

# OBJECT Press Release

25.11.08

## Thousands call on Downing Street to take action on lax licensing of lap dancing clubs



Object (1) today handed in a petition of nearly 10,000 signatures to the Prime Minister, calling for an end to lap dancing clubs being licensed in the same way as restaurants and cinemas. Object campaigners were accompanied by a woman formerly in lap dancing and MPs Lynda Waltho, Fiona Mactaggart, Roberta Blackman-Woods and Celia Barlow. The petitions called on the Government to allow lap dancing clubs to be licensed in the same way as sex shops and sex cinemas, to reflect their status as part of the commercial sex industry.

The measure is currently used for peep shows but does not apply to lap dancing clubs because of a legal loophole (2). Object is lobbying with the Fawcett Society (3) to close this loophole so that lap dancing clubs can be licensed as Sex Encounter Establishments – venues where visual entertainment for sexual stimulation takes place. The measure would give local councils greater control in the licensing of lap dancing clubs and allow gender equality to be considered in licensing processes.

Sandrine Levêque, Campaigns Manager at Object said:

“Our petitions send a resounding message to the Government that there is public support for an end to lax licensing of lap dancing clubs. We hope that Rt.Hon.

Jacqui Smith (4) will act to give local communities greater controls by allowing lap dancing clubs to be licensed in the same way as sex shops and sex cinemas. Lap dancing clubs are not just harmless fun. They are linked to sexual exploitation, promote sexism and create no go areas for women. Yet these factors cannot be considered in licensing which is why the law must change”.

Earlier in the day Object gave evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee (5) , highlighting the links between inadequate licensing, sexism and lap dancing clubs – and pointing out that under the current regime these factors cannot be taken into account. The Lap Dancing Association (6) also gave evidence and attempted to argue that lap dancing clubs do not base their business model on providing sexual stimulation.

This was contradicted by a further witness, lap dancing club owner Peter Stringfellow, who stated that lap dancing clubs are clearly based on sexual stimulation. To the shock of the attendees at the hearing, he went on to insinuate that the former lap dancer testifying on behalf of Object looked too old to have worked in the industry saying ‘with all respect that must have been a long time ago’.

Sandrine Levêque added: “The language used during the hearing was revealing of the links between lap dancing clubs and sexist attitudes. The meeting also highlighted the fact that lap dancing clubs need to be licensed for what they are – Sex Encounter Establishments. We welcomed the chance to present our case to the Committee and make clear that the licensing of lap dancing clubs is an issue of equality and empowerment for local communities”.

**END**

**For more information and to request interviews please call Sandrine Levêque on 07975 897 005.**

#### **Notes to editors**

(1) Object is a human rights organisation which campaigns against the objectification of women in the media and popular culture. [www.object.org.uk](http://www.object.org.uk)

(2) Lap dancing clubs are venues that provide visual entertainment for sexual stimulation. However the licence applicable to such venues – a Sex Encounter Establishment (SEE) licence – applies only in London, and London-based lap dancing clubs evade this licence by first obtaining a Premises Licence (PL) for the sale of alcohol. Once they have this licence they are exempt from the SEE category. As a result lap dancing clubs countrywide operate with just a PL.

(3) The Fawcett Society is the UK’s leading campaign for women’s rights.  
[www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)

(4) Rt. Hon. Jacqui Smith MP, Home Secretary, has indicated the tougher licensing of lap dancing clubs will be introduced shortly:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/nov/16/prostitution-women-lapdancing>

(5) <http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/VideoPlayer.aspx?meetingId=2898&rel=ok>

(6) The Lap Dancing Association was created on 21.04.08 and is a trade body that represents lap dancing club owners.