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University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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20 "PROTESTERS"
MARCH FROM UM
TO THE MISSOULIAN

MISSOULA---

A two-mile comic strip protest march from the University of Montana to The Missoulian newspaper plant downtown came off as expected, except that there probably were fewer demonstrators in the march than some had anticipated.

More than 600 had signed their names to petitions asking that The Missoulian editors drop Dick Tracy, Little Abner and Nancy from the newspaper, but only 20 participated in the march from the University Center to the newspaper plant.

The student petition in part described Tracy as "incoherent and hate-filled," Little Abner as humorous, but also "vicious and hate-filled" and Nancy as "not funny."

Hours before the march began Thursday afternoon The Missoulian announced in a page one news item in its morning edition that the paper "decided last November to drop Dick Tracy and make other changes in comics this coming summer."

After the protesters arrived at The Missoulian, Publisher Lloyd G. Schermer and Edward A. Coyle, editor, announced that Pogo would be replacing Dick Tracy on the comic page, but that Nancy and Little Abner would, at least for a while, remain.

The protesters sought in vain to have the "Wizard of Id" and "BC" added to The Missoulian comics.

Coyle said a number of The Missoulian staff members voted in favor of keeping Little Abner in the paper and "Nancy rates high among fifth and sixth graders" in readership, "We try to satisfy everybody," Coyle added.

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Sam Reynolds, the newspaper's editorial page editor, told the marchers his third grade daughter feels "Nancy is a gas." He said Daisy Mae's past may not be so respectable, but he added that she is a good housewife now.

The protest seemed to be all in good fun. The Rev. Jonathan Nelson, Lutheran campus pastor who was one of the marchers, said, "The issue today is laughter; the quality of it, the ability to laugh at oneself. The society that is up so tight it cannot laugh is on the verge of mass insanity."

Pastor Nelson, charter member of Save the Children from Unfit Material (SCUM), one of several campus groups seeking removal of the three comic strips from The Missoulian, said he had received a number of phone calls expressing a variety of feelings about the protest march.

"The general reaction has been that people are afraid of violence during the course of the demonstration," Pastor Nelson said. "More radical student types have said they didn't feel the comics are a serious enough issue to devote a protest to."

A number of the marchers wore yellow arm bands as self-styled parade marshals. Several carried signs with such things printed on them as "Happiness is a new comic strip," "Down with 'Tricky' Dick" and "POT -- Purge Our Tracy."

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