posters all over Halifax. Some of the women lost their straight jobs as a result. But with the free help of sympathetic women lawyers—they were refused legal aid—the sisters won their case. Unlike in Vancouver, this injunction was dropped.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

The Trinidad and Tobago Prostitutes' Collective has been in the news. A TnT paper reports that 'local prostitutes are on the war path'.

A big meeting was held in December 1984, in Arima, where before a large crowd prostitute women presented a list of questions to be raised at the United Nations End of Decade Women's Conference, taking place in Nairobi, Kenya in July. Clotil Walcott, President of the National Union for Domestic Employees and spokeswoman for the Collective was quoted as saying:

'Local prostitutes do have problems and these problems have taught me how much we owe them and how much we still refuse to take them into account. Very often they have to endure sexual harassment and they end up at the low end of the social ladder.'

As Sunday Punch puts it '... with Clotil on their side we are certain their problems would be given a good hearing.'

TnTPC c/o Clotil Walcott
Mount Pleasant Road
Arima Trinidad

Excerpt from a letter by Lynn Fraser and Cheryl Kehoe of ASP—Calgary about the film 'Hookers on Davie'.

"It is unfortunate that the filmmakers chose to focus solely on Davie, a street in Vancouver which is pimp-free and where a large percentage of the prostitutes are transvestites and transsexuals, instead of on prostitution generally.

The film is attracting audiences who want to learn about prostitution in Canada. When Janice Cole [one of the filmmakers] was in Calgary with the film she spoke about prostitution.

When she was asked a question about police violence and treatment of prostitutes, she replied that she didn't think it was too bad, and that the police had been very nice to them while filming. When we brought up that we have heard many stories from prostitutes about police coercion to have sex, or be harassed, raped, beaten or thrown in jail, she made it clear that she didn't think that that

was the case.

The filmmakers would probably not have been able to set up the interviews without the help of ASP in Vancouver. They said they wanted to give prostitutes a voice but then edited out two women involved in ASP. They also promised to give ASP a free copy of the video and to have a benefit for them. Neither of these promises have been kept. Many of the prostitutes who appeared in the film have had to bear negative consequences as a direct result of being in the film and becoming known. The filmmakers are travelling around answering questions about prostitution and haven't had time to keep their promises.

The hostility now felt on the street in Vancouver has had a negative impact on the connections that are beginning to be forged between prostitutes and other women. When you are in a position of such power, you should be very careful that the decisions you make further the goals of people on whose behalf you are speaking."

AUSTRALIA

We were really glad to see that the Australian Prostitutes' Collective (APC), who are part of our international network, have adopted our logo NO BAD WOMEN JUST BAD LAWS. 'APC consists of past and present workers as well as supportive women from other occupations. The Collective aims to provide an information and expression support network for working women' (*Working Girl*, Vol 1, No 1, July 1984).

The Australian government has been running an inquiry into prostitution and have sent representatives of their Select Committee to Amsterdam, Hamburg, Munich, London, Stockholm and Hong Kong. The results of the inquiry are expected to come out this summer in support of police recommendations, including 1) a ban on all street prostitution, 2) legalised brothels and 3) government clinics for young prostitutes.

APC, who made over 23 separate submissions to the Select Committee, announced it would have nothing more to do with the Committee and urged all its members to boycott providing services to Members of Parliament.

Roz Nelson of APC, accused the government of trying to '... make money out of [prostitution]. If you legalise it, you legalise the exploitation of women ... If [the government] does that, it is nothing but a big pimp ... We believe women should form themselves into small collectives of four or five and run their own lives.

In addition, AIDS is also being used by right wing organisations to attack prostitute women. Roberta Perkins wrote to us:

'... following a report of possible AIDS in two workers ... they have temporarily shifted focus from gays to prostitutes and ... have laid workers open to violence as has occurred with increases in poof-bashings since AIDS has become a media issue.' Nevertheless, the Australian Prostitutes' Collective ... founded 13 July 1983 ... is now well established in Sidney, Melbourne and Adelaide, and in its infancy in Perth.'

Well done, sisters!

APC
3/3a Henderson Road
Alexandria 2015
Sidney NSW Australia

CRIMES of POVERTY

I was eighteen years old when I was arrested, that was in 1965. I was working in Soho at a clip joint at the time. The charge was false pretences, this meant that I allowed men to think I was a prostitute and did not deliver the goods, so to speak.

I was taken to West End Central police station (notorious then for being one of the heaviest in London) and kept in a cell for forty eight hours, until I went to court on Monday. During this time I didn't see anyone except the police, who took my fingerprints and did a strip-search. I was unaware that there was such a thing as legal aid, so made no attempts to ask for a solicitor. There was no one in court who could bail me and I was taken to Holloway later that day.

