

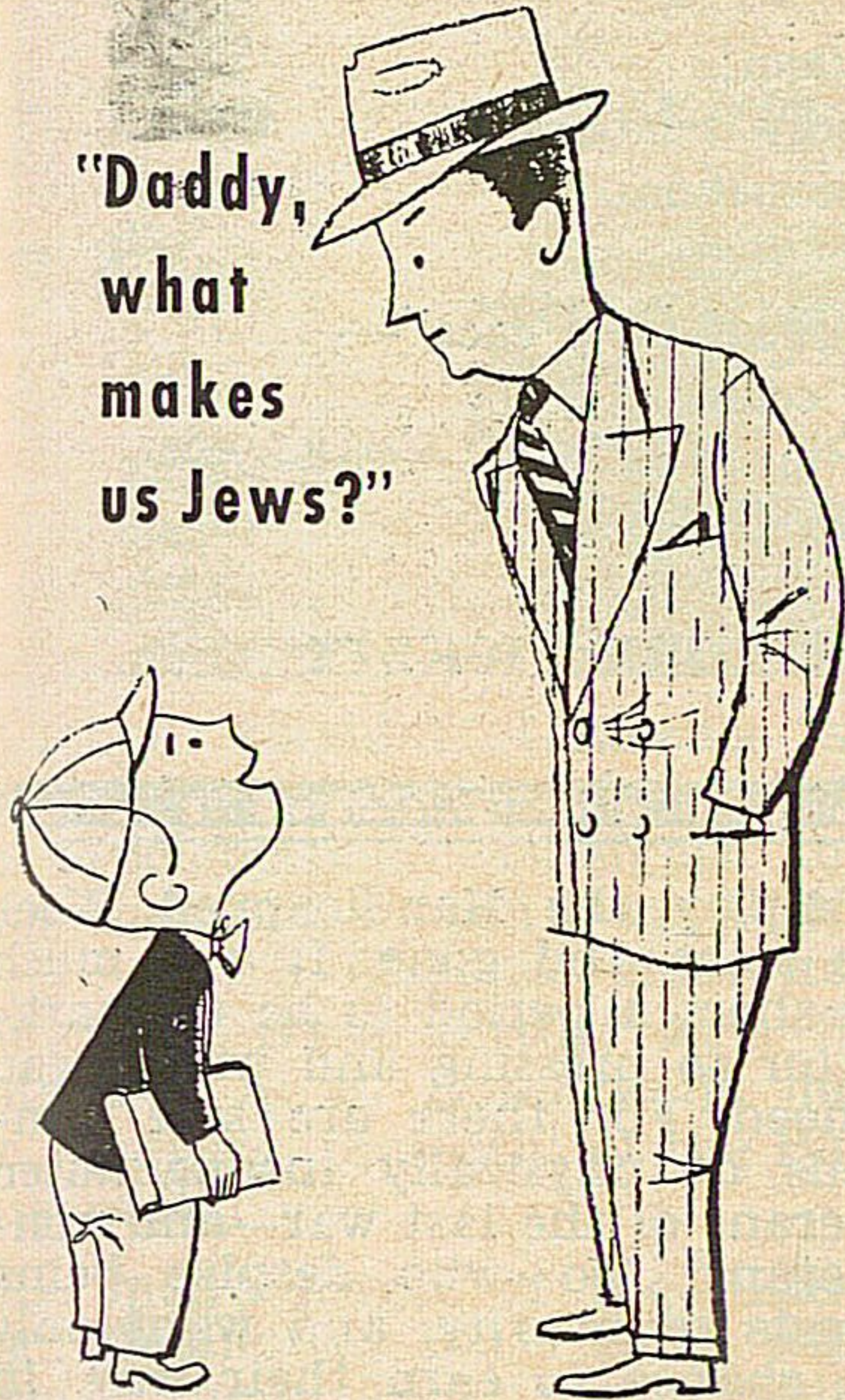
Why do You Send your Child to a Jewish School?

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the fourth in a series of seven articles detailing the preliminary reports of the Self-Study on Jewish Education which was carried out during the past spring.)

By WILLIAM MAZEFSKY

has your child ever asked....

