



Speech by

Mr M. VEIVERS

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard 2 December 1999

PROSTITUTION BILL

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (12.17 p.m.): As the member for Southport, I speak for many people in my electorate who have deep-seated moral and social concerns about the legalisation of the so-called sex industry. One of their great fears is that young, impressionable members of their families—and young people in general—will be recruited by entrepreneurs promising a huge remuneration for their services in that very unsavoury business. However well vetted those entrepreneurs may be, under this proposed legislation their prime objective is still going to be to make money by employing the appropriate staff according to the needs of their industry.

I have here advertisements from a newspaper in Melbourne. We all know that prostitution has been legal in Victoria for a number of years now. This advertisement quotes as much as \$1,000 an hour for the services of a woman. Prices from the so-called exclusive establishments start at \$200 an hour, and the most exclusive offer services at \$1,000 an hour and \$10,000 a night. How does a father or a mother—or a husband, for that matter—cope with a situation in which a young woman comes home and says, "Hey, I've been offered a job where I can get \$1,000 an hour"? What is that likely to do to the fabric of our society in general?

The thrust of this legislation, ostensibly, I do believe—and I have to say that the Minister is probably trying to do the best he can—is to get the criminal element out of prostitution and to protect the so-called sex workers' health and safety. That is all very well, but where are the so-called sex workers going to come from? Are there going to be vocational guidance seminars conducted in high schools at Year 12 level? Are we going to have madams going around schools checking out the girls to see if they can find good workers? What are the criteria going to be? What sort of prerequisites will there be? How does a girl rise from being a \$200 an hour sex provider to earning \$1,000 an hour? How is she going to be assessed on her performance, and by whom? Will so-called sex workers be able to file suits for discrimination on the grounds that they are being denied proper remuneration because they are fat, skinny, cross-eyed, freckled, albino or whatever? No-one has answered these questions, and members should not kid themselves: it will be on. Will we introduce courses in our tertiary education institutions for sex workers?

The legislation does not address any of those issues at all because, frankly, it is all too unsavoury, really, to think about. These are the things that should be covered if we are bringing legislation into the House, no matter what the legislation. What happens to all of these women when they reach their use-by date? The dreadful philosophical and moral problem of this legislation is that it suggests that prostitutes are born, not made, and that in the female context, all women are whores and it just depends on the price. I do not agree with that. That is what disturbs the people whom I represent and that is what disturbs me, as I just said. This legislation is a formal, legalised denigration of all women. I have to tell members that I deplore and despise such a proposition, as would most, if not all members in this House. I deeply love, honour and treasure my wife Betty, and I also deeply love and admire my daughter, Shan. I consider those two human beings to be the epitome of sacred womanhood. This is personal. Call me an old-fashioned Catholic boy—

A Government member: We'd never do that.

Mr VEIVERS: Members can do that. They can call me a bible-basher if they want, but I am not really that. I think that the member for Bulimba would know that. However, I would have a great problem with a situation in which any young lady came to me asking advice about becoming a prostitute. Without even pausing to think, my response, as would be the response of many in this House, would be, "Please don't do that."

I know that I am going to be crushed by the weight of numbers in this particular scrum and by the weight of the hastily written editorial comment from local press, which has no social conscience at all and whose fleeting comments ignore the long-term ramifications of legislation that we legislators have to pass in this House for the protection of people in general. However, according to my own conscience and the conscience of many people whom I represent, I must strongly register my opposition to the Bill.