The thought of going to Holloway after the ordeal of the police station was devastating. The reception area in Holloway is designed to do your brains in. You can be kept there for the best part of a day, shut up in cubicles which we used to call rabbit hutches because of the size and the wire mesh that covered the

top. In these conditions you think desperate thoughts, and I almost managed to drive myself bananas by believing that the women were weirdos who might carve me up if I so much as looked at them the wrong way. Of course, I couldn't have been more wrong. Most of the women were there for the same reason I was—*crimes of poverty*.

I learned a lot from the women in prison, that was the first time I realised about women's strength. Eventually I was bailed on £50 surety. I went back to court some weeks later, again without a solicitor. The magistrate said 'I am going to make an example of you' and sentenced me to three months in prison. This was my first offence.

These days, twenty years on, I still get arrested, usually for blockading at Greenham or some other USAF base. The strange thing is I am not worried about the arrest, but about the effect my previous convictions may have on the women around me. Not knowing if they would be supportive has been the most difficult part to overcome.



THIS IS THE AGE
OF THE GAME

Black women, prostitution and militarism

The military-industrial complex tops up soldier's pay with the service of prostitutes—that is, they compensate for the destruction of soldier's lives with work that women, through poverty, are forced to do . . .

The ECP's international network has been reclaiming and making public how prostitute women across the world have turned prostitution into a weapon of struggle and are challenging the military-industrial complex—from recovering the history of Black prostitute women in the United States who financed armed struggle against slavery which brought on the Civil War and abolition, to prostitutes in Southeast Asia who as urban guerrillas undermined the US invasion, to prostitutes in Australia who refused to service men from nuclear ships.

Campaigning for the abolition of all the laws against prostitutes—laws which criminalise women for resisting poverty—and for wages, student grants, benefits, housing and services so that no woman is forced into prostitution by lack of money, the ECP has been able to build a network of women from all levels of the sex industry. After the ECP sent a letter from the Occupation [of Holy Cross Church, 1982] to Greenham saying 'if prostitutes had the military budget we wouldn't go into prostitution', some women arrived at the church from Greenham with their sleeping bags. As I look back on it now, I think the Occupation turned the Church into a peace camp.

Black Women and the Peace Movement by Wilmette Brown.
£2.95. Available from the King's Cross Women's Centre.

ITALY

In March this year, the ECP was invited to the 2nd National Conference of the Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes in Treviso, Italy. We had attended their first conference in 1983. It was the usual story: dominated by political parties, sociologists, social workers and other academic pimps. This year even the Italian fascist party was an invited speaker. We wrote to the organisers:

"As Black and white women from an international network of prostitutes' organisations . . . we cannot participate in a conference which is to be addressed by fascists.

The presence of the MSI—the Italian fascist party—has nothing to do with the civil rights of prostitutes. On the contrary. It is an insult and a threat to the prostitutes' movement . . . and other mass movements for justice. . . If prostitute women are to win our legal and civil rights, we must organise against every form of racism and prejudice.

. . . We know from experience that if the fascists are strong, the police are strong against prostitutes. We are sorry to see that . . . from Germany is speaking at the conference. The Germans and Italians who have had first hand experience of living under nazi and fascist governments should know better than to join with nazis and fascists."

A member of Payday—Italy, an international organisation who works closely with our network, distributed our statement at the conference. He was almost arrested by police attending the conference in uniform, and threatened by a plain clothes officer with being delivered into the hands of the fascists. The conference speakers, including Miss England, took sides with the police. It took him two hours to force the organisers to call off the police and allow him to give out our statement. That's what you call collaboration with the police.

A Lesbian Life

Speech given by an anonymous member of Wages Due Lesbians and the ECP at the forum Talking About Sex organised by Housewives in Dialogue on 23rd November, 1984.

One thing that has really struck me is that there are so many lesbian women on the game. Many a time I've bumped into other working girls at lesbian discos and other gay clubs. We've exchanged a discreet 'Hi, how's things?' The discos and clubs are places where the sexual outlaws come together. A lot of lesbian women know of women working on the game and a lot of hookers have lesbian women as friends.

There are a number of reasons for not coming out as a lesbian on the game. Scabbing goes on, another hooker may use the knowledge that I'm a lesbian to undercut me, especially as I'm pretending to enjoy the job, because most of the work is pretending. . . . I've found that some hookers cannot come out to their girlfriends or other women they date. On one hand there's the illegality of the job and we've got a lot to lose; and on the other hand there's a lot of moralism in some sections of the women's movement. Some say you can't be a real lesbian 'cos you are pandering to the tastes of men. They cannot see that prostitution is a fight to have financial independence to lead a lesbian life.

