

OBJECT

**Women not
Sex Objects**

**Annual
Report
2009**

Chair's Report

For the Year Ended Aug 31st 2009

Set up in 2003 to challenge the sexual objectification of women, OBJECT really has gone from strength to strength over the last two years.

With *Stripping the Illusion* – our lap dancing campaign launched in April 2007 – we saw a Bill to reform the licensing of lap dancing clubs announced in December 2008 and its subsequent progression through Parliament over much of 2009.

We launched, *Demand Change!* with partner organisation Eaves – the UK's first campaign to raise awareness of the harsh realities of prostitution and to change policy by tackling the demand for prostitution.

We also input considerably into a number of violence against women strategies as they were being formulated by the Government, opposition and London Mayor.

And true to our grass roots origins, we launched *Feminist Fridays* as a monthly event to support activists across the UK to take part in simple actions over lads' mags and other forms of sexism.

Our website is 'perfect', as one supporter described it thanks to the skill and hard work of Steve, the designer who has worked tirelessly with us for the last two years often pro-bono.

We secured a further £48,000 in grants, started to increase income from membership, donations and Union affiliation and developed an overarching fundraising strategy.

Our management committee received 'fresh blood' with some wonderful individuals with an impressive range of expertise.

As ever, we are indebted to our many volunteers and supporters who have helped make OBJECT not just incredibly successful, but fun! A particular thank you to Anna, our campaigns officer, Bernadette, our membership officer and Sasha, our director.

And a special message of thanks and best wishes to Sandrine, our lobbyist whose energy and talent have been a driving force for our campaigns and the organisation. It was with great sadness that we heard in Sept 09, that she needed to leave OBJECT, for personal reasons. We wish her the very best.

Jeremy Coutinho Chair

Campaigns

Our work for the year initially focussed on one main campaign – *Stripping the Illusion*, challenging the licensing of lap dancing clubs as cafes. But in true OBJECT-style we took on two other major projects: *Demand Change!*, to ensure the law around prostitution was improved and *Joining Up The Dots*, to ensure the links between the media, attitudes and gender violence were recognised at the policy level.

Thank you to the many people who have supported these campaigns – our wonderful activists and supporters, the public, MPs, councillors and licensing experts and, of course, the many women from the lap dancing and sex industry, who have been not just a source of support but an inspiration.

A particular thank you to Sandrine Leveque, our Lobbyist, for undertaking this extraordinary volume of work and laying the ground for success on such a diverse range of issues.

Stripping the Illusion

Our lap dancing campaign, Stripping the Illusion, went from strength to strength. We received a further £48,000 in grants and by Dec 2008 had ensured that proposals to stop licensing lap dancing clubs as cafes were contained within the Policing and Crime Bill.

**STRIPPING
THE ILLUSION**

Much of the Spring and Summer of 2009 was spent challenging loop holes which would make new licensing voluntary and exempt venues that hosted lap dancing less than once a month.

Campaign Highlights include

Oct 08. Stripping the Illusion Awards. The Lap Dancing Association held its first awards ceremony at a City lap dancing club so we decided to hold our own. The 'Stripping the Illusion' awards were held outside the same venue, MC'd by comedian David Mulholland with awards including 'Biggest Misuse of the Word Gentleman'.



Nov 08. Over 140 guests attend OBJECT/Fawcett public meeting in Parliament chaired by Polly Toynbee. Speakers include cross party MPs, women formally in lap dancing, licensing experts and academics such as Beatrix Campbell.

Dec 08. Deliver petition with nearly 10,000 signatures to 10 Downing Street. Event covered by BBC News at Ten.

Dec 08. Testify in Parliament to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. The Lap Dancing Association (set up specifically by the industry to counter our campaign) and Peter Stringfellow also testified.

DEC 08: Protest Carols. OBJECT activists sing festive protest carols outside Spearmint Rhino's Christmas Party.

Dec 08. Government announces reform to lap dance licensing will be contained within the Policing and Crime Bill. This Bill progresses through both Houses of Parliament during 2009.

June 2009. Parliamentary premiere of our film of testimonies of women from the industry, with special guest speaker Sheila Jeffries. This video was then developed into a highly successful resource pack and continues to be widely used in workshops and discussion groups by Trade Unions, Student Unions and women's groups.

Demand Change!

In June 2008, OBJECT launched *Demand Change!*, in partnership with EAVES, a specialist provider for women from the sex industry. The campaign seeks to expose the realities of the sex industry and to ensure the law finally tackles the demand for prostitution – as the only way to finally curtail 'the oldest oppression'.

The campaign was launched at a critical time politically, in order to lobby for Clause 14 of the Policing and Crime Bill which seeks to criminalise the purchase of sex from a person 'subjected to force' (such as pimped or trafficked women).



