

## **POLICE HAMMER AT BUSIEST CORNERS IN DRUG OFFENSIVE**

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Lunchtime **in** the inner city: Seven scruffy men sit inside a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant on Dexter and Boston. One signals, dropping a napkin on the floor, and carloads of cops swoop **in** , arresting five people on **drug** charges.

One is a 16-year-old Northwestern High School student who says he took the bus to the restaurant because he had a half day off school. The **corner** is one of Detroit's **busiest** for **drug** sales. The student is charged with selling marijuana.

**In** the men's room, bloody tissue and paper packets marked with heroin brand names -- Heavy Drama, First Choice -- testify that this fast food business unwittingly serves a darker hunger.

"I only eat here once **in** a while," said the lone remaining patron, munching his chicken and minding his business. "Too much **drugs** is going on."

Employee Jean Curry said from behind thick Plexiglas protection: "It goes on all the time. It scares me. By the time the **police** get through, the **drug** sellers come right back."

The arrests are part of a new Detroit **police** program aimed **at** changing that scenario by taking the profit out of street **drug** traffic, said Inspector Joel Gilliam, head of the narcotics section.

"Our ultimate goal is that all street ( **drug** ) sales move inside," he said. "We hope to make it so uninviting to get involved **in** the (street) narcotics trafficking business that the risks outweigh the gains."

ON NOV. 18, **at** Chief William Hart's direction, a new narcotics street enforcement unit began making wholesale arrests on the **corners** where **drug** trafficking was worst, hauling offenders into traffic court on misdemeanor charges.

For the first arrests, 15 **corners** were targeted, based on a computer analysis of complaints, Gilliam said. Many grievances came from older people afraid to wade through **drug** traffickers to "go to the store, catch cabs or stand **at** the bus stop," said Investigator William Stevenson. "The primary goal is to free the neighborhoods."

The eight-person unit is similar to a two-year-old New York City project, Operation Pressure Point, that has cleared streets once so clogged with pushers that one writer called them open- air **drug** supermarkets. The Detroit unit concentrates on quick arrests -- handing out tickets officers call "green meanies" for misdemeanors ranging from loitering and disorderly conduct to selling narcotics without a city license, Gilliam said.

"We have never before used ticket writing as a major enforcement tactic. We're going to give the guy buying ( **drugs** ) a ticket for blocking traffic, get the guy selling for looking ugly," Gilliam said. "We're going to deny him \$100 a day" or more, through bond and fines. **Police** department attorney Mary Rose Prost said that because it is easier to prove a misdemeanor than a felony -- the traditional charge against people suspected of dealing **drugs** -- more people will be arrested faster and **police** will be able to spend more time on the street.

"It is the chief's creative use of the law. You can get someone for selling without a license, you don't even have to show dope," she said. To make a felony charge of dealing **drugs** stick, she said, the suspect must possess more narcotics than the typical street seller carries.

Processing one person on a felony charge may take 40 hours of **police** time, while a misdemeanor may take as little as 20 minutes, she said.

Ticketing "is the most effective use of minimal manpower for the maximum amount of punishment. The effect on **drug** dealing may be greater" when a dealer is convicted of a felony, "but the public doesn't see that, they want the (addicts) off the **corner** ."

ALTHOUGH most of the 137 people arrested by the new unit have been adults, **police** said selling **drugs** is particularly attractive to teenage boys who often can get only minimum-wage jobs.

But take away their profits and the glamor will fade, **police** said.

"A dope runner on the street who makes \$2 for every \$12 pack (of heroin) he sells can easily make \$100 a day," said Lt. Ron Cronin. "A \$500 fine on a ticket will take away the motivation. But we have to educate the traffic courts . . . to start fining heavily." Penalties on misdemeanors heard **in** the 36th District Court's traffic and ordinance division range from nothing to a maximum of \$500 **in** fines and 90 days **in** jail, **police** attorney Prost said.

