

U.S. Helps Detroit to Attack Drug Rings That Use Young

By HOWARD BLUM
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DETROIT, Jan. 27 — A 15-year-old boy recently walked into a suburban Mercedes-Benz showroom, pointed to a black 500 SEL and announced, "I'll take it." He paid with \$62,000 cash, from a brown paper bag. In the Jeffries Housing Project on the east side, teenagers are driving new Corvettes, Christmas bonuses for jobs well done.

These youths, according to the Federal and local law-enforcement authorities, are "runners" for narcotics rings that supply the city's estimated 50,000 addicts.

"We have a unique phenomenon in Detroit," said Robert J. De Fauw, who is in charge of the local office of the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration, "in that groups of children as young as 12 years old are being recruited to work in drug rings where they can make as much as \$2,000 to \$5,000 a week."

The Lure Is Powerful

In Washington, David Hoover, a spokesman for the Drug Enforcement Administration, agreed, saying, "No where else in the country have we found so many juveniles involved in such highly structured heroin gangs."

James D. Tishuck, a Detroit narcotics officer, said: "Despite all we do, it's going to be impossible to stop gangs from recruiting these kids. It is a matter of economics. You're 12 years old, living in a Detroit housing project, your parents are out of work, and some guy in a fancy car comes by and tells you he can help you make \$300 a day. You're going to listen."

United States Attorney Leonard R. Gilman said: "Part of the problem is that by using these juveniles, who can't be prosecuted in adult courts, the leaders of the operation have managed to insulate themselves from law-enforcement efforts. Worse, we're trying to catch men who the kids working on the streets see as folk heroes."

Special Force at Work

However, local law-enforcement agencies have taken these actions against heroin-trafficking rings that employ children and teen-agers on the streets:

¶A special force of local narcotics officers and Federal drug enforcement

agents has been formed to concentrate on heroin rings. It is financed by the Justice Department to buy drugs, reward informers and pay Detroit officers' overtime.

¶A two-year investigation of Young Boys Inc., a group the police say employed 300 young people to sell \$350,000 worth of heroin a week, has resulted in 32 convictions and the confiscation of \$1.5 million in cash, found in garbage bags.

¶Investigations of Pony Down and Adidas, heroin rings employing many of the young who were in Young Boys Inc., are under way.

Role of the Organizer

Recruiting the young for drug trafficking was, according to Federal affidavits, the idea of Milton David Jones, 28. The papers showed that in the winter of 1980 Mr. Jones left a prison after serving a manslaughter sentence for a killing when he was 17 and began assembling groups of young boys from the Montrey-Dexter neighborhood.

Assistant United States Attorney Robert M. Morgan said Mr. Jones would "stand before these kids in a playground and preach to them that he would get them high on money, jewelry and clothes if they worked for him — he promised to make them millionaires."

