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WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

P.O. Box 26325
LOS ANGELES, CA. 90026
(213) 680-1767

URGENT!

January 15, 1977

Dear Sisters,

The enclosed statement & cover letter should be self-explanatory. We are circulating them to women's and community groups in the L.A. and San Francisco areas. We hope you will be able to get some endorsements and are enclosing 10 copies for your immediate use. Please reproduce them if you need more. A new version will come out in a week (see below).

We are not seeking endorsements from Left organizations or government bureaucrats. But should some Congresswoman see the statement and want to endorse it, we will accept anyone's endorsement. Don't worry. Look at the statement. What Congresswoman will endorse a statement saying all work is prostitution?

Anyway, try to move fast. But then keep collecting endorsements because, as noted in the cover letter, we will be reissuing the statement later. Call us by Friday, Jan. 21, if you can, to let us know if you have any endorsements or if you think we should hold up the printing 'til Monday, that is, if you think we will have more endorsements by then.

Let us know how many copies of the statement you will want when we print the new version--with the endorsing organizations listed. Once we have that version, it, of course, should be circulated.

We will also be preparing a new cover letter at that time. Let us know if you can use it--stamping it with your address--and if so, how many. We will send you copies of our press release as well.

Soon we will forward you copies of press clippings about the situation in San Francisco so you will have more information (some are enclosed). Send us and San Francisco clippings about crack-downs on prostitutes in your area.

If you have any questions or if we can help, please call. We feel this is an important struggle and our support could be very useful. Feel free to quote from the statement. Perhaps you can use it in relation to struggles of prostitutes in your areas as well.

Love and power,
Beth



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January 15, 1977

Dear Sisters and Friends,

The San Francisco Police and District Attorney have recently begun a campaign of harrassment against street prostitutes (see articles enclosed). Using the cover of "morality" and insinuating a connection between "violent crime" and prostitution, they are in fact depriving thousands of women of their only access to money, threatening them with imprisonment and heavy fines. At the same time, the government is leaving untouched the big hotels and other establishments which make a fortune by pimping off prostitutes.

The enclosed statement explains how the attack on prostitutes is an attack on all women. It calls for an end to the harrassment of prostitutes and the abolition of all laws against prostitution.

We are asking your organization to support the San Francisco prostitutes against the police attack by endorsing this statement. Prepared by Wages for Housework-San Francisco and the Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee, this statement has already been endorsed by COYOTE, the San Francisco-based organization of prostitutes.

We are circulating the statement in the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas, as well as in other parts of North America and Europe. Similar attacks are being made on prostitutes in other parts of the country and internationally, and focusing attention on the San Francisco situation should lend power to women everywhere who are facing the same kind of harrassment.

Because of the urgency of the situation, we are asking for quick action on your part. We are aiming to publicly release the statement and the list of endorsing organizations to the Los Angeles and San Francisco press early in the week of January 24. If you would like your endorsement listed when the statement is first released, try to notify us by Friday, January 21. If you cannot reply by Friday, endorsements received by Monday, January 24 may still be in time for the first release.

We are planning to continue collecting endorsements after this week, however, and will reissue the statement at a later date, listing all endorsing organizations. Therefore, even if you

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cannot get your endorsement to us by January 24, do not hesitate to submit it to us. Your endorsement can still be an important source of support to the San Francisco women.

We would also appreciate your sending us the names and addresses of groups you feel should be contacted. We are preparing a Spanish translation of the statement and cover letter which we would be happy to send to Spanish-speaking groups. That translation will be ready shortly.

If you would like more information or copies of the statement to distribute to other groups for their endorsement or information, or to post in various places, do contact us. In the Los Angeles area, call (213) 680-1767 (leave message if I am not at home). Or write to the Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee, P. O. Box 26325, Los Angeles, CA. 90026.

Please try to contact us by phone by Friday, January 21 or by Monday, January 24. Because of the intensity of the repression against the San Francisco prostitutes, we must try to act quickly.

