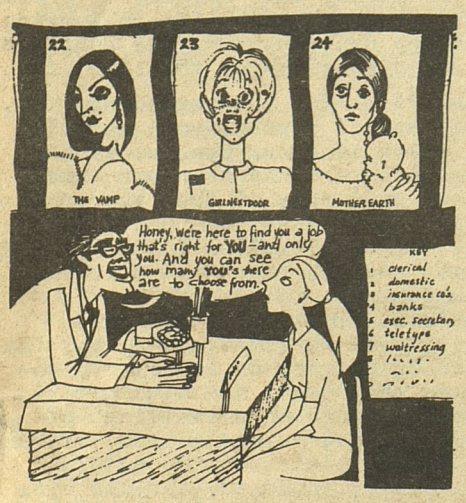
THERE'S A LITTLE PROSTITUTE IN ALL OF US



PROSTITUTION AND THE LAW

GLENN

"If we didn't have regulation of morals, the streets would be full of freaks."

I'll probably see a blue moon before I hear again such choice testimony on the textbook phobias that have created the monster we have for a system of criminal justice. Brought to the Law School last Monday to discuss the issue of decriminalization of prostitution for the enlightenment of would-be lawyers, were a Dallas vice squad police lieutenant, a local Church of Christ minister, a San Francisco prostitute, an academic on sexuality, and a feminist lawyer-- in other words, you missed something.

The basic arguments for decriminalization were that:
1) Prohibition laws are unenforceable and consequently are only selectively enforced.
2) VD, one of the original reasons for prohibition in the last century, can now be cured. Besides, most VD is happening among young teenagers, not prostitutes.
3) The increasing equality of women exposes the inequities of busting the prostitute and not the "patron".
4) Legalization would only bring the government into directing the sex practices that should remain the business of consenting adults.

The basic arguments against were that:
1) Without laws that people can hang onto when they are tempted, our society will lose its grip and fall head over heels into the perpetual perversity of a Sodom and Gomorrah.
2) Since prostitution is often hand-in-glove with urban petty crime rings, decriminalization may encourage these crimes.
3) Decriminalization will not decrease rape. (The lieutenant hushed the unbelieving audience with the metaphor of the hunter who hunts game not for the catch but for the thrill of the chase.

> (LNS) - "I learned it from the society around me, just as a woman. We're taught how to hustle, how to attract, how to hold a man, and give sexual favors in return.....
> It's a marketplace transaction.
> What I did (being a prostitute) was no different from what 99% of American women are taught to do. I took money from under the lamp instead of in Arpege. What would I do with 150 bottles of Arpege a week?
> You become your job. I became what I did. I became a hustler. I became cold, I became hard. I became turned off, I became numb. Even when I wasn't hustling, I was a hustler. I don't think it's terribly different from somebody who works on the assembly line 40 hours a week and comes home cut off, numb, dehumanized... People aren't built to switch on and off like water faucets."
>
> -Roberta Victor, who works as a prostitite, quoted in Studs Terkel's "Working."

An interesting analogy. Since rapists are sick, then game hunters must be, too.

But despite the frank opinions and a few juicy punchlines, a crucial analysis was totally missing from the discussion: the economic oppression and class bias that fosters prostitution, the economic oppression and class bias that "enforces" prohibition, and the economic oppression and class bias that will still be here when prostitution is decriminalized.

In other words, decriminalization is no cure-all. Hopefully it will shorten the gap between the "Good Woman" and the Whore--the Mary/Magdalene complex suffered by many men; it may bring about a less hypocritical, more healthy attitude toward sexuality; prostitutes will be able to organize; when victimized they will be able to demand their rights. All of this is commendable.

But more than that, the decriminalization of prostitution offers us a staggering critique of our society. Once those who sell their bodies for a living are no longer criminals, then the legal line that has separated these women from the women and men who have sold their bodies to their husbands and to their bosses for a living will be erased. And we will all be exposed as the prostitutes we undeniably are in this capitalist system.

alan pogue-o-graph

MY DAY ON THE STREETS WITH A HOOKER

MISSY

Joan Bauer and I walked back from Maharini as she told me about her days in Austin and about her eventful past as a shady lady and later as an organizer for the hooker's organization, COYOTE. I had been a bit embarrased to ask her questions in the store. Joan doesn't think a thing of talking about turning tricks and about the hooker's life, but I just couldn't get used to it. Besides what is there to say? As we went to Carol Oppenheimer's office, Joan told me she would welcome a monogamous relationship again. She's not tired, not worn out, apparently ready as ever to live a little, and to love.

Some people usually asked her--in the several times I heard her speak-- about whether she felt anything at all for her customers. Did she enjoy IT? And the attractive, brief speaking, frank Joan would explain...

