

Rape: Education and prevention



Ben/Dal Photo

Corporal Bob Cooke

by M.L. Hendry

Until recently the Halifax Police did not release all information regarding rape and other criminal incidents in the city to the media.

As of September 14th the Police Department has adopted an 'open-door' policy to the media, Inspector Grandy of the Criminal Investigation Bureau said. "Prior to that we released what we felt was necessary," he said. "Now we release everything."

"People were clamouring for information," said Superintendent Harry Kinsman, "so we decided to give it to them."

Both Barbara James and Dr. Renner stress the need to publicize information about the incidence of rape in Halifax.

"Because rape is as prevalent as it is, it is extremely important to get publicity so people can be aware and so myths about rape can be discussed and put aside," said Renner. "Rape, on a best bet, is going to occur with someone you put yourself into close proximity with in a reasonably ordinary social encounter. It should be aired so people are aware of the facts," he said.

"Women need to know what is going on," said James, suggesting that a communications

network among women be established so women can know when things are worse and when they ought to be protecting themselves.

"The biggest problem in preventive policing is trying to educate a woman that yes, it could happen to her," said Corporal Cooke of the Halifax Police Community Relations Division. Women must be aware that they are potential targets for a rapist so that they can avoid the situation, he said.

There are many very simple precautions that all women should take, Cooke said, such as not identifying yourself as female on mail boxes and in telephone directories, not travelling alone in secluded areas and being very conscious of who you are inviting into your residence.

Dr. Johnson agreed, saying that at night women could walk with friends rather than alone.

Avoidance of potentially dangerous situations is not a solution to the problem of violence against women by men.

"As a young woman I am sick and tired of hearing what I should be doing to prevent rape," said one person in the audience. "I can't live my life in fear and paranoia. There are times this week when I am going to have to be alone at night. If you want to blame somebody, blame it on the legis-

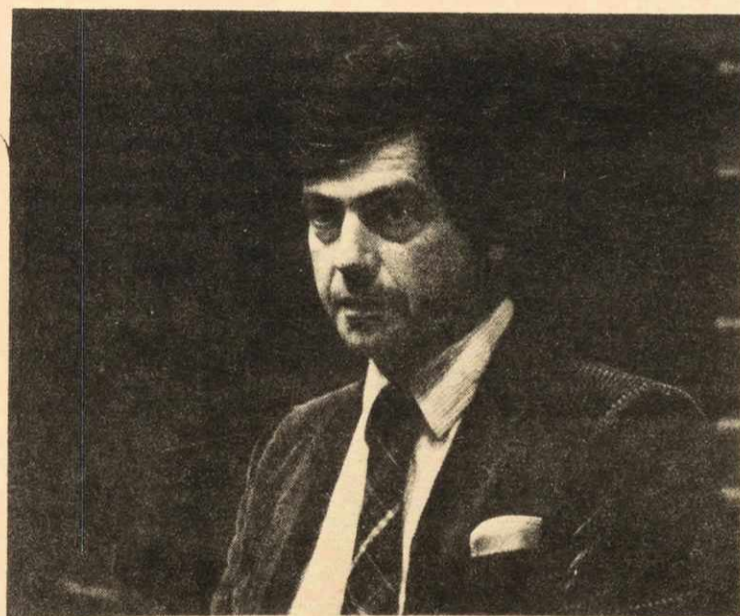
a long term perspective that says 'why do we have those kinds of pressures, why is it that there is a whole set of attitudes that make rape a second class of offense and puts the woman in the situation where it is her responsibility to prevent rape?'," Renner said.

Education must be directed toward men

"From this perspective we want publicity and we want public education, and discussion has to be much more directed towards men and not to women, Renner said. "It's primarily a masculine attitude and a masculine orientation toward women that perpetuates a lot of the practices and a lot of the ideology that we have, and so that should be discussed and brought out as the sex-role problem that it is," he said.

"We can't sweep rape under the carpet as an isolated event that crazy people do," Renner said. "The majority of rapes are committed by normal people who aren't loonies by any stretch of the imagination. They do everything we do, they walk the streets and they work for a living, they're part of the culture that we live in. And until we recognize that and deal with that there won't be any prevention in any primary sense," he said.

"Society must put pressure on officials and agencies to revise procedures in the police station



Ben/Dal Photo

Dr. Edward Renner

lation here in Canada...."

Dr. Renner concurred with this protest, which is shared by many women who are concerned about rape.

"If you take every preventive measure possible to make sure that you are never raped, you'll become a prisoner in your own home, he said.

There are two categories of rape prevention, he said. There are immediate steps you can take to avoid it, which is just common sense, but it is extremely important that that be viewed as only a short term response.