Another thing I have to hide from some people who know I'm a lesbian is the money. There is a lot of moralism about having money among people who are quite happy to see us as 'victims'. But there is no moralism attached to men who can earn a fortune.

Another place where I often

bump into other prostitute women is while organising. With the ECP there is the protection of not saying who is on the game. Some people have a funny stereotyped view of what a hooker looks like. . . . During the Church Occupation I overheard a *Times* reporter saying to another girl 'There's no prostitutes here, you're all too articulate.'

Many people think if we are on the game we work full time. How narrow minded! Most of the girls I know work part-time maybe one night a week or seasonal stretches, so we can stock up the money and spend more time organising, or with our children, or doing other things we want to do.

Part of the reason that people are so ignorant is because illegality makes it very hard for us to come out and say about our lives and about the fight we're making against the police and the laws, and about our working conditions. The media manipulate and lie. By calling us 'vice girls' they try to make us look like weird creatures, as if we weren't mothers, daughters, sisters, all women.

It's a hard job—it's no bed of roses hiding from the police and being isolated. But it has been a way I have found to be able to live a lesbian life, to have more choice about who I sleep with in my private life. It has given me the time to organise so in the end I, and many other women, won't have to do this job in order to have some money and choices about our lives.



France, 27 March 1985 -- Over 100 prostitute women marched to prevent eviction from the Rue Saint Denis in Paris. Like the ECP, when we occupied Holy Cross Church in 1982, they were wearing masks to protect their anonymity. The police diverted them from the Elysee Palace to the Prime Minister's residence where they met with the Prime Minister's staff.

There is a long tradition of prostitute women organising in France. Ten years ago working women went on strike and occupied churches all over France. See *Prostitutes—Our Life*. £3.95, available from the King's Cross Women's Centre.

FINSBURY PARKER COMPLAINS

I live in the N4 area. My family don't know what I do for a living and I don't really want them to.

One evening about 10pm I left my house to go two streets away to meet a friend. As I crossed the road a car passed me and I noticed that it was my brother-in-law and sister and their 10-year-old son. They had seen me and stopped to chat. While we were chatting a police van came round the corner. They saw me talking and stopped just in front of my brother-in-law's car and jumped out like they were members of the Sweeney.

The only reason the police have to stop me is that I might be loitering or soliciting for business. But it must have been evident to them that I surely would not ask a man for business in front of a woman and child who were obviously with him.

When they jumped out of the van, the male officer called out my name. I stepped about three feet away from the car because I didn't want my family to know what was happening. I said to the police officer quite politely: 'Do you have to stop me in front of my family?' He turned to me and said quite aggressively 'I don't fucking tell you what to fucking do for a living so don't tell me how to do my job.'

At this point my sister and her husband who were amazed asked the police woman why she was stopping them and her sister. The police woman said 'Oh, it's your sister is it?' and 'Is this your husband or is it just that you live together?' Well, their son was sitting listening to the conversation. Whether they are married or not I do not think the police were justified in asking this question as they are not criminals and this is an infringement of their human rights. My brother-in-law got quite annoyed. He got out of the car and asked the male officer what was happening; did they need to stop us for any reason and if not he was going to go. They didn't answer him so he asked me if I would be alright. I replied I would. He got in his car and went.

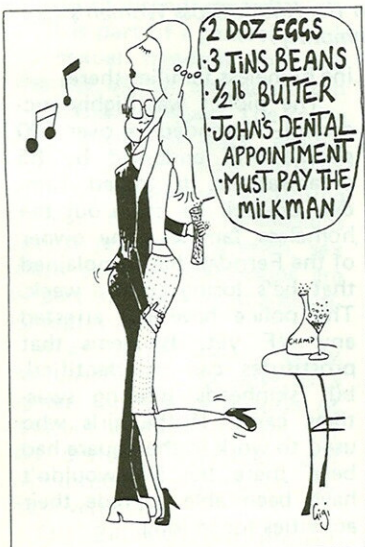
The police officer then told me to 'Fuck off home'. I said I had just left my home and had no intention of going back at this precise moment. He then said, well, if he saw me in the area anywhere in five minutes I would be nicked whatever I was doing or whoever I was with.

I have since put in a complaint to his superior officers but I doubt very much whether anything will be done about it.

Prostitute wins damages

The Swiss Supreme Court ruled yesterday that a prostitute temporarily disabled by a road accident could claim damages for loss of earnings. The woman, unable to work for two years following the accident, said she previously earned \$4,705 a month.