Sincerely yours,

Beth Ingber

Beth Ingber for
the Los Angeles Wages
for Housework Committee

AN ATTACK AGAINST PROSTITUTES IS AN ATTACK ON ALL WOMEN

The recent attack on prostitutes in San Francisco is one more attempt by the government to deny women access to money of our own. The city supervisors are raising the flag of morality to justify their "cleaning up the streets." In fact, by harrasing street prostitutes, they are protecting the profits of the Union Square hotels which run their own pimping services. The supervisors' morality is not offended when big business pimps or when the government takes its share through fines on prostitutes. It is only offended when we refuse to give them a cut.

In many parts of the world, governments are harrasing prostitutes because prostitution exposes our sexuality as work which should be paid. As recently stated by the English Collective of Prostitutes:

"Sex is supposed to be personal, always a free choice, different from work. But it's not a free choice when we are dependent on men for money. We women are expected to be sexual service stations and because of that, sex becomes a bargaining point between ourselves and men. When any of us sleep with a man, at least to some degree we are forced to consider what we are going to get in return for 'giving' -- money, the rent, or better treatment in other ways. Whether we enjoy it or not, we are making a calculation. Those of us who are prostitutes not only calculate, but put a price on our services and make men meet it. The line between unpaid sex and paid sex is a question of what we get in return."

Business makes money off our sexuality. Destroyed by the work they are compelled to do, men come to us for the sexual and emotional gratification they need to continue working, making profits for business. When we work outside the home on top of housework, our bosses use our sexuality to please customers and make sales. The advertising industry is based on linking products with hints that our sexual "favors" go with them. Our lives are consumed so that business can profit.

More and more, women are refusing to be exploited -- to work at home for free, and to work outside the home for low pay. Wherever we are demanding our wages -- from the Welfare Dept., in the street, at the job outside the home -- we are fighting for money for all our work.

Prostitution is one way of getting our wages. Although the government tries to isolate our struggles, we refuse to be divided. All work is prostitution, and we are all prostitutes. We are forced to sell our bodies -- for room and board or for cash, in marriage, on the street, in typing pools or in factories. And as we win wages for all the work we do, we develop the power to refuse prostitution -- in any of its forms.

WE DEMAND AN END TO THE HARRASSMENT OF PROSTITUTES

WE DEMAND THE ABOLITION OF ALL LAWS AGAINST PROSTITUTION

Prepared by Wages for Housework-San Francisco and the Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee.

For additional copies contact: Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee, P.O. Box 26325, Los Angeles, CA. 90026 213 680-1767

San Francisco Chronicle

The Largest Daily Circulation in Northern California

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1976

Policy Change

Crackdown on S.F. Prostitution

By Jerry Carroll

The police department and the district attorney's office in San Francisco have decided to end an 11-month-old policy of easy-going tolerance toward street prostitution and are readying a crackdown. The Chronicle has learned.

Within the last couple of weeks, according to sources within the vice

crimes division, word has been passed from the district attorney's office that it plans to resume the vigorous prosecution of hookers as well as the flamboyant hordes of new male prostitutes.

"I think you'll see a great change," said Lieutenant Sol Weiner. Adds Sergeant Michael Dower: "We've been told there is going to be a new attitude of cooperation, of working together." A lawyer familiar with the DA's office comments: "Word has been put out that everybody in the office is going to be prosecuting prostitution cases."

Since District Attorney Joseph Freitas Jr. and Police Chief Charles Gain took office last January, the city has sharply de-emphasized the attention paid to prostitution in the interest of pressing a concerted attack against violent crime.

"It's a political move, but better late than never," said Joseph Russoniolo, who specialized in prostitution cases for the DA's office before leaving at the first of the year to practice civil law.

Although vice squad brass talk soothingly about forgiving and forgetting, the attitude toward Freitas of most of the rank and file is a mixture of contempt and anger.

"After he came into office," said Sergeant Dower, "he came in one night and asked us to drive him around to look at the situation. He got here at 8 o'clock and said 'You've got to get me back by 8:30.' At that hour there was nothing to see, so he assumes there is no problem."

That campaign has been a failure — FBI statistics show San Francisco experienced a 22 per cent rise in violent crime while comparable cities nationwide saw a one per cent decline — and in the meantime there has been a 1000 per cent jump in the number of street prostitutes.