We spent 6 months preparing the campaign and formally launched it to a packed audience in the House of Commons. Speakers included MPs, Fiona Mactaggart and Lynda Walthou and MEP, Mary Honeyball; Unison spokeswoman, Cath Elliot and Victor Malarek, award-winning Canadian journalist who has written extensively on prostitution.

We envisage that *Demand Change!* will continue to work for political reform and social enlightenment for many years to come.

"It makes me feel hopeless .. drowned out by the vast noise of the sex industry and its all-powerful lobbying"

Angel, formerly in prostitution

Joining Up The Dots

With the Government, opposition and London Mayor all developing and consulting on violence against women strategies we had the perfect opportunity to develop our work in this area.

Our ultimately goal is to ensure the media is included in all policies on violence against women, because of the harmful attitudes it can promote. To this end we took part and/or were a stakeholder in these consultations, supported others to take part and launched a landmark report *'Joining up the Dots'*, which clearly sets out the links between the media, the attitudes it frequently promotes and gender violence and discrimination.

2/3 of young people say the media is a 'good way to find out about sex and relationships'

Inst. Education 2003

This work has laid the ground for the long term campaigning that is needed in order for us to ultimately see a socially responsible media.

ACTIVISM

Protest and activism were of course a key component of all our major campaigns and the energy and positivity that came from our activists were infectious. Not surprisingly a great deal of grass roots activism happened above and beyond our core campaigns - and across the UK.

A key rationale behind protests was to make sure supporters felt positive and empowered. We knew that if we got that right, then our protests would be engaging for others, fun and at times moving and could help rekindle activism across the women's sector more widely.

"When I joined OBJECT I joined a movement"

Objecter

And so successful has our activism been that it has become a model for others - with even OXFAM approaching us for advice.

This success is an extraordinary testimony to the women and men who put so much time, energy and thought into our actions. And, above all, our Campaigns Officer, Anna Van Heeswijk, who set the benchmark to ensure the ethos as well as the energy is always present.

On Line Activism

Our yahoo and facebook groups continued to go from strength to strength with 150 and 1200 members respectively. And in the Spring of 2009 we launched OBJECT on Twitter, which now has 200 followers.

Feminist Fridays

In March 2009 we launched *Feminist Fridays*. These were conceived as a day of action every month where people across the UK could protest against lads' mags or other forms of sexism.

Our first protest saw us targeting WHSmith and putting lads' mags into the brown paper bags that pornography used to be sold in, with slogans on them like FHM - For Horrible Misogynists.

A departure from our usual protest action, this simple, eye-catching (and legal) form of protest has proved to be highly engaging - with members of the public, shop attendants, managers and even the police entering into discussion with us and frequently signing petitions in support.

By August 09 we had held our sixth *Feminist Friday*, and on occasion had been joined by the entire NUS Women's Committee. Groups from Portsmouth to Cambridge were using our toolkit to start their own events. We see *Feminist Fridays* as a highly engaging, media-friendly tool to spark debate and will continue to develop and expand it.

Other Grass Roots actions

We ran a series of grass roots actions above and beyond Feminist Fridays and protests around our main campaigns. These included:

Miss-Ogynist. Supporting the Miss-Ogynist campaign against the re-introduction of 1970's-style beauty pageants at Universities

Pimp Centre Plus. Protesting outside Job Centre Pluses for carrying ads for lap dancing, webcams, massage parlours and other branches of the sex industry. This coincided with a consultation on such advertising.

MWR. Taking part and speaking at Million Women Rise (an annual event to mark International Women's Day in March).

Reclaim the Night. Joining thousands at the annual November event to raise awareness of violence against women.

OBJECT Leeds

OBJECT Leeds is our first regional group. Set up in Sept 2008 it hit the ground running - whether protesting outside the Labour Party Conference or Miss Leeds 2009. The group has appeared in regional media, such as BBC Leeds and was awarded funding to co-organise Leeds' Reclaim the Night in Nov 2009.



Union Support

The year saw an ever-increasing groundswell of support from Trade and Student Unions with a range of mandates passed in support of our work and several unions affiliating with us.



The NUS Women's Committee made challenging sexual objectification its campaign priority. Unison, the NUS and the TUC's women's committees all passed motions in support of our work.

In the Media

OBJECT made numerous media appearances ranging from The Times to The Big Question and at times a near-constant presence in The Guardian's *Comment is Free* blog

In one month alone coverage included The Observer, Guardian and New Statesman as well as regional press.

As importantly, media debuts were made by an increasing number of empowered and confident activists, such as Film 4 shorts.

