

Spearmint Rhino Camden

Testimony from former performer given to Camden Council at licensing hearing of Spearmint Rhino Camden, 2014. Full testimony at p121 here:

<http://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/g5376/Public%20reports%20pack%2029th-Jan-2015%2019.00%20Licensing%20Sexual%20Entertainment%20Venues%20Sub-Committee.pdf?T=10>

26.11.2014

As a former worker within the 'lap dancing' industry in the Central London area, I am making a statement against this license renewal on the basis of all four licensing objectives.

1. Prevention of crime and disorder:

During my 6 years of working at venues such as the one applying for a renewed license, I witnessed the way in which the clubs were used as a meeting ground for people engaging in various criminal activities - from organised crime to drug dealing.

I met many girls who were coerced or 'chosed' to go into further exploitative (and illegal) areas of the sex industry having met those who could facilitate such a 'move' in the venue.

I have come to see the buying of sexual services from women as a form of crime and disorder, because although it can appear to be a 'free' choice, in such a gender unequal society, the selling of sexual services is an unnatural choice made under societal oppression, no matter how free it may seem. When you take money from a client at a lap-dancing club, he expects to see all of your naked body - including genitalia, close-up and for you to touch him (the no-touching rule is NEVER kept, in any club) and generally engage with him in a sexual manner. One look at the website or promotional images will easily show this to be the case, even without visiting. As these venues are often open later than other clubs or bars in the area, it allows groups (of mainly men) to continue drinking and to leave together in a disorderly manner. My friends and I come across such groups any evening out in central London and the comments will always be lewd, sexually derogatory and offensive. Of course this may happen without a visit to such a venue, but my vast experience suggests that it goes a significant way in validating and encouraging such behaviour towards women.

2. Ensuring public safety:

There is plenty of crossover with the statement made above for this objective. Public safety is obviously threatened when groups of various criminal factions meet in one particular place - lap-dancing clubs have long been the traditional meeting place for such interactions. Drugs and excessive alcohol consumption are also a huge feature of such places and effect public safety negatively.

Perhaps the biggest threat to public safety is the normalisation of sexual objectification that such venues encourage and validate. There are numerous studies that link the exponential increase in sexual objectification of women to the epic volume of sexual violence that women suffer - mainly at the hands of people they know. This is without taking into account the safety of the women working at such venues. Studies have shown women who have worked as strippers have similar levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as members of the armed forces returning from a conflict. From my own experience, I would agree with such an assessment and say that the psychological damages of working within such places cannot be properly assessed at the time of engagement, but only with distance from such an occupation - I have never encountered anyone with such distance who did not feel it had a negative effect on their physical, mental and emotional safety and wellbeing.

3. Prevention of public nuisance:

This has also been covered above.

4. Protection of children from harm:

In my experience, I worked with women who were certainly under 18 at such venues - therefore still children