

EQUAL PERSECUTION

by Mark Goodall

The recent ACLU victory in the East Bay, resulting in the decision to arrest male clients as well as prostitutes has immediate bad effects for the working girl.

The Oakland decision, considered a triumph for women's rights, is making life tough for working prostitutes. According to Joan Baur, coordinator of COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, the prostitute's union) the decision is bad for business.

"The immediate effects are unhappy," said Ms. Baur, "We don't like the fact that eight guys will lose their families and their jobs. We don't want anyone to get arrested."

"Customer's are scared to death," explained Ms. Baur, "It is hard to make money. Women are desperate, so they become careless and make bad decisions." She described a recent incident in which a prostitute failed to carefully check out a client who turned out to be a "freak." She had to jump out of his car while it was going 40 miles per hour.

COYOTE feels that the ACLU may not fully understand the problem; therefore, they may not have exactly the same goals. "I'm not sure even women lawyers understand all of the actualities, not having been in the business," said Ms. Baur.

"It is a 'wholistic' problem," she said. "The rights violated that the ACLU named are all of a piece. This legal trip is disruptive to people's lives. It is just weird to take it apart. You would have to change the whole system to do it in

a human way."

According to COYOTE, there are six grounds upon which prostitution laws are unconstitutional. Those grounds are: equal protection, privacy, cruel and unusual punishment, due process, freedom of speech and freedom of association. By singling out "equal protection" for their attack, the ACLU has caused a very difficult situation.

My ass



is mine!

"We are not getting equal protection, we are getting equal enforcement--equal persecution," explained Ms. Baur.

Ms. Baur feels that the system as it exists divides women into "madonna" and "whore" categories. She hopes that as the gap closes between viewing a woman as either having a "good" role or a "bad" role, there will be more legitimate opportunities. She sees decriminalization of "bad" women as a large step in this direction.

"Maybe there would be less need for prostitution as it is, but more need as a legitimate therapy offered by women," said Ms. Baur.

COYOTE, founded by Margo St. James on Mother's Day, 1973, is a

national union with membership close to 10,000. COYOTE tries to help prostitutes in trouble and provides a forum for the exchange of "survival" information. This includes descriptions of vice cops and instructions for getting an O.R. (getting out of jail on your own recognizance.)

COYOTE wishes to legitimize the profession and favors decriminalization, not legalization. It is feared that legalization would involve government control and licensing. According to Ms. Baur, the idea of a governmental official in charge of quality is unacceptable. Members want to be free to do as they wish with their own bodies.

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