

Prostitution

Notes from a visit to Sweden

Rosella Melanson
Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Fredericton, December 2010

Swedish Institute

Journalist Visit, 19–21 October 2010

- International Public Prosecution Office
- Stockholm Police Anti-Trafficking Commission
- Minister of Justice
- Skogsbo Half way House
- Council of Baltic Sea States
- Author /Journalist
- ECPAT (end child prostitution/pornography & trafficking)

Sweden

- '60s: at forefront of decriminalisation. By '70s, 500 brothels.
- '70s-90s: Social & gender equality are public/political priorities. Several commissions on prostitution. Lobby by women's shelters. By 1999, Parliament is 50% women.
- 1999: omnibus law on violence vs women. Ban prostitution by criminalizing demand, not suppliers. First country. "Day-fines", up to 6 months prison

- 1999 Prostitution law
 - Public consensus: in a society that aspires to advance equality, unacceptable for men to purchase women.
 - Gov't platform: like other violence vs women, prostitution is gender specific & a consequence of unequal gender relations. Exploiter/buyer must be punished, victim/prostitute must be helped & must protect those at risk of being prostituted.

- Ban “not based on sexual moralism”
- “Prostitution results in serious harm to individuals & society”.
- Irrelevant whether it’s voluntary



TARGETING

THE SEX BUYER.

**THE SWEDISH EXAMPLE: STOPPING PROSTITUTION
AND TRAFFICKING WHERE IT ALL BEGINS.**

By Kajsa Claude

*He could be your neighbor, even your best friend...
a regular guy.*

*But he buys sexual services and thereby supports
the market for sexual exploitation, prostitution
and trafficking.*

*And under Swedish law he is a criminal. Swedish
law focuses on these men rather than on the
young girls and women they exploit: it is the
demand for sexual services that maintains
prostitution & human trafficking for sexual
purposes.*

- *“Women and children... in prostitution regularly suffer threats, abuse, rape, assault, torture, unwanted pregnancies, infertility, injuries & permanent damage ... as well as extreme humiliation & degradation...”*
- *These acts cause severe harm. They are also gross violations of their integrity, dignity and rights as human beings. The fact that these acts are committed in exchange for payment does not in any way diminish or mitigate the immense damage inflicted on their bodies & minds*
- *International studies show that prostituted women suffer from the same emotional traumas as war veterans and victims of torture.”*

After the Ban

- National Board of Health & Welfare monitors
- National Police Board: rapporteur on trafficking in women
- Prostitution Units

Prohibition of the Purchase of a Sexual Service: Evaluation 1999-2008

- Independent commission led by justice chancellor
- “Overwhelmingly positive impact”
- Street prostitution halved
- No increase in indoor prostitution nor in violence
- Reduction in organised crime & trafficking
- Only country in Europe with no increase in prostitution & trafficking

- 70-80% of Swedes support the law
- Attitudes & law: strong deterrent for buyers
- Prostituted women find it easier to leave trade. Police are allies. Extensive services in larger cities.
- Some initially resistant to law :
 - Police, prosecutors: “has been good for country, has cut crime, helping to convict cases”
 - Groups: No evidence it has gone underground. Conditions did not worsen

Malmkillnesgattan St., Stockholm



- “Much remains to be done”
 - Add services.
 - Increase penalties.
 - Increase efforts to identify those at risk.
 - Prostituted person could be « injured party »
- Have been few prosecutions (most get 50 day-fines)
- Police concentrating on trafficking & street prostitution

The view of prostituted women

- **Those still in prostitution:** law has intensified social stigma, feel treated as incapacitated persons: their actions are tolerated but choices not respected.
- **Those who've left:** “are consistently positive to the ban”, were able to stop blaming themselves. The buyer always has the power but no one wants to see it that way while still being exploited.

Notes

- Business has changed. ‘Scared away good guys’
- Incidence of rape not increased
- No political party is saying law should change
- Stockholm: 130 prostitutes. Barcelona: 15,000
- « There is no right to buy sex »
- Normative power of law

Notes (cont'd)

Trafficking problem

Translation costs

Halfway house: re-education of trafficked W

« Helps a lot that women not seen as criminals »

Swedish campaign:
Posters in airport & bus terminals, parking lots



Notes (cont'd)

Lilja 4ever



From the film *Lilja 4ever* © Mofda film

A little over ten years ago, a Lithuanian girl committed suicide in Malmö by jumping off a bridge onto a highway. Prior to that, she had been exploited by sex-buying men in Sweden. In the end, her desperation and sense of powerlessness became so overwhelming that she took her own life. She was just 16 year old. In a compelling and frightening way, the 2002 Swedish feature film *Lilja 4-ever*, directed by Lukas Moodysson, shows what human trafficking is about—the life that young girls are forced into.