"Daddy,
what
makes
us Jews?"



Last May two hundred and fifty three Jewish doorbells were rung and, among other things, parents were asked "Why do you send your child to a Jewish School?"

In all, thirty three questions were asked of Jewish parents by fifty volunteers, mothers themselves, who did the interviewing in behalf of the Parents' Attitudes Committee of the Self Study on Jewish Education.

The Parents' Attitudes Committee, under the chairmanship of Mrs. M. H. Fisher, were aided by Dr. Morris Ostofsky of Duquesne and Dr. Paul Schreiber of the University of Pittsburgh who made a preliminary analysis of the returns which were the basis of the initial report by the Attitudes Committee.

Significantly, the group surveyed which was selected at random was almost equally divided between boys (136) and girls (131) confirms the findings of other sub-committees of the Self Study, particularly with the hardhitting observations of the School Facts Committee and School Facilities

Committee, reported in earlier articles.

The Fisher Committee reported that "On the basis of the questionnaire, certain trends emerge: (1) three out of four girls attend Sunday School only, (2) six out of ten boys attend weekday or combined weekday and Sunday School. This is much higher in the age group of 11 to 13 when the boys are prepared for Bar Mitzvah; in this group eight out of ten attend weekday schools."

"Safe Pick-Up and Delivery"

In response to the question "Why do you send your child to Jewish School," the replies were standard stereotype reflecting an untutored and shallow approach which was not based on any concept of the role and understanding of the importance of Jewish education by the parents themselves.

These were some of the typical answers: "For cultural—not religious reasons;" "All the other children go;" "To meet Jewish children;" "Grandparents insist;" "Safe pick-up and delivery;" "To be a member of a Jewish Congregation"; "Mother went"; "To Prepare for Bar Mitzvah."

In response to questions relating to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the type of Jewish education received by the child, the Parents' Attitudes Committee reports the "more prominent reasons for dissatisfaction with Sunday Schools are the following (1) Teachers are incompetent (2) Lack of discipline (applies also to weekday schools) . . . (3) No agreement on proper curriculum."

The question which probed the parents' knowledge of the subjects studied by the child and asked an evaluation of progress again revealed a startling lack of interest on the part of the parents. According to the report, "36% of those whose children attend Sunday School indicate no knowledge of any subjects taught, while . . . 16% of the parents of weekday children do not know of any subjects which their children study."

"With one exception," the Parents' Attitude Report adds, "parents of children attending All Day

Schools, were both very well informed and pleased with the progress of their children."

The parents of All Day School children again set a pace when 86% answered "Yes" to the question asking whether they found the teachers "Competent and well trained." Parents of Sunday School students who answered in the affirmative totaled but 64.4%.

The Parents' Attitude group report indicated that "three out of four parents were satisfied with school facilities. Again All Day Schools are leading with 100% of their parents answering in the affirmative. In general the facilities of the larger schools meet with a greater degree of satisfaction while smaller schools invoke a considerable degree of dissatisfaction from parents."

Recommendations

The Parents' Attitudes Committee concluded its preliminary report with the following recommendations:

1. "Greater attention should be paid to Adult Education which would draw parents into informal adult groups to raise their level of understanding and acceptance of Jewish education.
2. "On the basis of the dissatisfaction and lack of knowledge of parents, our committee recommends that schools have **Parent Teacher Associations** which would be so programmed that there would be a healthy, wholesome attention paid to problems relating to the relationship of parents to
3. "There is a need for well-defined curriculum for Sunday Schools since our findings reveal that parents do not seem to have an adequate knowledge of what their child is studying.
4. "Sunday School education should be made more intensive. This might require change to more than one day attendance.
5. "There should be more intensive education for girls since our findings reveal that most girls are in Sunday School and that parents feel that the Sunday School education is inadequate.
6. "Greater attention should be paid to more homework for children in view of the fact that parents complain that there is not enough. More homework may help bridge the gap between the minimum amount of time spent in Sunday School and the amount of Jewish education that parents feel their children are absorbing.
7. "School facilities should be improved. Parents express their dissatisfaction with school facilities.
8. "Greater attention should be paid to securing trained teachers since dissatisfaction with teachers was noted in our responses."

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