What really happened in New Zealand after prostitution was decriminalized in 2003?


2. Stigma and prejudice against prostitution, and the shame associated with prostitution, continued since decriminalization of prostitution in NZ.

3. Street prostitution in New Zealand’s cities increased dramatically after prostitution was decriminalized in 2003.

4. There is inadequate protection for children against prostitution in New Zealand since decriminalization.

5. The US State Department has noted trafficking of women and children since prostitution was decriminalized in New Zealand.

Decriminalization can’t stop the violence, abuse, and stigma that are built-in to prostitution. Prostitution has increased dramatically in New Zealand since decriminalization in 2003, with a 200-400% increase in street prostitution in Auckland.

Prostitution of children and youth has increased, with humanitarian agencies declaring that indigenous Maori children are at highest risk for prostitution.

When prostitution is decriminalized, neighborhoods mount legal battles over whose back yard the next brothel will be zoned into. In October 2008, frightened parents discovered that a New Zealand brothel was in the same building as a child care center. Yet under decriminalized prostitution “We don’t believe we have any legal avenues to stop them,” said the director of the child care center.” (“Brothel Shares Childcare Building” OneNews NZ, Oct 14, 2008, http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411365/2199590)

“For the most part the women in prostitution who I talk to don't really seem to care about their human rights. The stigma and shame of prostitution is still very strong even after decriminalization. The women I see feel that prejudice intensely. One of the women we work with was raped in prostitution since decriminalization. She told us, however, that she felt that ‘it was part of the job’ of prostitution. Of all the women I’ve worked with, none of them told me that when they were little girls they dreamed of growing up to be prostitutes.” - Director of an Auckland agency providing services to women in prostitution, 2008.

1. Violence in prostitution continued after prostitution was decriminalized in New Zealand, according to the New Zealand Law Review Committee.

“The majority of sex workers felt that the law could do little about violence that occurred.” (page 14)

35% reported in 2007 that they had been coerced to prostitute with a given john in the past 12 months. (page 46)

A majority of respondents felt that decriminalization made no difference with respect to the violence of johns in prostitution – they felt that it was inevitably a part of the sex industry. (page 57)

The Report notes that “few” sex workers, regardless of whether they were prostituting indoors or outdoors, reported any of the incidents of violence or crimes against them to the police. (page 122)

Many owners of brothels have the same exploitive contract arrangements that existed before prostitution was decriminalized. Often no written contracts or their questionable quality. (page 157)

2. Stigma and prejudice against prostitution, and the shame associated with that, continued after decriminalization of prostitution.

The New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee stated, “Despite decriminalization, the social stigma surrounding involvement in the sex industry continues.” (page 154)

3. Street prostitution in New Zealand’s cities increased dramatically after prostitution was decriminalized in 2003, according to many news reports, and according to one report from the New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee itself.

In 2006, an Auckland lawyer declared decriminalization a “disaster” which had resulted in an “explosion” of children in prostitution in Auckland and Christchurch, three murders of people in prostitution, and local businesses complaining of prostitution occurring on their premises and used condoms littering streets and doorways. (“Barrister labels prostitution law ‘a disaster’” (http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3640007a11,00.html April 17, 2006)

Mama Tere Strickland, a Maori street outreach worker (who came to Berkeley to speak out against Measure Q in 2004) stated that in 2005, the numbers of those prostituting on the street in Auckland have increased by 400% since decriminalization.
The New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee states that street prostitution in Auckland more than doubled in just one year, 2006-7. (page 118).

“Estimates indicate that the number of street workers in Manukau City may have quadrupled since June 2003.”

The New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee comments on citizens’ complaints of increased street prostitution in two large communities in New Zealand: Christchurch and Manukau. (page 16). In these same two communities, Christchurch and Manukau, street prostitution has shifted into traditionally residential areas where community residents harassed those in prostitution and people in street-based prostitution “propositioned members of the public, were aggressive, disruptive, and noisy.” Complaints from residents included “condoms, excrement, and other bodily waste” left in the street, shops, car parks, and on private property. P (124)

4. There is inadequate protection for children against prostitution in New Zealand since decriminalization.
According to the New Zealand decriminalized prostitution law, the police have no right of entry into brothels, and have no right to ask for age-identification papers of those in prostitution – thus investigation of suspected youth prostitution is extremely difficult, according to police officers, who asked that the law be revised. (page 109)

5. The US State Department has noted trafficking of women and children since prostitution was decriminalized in New Zealand.
The Trafficking in Persons Report of the US State Dept notes that New Zealand has internal trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, and that there are instances of debt bondage and document confiscation, and women from Asia, the Czech Republic, and Brazil “working illegally” as prostitutes. OneNews (NZ) 2008 NZ a sex trafficking destination. Accessed Jun 5, 2008 http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/1316907/1831498

6. The NZ Prostitution Law Review Committee was biased and blatantly favored the sex industry:
“For people whose employment options may be limited, sex work, and particularly street-based sex work, can offer a quick means of achieving financial gains…”
(page 121)

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