

**UNFUNNY FUNNIES HIT**

**Editors Ponder Ultimate Effect On Youth Of U. S. By Crime-Laden Comics**

WASHINGTON—AP—The country's editors asked themselves and their comic artists Saturday whether comic strips laden with sex and crime will some day make them answerable for "damage done to American youth."

Two of the top artists, Al Capp of "Li'l Abner" and Milton Caniff of "Steve Canyon" defended their craft as being one in which virtue always is conspicuously rewarded. Caniff had the last word:

"The editor is the key to the whole thing, he can tell us what's wrong, he can leave the strip out of the paper, he can cancel it."

But the debate was hot and the

wit barbed as editors aired their "grave concern" over unfunny funnies in a forum at ASNE's annual meeting.

James S. Pope, managing editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, led the assault for the editors along with Norman Isaacs, managing editor of the St. Louis Star-Times. A questionnaire circulated by him to fellow editors, Pope said, showed them bothered by these problems:

**Editors Worried**

Many editors are worried about the detailed picturing of crime. One editor of a successful daily carries no crime or detective strips.

Sex: There was concern but less than expected. The problem of "sly and smirking sex has been greatly improved," Pope said, perhaps because of the public reaction against newsstand comic books.

Propaganda: A "tremendous uprising" of editors against any form of comic-strip propaganda was revealed. "Editors seem to want to pick out their own targets for editorial crusades," Pope suggested.

And: The comics are not funny. Al Capp was belabored for the accentuated hips and thighs of the female inhabitants of his mythical mountain town, Dogpatch. He protested that "women do have figures and they're beautiful—people like to see beautiful girls properly dressed—and artists like to draw them."

Isaacs retorted that Capps should underline his own phrase, "properly dressed." Unabashed, Capp explained:

"These are very poor people in Dogpatch."

**Prison Director Heard**

Even James V. Bennett, federal director of prisons, was drawn into the act. Isaacs read a statement by him voicing concern over the impact on juvenile delinquency of blood-and-thunder strips "which can easily be imitated by children."

Caniff promptly invited anybody to "quote us a single statistic to show that any child has been prompted to commit a crime by any comic strip."

Bennett rose from the floor and acknowledged the cases were few but he said he could introduce Capp to a youth who admitted staging a kidnapping on the prompting of a pictured crime in a "comic book, not a comic strip."

"I do have a feeling that there are a few cases of that kind," Bennett said. "It seems to me and to hundreds of thousands of parents that the comics are not character building."

Isaacs said the feature syndicates which sell the comics tend to deal with complaints by "filling, fudging and forgetting." He said there are many strips which are perfectly harmless, and he included Caniff's among them, but he observed that "enough is wrong with enough strips to cause us concern."

Comic strips are, to children their first introduction to mediocrity, Isaacs said. "We've got to stop feeding kids this mental marijuana."

As for propaganda on the comic pages, Capp said he fears a tendency in America to shrink from the lampooning of itself in the manner of the "delightful and disrespectful humorists of another day." He professed himself "er-rorized" at the interpretations some seek to read into his own make-believe tales.

"I'm afraid America is losing its most precious freedom—the fifth freedom—the freedom to laugh at itself," he remarked.

"Let's not lose that freedom for without it the other freedoms aren't any fun."

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BALTIMORE, April 22—AP—Richard Rogers has taken his pressing problem of a suit to Baltimore city officials.

It seems, Richard was out with the boys on Easter Sunday, Richard—who is 10 years old—had his new suit on.

"All of the boys went on the sliding board" at a city playground, he wrote. "When I slid down I heard a rip and discovered that I had badly torn my new Easter pants."

Richard didn't come right out and say he wanted the city to replace the pants. But—

"I should like to hear from you as quick as possible. I would like to have them to wear to church Sunday."

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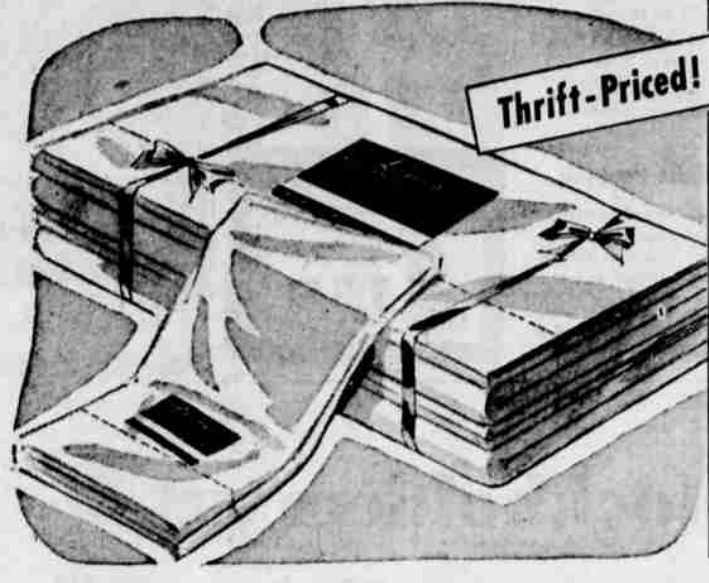
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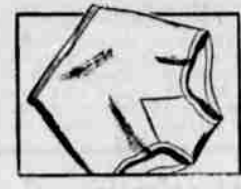


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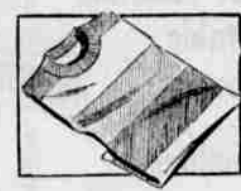
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