



**INDUSTRIAL  
WORKERS OF THE WORLD**  
A UNION FOR ALL WORKERS

## **IWW – Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England - Annual Conference 2018**

### **Motion 10: Policy in Support of Sex Workers**

#### **The motion commits the IWW and its membership:**

- To publicly state our support for the full decriminalisation of sex work and for a full pardon for those sex workers convicted under existing legislation for sex work related activity
- To facilitate the creation of a network within the IWW for sex workers wishing to organise in their workplace to find support, advice and assistance in doing so.
- To work, support, and show solidarity with organisations championing the rights of sex workers that are sex worker led and focused, to the exclusion of anyone who seeks to oppress, exploit or silence sex workers.
- For its members who are 'dual carders' to propose, or do whatever necessary to support, decriminalisation motions in their service union.

#### **Background to the motion:**

Steps have already been taken towards creating a sex workers network within the IWW, we're asking for support with this. The IWW has already set a precedent that sex work is work, since establishing IU 690. Sex work is on the increase because of austerity. Redundancies and benefit sanctions are driving an increasing number of workers, particularly women, into the sex industry. Approximately 70% of women in the sex industry are mothers.

Workers in the sex industry in the UK don't have the same rights as other workers. The law forces sex workers to work in isolation, as the brothel keeping law makes it illegal for two or more workers to work together for safety. Arrests and raids deter sex workers from reporting violence.

Migrant sex workers are targeted by police raids, locked in detention centres and deported against their will. The police love any excuse to go after sex workers because they're an easy target. Laws which criminalise sex work in some way are consistently used to harass and arrest sex workers, who are less relatable to the police than clients and less able to pay them off than pimps.

This is the case for other countries which criminalise sex work too. For example, under the Nordic model, where the purchase of sex is illegal, the police focus their efforts on harassing sex workers for effectively being the nexus of this criminal activity, and blame them for attacks against them while on the job. And in Germany, for example, under legalisation all sex workers who can't or won't comply with the states demands are

criminalised, including sex workers who don't have papers, or don't want to out themselves.

The ruling class prefer laws which drive us into prisons where we can work for almost nothing, to permitting us to survive in whatever way we can. The criminalisation of sex work functions to make attacks on our class through austerity even more brutal.

We have seen moves amongst mainstream trade unions to support decriminalisation. Most notably when Aslef, the train drivers union, recently put a pro-decriminalisation motion to the TUC. While it fell due to bureaucratic manoeuvring, there was a lot of support and over the next year pro-decriminalisation motions will be discussed in other mainstream trade unions.

### **Rationale for the motion:**

The IWW, as a union committed to the liberation of all workers, wherever they are and in whatever industry, stands fully behind sex workers. That we have a formal policy in favour of the decriminalisation of sex work.

The IWW should express support for, and when necessary practically support, sex worker organisations such as the English Collective of Prostitutes and SWARM (which have the same policy as the IWW on excluding bosses).

Dual carders in the IWW should do whatever necessary to support pro-decriminalisation motions in their service union. While we can and do help sex workers already, the current legal position of sex work and the precarious nature of many involved in this industry limits our ability to do so.

We salute the great work conducted by organizations such as SWARM and the English Collective of Prostitutes in organizing and supporting workers in the industry, and we offer our support and extend our hand towards helping to organize sex workers to build effective workers power when and where they feel confident and safe to do so.

### **Consequences of not passing the motion:**

Sex workers safety, ability to leave the industry, and ability to organise, would be undermined.

### **Costs for the motion:**

There would be no immediate costs. Lending practical support to the sex workers network that's being established might involve costs for meeting rooms, travel, the work involved in creating forums, informing interested people, etc, the usual things we provide whenever workers are organising.