

Former UK Minister Forced Me Into Abortion, Ex-Wife Tells Trial

A former British **cabinet minister** pressured his ex-wife into an abortion because having the baby would have damaged his career, she told a criminal court on Thursday.

On the second day of **Vicky Pryce's** trial, which is evolving into a cautionary tale of sex, deception and politics, she said **Chris Huhne** had told her of the affair that was to shatter her marriage while she was watching a World Cup football match.

Huhne was considered a contender to succeed Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg as leader of the Liberal Democrats until he pleaded guilty on Monday to perverting the course of justice.

He was charged in 2012 over an incident in 2003 in which Pryce took penalty points on her driving license for a **speeding** offense he had committed, so he could avoid a driving ban.

Pryce, a high-flying economist, has pleaded not guilty. Huhne is awaiting sentence and has been warned he faces imprisonment.

The 2003 incident came to light because Pryce told a newspaper about it in 2011 in what the prosecution has described as an act of revenge over the breakdown of her 26-year marriage to Huhne.

He left Pryce for his mistress Carina Trimingham in June 2010, just weeks after he became energy minister in the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition.

Pryce told the court that Huhne told her while she was watching a World Cup football match that a newspaper had

uncovered the **affair** and he was about to announce he was leaving his wife.

Pryce said she found the news hard to believe at first as she had met Trimingham at a time when Trimingham was in a lesbian relationship.

Huhne weathered the media storm that followed the revelations about his private life, but resigned his cabinet post in February 2012 when he and Pryce were charged.

“Bad for His Career”

The issue of how Huhne treated Pryce during their long marriage has become relevant to her trial because her defense is that she did take his penalty points but he had used **“marital coercion”** to make her do it.

The prosecution have portrayed Pryce, who has held prestigious posts including joint head of the government economic service, as a strong woman who would not easily be coerced.

Pryce sought to portray Huhne as an arrogant, ambitious man capable of pressuring her into acting against her will when it suited his interests.

She told the court that in 1990 she had accidentally gotten pregnant and wanted to have the baby. “He absolutely resisted it, saying it was bad timing, bad financially, bad for his career to be tied down again,” Pryce said.

“And despite my protestations, he got me to have an **abortion**, which I have regretted ever since,” she said, fighting back tears as she spoke.

The couple have three grown children together and Pryce has two children from a previous marriage.

Turning to the events of 2003 that gave rise to the criminal prosecutions, Pryce said that she had angrily resisted Huhne’s attempts to persuade her to take his speeding points.

Pryce said he had then gone behind her back and filled in a police form saying she had been driving his car when it had been caught speeding by a speed camera.

The first she knew of this was when she received a form from the police asking her to confirm the information.

“I exploded,” she said, describing her reaction.

Pryce said this fait accompli had put her in an “impossible situation” because her only options were to go along with the lie or to reveal to the police that her husband had lied.

Huhne, a member of the European **parliament** at the time, was campaigning to be nominated as the Liberal Democrat candidate for a British parliamentary seat.

Pryce said he told her that she had no choice but to sign the police form indicating that she was the driver because any other course of action would ruin his entire political career.

“I took his pen and I signed, protesting all the time, but I did it,” she said.

The trial continues on Friday.

Reporting by Estelle Shirbon; editing by Robert Woodward

© 2013 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.