

# Problems Arise in Nar's Proposed Plan for the Chaim Chelm Cheder (CCC)

by Philip *Fishl* Kutner

Last month, on Our Yidish Club's flight home from visiting Chelm Poland, Nar proposed a plan for the CCC. However, a dilemma surfaced when Heshy asked where were we going to get the students teachers and support staff to come and live in Chelm in the CCC which will be established in the chalk caves carved out beneath the city?

Nar phoned *Fishl*, editor of *Der Bay*, and asked if he could put in an RFA (request for advice) from his erudite readers. The request was fulfilled and the mail carrier delivered bushels of responses.

Almost to a tee they read, "I am deeply moved by Nar's plight for staff and students for the CCC. I have a \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank— daughter-in-law, son-in-law, husband, wife, under-achiever, dyslexic, dysfunctional or addictive) who would benefit from being removed from a normal Jewish home and be in a sheltered, caring and loving cave.

*Fishl* delivered the bushels of responses to Nar and with *Rokhl* helping they spent days reading and rereading the letters. They decided to sort them into piles of qualified (Q), doubtful (D) and unqualified (U). The criteria that were established for each of the three categories were based on:

- How large a check was sent to be sure that their \_\_\_\_\_ was selected.
- Corroborating letters of reference who attested to the qualifications of \_\_\_\_\_ as a viable candidate for admission to CCC.
- The willingness to send continued contributions to see that \_\_\_\_\_ would not leave for at least a year.
- A psychiatric evaluation which attested to the fact that a *vacation* from a *normal* Jewish environment would definitely make him/her a better Jew.
- Accepting and signing to live by the *narishkaytn* established by Nar—known as the N.N.s or *enens* (Nar's *Narishkaytn*).
- (\*\*\*)Most important of all, and being the main reason for selection) A letter from the applicant himself/herself stating that he/she is in an unbearable situation and any place would be better than where he/she is now.

It was interesting to note that Nar reported that the applications were equally distributed among Q, D and U. This resulted in more than a sufficient number of qualified and accepted teachers, staff and students.

All went well until the *Forverts* spilled the beans, let the cat out of the bag and published the list of *winners*. Nar was bombarded with phone calls and even a lawsuit threatening him with demeaning the name of a *loved* misfit. Each refusee was humiliated that he/she was not a qualified prospect for CCC.

To prevent the escalation of a public scandal, *Rokhl* turned again to Nar and said, "You got me into this mess, come up with an idea to get us out of it."

Nar turned for assistance to his dear friend, *Fishl*. After much deliberation the plan began to gel. First all D and U applicants would have to fulfill all of the criteria to show good faith. Not surprisingly, down to the last one, each complied. This showed how detested they were and how miserable they were.

The plan was to cave (house) a third of the group. Since the day in Chelm has 24 hours, they'd be in the cave and learn at the CCC for 8 hours. Since they would sleep 8 hours, the unemployed Chelm households could have boarders. Chelm has 21% unemployment. Also, they would not be fed during those hours. Households received for each sleeper \$5 per night, \$30 per week or \$120 per month. (These numbers are important. A budget had to be submitted for grants to make up a shortfall.

We have taken care of 16 hours. What can we do for the next 8 hours? Since we are working on 3 shifts, there had to be something that they could do at different hours. Oh, it was decided to have the shifts go 8am-4pm, 4pm-midnight and midnight-8am.

The easiest was the first group from 8am-noon. They would be teachers aides and help teach English speaking and reading. In the second group the girls would be mother's helpers and also baby-sit so the moms could have free time. The boys would be doing handy jobs around the house. This would be in return for 2 meals a day.

The toughest job was what to do with the midnight-8am shift. The decision was made to place them in the library. It was always empty those hours and for the brightest teachers staff and students, they could spend the time reading and studying. The only extra cost was the extra heat and electricity. Also some could be placed in the hospital for night duty.

It appeared this problem was solved, but how are the problems of the cold and dampness to be handled inside a cave without polluting the environment? Come back next month and see!