



Speech by

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PROSTITUTION BILL

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—ONP) (5.40 p.m.): The Prostitution Bill before us should in no way be supported. This Bill will only create further social and family breakdown and will not reduce the illegal element of the sex industry. Surely it is obvious that the legalisation of this industry not only sends a message of condoning this behaviour to the community and to our children but also encourages the breakdown of the family unit and the further moral decay of society. In a letter to all members of Parliament and to the Premier, the Family Council of Queensland Inc. said—

"Besides the fact that prostitution is contrary to the teachings of the Scripture, there are strong social reasons for retaining the existing sanctions against this evil and degrading practice. Amongst these are that prostitution brings an increase in sexual activity outside marriage and consequently an increase in family breakdown; it produces an inevitable escalation in the transmission of sexual diseases; and it debases all those involved in it. Various forms of criminality also grow and flourish around it. Another consideration is that legalising brothels would give prostitution a cloak of legitimacy that would entrap more young women and men by causing them to view it as an attractive employment option."

The issues raised in this quote are real and obvious. None of these probable results from legalising prostitution equate with the great benefits of the Bill that the Minister referred to in his speech. No, the Labor Party seem to believe that this Bill will—

"... ensure quality of life for local communities, safeguard against corruption and organised crime, address social factors which contribute to involvement in the sex industry, ensure a healthy society and promote safety."

In no way does this Bill achieve any of those objectives. If it achieves part of one objective, the negative effects that go along with that far outweigh the so-called positives.

My colleagues have already addressed the failure of this Bill to address the Minister's stated principles, so I will not continue down this path, except to say that one only has to read the Minister's stated principles to know that they are unachievable with this legislation. The moral issues of this Bill and the impact upon the foundation of society make it an important piece of legislation with broad ranging effects. The moral issue of this Bill then needs to be examined.

I will use many quotes throughout this speech, and I do so because I have had many people and organisations write to me to express their concern about this Bill. I prefer to use some of their words so it can be shown that I do not speak for just myself but for many, and they should be heard. The Family Council of Queensland said—

"As prostitution quite clearly is harmful to society and is an evil which should be contained, controlled and if possible reduced, the last thing your government should consider is broadening the existing legislation—for if you legalise something, quite clearly you will get more of it, not less! This is because the law is an educator and many people mistakenly believe that whatever is legal is also moral."

I repeat the last part of that comment: the law is an educator and many people mistakenly believe that whatever is legal is also moral. The message this legislation sends to the community is a message that prostitution is okay, that it is a legitimate profession and business. Is that the type of message we want

to send to our children? Do we want our children or the next generation to view prostitution as a viable career option? I certainly do not. I feel sorry for future generations who will emerge into a world with no moral leadership and a belief that anything goes if it is within the law.

This is why our children are so lost today. What is the role in society? What is right and wrong? Do people really matter, or is money more important? Teenagers are lost, so lost that hundreds of them kill themselves every year. Something needs to be done to end this destructive cycle. Legalising prostitution is certainly not going to contribute positively to that need. It will only lead more of these children to a life of destruction, a life that will only further their confusion and hopelessness. After reviewing 50 studies on the subject of teenagers who are taught to use condoms and teenagers who are taught abstinence, a study published in the American Academy of Paediatrics found as follows—

"There has been a 12% drop in US teen pregnancies between 1991-1996, mostly in areas where abstinence, not condoms, is taught in school sex education programs."

The "if you can't beat them, join them" attitude did not work in this instance and it will not work with prostitution, either.

The argument that "it won't go away, it will always be around, so why not regulate it" does not wash. If we use that argument we could also say that we should legalise paedophilia because it will always be around. Why not regulate it? Yet we do not. We come down hard on paedophiles for the protection of the children involved and for the protection of society. By the same justification, we should come down hard on prostitution for the protection of the prostitute and for the protection of society.

In an interview published in Life Ministries Current Issues Paper of November 1997, Linda, a former prostitute and madam for 20 years, explains how someone could have protected her. She said—

"I would wish that someone would break my legs, and my arms, and I wish I had someone that rescued me."

