

# t escape harassment



Sherry, a prisoner free on temporary absence, says guards use "women's liberation" as an excuse for their brutality against women. "They figure: 'We can slap women around if we want because if they want to be like men, let them get up and fight like men.'"

Both she and Bev said they think prison administrators turn a blind eye to the use of excessive force, whether by their own guards or police on the outside. The Vancouver police department could crack down on violence, but in Bev's words: "They don't want to because they want the brutality of it, to keep us under control."

So women prisoners face threats and potential violence whether they are behind bars or not, says Sherry. It's an ugly cycle, as she explains:

"They threaten you a lot in jail now. If you don't do exactly as you're told you have that hanging over your head — the threat of being sent back to Oakalla. When you're in Oakalla they threaten you with Kingston (prison). They're constantly threatening you with something."

Most women prisoners are too intimidated to criticize or complain about guards because they fear reprisals and removal of prison privileges.

"There's a lot of bullshit and nobody wants to do anything about it," she said. "I've seen girls write up

grievances for other girls to sign, but then when it came time to sign it the girls just backed right down. They're afraid if they did sign that they're signing away their life... that they will just be known as troublemakers and the screws will really put the screws to them."

Because they have so few rights in prison, confined women must often resort to strikes and sit-ins to have their demands heard, said Ruth.

"Girls who had slashed (themselves) couldn't get psychiatric help in the prison they were in. They obviously needed psychiatric help," she said. "We had to do things like have sit-down strikes to get some of these girls proper medical attention, psychiatrists and stuff. It was crazy."

Yet prison officials often try to blame other prisoners for the self-mutilation or death of a woman prisoner, charge Women Against Prison members. For example,

Maureen Richards was found hanged in her Oakalla cell last November after waiting two weeks for a trial on remand; Women Against Prison members claim that the Oakalla men's unit padre said later: "The other prisoners didn't do anything to prevent Maureen from doing it."

The only way to survive in prison without hassles is to be quiet, passive and obedient, two women interviewed agreed.

In Pat's words: "If you ever go to jail, I'll tell you this. Do exactly what they tell you to do. Don't be one of the fuck-ups and think that you're gonna make it because you're gonna be a hard-nose and do what you fuckin' want to do. Because it doesn't work."

Sherry adds: "You're supposed to be like a robot. They push the buttons and you do it. In jail you're not even allowed to be honest. You have to go along with their bullshit. You

want to tell them exactly how you feel but doing that could jeopardize your freedom."

Whether women in jail choose active or silent resistance, prison still leaves it scars, says Jerry Phillipson of Vancouver's John Howard Society, a rehabilitative organization for ex-cons. For most, prison is the end of the road for society's problem cases, he says

"A lot of people get damaged in prison. There's no question about that. The longer a person is in prison, the less likely it is that a she will survive on the street."

As Bev said, you never forget prison. She cried out her former prison number — 1473 — with these words: "Everything that you write in jail has to have your number. You don't wear it on your chest anymore. You just wear it in here (your head)."

to Vancouver Women Against Prisons has changed or the worse."

Barr & Phelps

**SOUTHERN COMFORT**

Southern Comfort. Enjoy it straight up, on the rocks, or blended with your favourite mixer.

 The unique taste of Southern Comfort enjoyed for over 125 years.



**"What are you doing this summer?"**

Dunhill can offer you an interesting summer doing varied temporary assignments.

**Temporary work offers:**

- \* flexibility
- \* variety
- \* experience
- \* chance to meet new people
- \* excellent wage

**Dunhill Temps**

11A Ave. 426-6145



**IF WATCHING POLITICS FROM THE SIDELINES? PAP IS FOR YOU!**

Political Apprenticeship Program

Get out of the sidelines and into the political arena! This summer job program in Ottawa!

Students to work at Progressive Conservative Headquarters: Gain practical interest in politics.

**SPAP**  
Political Apprenticeship Program  
Progressive Conservative Party of Canada  
178 Queen Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 5E1

**EDMONTON'S ONLY ROCK PRESENTS**

## Play it again, Sam

**WHEN YOU HEAR THE BAND OF THE HOUR GIVE US A CALL, IF YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON YOU WIN!**

**STARTS 4 P.M. FRIDAY, MAR. 27  
ENDS MIDNIGHT, SUNDAY, MAR. 29**

**97.3 FM**