Notes (cont'd)

- Swedish police chief, “Mr Dress”, equality expert, jailed for rape, summer 2010
- “Gender issue”. Little focus on male prostitution
- “Sex buyer” “Prostituted” “Documentation of child abuse”
- Provoked sharp increase in prostitution in nearby countries

- **NORWAY** – Followed Swedish example in 2009. “Immediate & dramatic results”.
- **ICELAND** - Legalized prostitution in 2007 but in 2009, followed Swedish example.

NETHERLANDS

2000:

Brothels legalized.

Prostitution is a
business: inspected,
protected and taxed.



NETHERLANDS (*cont'd*)

Evaluation 2007: most women in window brothels subject to pimp control. Emotional well-being lower.

2008 National Police report: “The idea that a clean, normal business sector has emerged is an illusion.”

Efforts to break link with organized crime “complete failure”



In Amsterdam red-light district: “Belle”
"Respect sex workers all over the world"

Swedish Justice minister Beatrice Ask, when asked about the Dutch law:

“As long as we don’t want our daughter or sister to be in the business, we should ask ourselves why we tolerate it... Stop feeding the dinosaur.”

GERMANY

- 2002: decriminalized prostitution incl pimping, procuring, promoting. Contracts and benefits for workers in brothels.
- Evaluation 2007:
 - conditions for women didn't improve.
 - Act didn't help them leave.
 - Didn't reduce crime around prostitution.
 - "Prostitution should not be considered to be a reasonable means for securing one's living."

NEW ZEALAND

- 2003: legalized prostitution (home, brothel, street)
- Prostitutes:
 - Have right to refuse to have sex with a client.
 - Up to 4 sex workers can work together and don't need an Operators Certificate, so long as no boss.
 - If leave sex work, no benefit penalty for voluntary unemployment
 - Occupational Safety & Health guidelines apply.

N.Z. Occupational Safety & Health Manual

Warning: Document Contains Sexually Explicit Material

- Personal Protective Equipment
 - Handling of PPE, used PPE, sex toys
 - Condom breakage
 - Sexually transmissible infections
- Reproductive Health
 - Pregnant workers
 - Avoiding unintended pregnancy
- Repetitive Strain Injuries
- Cleanliness of Workplace
 - Linen
 - Cleaning of body fluid spills
- Security & Safety from Violence
 - Procedure with a threatening client
- Alcohol, Drugs
- Smoking in the Workplace
- Guidelines for Sex Workers Who Provide Outcalls
- Examination of Clients Prior to Provision of Service

NEW ZEALAND (cont'd)

- Evaluations 2006 & 2008:
 - No expansion.
 - Still violence on the streets.
 - Some deficiencies in safe sex practices.
 - Stigma remains major problem.
 - Traditional distrust of authorities remains.
 - Many workers want to continue to sell sex.
 - Sex workers more willing to report crimes against them.
- Report criticized for being biased. Some groups asking for repeal, incl. a political party.

CANADA'S LAW

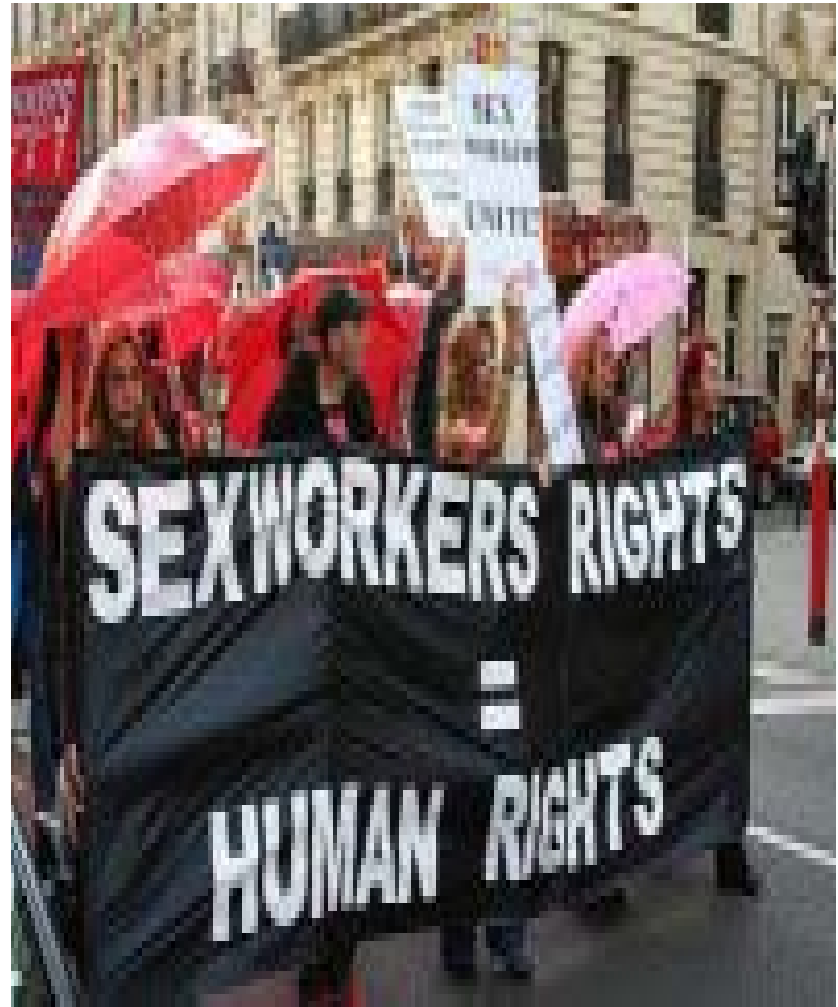
- Unique. Among the worst for workers' safety
- Prostitution is legal (1985), but illegal to:
 - work indoors
 - communicate for the purpose
 - live on the avails
- No matter view on prostitution,
 - If sex work is legal, gov't can't discriminate vs workers
 - Majority of arrested: prostitutes, street prostitutes.
 - Majority of those who get prison sentence: women. No John School.
 - Traps women in the industry