Many of these prostitutes are vulnerable people who are abused by others. This legislation legalises that abuse. Do we legalise the abuse of anyone else in society? No. We even have legislation to prevent the abuse of animals, yet the Government wants to legalise the abuse of people. I simply cannot condone it, nor can I understand why anyone would.

Another issue in this debate is the drug issue. Honourable members cannot tell me that the drug industry does not thrive from the sex industry. Many of these girls—and I deliberately say "girls" because they are the majority—can only make it through the day if they are on some form of drug. I have no doubt that many pimps get prostitutes addicted to drugs so that they will work to feed their drug habit. It acts as a form of security to the pimp, although under this legislation the pimp would be referred to as a licensee or legitimate business owner.

The facts are that drugs are very much a part of the sex industry. I refer to Linda again, a former prostitute and madam. She said—

"They will drink, (take) drugs, (associate with) stupid company, (suffer) horrific pain, but the drugs cause them to no longer hurt. But then they get the depression in, and they no longer know who they are."

Linda also tells how the drugs are traded for sex. She says—

"They say, 'Here is a hundred and I could give you a bit of this to help you through your night's work—a bit of speed.' So basically it starts with speed, and then it goes to cocaine and heroin."

The interviewer then asked Linda if most of the girls end up on cocaine and heroin. Linda replied, "Oh, yeah." On Linda's figures calculated from her experience in the industry, around 87% of prostitutes would become involved with drugs, not to mention the mental and emotional scars that sex workers may never get over, and yet it is so easy to be seduced by all the wonderful trimmings. Is this what we want to legalise? Is that what we want our children to see as a legitimate and glamorous career? What about the sexual exploitation of migrants? There is no doubt that this actually occurs. In the same way that girls are bribed to work for drugs or promised protection, migrants are bribed to be brought to Australia. In March this year the Melbourne Age stated—

"Police also confirmed concerns about continuing criminal involvement and illegal activities in several legal brothels including 'sex slavery'—illegal immigrants contracted to work in Australia by international crime organisations. The Age is aware of three inner-city brothels where 'contract girls' repaying a \$40,000 debt are working. These women are forced to work seven days a week and some do not use condoms."

Prostitution is blatant exploitation and abuse and it will do nothing but contribute to the increasing decay of the family and of society and further decay the lives of sex industry workers. By

further legislating this, the Government condones it. By condoning it, the Government encourages it. How can Government possibly justify condoning and encouraging such a dangerous, disgusting industry when there is so much at risk and at stake? New South Wales Liberal MLC the Honourable Marlene Goldsmith stated in an article published in Light in February 1996—

"At a United Nations conference (Beijing, 1995) Asian women maintained that the most difficult factor in reducing the exploitation of women and children in Asia was the cultural acceptance of prostitution. Questions need to be asked about what will happen to the status of women in society."

Surely this degradation of women is not on the feminist agenda. It is certainly not on One Nation's agenda. I began this speech with a quote from the Family Council of Queensland about the horrific ramifications of condoning prostitution in our society. I will close with a quote from Bruce Jones of the Kingaroy Christian Outreach Centre which I think sums this up quite well. He states—

"Therefore, for the sake of the many who will become prostitutes through this law, for the many more families who will suffer when they discover their children or siblings caught up in prostitution, for the wives and families that will suffer because of the increased number of husbands who will use the services of prostitutes as brothels become legal, we would beg you to vote against this bill which on the surface may seem beneficial but which we believe will be disastrous to far more lives than are being damaged and destroyed now. It is the social impact of this legislation about which we are so concerned."

He continues—

"The time has come to make a stand and so we are trusting that you will vote against the bill even if you have to vote against your party policy. We are sure you will find much support in your electorate if you do so."

I urge all members of this House to represent their electorates or place their conscience above their party. I place on the record One Nation's complete rejection of the legalisation of prostitution, this Bill and the further degradation of our society.