LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

December 19, 2023



CHILDCARE

Dear Editor,

Since the main purpose of childcare is to help working members, reducing the maximum time to two hours is not a reasonable solution to obtain insurance. Why not hire a contractor to cut through the wall and add a door to the offices? That solution sounds like the most effective way to obtain insurance. Having childcare for shopping parents is a convenience but having it for working parents is a necessity.

Best,

Stacey Sarnicola

Response from General Coordinator Lisa Moore: We understand that childcare is a crucial need for parents who work at the Coop. That's why the program was implemented in the 1980s. We are committed to finding a solution that works for everyone. The General Coordinators and the sponsors of Return Childcare to the Coop are working together to find additional insurance carriers who won't require us to have a childcare license. It's important to clarify that the November 7, 2023 issue of the Gazette incorrectly stated that the time children spent in childcare would be reduced to two hours. The General Coordinators would not restrict the time so drastically as it would defeat the purpose of having childcare.

As reported at two prior General Meetings, the Coop's childcare cannot be licensed because we do not meet New York's stringent requirements. One of these requirements is that the room must have two exit doors into a hallway or the street, known as egresses. Egress is a means of exit or a way of leaving, and fire egress is more specifically defined as a method for exiting a structure during a fire. According to New York City's fire code, all exits must have an accessible means of egress, i.e., a continuous and unobstructed way of egress travel from any accessible point in a building or facility to a public way. Cutting through the wall to add a door to the offices would not meet the fire code standards.

We are doing everything possible to restore childcare services at the Coop. We understand the importance of this service to our members.

The General Coordinators will provide another update to the membership on childcare in the near future.

‘TIS THE SEASON

To the Editor,

As gift givers prepare presents for their loved ones, many Coop members will be considering how to minimize waste. Using recycled wrapping paper, a reusable gift bag or creating your own wrap from extra fabric or paper are some options. While shopping at the Coop recently, I saw quite a bit of non-recycled wrapping paper on display in aisle two and later found rolls of recycled paper in a box in another part of the store.

We should not be carrying non-recycled wrapping paper. There are many vendors currently carrying recycled wrapping paper in a variety of sizes. And these vendors very likely do not have an environmental policy, as we do, which states that we are: “Minimizing disposable products, by seeking durable alternatives and/or alternatives which have recycled content“ and “The Coop will strive to support the best products and practices in regard to the health, safety and preservation of humans, animals and the overall biosphere that it can achieve.”

Looking at the countries of origin of the non-recycled wrapping paper on display, I noticed that some were from China. Old growth forests are practically non-existent in China today after years of reckless and poorly managed logging. There are more recent policies in place to maintain what is left and replant trees—but is that where the wrapping paper and wood products “Made in China” come from? Probably not. As China began to implement policies for their largely decimated forests, there was an impetus to keep manufacturing paper and wood products. Timber has been sourced from pristine forests in nearby countries like Russia, both legally and illegally.

Every purchase we make has wide-reaching environmental ramifications. So let's please be true to our environmental policy and more consistently carry recycled rather than non-recycled paper products.

In Cooperation,

Cynthia Blayer

NO TO BDS

Hello Editors,

It is imperative for the physical safety of PSFC to know that BDS explicitly supports violence.

Just check the BDS website. The call to use "armed resistance" (https://tinyurl.-com/2zxbu93h) is explicit. Support for 'armed reaction' is explicit (https://tinyurl.-com/yhdmk9hm). Omar Barghouti's justification for '…illegal or immoral acts of violence that the oppressed may commit…' in a *Guardian* article is explicit.

People around the world are being physically harmed and killed. That alone is the litmus test. PSFC is not equipped for this and cannot be perceived as taking sides among violence. Simply read the news to see how such a stance plays out in real time. As always, I maintain PSFC should remain explicitly non-violent.

The *Gazette*, PSFC's official voice, is now informed that it is giving a platform to a movement that explicitly supports violence. As an equal working member I feel unsafe and physically threatened through such letters. No working member or volunteer is allowed to feel unsafe. I unapologetically demand that the *Gazette* stop publishing letters supporting BDS.