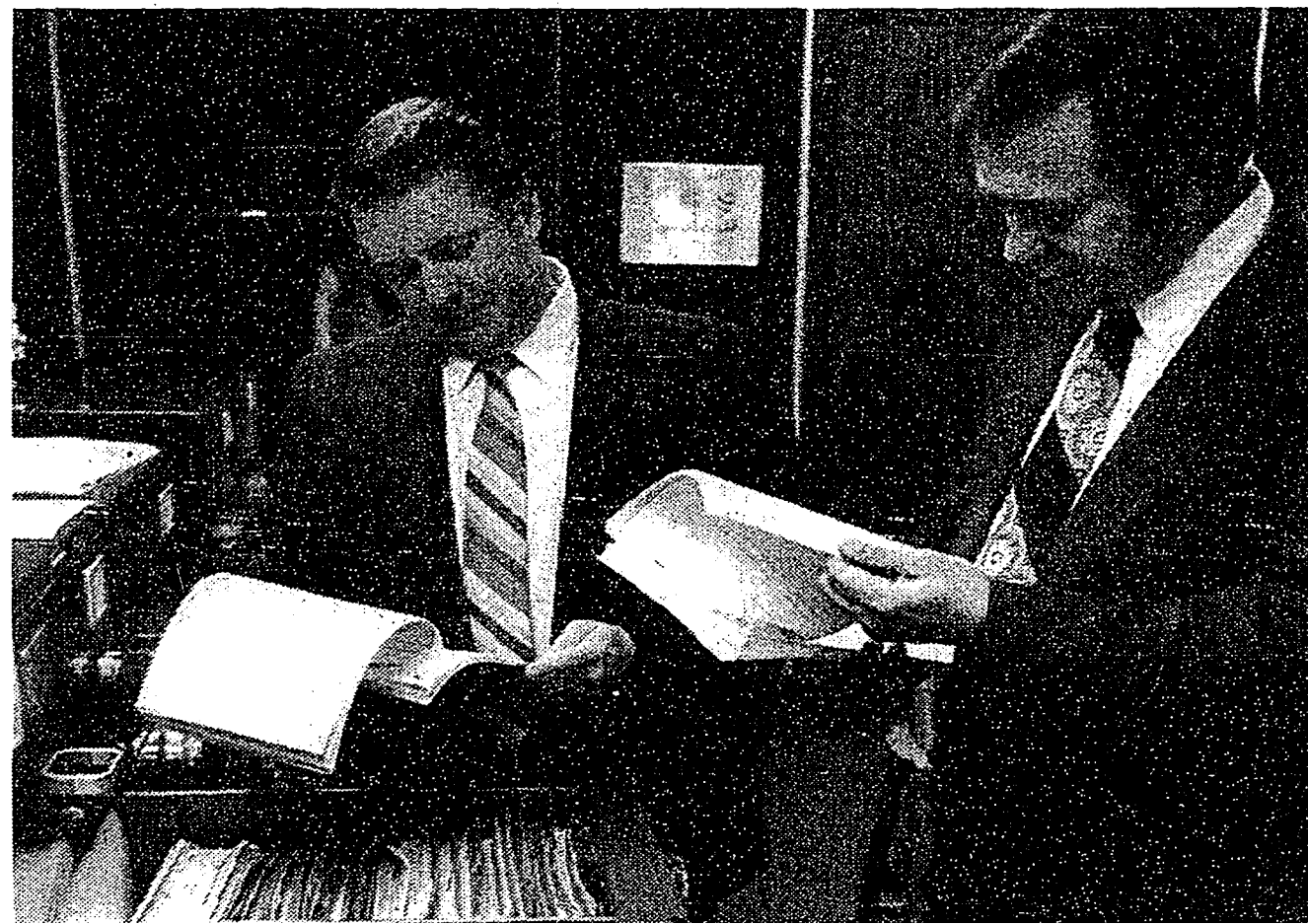
Last May, when he was sentenced to 12 years in jail for engaging in a continual criminal enterprise and tax offenses, prosecutors said, he had 300 youths selling \$50,000 worth of heroin a day.

Model Structure for a Gang

The hierarchical, almost corporate structure of Young Boys Inc. was said to have been devised by Mr. Jones and Sylvester Murray, 30, identified by the police as the ring's chief supplier of drugs. Both the Pony Down and Adidas gangs, which took their names from the athletic shoes their members wore, used Young Boys Inc. as a model for their organizations.

As outlined by the police and by Wayne County prosecutors' reports, Young Boys Inc. operated this way:

The leaders of the gang would take raw heroin to a "hookup" house where half a dozen people would, like an assembly line, mix the heroin with sugar



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Robert J. De Fauw, left, who is in charge of the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration's office in Detroit, going through the agency's files with Inspector Ray Murray of the Detroit Police Department.

and quinine.

The mix would be spooned into coin envelopes that would be stamped "Murder One" or "Rolls-Royce," the street drugs' brand names. Ten of these envelopes would be grouped in a "bundle." The "bundles" would be taken by the young people in early morning to where the drugs would be sold.

'Hustlers' Could Make \$500

Each such location, usually a street corner or a public housing project, was supervised by a "top dog" who would distribute the envelopes to runners, the lowest and usually the youngest participants.

The runners would sell an envelope to an addict for \$13. From this, the organization would receive \$10; the runner would get the other \$3 as his fee, or "tops."

"If a kid wanted to hustle," said Officer Tishuck, "his 'tops' could come to \$300 or \$400 a day. That's why, when we found an 11-year-old carrying two grand in his pocket, we weren't surprised."

Sunday, according to prosecutors' papers and wiretaps, was generally payday. All would gather in a downtown warehouse and be paid salaries according to their positions, in addition to their "tops." Bonuses were frequent. "They would take these kids on trips to Las Vegas and show them things they had only just dreamed of," Mr. De Fauw said.

Warfare, Murders, a Kidnapping

Officer Clyde M. Ritchie, a member of the special force, said, "One of the leaders gave out 16 Corvettes for all the kids to ride around in."

The murders of two teen-agers have

been attributed by the police to narcotics gangs' rivalry. An alleged Pony Down leader has been kidnapped. There have been beatings.

But now that the leaders of Young Boys Inc. are serving jail terms, many of the younger members are joining Pony Down, the authorities said.

"Except now," said Mr. De Fauw, "the kids who were runners at 12 are now 15 and working in supervisory positions. We're now going after 15-year-olds who are very experienced criminals."

"And I don't think the situation on the streets is going to improve much. Our major problem is, how are we going to reach these kids? I mean, do you tell them to work in a warehouse at J.L. Hudson's for \$45 a week when they're making \$2,000 a week selling drugs on the street? They'll just laugh at you."