"Where there were two or three prostitutes working in one area, now you'll find 22 or 23," said policeman Richard Adams, a six-year veteran of the vice squad.

Explanations differ for the reason behind the about-face. Freitas maintains prosecutions by his underequipped office were slowed by a legal action involving 360 accused hookers who claimed prostitution laws were being unfairly administered because customers weren't being arrested as well. That was dismissed in Superior Court last week.

Streetwalkers now frequently outnumber pedestrians outside the major hotels. "At some points during the night it's absolutely ludicrous," says vice squad officer Gary Psicotto. "The only people on the street are them and us."

The latest attraction for males in the market for commercial sex is the band of slim, young homosexuals who collect in a noisy, jeering group most evenings on the corner of Geary and Powell. Not far away at Jones and O'Farrell, transvestites accommodate drive-up customers until 3 and 4 in the morning.

The number of hookers prowling the streets is estimated to range from 200 to 300 on any given day and night. These numbers come as news to Freitas.

"The information I received from the police department doesn't square with that. We had a temporary influx earlier this year, but the police department tells me they've brought that under control. Someone is not giving the straight scoop," he says.

Gain takes the line that his department has been doing a good job in controlling the problem, and cites as evidence the 34 per cent increase in prostitution arrests over last year. "He tells us to go out and make the arrests so we have the stats," one vice officer confided.

But given the thousand per cent increase in the number of visible prostitutes, that 34 per cent rise becomes insignificant, in the view of the vice squad. With any kind of cooperation from Freitas, the number of arrests would have kept pace with the vast influx of streetwalkers, they maintain.

Vice squad officers say they haven't felt any need to buckle down to business because in this past year the DA's office has not pressed prostitution charges until a person has been arrested four times for the offense. Freitas flatly denies this has been the policy.

Up to the time of the fourth arrest — and nobody can think of any streetwalker dumb enough to get caught four times — they have been allowed to plead guilty to such lesser offenses as disturbing the peace, pulling little or no time behind bars, officers say.

By contrast, according to Russoniolo, the previous policy saw the DA's office seeking 45-day jail sentences upon the second conviction, 90 days for the third, and six months behind bars for the fourth. "We didn't see them again after the second," he said.

Further hampering attempts to control the problem has been an order by Gain whose effect has been to deny the use of laws forbidding obstruction of sidewalk walks, which in the past have served as invaluable weapons in controlling prostitution.

"We can only make arrests now when they're standing four abreast," said the vice squad's Adams.

Although there are many who continue to declare that prostitution is a "victimless" crime, statistics gathered by police this year indicate that is not the case.

Since April, there have been 605 crimes related to prostitution reported, including 85 robberies, 50 assaults and 192 grand thefts. Assistant inspector Lloyd Cunningham says those figures don't begin to describe the dimensions of the problem.

"Only about one out of 20 men will report a crime because of their embarrassment," he says. So many Japanese tourists have fallen prey to prostitution-related crime, sources say the Japanese government has made a quiet protest.

Freitas says it is false to link the city's shocking rise in crime to its laissez faire attitude toward prostitution. "No one has ever made that connection with any supporting data," he said.

Nelder, however, maintains "there is a very definite relationship. By and large, there's an attraction of undesirable elements when permissiveness envelops a city. Hoods gravitate to where the action is not too tough. When they see all this prostitution, they see the city as kind of a playground."

The DA's office is not taking this criticism from the vice crimes division lying down. Officials there say many cases they are handed reflect such sloppy police work they would be embarrassed to take them to court.

Freitas himself remarks, "A lot of these fellows have been in this for years and they've got to be known by the street trade. Some dress like North Beach romeros in leather coats and turtle-neck sweaters when to do an effective job, they ought to dress like conventioners."

But Russoniolo calls the men on the squad "top drawer," saying, "They're making the same arrests with the same evidence as a year ago, but now the DA's throwing them out."

Because the number of potential customers has not kept pace with the proliferation of prostitutes, a hooker can't expect to handle the same amount of business as before. But because pimps still demand the same cash flow levels, this factor alone accounts for a good part of the rising curve of robberies, assaults and thefts, in the view of vice officers.