Jesse Rosenfeld

THE SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DEBATE

Dear Editor:

To support a democratic society we must have an appreciation for the social importance of civil debate. History is filled with moments in which communities came to a seeming moral impasse. But if in a democratic framework the best option for discourse across divides is to quietly agree to disagree, then what would this framework have to offer us when we face a genuine crisis of consciousness?

As organizing for and against BDS at the Coop rises again, it will be crucial to provide our community a genuine outlet for the expression of our views. An effective democracy enables and supports meaningful dialogue around complex and difficult issues. Strong communities work to bolster this capacity as needed, rather than relinquish it at the first sign of disagreement.

There are conflicting opinions regarding the BDS movement, at the Coop and beyond. But that sense of conflict is only exacerbated by the force of silence that we allow between us. We owe it to ourselves—as members of a community committed to equality, opposed to discrimination in any form, seeking to maximize participation at every level—to encourage a discussion that can clarify and expand our viewpoints concerning what response is required of us in this urgent moment.

Gratefully,

Morgan Võ

MISSED CONNECTIONS?

Dear Fellow Members,

It was a hot Friday afternoon in August and I was checking out a shopper who couldn't find corn syrup. He was roasting peaches later and the corn syrup was for the homemade caramel sauce that, along with homemade whipped cream, would transform them into peach sundaes. Obviously this was the best thing I'd ever heard and I told him so. We continued to chat pleasantly for a few minutes before he paid, introduced himself, shook my hand and left. Ten minutes later while checking out another shopper, it hit me: Peach sundaes are hot—and I'm pretty sure that guy was supposed to be my new boyfriend? Alas my peach sundae opportunity is long gone. But what if yours doesn't have to be? What if the *Linewaiters' Gazette* had… drumroll… a missed connections section!

During a recent shift, I asked a fellow member what she thought of the *Gazette* having a missed connections section and she was reminded of a missed connection of her own. While she was working a checkout shift, a shopper admired her outfit and she'd confidently told them it came from the Gap. Later she realized the outfit wasn't from the Gap at all—it was from JCrew! She wished she could tell them somehow—because somewhere out there perhaps they were clicking away on gap.com not finding what they're looking for. What could we possibly do about this? Missed connections!

And so dear reader, since a section in *Gazette* isn't actually an option, I did what people do in situations like this—I created a private Reddit community. In order to post and read missed connections, please sign up for a Reddit account, sign in, go to https://www.reddit.com/r/psfcmissedconnections/ and click "Request to Join." And should you wish to reach out with thoughts, questions or ideas, please email me at psfcmissedconnections@gmail.com.

Warmly,

Arpita Dey

DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AT RISK

Dear members,

The largest threat to PSFC continuing to function as a democratically governed Coop is not whether our General Meetings are in-person or a hybrid of in-person plus on-line.

The Coop's dedication to democratic governing means that all of us are bound by operational changes determined by a simple majority of members present at a general meeting where a vote is held.

If a proposal had been voted on during the September meeting, it could have been decided by a simple majority of the 105 who attended: 53 individuals, representing just 1/3 of 1% of our current 15,500 members.

Pre-pandemic, 500-750 people attended the in-person GMs, representing, 3-4% of membership. The offer of earning a shift credit first attracted me, but I kept coming back to learn more. My experience of the online meetings, which attracted 150-250 participants, was that even though this represented only 1% of membership, there was a higher level of engagement in the details of a specific discussion or vote, general Coop governance, and/or sharing experience (personal, professional, or Coop institutional memory) about how a decision might affect members and staff. Since a voting issue requires a 2-step process (discussion at one GM before being scheduled for a vote at a second GM) there was a greater chance that those voting were present during the previous discussion so that they could better evaluate changes in the final

proposal.

It’s time for the Coop to think more creatively about how to govern democratically, or we will be governed solely those who have the time and motivation to attend monthly meetings. Or, using September as an example, decisions could be made by 53 members.

Jan Rigsby

PRINT GAZETTE?

Hello!

I’m wondering if there’s a plan/interest in bringing back the print Gazette? I’d be happy to help facilitate or participate in any conversations.

Alex Godin