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THE LAW

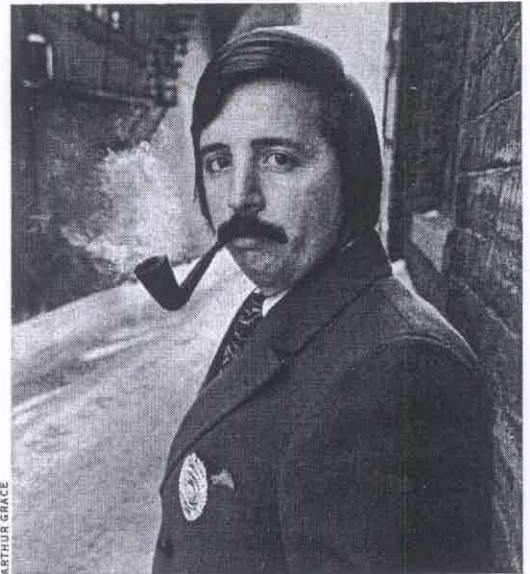
One Very Bad Cop

More than any other policeman in Vermont, Paul D. Lawrence, 30, had a reputation in drug circles as one tough cop. In his six years on the drug beat, first as a state trooper and then on various local forces, Lawrence racked up some 600 drug convictions. He never failed to turn up incriminating evidence. Police and counterculturists agreed that his record was almost too good—or too bad—to be true. As it turned out, bad was the right word.

Big Drug Buster. Last week Governor Thomas Salmon was contemplating an extraordinary letter from Francis Murray, the Chittenden County (Burlington) prosecutor, asking him to pardon all 600 of those convicted on Lawrence's testimony. Lawrence, the prosecutor pointed out, faced up to 16 years in prison after being found guilty of turning in false arrest affidavits and giving false information to a police officer. The big drug buster apparently arrested anyone he was suspicious of, often supplying the narcotics evidence himself and claiming he had made a buy from the alleged pusher. Judges, and in a few cases even juries, simply took Lawrence's word.

As his story unraveled in court, it became clear that Lawrence had rarely been more than one quick step ahead of discovery. Somehow, he became a cop in 1966, despite a youthful arrest for illegal possession of liquor and an Army discharge for "behavioral disorders" after three AWOL incidents in seven months of service. He was with the state police from 1968 to 1972 and quit shortly after his squad-car windshield was apparently shot out from the inside when he was alone on patrol. His record also included the beating of a man he had arrested. After that, a brief stint as a tobacco salesman came and went amidst claims by his employers that a cache of cigarettes had mysteriously disappeared. Lawrence then managed to get a job as chief of the four-man police force in the small town of Vergennes; he left a year later, this time just before being fired for questionable drug arrests and hyperactive enforcement of speed limits.

He next became an officer assigned to the drug beat in St. Albans. There, defense attorneys soon noted that an unusually high percentage of their clients claimed that Lawrence had framed them. The lawyers persuaded the state defender general to hire a private detective, who filed a 30-page report a year



ARTHUR GRACE

UNDERCOVER POLICEMAN LAWRENCE
Always one jump ahead of his past.

ago that was highly critical of Lawrence's activities. The state attorney general, who was busy running for reelection, shelved the charges as unsubstantiated. By then, the St. Albans police had lent Lawrence to Burlington to work on undercover drug enforcement there. That was the end of the line.

At about the same time that a fellow policeman became suspicious of Lawrence's too-easy arrests, a reporter approached the local prosecutor's office with stories of Lawrence's past. A spe-

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cial undercover policeman brought in from Brooklyn (for his expertise and to assure that he would not be recognized) was pointed out to Lawrence as a suspected drug dealer. Then, while police watched from hiding, Lawrence approached the planted "pusher," but exchanged neither words nor money with him. Nonetheless, Lawrence later filled out an arrest affidavit and claimed he had bought a nickel (\$5) bag of heroin. At Lawrence's trial, one girl he had arrested testified to another Lawrence technique. She was hitchhiking, she said, and he picked her up, offered her dinner and a few sniffs of cocaine, then asked her to spend the night with him. She refused; two weeks later he busted her for selling him drugs.

Case-by-Case. Officials are still trying to find out exactly how and where Lawrence got the drugs that he turned in as evidence. Further charges are pending over his use of the money he was given to make his supposed buys. Meanwhile, Prosecutor Murray has requested the mass pardons from Governor Salmon. Though state officials contend that some of the convictions were valid, Attorney General M. Jerome Diamond concedes that it will now be necessary to begin a case-by-case review of every Lawrence arrest. It might also be advisable to review the hiring practices of Vermont towns that may be more anxious to ferret out drugs than bad cops.

Legal Briefs

► The Supreme Court decided last year that under federal rules, anyone bringing a class action must notify all other potential parties to the suit (TIME, June 10). That tough interpretation put a stop to such far-reaching actions as one brought on behalf of "all U.S. citizens." Sensible as that seemed, critics were quick to point out that many legitimate consumer suits would also go down the drain—as Sandra Lee Cartt has just found out. Car Owner Cartt, an elementary school teacher in San Fernando, Calif., had wondered about Standard Oil of California's claims that its F-310 gasoline reduced air pollution. When she tested the gas, she found that pollution actually increased. Later and independently, the Federal Trade Commission charged that some of the F-310 advertising was false. Cartt meanwhile had brought suit on behalf of all Standard's California customers to recover the extra nickel that each gallon of F-310 cost. A federal judge ruled that the suit could not proceed until she notified each of the 700,000 Standard credit-card holders in the state. That would cost her at least \$42,000, and Cartt now reports that her efforts to raise the money from interested consumer groups have failed. As a result, so will her class action unless she manages to persuade an appeals court to ease her notification burden.

► Aware that most state unemployment insurance programs do not cover such groups as farm laborers, domestics or Government employees, Congress decided three months ago to give those workers federal benefits for up to 26 weeks. The act provided for payment to anyone who was not covered by state insurance but otherwise met the state's definition of unemployed. Astute educators read the fine print and asked an importunate question: Since those who teach in publicly supported schools or colleges are Government employees, are they not eligible for annual summer unemployment benefits when classes are not in session? The answer varies from state to state, even though it is the Federal Government that pays the bills. Indiana has already said that its teachers do qualify under that state's definition of unemployment. New Jersey and other states are contemplating similar decisions. But even if all 50 states followed suit, by no means would all 2.5 million teachers qualify. Many take summer jobs. Others have all-year-round contracts. Still others study, or would be otherwise uninclined to meet the common requirement that those on unemployment relief be "ready and willing" to take a job in their field. Finally, federal officials expect—or hope—that at least some teachers would be too scrupulous to apply for funds obviously meant for the "truly" unemployed.