Being a hooker isn't something that little girls aim for in elementary school. It didn't even occur to Joan until she had graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in Psychology. There she was, attractive, ambitious, education at the ready and a secretary's drudgery waiting for her, 50 years of it. She tried it for a while, even, biting the bullet, but soon withered on the vine of straightness. A few drinks in a few bars for escapism, a few offers not turned down, then little by little freelance whoring. The money coming in gave freedom, pleasure.

The money was very important. Hooking was a good job. "Look, we are all prostitutes, right?" says Joan."I mean we all do things we don't want to do and do them for a little money. I wanted more money for doing something that was essentially more pleasant than dead jobs and was shorter, too. And I could relate to my customers, I choose them as much as they did me. And both of us were happy."

"The money relationship does formalize, but doesn't kill relationships. People pay their doctors, their psychiatrists. They respect them. And they respected me."

"It is others who mythologize the hooker who has to bear the load of a heavy mythology. She's supposed to be a nymphomaniac, diseased, wrong-sexed, power-mad, I don't know what all. And many of them are none of these--prostitutes have less VD than the general public-- many of today's hookers are mothers, friends, wives, artists, etc. The only thing that makes them criminals is a law making selling physical intimacy a crime."

"It is no crime. A woman has a rich variety of sexual responses. I because of this can enjoy sex with people who pay for it-- I don't fall in love with them, but I do respect them and they me."

Joan has recently become active in COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) the hooker's organization, which was founded by Margo St James on Mother's Day, 1973. COYOTE wants to not only legalize prostitution but to decriminalize it, to remove it from government control

Joan expressly regrets the aura of secrecy around her profession (or ex-profession). She says that many prostitutes need information and help regarding their rights, their service. If making the profession legal would mean ending it, she still is in favor of it. Her real interest is in allowing women to do what they want with their bodies, and removing the stigma from women who do want to earn money with sex.

Despite the problems of criminality, COYOTE is growing if not prospering. It's last Hookers' Ball was called "a surrealist nightmare, a combination of Mardi Gras, Halloween, and a walking rummage sale." The San Francisco Examiner said, in bold print, "If it wasn't there it doesn't exist! The bizarre ball was the social event of the year for homosexuals, bisexuals, trisexuals, transsexuals, nonsexuals, and other minorities who feel they are discriminated against."

The founder of COYOTE, St. James, says America treats hookers like men treat women. Men perpetuate the myth that a woman is guilty in the sex sale but not the man. And men think women are looking for a fucking if they are looking up. "If you don't want to give them that impression, you have to go through life with your eyes down, avoiding contact. Why the hell do women have to avoid looking people in the eye? Men are the solicitors, they should be equally guilty. They entice with their money. I think we should replace the Pussy Patrol (vice squads) with Peter Maids-- women cops who go around busting men who are offering money and trying to pick us up!"

The COYOTE people want to let prostitutes earn their living in the most efficient way possible. They want to improve the standards of the business and possibly democratize the benefits of sex sale.

Chapters of COYOTE spring up like mushrooms. Some liberalizing is seen in California, where one judge ruled recently that police cannot trap women into enticement. Another ruling also current is that prostitutes picked up can no longer be held in prison pending the results of a mandatory VD test. The test was used for punishment.

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PROSTITUTION

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COYOTE has been functioning as a service group carrying on nation-wide correspondence, sending out speakers, and lobbying for better legal treatment and less harassment. The organization is furthering a sophistication rare in a country still prone to anti-ERA movements and missionary-position-only fuck laws. In Texas, as the Observer noted, a recent bill is in the works defining the various permissible sex acts and banning some (but not all) animal fucking positions (you can still have genital-oral fun with a duck.).

Among the Board of Directors of Coyote are Kate Millet, Paul Krassner, Bev Axelrod, Ken Kesey, and Tom Smothers.

'74 THE YEAR OF THE WHORE

COYOTE claims victories have been coming fast in legal defense, self-help programs, and community awareness-raising. Goals for this year include ending the isolation and discrimination endemic to hooking in many practical ways. Those interested in further organizational information may reach COYOTE at Box 26354, San Francisco California, 94126.

Joan's common sense shone through the general bullshit of the panel she spoke on to the Law School. The panel included such luminaries as a right-wing police officer, a Church of Christ minister, etc. She concluded her remarks with the final emphasis on the desireability of the service hookers offer:

There's a lot of victims around the US, said Joan, hemmed in, unable to make money, forced not only to be prostitutes, but for pennies relatively. For little reward and no self-respect. The professional love-maker is better off, she works for herself and usually in a cooperative setting. During the day she has time to do what she wants to.

When a hooker and her customer agree to do business, they are making a simple contract to remove complications which arise in an extended relationship. Their contract needn't jeopardize their humanity or anything. It can remove game-playing, power-tripping, and bullshit. It can be human...it can be fun. Says Joan: "It's worth it for all concerned."