

behavior between consenting adults.

Legalizing prostitution would mean prostitutes would have to be regulated, requiring them to bear the burden of being checked for disease and having to be licensed, which could make it difficult for them to find other jobs, she says.

Portland Detective Dick questions how prostitution could be regulated if it were legalized. And he believes the same people who now run the prostitution business illegally would simply start running it legally. "The same draws into the business are still going to apply," he says.

Both Hunter and Alexander agree that police attention to prostitution has focused on the prostitutes themselves, not on the pimps and johns who keep them in business.

Babe Bliss, a COYOTE volunteer, estimates that about one-third of men use prostitutes at some time during their lives. Although the men, including policemen, johns and pimps, are frequently physically or verbally abusive, men represent only 25 percent of the arrests for prostitution.

"Why are they arresting women?" Hunter asks. "Why aren't they arresting men? It's gross and crass sexism."

But people who argue that police should concentrate on arresting men, not women, to deter prostitution do not understand the nature of the business, Dick says. "People argue that they want more males arrested, but the supply of customers is almost unlimited where the supply of (prostitutes) is not."

The stigma of being AIDS carriers also seems to be one borne mainly by prostitutes. Medical professionals believe prostitution may be one of the primary ways in which Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is spread to the heterosexual community. And the one-third of prostitutes who use intravenous drugs are even more at risk.

Alexander says that although AIDS has made a dent in the business of prostitution, only about 5 percent of prostitutes are carriers of the AIDS virus. Hunter put the figure at about 1 percent and sees AIDS as a "non-problem" among prostitutes.

Prostitutes "may be more likely to get AIDS, but they don't spread it" because of the increased use of condoms, Hunter says.

But Goldman says two of three drug addicts have tested positive for the AIDS virus in New York City, meaning many prostitutes potentially are AIDS virus carriers.

"Prostitution is a feminist issue, and it is an economic issue, but it is also a national health issue," Goldman says. On a "60 Minutes" program about two years ago, Goldman says she saw a report on two New Haven, Conn., prostitutes who were carrying the AIDS virus and who had not stopped their work. More surprisingly, the number of johns they saw had not diminished, although it was widely known in the community that some prostitutes had tested positive for the AIDS virus.

Nevada residents have had legalized

prostitution for about 10 years in counties with a population of less than 200,000 (this prohibits prostitution in Las Vegas). Brothels are required to be more than 400 yards away from schools and churches and must be located in a business area.

The brothels are an important part of the Nevada economy, according to Goldman. In one town near Las Vegas, when city officials discovered that a planned school expansion would put it too close to a nearby brothel, they moved the school rather than jeopardize a source of community funding.

"Most of (Nevada's) revenue comes from gambling and related entertainment," she says. "It's all set up to exploit human greed. Everything's for sale in Nevada, and prostitution is a big business because it feeds into the idea of suspending morality."

The Chicken Ranch, in Pahrump, Nev. (about 60 miles outside of Las Vegas), has about 15 prostitutes who live and work there, serving about 350 men each week. The brothel provides complimentary limousine service from the airport and hotels in Las Vegas, says Betty Cagle, the ranch's bookkeeper and secretary.

The ranch, which was the basis for the movie, "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," is considered by residents to be a member of the community, Cagle says. The ranch sponsors a softball team and a bowling league in the town. "The majority of people have nothing against us. We keep a very low profile."

The ranch started in Texas in the 1840s and got its name when men used chickens instead of money to pay for prostitutes. Since moving to Nevada in 1976, business has grown, although Cagle refused to say by how much.

The women are required to register with the sheriff's office and to have weekly venereal disease checks and monthly AIDS tests. "It's one of the safest places you can go — it's a lot better than some of the bars I used to go to," Cagle says.

A "menu" given to each customer when he enters the house gives him some idea of what he can ask for and the costs involved — a French, a straight lay, a massage and bondage are some of the choices.

The prostitutes can charge as much as they want "within reason," Cagle says. Cagle would not say how much money the prostitutes must give to the brothel's owners, but Goldman says many brothels request 50 percent or more of a prostitute's earnings.

