

# The unhappy hookers shun congress

by SIMON de BRUXELLES

ENGLISH prostitutes are to boycott the international Whores' Congress in Brussels next month.

They refused an invitation after being told at last year's congress in Amsterdam to reveal whether or not they were 'on the game.' The congress categorises women as whore, non-whores and ex-whores.

Nina Lopez Jones, spokeswoman for the English Collective of Prostitutes, 'The Girls' Union,' said last week: 'The congress was full of pimps, clients and police. You don't have a union with your employers in it.

'It discriminated against the vast majority of women who can't come out and openly identify themselves as working prostitutes.'

The two-day congress, held in the European Parliament between 1 and 3 October, to the embarrassment of some members, is organised by former San Francisco hooker Margo St James.

According to the collective, Miss St James, 48, who moved to the south of France earlier this year, is a 'careerist and American imperialist' and ignores the most serious problems facing prostitutes — poverty and the police.

Ms Lopez Jones said: 'Forget the reasons the academics and do-gooders come up with; women don't go on the game for kicks, or because they were raped as children, or because

they like the life-style — they do it for money.

'The most serious problem prostitutes have is harassment by the police, whether it is in Britain or in countries like Holland and West Germany where there are State-controlled red-light areas. Neither of these issues was discussed at the congress last year.'

The collective has campaigned since 1975 for the abolition of anti-prostitution laws. It is opposed to legalised brothels — 'sex factories' — and estimates that as many as two million women in Britain have turned to prostitution at one time or another.

It offers legal advice to prostitutes from behind the locked steel doors of the King's Cross women's centre in London. The steel doors were erected following a spate of attacks by extreme right-wing thugs.

The collective has contacts around the world. It organised the 12-day occupation of a London church in 1982 in protest at alleged police discrimination against black women. Relations with other women's groups, particularly the hard-line feminists, are strained.

Gigi Turner, a collective volunteer, said: 'Women should have the right to choose whether to go on the game and not be forced into it because they need the money.'

Collective members will never reveal whether or not they are working prostitutes and they wear black masks to be photographed.



The hidden faces of the English Collective of Prostitutes: Nina Lopez-Jones and Gigi Turner.

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The Editor  
The Observer

Dear Sir/Madam,

In response to your article The Unhappy Hookers Shun Congress 21.9.86, Simon de Bruxelles; I would like to make the facts clear about the E.C.P.'s comments and lack of information about the 2nd International Whores Congress. I would also like to point out to the Press that the E.C.P. does not represent the general consensus of Pro's and feminists in this country.

First of all, women are not required to reveal whether or not they are 'on the game' & however many women want to and one of the points of the congress is for women to come out if they want to. Many Pro's believe they should have respect and credit for their work.

I should clarify here that the E.C.P. attended very few meetings at the Amsterdam Congress because of their disruptive behaviour they were either requested to leave or stormed out.

It should also be noted that personal attacks on individuals at the 1st Congress and at other Pro's meetings all over the world have been the theme song of the E.C.P. Their vicious attack on the authoress Pieke Biermann in Treviso Italy, 1985 - calling her a 'Nazi' and the Pro's meeting itself a 'Fascist' gathering is another example of the

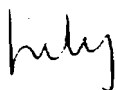
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low level the E.C.P. will stoop to. It is not surprizing then that Margo St. James comes under attack as a 'careerist' and an 'imperialist' nor that the E.C.P. represents only a minority ,reactionary faction.

Gigi Turner contradicts herself in the statement ' Women should have the right to choose ....not be forced into it because they need money'.On th the one hand she says that poverty is the main reason for women working on the game and on the other hand suggesting that women would choose prostitution even if they had money.

And finally so much for their Hidden Faces, dont we know them all by now.

Yours

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'hily'.

C/- The Red Thread  
Lomdon/Amsterdam