

'Call boy' leader gets 5 years

Paul M. Rodriguez The Washington Times, Part A; NATION; Pg. A3 June 13, 1991, Thursday, Final Edition

The head of the District's largest male prostitution ring was sentenced to 63 months in jail yesterday after an unusual tirade by U.S. District Court Judge Harold Greene directed at the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The judge specifically criticized U.S. Attorney Jay Stephens' office for seeking a departure from mandatory sentencing guidelines for Henry W. Vinson, operator of the callboy ring.

"Why propose this departure?" Judge Greene asked. "I can't recall a single case in which the government has asked for departure before just because somebody pleaded guilty and got others to plead. . . . I don't think it's warranted . . . because there are sentences being handed out [more severe] for crimes below this."

Judge Greene's rebuke followed a panel discussion Friday in which Mr. Stephens suggested that federal judges in Washington stop complaining about being overworked and having no room to tailor sentences to specific crimes.

Mr. Stephens, in an eight-page statement, said that federal judges in the District spend an average of only 13 hours a week in the courtroom and only five or six hours of them on criminal cases.

Federal judges, including Judge Greene, bristled at Mr. Stephens' comments and said they have been swamped with an influx of small-time criminal drug cases.

Yesterday's sentencing of Vinson, 29, of Williamson, W.Va., culminated a two-year investigation of the prostitution ring by the U.S. Secret Service, the Internal Revenue Service and District police.

The ring included a small number of female prostitutes. Over a two-year period, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the ring generated between \$500,000 and \$1 million in revenues.

At his sentencing, Vinson told the judge that "my behavior has certainly not been very complimentary. I'm sorry if I did hurt society."

He had pleaded guilty to one count each of credit card fraud and conspiracy to violate the Racketeering, Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act.

Ten days ago, Robert Chambers, 39, of Upper Marlboro, son of the owner of The Chambers Funeral Home, was sentenced to 41 months for helping to operate the prostitution ring, which went under various names in the District area, such as "Man-to-Man," "Jovan" and "Dreamboys."

Two other manager-prostitutes of the ring - James A. Macko, 29, of Michigan, and James T. Smith, 23, of Florida - were sentenced to federal prison earlier this year.

The investigation of the ring was triggered when police raided a house in the 6000 block of 34th Place in Upper Northwest in February 1989.

In his remarks yesterday, Judge Greene excoriated Assistant U.S. Attorney Alan Strasser for seeking a waiver from the mandatory sentencing guidelines that became effective in November 1987. Judge Greene said Mr. Strasser's request was "one of the worst" made "by the faceless departure committee."

The committee is an internal group in the U.S. Attorney's Office that determines whether a defendant's cooperation merits a sentencing waiver.

"I don't think that's warranted" because Vinson was the leader of a "sophisticated scheme," Judge Greene said, noting that others in the case had received stiff sentences.

Vinson's lawyer, Greta Van Susterne, said the judge's decision would dampen efforts by prosecutors to gain cooperation from defendants. "You'd have to be crazy to cooperate when the whole point of such cooperation is to get something in return."

In an apparent contradiction, Mr. Strasser sought a waiver from federal guidelines but in a separate sentencing memorandum called for a harsh sentence because the prostitution ring was cavalier about the spread of the AIDS virus.