Women seem to be the primary victims in the business of prostitution, Goldman says. But what may be suffering even more is the human relationship.

"What we have to look at is, should sexual interludes be a part of our marketplace? ... Are human relationships suffering as a result of looking at them as commodities in the market?"

One thing Goldman is sure about: "Prostitution would not exist if there was not discrimination against women in our society."

Creating A Demand For Prostitution

Editor's Note: Names that initially appear in quotation marks are fictitious.

"Steve," who describes himself as a prominent Eugene businessman, has dated about 200 women in the last six years.

But Steve's kind of dating is not without its costs: he estimates he has spent between \$300 and \$400 each month for the last six years on prostitutes in the Portland area, not to mention the two times he has been busted for solicitation.

Despite the estimated \$21,600 he has spent on prostitutes since he first started seeing them, Steve believes it is cheaper than dating. The price for prostitutes in Portland ranges between \$20 and \$100, but Steve says he usually spends at least \$100 because "I'd rather pay the money than have a hassle."

"When it's good, it can be joyful for both people," he says. "It's like a dentist filling a tooth and doing it right."

Because police sting operations are the primary way of checking prostitution, both johns and prostitutes have developed a method by which they learn who they can trust.

In Portland, Steve says it is customary for the woman to expose her breast so the man can touch her. Then she unzips his pants and feels him, and both know the other is not a police officer.

"Jim," a University student, says he has seen three or four women a year for the last 14 years. While he admits that some are only in it for the money, others "are apparently awfully good actors or they really enjoy giving pleasure to someone else."

Jim began seeing prostitutes in massage parlors in Washington, D.C., in the early 1970s. On occasional trips to Portland, Jim calls women through some massage businesses listed in the Portland yellow pages that double as call girl services. One Portland police officer estimates there are about 30 such businesses in the city.

Organized crime seems to be behind such businesses, at least in the upper ranks, Jim says. The prostitutes call to check in when they arrive at the man's hotel room, and they call again when they leave, and Jim believes the women are "reasonably well protected."

There is an unspoken code that exists between prostitutes and johns, Jim says. Few prostitutes volunteer information about themselves, and there is not much verbal or eye con-

tact. "Many had unhappy childhoods and were abused, and I think sometimes they feel guilt. (Prostitution) reinforces scars from childhood."

But Steve says many of the prostitutes he has seen have been very well-adjusted and sensitive people. "These women don't feel demoralized. They don't feel degraded or used — they think of it as a business."

Steve's relationship with the prostitutes he sees is upbeat, he says. "You can develop friendships, but it's still non-threatening. It doesn't threaten my male ego."

But the threat of arrest is one that Steve says he is still afraid of after being arrested twice for solicitation. Once he went to the woman's room where she stripped, and he put the money on a table between them. After she made certain the money was for her, a policeman entered the room and arrested him.

The second time, a policewoman exposed herself, he touched her, then she touched him and arrested him.

"It's a demoralizing, frightening experience," Steve says. He took both cases to court and got the cases dismissed because of the entrapment methods used to arrest him. Each case cost him \$2,000 in attorney's fees.

In Eugene, one University student said he and some friends bought the services of a prostitute after meeting her inside Perry's Garden Eatery. "Terry," a Lane County resident, says he met a prostitute outside the Atrium building in downtown Eugene. Terry, who is married, says he sees prostitutes because he "can't get it at home. Some things I like don't come easy." Studies show 70 percent to 80 percent of most prostitutes' customers are married.

Despite the high costs of seeing prostitutes, some men say the benefits outweigh the problems, which could include jeopardizing a relationship, contracting AIDS or even public humiliation in cities where the newspapers print a weekly list of men arrested for solicitation.

Even in the face of such risks, Steve says he wouldn't trade it for a steady relationship with one woman. "It's a service (prostitutes) offer — we can get our frustrations out, spend time on our jobs and not get involved in playing the game of dating."

— JOLAYNE HOUTZ

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