Press Release: 26th January 2017

THIS HOUSE WOULD LIBERALISE PROSTITUTION

Proposition 1: Luke Gittos

Luke Gittos, law editor at Spiked opened his speech by stating that current legal frame wear is not fit for its purpose and that the liberalisation of prostitution rather than the criminalisation is the best solution. He continued to argue that the fact that there are websites on which clients can rate sex workers highlights how prostitution currently degrades those involved and commercialises intimacy, packaging it up as something bought and sold as commodity. This encourages men to indulge in misogynistic behaviour and have hateful attitudes to women. He discussed how a former client was pole dancer and prostitute who set up a commercial agency which provided drivers, security and a screening agency, making sex work much safer. However, it had to operate off the books with no tax declaration. Solicitation is dealt with by prostitute’s caution often issued with no evidence, giving sex workers a criminal record with no criminal offence. This is self-perpetuating and the worst way out of sex as with such records it is difficult to find work elsewhere. Finally, he stated that the current laws treat prostitutes as a separate class of human being which is an affront to justice and so the law must be liberalised as criminalisation only makes sex work more dangerous. He ended by asking whether it is worth criminalising adult women who choose to engage in sex work and asked the opposition why it should be the job of the law to protect women from the decisions they make themselves.

Opposition 1: Alan Caton OBE

Alon Caton, head of public protection in Ipswich said liberalising prostitution would mean sex workers fall into the hands of gangs and this would draw in more children and women who would be tempted by the dark world of prostitution. As the District Commander of Ipswich he mentioned five women prostitutes who were murdered in the region. They lived chaotic lifestyles and were addicted to drugs. He stated that women do not make choice but that they have no option since they are fuelled by drugs and encouraged by partners. The statistics show that 95% of sex workers use heroine. Thirdly he discussed the impact of street prostitution on local communities, women come home in evening being asked for sex, men are accosted by women asking for business and children play in gardens scattered with used condoms. The harm caused to individuals and communities makes the criminalisation of prostitution a priority.

Proposition 2: Douglas Fox

Douglas Fox, sex worker and activist for IUSW and Harlots Collective said sex is male, female and trans. We don’t know the demographics in this country which is the main problem but 40%
of sex workers are men. He stated that many people go into sex work as a method of survival if they have health issues, are ostracised from families or want to escape abusive environments. Normally we blame sex work for these problems but in reality it is a matter for survival. He said that sex workers don’t want the attention of the police and the media and that they want to get on with life and work like everyone else. The reality of the day of a sex worker is 30 calls a day and not 70 clients a night as the media wrongly portrays. He argued that it is consensual sex between two consenting adults and a normal service offered for a fee. He concluded by saying that sex is complicated and sex work caters for all the complications and is the answer to many fantasies. Sex workers only want to be recognised as ordinary people with ordinary rights.

**Opposition 2: The Rt Revd Roger Morris**

The Rt Revd Roger Morris opened by asking where we want to set norm? Decriminalisation makes something normal and legitimate and is the liberalisation of prostitution where we want normal to be? Firstly, the Church teaches us that sexual intercourse belongs best in a committed relationship since great sex involves emotional intimacy. Secondly, many sex workers need to disassociate emotions from what happens physically and drugs are needed to aid having sex with multiple people a day. Thirdly the stories of trafficked woman are horrendous such as on arrival at the airport, they are given a bag with condoms and can’t return home due to shame. Whether we criminalise prostitution or not we cannot stop the stigmatisation of it. Finally, there will still be illegal work as young workers won’t be able to register so will work in the dark as is the case in Germany and Amsterdam.

**Proposition 3: Alex Feis-Bryce**

Alex Feis-Bryce, Director of Service of the National Ugly Mug Scheme opened by stating that the vast majority of sex work is indoors and not on the streets. The vast majority of sex workers do not have drug or alcohol dependencies and only a small proportion are trafficked, claiming that a higher proportion of people are trafficked into nail bars. Secondly as CEO of an organisation supporting sex workers, he argues that we must focus on safety and welfare. He asked whether it is possible to eradicate prostitution or whether attempting to eradicate it causes more harm to sex workers as sex workers don’t report to the police harmful people continue to be out there. Thirdly, he argued that sex workers in Sweden can negotiate over the use of condoms and that they have more rights and power over the client. In New Zealand there have even been cases where the police have taken clients to an ATM to draw out money so sex workers work in a safer environment. He ended by saying sex workers advocate decriminalisation of clients as it makes it safer for them.

**Opposition 3: Seb Motala**

Seb Motala a first year student at St. Edmunds College opened by saying it is difficult to get data around sex trafficking. Firstly, he argued that sex work is an economic necessity or sex workers
are forced into it with no choice. The liberalisation of prostitution would affect women’s attitudes towards reaching high career goals as they already find it hard to reach the top of most aspects of society. This would prevent the celebration of equality and what women can achieve today. Liberalising and normalising prostitution says women are economically disadvantaged and forced into it in a way that men aren’t. Prostitution will be a normal career path and something to aspire to be. Secondly, he asked whether liberalisation would actually make it more safe? Thirdly he argued that prostitution makes women’s bodies a commodity, and promoting this attitude makes their work less safe. Fourthly, sex trafficking will become more prevalent as figures in Germany show that sex trafficking has increased due to liberalisation. Finally, sexual violence is dealt with more harshly than any other type of violence and sex is different to any other forms of labour. There is no psychological harm after any normal jobs but harm is afflicted on many sex workers after their jobs.

Proposition 4: Lady Charlotte Rose

Lady Charlotte Rose multi award winning 1st Lady of Sex said she has experienced traumatisation from police rather than her clients as she was evicted from homes due to society deeming her unacceptable. She joined an escort agency as she had no human interaction as a single, working mother. She revealed how she left her first sex job feeling empowered as she was touched in a safe and consensual environment as well as being paid for it. She stated that rather than trying to eradicate it we need to understand what we can do to make prostitution safe. All sex workers want is safety which is a basic human right. She argued that it is impossible for sex workers to exit the industry if it is on their record. Finally, she stated that older or disabled clients use prostitutes because they cannot have intimacy otherwise and without prostitution they would not engage in such pleasures.

Opposition 4: Tara Burns

Tara Burns, former sex worker turned writer opened by saying that liberalisers don’t portray the real life of sex workers. Firstly, the laws created do more harm than good as in Alaska many young prostitutes are sent to jail as a saviour and then being labelled as a sex trafficker makes it difficult to find a job. Tara stated that 80% of sex workers in Alaska are turned away whilst trying to report a crime or are even arrested. She concluded in stating ‘I’ve had sex for money thousands of times but I still have my body.’

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