The Guardian 27.6.'85



FOR PROSTITUTES AGAINST the POLICE

In February 1985, Nina Lopez-Jones and Gigi Turner attended the International Whores Convention in Amsterdam, organised by Margo St James of COYOTE in San Francisco, and others.

The Convention was packed with police, media, academics and researchers of every kind. As a condition to their participation prostitute women were asked to come out in front of them. We refused and walked out. Loes Grotenbreg, co-founder of 'The Red Thread' (the Dutch prostitutes' organisation) was so angry that she left with us. We distributed a statement throughout the day and at the press conference. This is an excerpt:

"This Convention gives a charter to careerists and informers . . . Any serious person who organises with illegal workers knows that most prostitutes are mothers, Black and immigrant women, lesbian women, who could have their children taken away, lose their home or husband, be deported, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, raped, blackmailed. Our network is very big because we have always put women's safety first. This Convention doesn't care about women's safety. It's a convention for a tiny minority of women who can afford to be public. Either they are ignorant or insensitive, or they are careerists who make a living off the struggles of many millions of prostitute women who can't afford to come out."

Margo St. James introduced herself saying: 'In the last 10 years because of prohibition in the States, it's been difficult

to bring a focus on positive steps for prostitutes' work . . . I picked Holland as the most likely country . . . where the international organisation could be based without fear of police sabotage.'

But US PROS, in spite of police repression, runs a successful legal service, a campaign and an action network for the rights of women in the sex industry and for other women, in Margo's own city. It is not helpful for an American to come to Europe to support the police here . . . Whatever the differences in legislation . . . we never trust the police and the media, and we don't trust those who trust them.

Forcing women to identify themselves as prostitutes is to help the police to control prostitutes. Being publicly identified like this is exactly why most women hate State-run brothels. These are the terms of women who want to make their careers by showing their faces while forgetting about all our sisters who are forced to remain invisible.'

Prostitute women have been organising in many European countries. Women in France went on strike and occupied churches to protest against police harassment in 1975; in Italy, and recently in France again, prostitutes have demonstrated on the streets. Unfortunately the Convention was a show. It didn't do justice to the years and the objectives of prostitute women organising away from the limelight. Nor will it help the international movement it is taking credit for, starting with women

in the Third World who weren't even mentioned. The anonymous motion circulated at the Convention—demanding that laws on rape and sexual assault be used to protect prostitute women and men, who are often dismissed by police and courts—spoke to the struggle of Netherlands' prostitutes more than any of the Convention speakers.

Once a scab...

One of the victories of the miners' strike has been to show that there are scabs in every movement. The ECP has been fighting against an increasing number of feminist pimps, some from political parties, who want to make their careers by undermining the prostitute women's movement. To do it they need scabs.

A few girls have been ready to sell out years of struggle against police illegality and racism, years of campaigning for the abolition of the prostitu-

tion laws. One girl in particular has joined the international jet set of careerist pimps. She claimed to represent English prostitutes at the conferences in Amsterdam and in Italy where she took sides with the police against the ECP. She's connected with Rights of Women — the careerist lawyers funded by the GLC Women's Committee to undermine the prostitutes' movement.

It's not enough to be a prostitute to speak for prostitute women. Scabs like Miss England can only speak for themselves and for other scabs. The National Coal Board and the government supported the miners who scabbed in order to defeat the strike. In the same way politicians, police and pimps have backed working girls who are ready to make a deal—to get something for themselves at the expense of all of us.

Black people in South Africa are showing us how to deal with scabs. As the miners and their wives put it: 'The scabs will never be forgotten.'

spotlight the nazis



19 February 1985—the ECP picket the Ferndale Hotel in Argyle Square with other local people and organisations in protest against National Front attacks on the King's Cross Women's Centre and other members of the community.

In 1983 the local MP, councillors and some King's Cross residents asked for a special police squad against prostitute women (see *Network* 1,2 & 3). Since the police 'clean up', the NF came up again and it was using the Ferndale as a base for national and international Nazis. Nothing was being done to clear up the area of these Nazi terrorists. The owner of the hotel claimed he 'got on well with the local police and (he) had a meeting with local MP Frank Dobson to discuss prostitution in Argyle Square'. Camden Council was financing the Ferndale by plac-

ing homeless families there.

The picket was highly successful—attended by over 500 people and endorsed by 85 organisations. It forced Camden Council to move out the homeless families. The owner of the Ferndale has complained that he's losing £600 a week. The police have not arrested any NF yet. It seems that prostitutes can be identified, but skinheads wearing swastikas can't. If the girls who used to work in the Square had been there the NF wouldn't have been able to hide their activities for so long.

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* (£1.50 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—Thursday, 11 am—5 pm. Members of the ECP are there most days. You are welcome to come and see us at any time.