SELLING NARCOTICS on street **corners** became popular **in** 1977 when Young Boys Inc. built a flexible and seemingly endless network of juvenile street salesmen and suppliers to foil **police** geared to "knocking down doors," Gilliam said.

**Drug** dealers' "distribution method changed, but we kept plodding on the same way. They have been doing it almost with impunity," he said. "Our enforcement was not set up to get them."

The unit "giving a message 'you don't sell dope on this **corner** ' upsets the whole organization," Gilliam said. "Once the pusher moves, he has to move the **drug** (supply) house. We don't have to deny them anything but bathrooms. When they transport **drugs** three or four blocks it is a very traumatic thing."

**Police** said they aren't arresting just anybody who happens to be around when they roll by.

"We take a look first and see who's dealing, who's running so we can tell the judge we saw them hanging out doing a deal," said Sgt. Jimmy Keck. Once **drug** traffic has been reduced on a **corner**, the plan calls for precinct foot patrols to keep it clear, said Deputy Chief Richard Dungy. "The high uniform presence will interfere with runners," he said, and their **drug** source.

Co-ordinating efforts of the centralized narcotics section and the precincts will make enforcement more efficient, Dungy said. "It is a concentrated effort where before it was fragmented. The precinct commander would call for help and we'd say, we'll get around to it when we can. Now we get together." Dungy would not say how much additional staff or money is being invested **in** the project.

**POLICE** HAVE one satisfied customer **in** Vincent George, 22, proprietor of the Market Place Food Center on Hamilton and Lawrence. It was one of the city's most active **drug**-dealing **corners** when he bought the store last spring, **police** said.

" **In** April, people were afraid to come into the store . . . and cash their checks," George said. "There was a lot of ( **drug** ) traffic outside and people were coming **in** and trading inside too."

Complaints to the precinct brought little relief, but when Gilliam's crew began "having some big busts, people became afraid to deal on the **corner** and business increased," George said. "I never thought they would clear it up so well. **Police** cars are out quite frequently and I can say I'm happy so far. Let's just hope they follow up."

**ALTHOUGH** narcotics officers think they can clear the sidewalks of **drugs**, they have few illusions that will solve Detroit's narcotics problems.

New York City **police** have arrested 17,000 on the Lower East Side since they launched Operation Pressure Point two years ago, but only 500 are **in** prison, according to the New York Times. "It's like shoveling water against the tide. For every two you send out, you get four back," Dungy said. "But it doesn't stop you from shoveling. The bottom line is to get to the source and that's not our job."

Said Gilliam, "We've closed down some ( **corners** ) and they've opened back up." He said that forcing **drug** sales indoors makes arrests more difficult "because you have to justify a search warrant."

But Gilliam said the effort is well worth the trouble. "People want **drugs** off the street. If the dealers were all inside, I'd love it."

### Top **drug** corners

These are the Detroit street **corners** with the most **drug** traffic, according to a Detroit **Police** Department computer analysis of citizen complaints from the last two years.

The narcotics street enforcement unit hopes to clear these **corners** of **drug** traffic **in** its first wave of arrests, said Inspector Joel Gilliam.

W. Warren and Beechwood

Herbert and Thirty-Fifth

Herbert and Twenty-Eighth

Owen and Goodwin

Owen and Oakland

Cass and Davenport

Prairie and Joy

Hamilton and Burlingame

Hamilton and Lawrence

Hamilton and Calvert

Dexter and Boston

Dexter and Glynn Court

Dexter and W. Davison

Linwood and Richton

Linwood and W. Davison

These **corners** are next on the list:

W. Warren and Van Court

W. Warren and Prairie

Mack and Canton

Mack and Concord

Mt. Elliott and Kercheval

Crane and Charlevoix

Chene and Garfield

Harper and Bewick

Harper and Maxwell

Harper and Van Dyke

W. Vernor and Clark

Visger and Edsel

Electric and Gleason

Woodmere and Cabot

CUTLINE:

Suspects lined up against a van **at** the restaurant.

Suspects arrested **at** a Kentucky Frid Chicken restaurant are led to a **police** van.

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