"It is not and cannot be seen as the primary attitude to take towards rape," Renner said. "If you take that attitude as your primary focus you are putting the blame for rape on women and shifting the focus onto the woman herself to prevent rape. What is critical is to look at it in

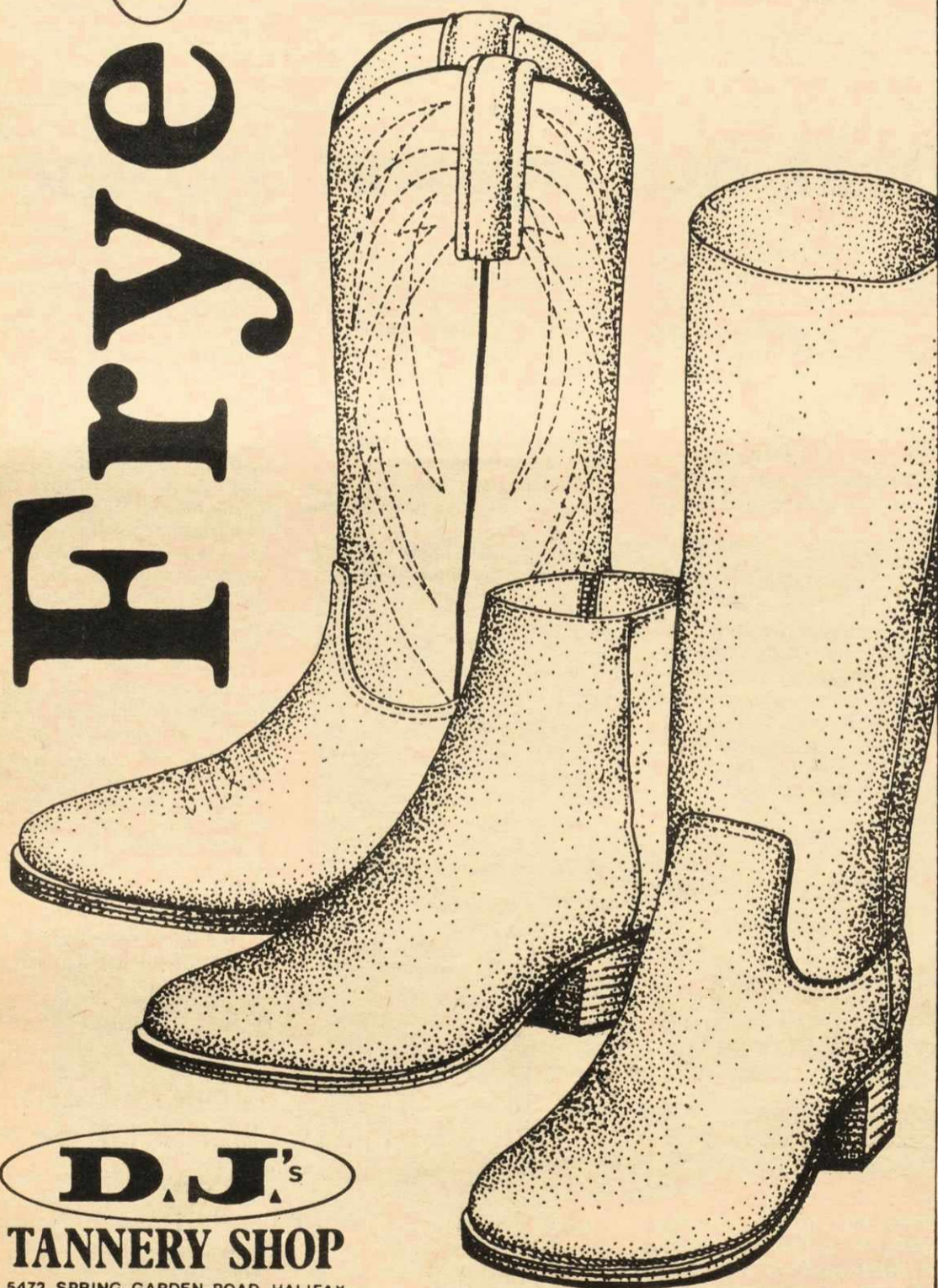
and in the courts," Renner said. "Women mustn't feel they are on trial. The protocol of our institutions is dominated by males and these areas must be the focus for primary prevention of rape."

Dr. Johnson agreed. "Some of us are trying to change attitudes with general education," he said. Student Health conducts workshops on sexuality and birth control with both men and women, stressing that males and females share responsibility for pregnancy and intimate relationships.

Security on campus

Lighting on campus has been upgraded in the last year, according to Max Keeping of Dal Security. Security will escort a woman from one campus location to another or to the nearest bus stop if she is prepared to wait until a security guard is available.

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