Sept 2010 Ontario Superior Court

- Law sections re communicating, living on avails & bawdy houses:
 - endanger lives
 - violate Charter right to life, liberty & security
- “The only consensus that exists is that there is no consensus” - Madam Justice Himel

PROSTITUTION ...

- is a violation of women's rights, violence against women. Legalizing it normalizes it, legalizes inequality
- or
- promotes equality by recognizing a woman's right to control her body. Legalizing it improves working conditions.



WOMAN TO GO



ENGLISH HEBREW

WOMANTOGO

welcome to the first online store selling women.
choose your favorite woman, now on special offer and start having fun



WOMANTOGO
Barcode
Olga
₪ 22,500
AGE: 21
WEIGHT: 57 kg
MEASURES: 95/72/99
MADE IN UKRAINE
Add to cart



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ENGLISH HEBREW

WOMANTOGO

welcome to the first online store selling women.
choose your favorite woman, now on special offer and start having fun



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WOMANTOGO

WOMEN ARE NOT FOR SALE

To join the petition calling for the Minister of Justice to rule in favor of the law proposal by which consumption of sexual services is a criminal offense, enter your details here.



Full Name
 City
 E-mail
 Interested in more details

Full Name

יניס-נב לטומח
 לאלצב ריזא
 דלפ ורוא
 ישלקא ילט
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 Monika Danielewicz
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Violence, Exploitation, Just A Job?

- Does banning deny women's right to control their bodies?
- Does tolerating contribute to sexism & violence against all women, to viewing women as commodities?
- Can it be just a job if so many are forced into it by abuse, addiction, racism, pimps, traffickers? If workers mostly female, poor, racialized /Aboriginal, young, disabled?
- To improve status of women, do we ban or legalize it?
- If we could end prostitution, should we?
- What works?

- “It’s very difficult to launch feminist arguments against the motives and logic of the Swedish prostitution law.” Sari Kouvo, Law Dept, U. of Göteborg, Sweden
- From individual perspective, adults have right to sell sex... There is voluntary prostitution
From societal, human rights & gender equality perspective, whether it’s voluntary or not is irrelevant
- The lives of most women in prostitution will not change for the better if prostitution is decriminalized.

End Thoughts...

- Canada is not Sweden. In Sweden:
 - culture of equality. Low tolerance of injustice. High commitment to solidarity.
 - public view of prostitution
 - low poverty levels, network of programs
- Importance of identifying our objective

The Travelogue

Ireland, Canada, U.S., Netherlands



I KNOW ITS WRONG,
BUT I KINDA LIKE GLOBAL WARMING.



TELEFON SMART
KORTER 102

BETALA MED
MOBILEN
41

TELEFON SMART
KORTER 102

BETALA MED
MOBILEN
41







Prostitution

- Legal in 50 including
 - **Canada**, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, U.K.
- Limited Legality in 10 incl.
 - Australia, Iceland, Spain, Sweden, U.S.
- Illegal in 40 incl.
 - Afghanistan, China, Cuba, India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand

ADVISORY COUNCIL

2008 statement

- Sex workers are entitled to full protection of the law.
- Reform should conform to international best practices.
- Individuals, community groups & government need occasions to discuss our attitudes and be aware of reality of sex workers' lives and their rights in Canada.
- Sex workers urgently need services such as counseling & substance abuse programs, as well as initiatives to reduce violence against sex workers.
- Sex workers who want to leave the trade often need help to deal with low employment skills and with attitudes about them in the work world. Government leadership is needed to fund outreach workers and to streamline solutions for this population.
- Services for youth at risk must be improved - drug abuse, mental health, job training etc.