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BAY AREA WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER - FRONT PAGE

As Scapegoats

Supervisors 'Use' Prostitutes

by Chris Delsol

San Francisco Supervisors' aides refused to meet with women who are protesting the city's crackdown on prostitution that began early this year. Aides to Supervisors Quentin Kopp and John Barbagelata had made and confirmed the appointment in advance.

Representatives of the San Francisco and Los Angeles Wages for Housework groups, and Coyote, the prostitutes' rights group, are charging the Board of Supervisors with scapegoating prostitutes to further their political careers. San Francisco's skyrocketing crime rate has alarmed the city's voters, and increasing the number of prostitution arrests improves the statistics without dealing with violent crime.

Beth Depew of S.F. Wages for Housework said that Kopp's aide, with whom she had arranged the meeting, appeared 15 minutes late and said she hadn't known the group wanted to discuss prostitution or that the press would be there. The agitated aide then disappeared and did not return. Depew says she did inform the aide of both the topic and notification of the press. Barbagelata's aide did not show up at all.

During a press conference outside City Hall before the scheduled meeting, Beth Ingber of L.S. Wages for Housework stated their three major de-

mands: An end to the harassment of prostitutes, abolition of all laws against prostitution, and amnesty for all prostitutes, including removal of all criminal records relating to prostitution. Over 50 other women's groups have endorsed these demands.

"Prostitution is paid housework," Ingber said when asked how her group joined with the prostitutes' protest. Their press release emphasizes that an attack on prostitutes is an attack on all women because it is an attempt to prevent women from organizing and getting paid for the work we ordinarily do for free.

When Police Chief Charles Gain took office in January 1976, he announced that he would deemphasize prostitution and other victimless crime in order to concentrate on violent crime. Disgruntled vice officers have complained that San Francisco's street prostitution increased by 1000 percent since then. The Supervisors also criticized Gain's policy.

On Jan. 3 of this year, Gain appointed Captain Gerald J. Shaughnessy to head the vice unit. Shaughnessy, who had led the vice squad for six years until Gain transferred him last year, is known as a tough, hard-bitten cop, and he promised to prosecute as many prostitutes as possible.

Arrests on soliciting charges have doubled since Shaugh-

nessy's reappointment, and the city's jails for women have filled to capacity. Many prostitutes say brutality during arrests has also increased.

Last year, women were prosecuted for prostitution only after the fourth arrest. Prostitutes are now receiving six-month jail sentences for the first offense and one year, the maximum for a misdemeanor, for the second conviction.

Yet Gain denies reversing his policy, and he denies receiving any political pressure from the Supervisors.

Representatives of Wages for Housework and Coyote say they will seek another meeting with the Supervisors, and may consider a public hearing. The Wages for Housework Group welcomes input. They can be reached at P.O. Box 5207, S.F. 94101, 821-1167.

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