Funding

We were successful in gaining two significant grants totalling £48,000. £30,000 was received from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, who had previously supported our lap dancing campaign. This funding was conditional on our receiving match funding from elsewhere. Fortunately we were able to secure £18,000 from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, a departure from their usual funding brief.

However, as for many charitable organisations, the recession made it increasingly hard to secure grant-based funding over the course of 2009. So we started to implement a fundraising strategy with the primary aim of increasing our non-grant based income – particularly through membership and donations.

We started to develop our membership systems including processes to record and to increasingly promote 'regular giving'. As a result, our membership had doubled by August 2009. Although it still represents a substantially under-developed income stream, we now have the tools to greatly expand this in the coming years.

By early August 2009, we had instigated a Fundraising Working Group to assist in further developing our strategy and to take on some of its more work-intensive aspects – such as researching potential patrons.

Our short term plans focus on continued membership growth. But we also have considerable potential to increase donations – given the numerous high profile contacts our campaigns have allowed us to develop, and will continue to present.

A particular thank you to Bernadette for the huge amount of work she put in to developing a superb membership system, Clair for her tireless energy in pushing forward our fundraising plans and Jan, Matt and the many others who have put many long hours into our Fundraising Working Group.

Annual Accounts

Sep 1st 2008-Aug 31st 2009

PROFIT & LOSS

	THIS YEAR	LAST YEAR
<u>Income</u>	£	£
Grants	48,000.00	18,350.00
Donations	1,2450.00	778.03
Membership	1,383.50	331.00
Affiliation	50.00	270.90
Speakers Fees	510.50	-
Merchandise	555.00	308.00
Refunds/Interest	54.21	-
Other Credits	795.95	-
Outstanding on 31/8/08	(545.06)	-
TOTAL INCOME	52,049.10	20,037.93
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Salaries	41,489.98	18,059.66
Employee Recognition	119.50	-
Prof. Services	5,653.36	-
Telephone	720.00	274.95
Stationery & Postage	488.22	312.57
Travel	1,072.40	573.65
Publicity	1,066.60	4,058.34
Merchandise	443.45	-
Research & Education	150.00	150.00
Subscriptions	10.00	100.15
Events	548.95	813.42
Corporate Gifts	31.97	-
Miscellaneous	656.10	-
Capital	419.55	-
Depreciation	504.66	252.33
Paypal Charges	87.39	-
Inland Revenue	0.67	-
Outstanding on 31/8/08	(1,201.14)	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	53,238.32	24,595.07
PROFIT/(LOSS)	(1,189.22)	(4,557.14)

BALANCE SHEET

	THIS YEAR		LAST YEAR	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets				
Capital	756.99		756.99	
Less depreciation	756.99		252.33	
			-	504.66
Current Assets				
Bank Balance	6,431.87		7,772.51	
Debtors		-	545.06	
		6,431.87		8,317.57
Current Liabilities				
Creditors		-		-
Accruals		-	1,201.14	
			-	1,201.14
Current Assets less Current Liabilities		6,431.87		7,116.43
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		6,431.87		7,621.09
Capital & Reserves				
Reserves	7,621.09		12,178.23	
Profit & Loss A/C	(1,189.22)	6,431.87	(4,557.14)	7,621.09

These accounts have been prepared from the books of OBJECT and show a true and fair view of the organisation's affairs at 31st August 2008

John Morgan ACCA

The Management Committee

Jeremy Coutinho, Chair

Jeremy has served on the Management Committee (MC) since OBJECT's inception in 2003, frequently as Chair. He is the manager of a welfare rights department of a mental health hospital.

Ellie Cumbo

Ellie currently works for the Greater London Assembly and is a trainee barrister and former officer for the Lib Dem's Campaign for Gender Balance. She has also spent time working as a lobbyist for OBJECT. She was first elected onto the Committee in Nov 2008.

Wendy Davis

Wendy is the former Director of the Women's Design Service, with a wealth of experiences from school governor to trusteeship of numerous organisations. She was co-opted on to the committee in the Spring of 2009.

Victoria Henry

Victoria is a direct marketing fundraiser for both Amnesty International and Green Peace. Since joining OBJECT she has given invaluable advice on our fundraising strategy and helped guide our newly established Fundraising Working Group. She was first elected to the MC in Nov 2008.

Janice Williams

Janice has senior HR experience as well as consultancy with Parentline and Gingerbread. Since joining OBJECT she has been closely involved with the activism side of OBJECT and the newly established Fundraising Working Group. She was co-opted onto the committee in the Spring of 2009.

Past Members of the Committee (retired)

Sasha Rakoff

Jennifer Drew

Anna Hoyles

Beatriz Concejo

Madryn Parker- Munn

Sophie Taylor

Debra Vice-holt