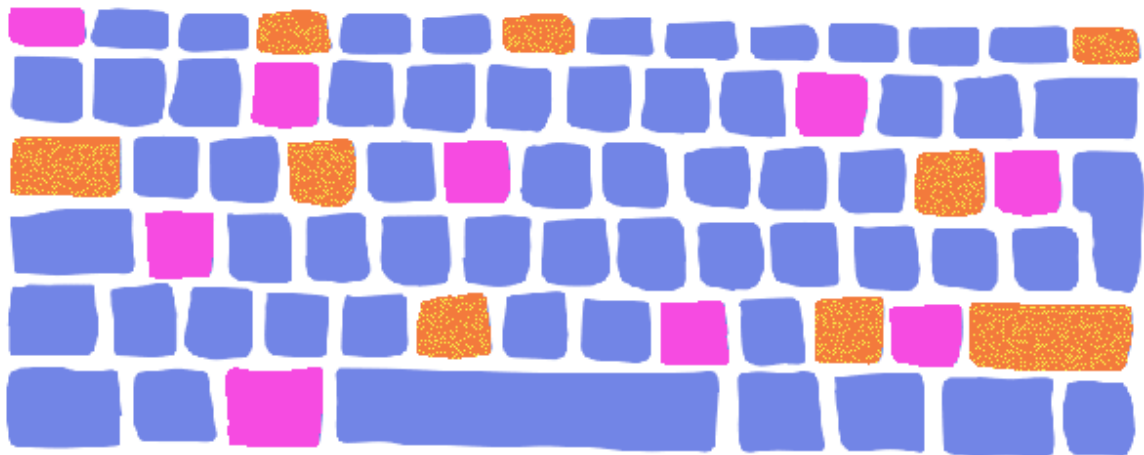


FEBRUARY 18, 2025

February 18, 2025

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## **FINDING THE COOP ABROAD**

Dear Coop Members:

This is in the “What are the odds? department.

I am in Southern Mexico—Ciudad of Oaxaca. On a van trip to see and make paper, and to see the work of artist Francisco Toledo I found myself in a group of 11 other ex-pats. Of the 11 of us seven of us were from Park Slope and five are Coop members! (Another revealed former Coop membership.)

Surprise!

*Riva Rosenfield*

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## **EVIL ON BOTH SIDES**

Greetings:

Having been a member since 1980, I have witnessed many conflicts in the Coop. A short letter regarding boycott of Israeli products. This whole issue is toxic for liberal and left organizations, creating divisions that interfere with other vital concerns. I find evil on both sides of the Hamas-Israel war.

*Bill Miller*

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## **FEWER THAN TEN ITEMS AT THE COOP ARE ISRAELI**

Dear Gazette Editor,

Coop members calling themselves psfc4palestine want us to boycott certain products from Israel, based on the “BDS targeted list” to “materially enforce economic pres-

sure on Israeli companies complicit with apartheid.”

On January 7, 2025 the Coordinators said, “The Coop currently carries less than ten items from Israel.” GM Joe Holtz gave me this list on January 22, gathered from July 2024 sales data:

<b>Product</b>	<b>Average weekly unit sales</b>
Ecolove (assorted)	14.84
Seed & Mill Tahini	6.17
Soom Tahini	13.0
Al Arz Tahini (assorted)	54.67
Osem Bamba	258.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>347.01</b>

Joe estimates that the Coop sells “over 400,000 units” of product per week.

Joe said, “Occasionally a fresh produce item comes from Israel. None at present. The BDS targeted list includes SodaStream, Sabra, and Israeli produce such as peppers, carrots, and clementines.”

“Sabra is now 100% owned by PepsiCo and is manufactured in the United States,” he said. “They want us to boycott SodaStream. SodaStream is no longer carried by the Coop.”

As of July 11, the Coop carried ZERO items from Israel that BDS is targeting, though sometimes we sell produce they’re focusing on.

The boycott ignores products we always sell! This makes no sense and so I question the entire boycott premise.

Could a boycott mainly represent a position statement?

If the Coop thought that Israel was treating the Palestinian people badly, now and throughout history, rather than joining a flawed boycott, let's think for ourselves and make a declaration, e.g.:

"We unequivocally support the right of Palestinians to live with freedom and dignity and the dismantling of all systems that propagate and empower discriminatory treatment of these people."

Some psfc4palestine supporters propose changing longstanding Coop boycott voting rules just for them, such that a simple "majority vote" activates their boycott. I object.

*Andy Feldman*

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## **NO TO BDS**

Dear *Gazette* Submissions:

I wholly concur with *The Linewaiters' Gazette* article, entitled "Stop Forcing Me To Shop, Vote, And Think Like You." Its closing sentence, "BDS needs the Coop. Not the other way around," is spot on. Our Coop has nothing to gain and everything to lose by linking itself to the BDS movement. I can't help but think of the BDS movement against the Israeli company, Soda Stream, that had been located in the West Bank, and employed hundreds of West Bank Palestinians, and then in the face of intense international pressure, moved its operations inside Israel proper; and with that move, the jobs of many of those West Bank Palestinians were lost. So yes BDS was successful in Soda Stream leaving the West Bank, but did so without care or regard for those Palestinian workers harmed by them. So too at our Coop, adopting hybrid meetings

could potentially lead to the Coop adopting BDS. This would likely lead to loss of members (myself—a 23-year member included), loss of revenue, potential legal action, etc. And then the bad press (and ethics issue) of having our Coop, via BDS, take the side of Hamas, a terrorist group that sanctioned the rape, murder and kidnapping of Israelis and foreign nationals.

I love the Coop, I love Israel (though not its current government), I support a peaceful, independent Palestinian State; but as seen in the Soda Stream example, BDS works against all of these entities.

Let's unify our Coop and get back to the business of being a Coop and not a platform for those who seek to divide us.

*Murray Lantner*

PS: I love that we have some really tasty shade grown coffee in the Coop, it tastes good and its good for biodiversity.

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## **OUR GENERAL COORDINATORS ARE FALLING SHORT**

Coop Members,

I was taken aback to read the GC's January 7 inflammatory, fear-mongering opinion piece "Our Coop At Risk," that opposed both a referendum on boycotting Israeli products and hybrid GMs. Their January 28 follow-up on preserving the 75% supermajority for boycotts simply reiterated those points rather than responding to new concerns.

My own opinion, while in favor of a boycott, is nuanced. It is straightforward to not stock Israeli-made products such as Sabra Hummus, but from working produce receiving and processing, I can see practical challenges in screening out produce deliveries

at receiving, as they are variably sourced at the distributors' discretion. Those same challenges arise for any boycott, yet boycotts are in the tradition and history of the Coop. I think it's worth exploring, planning, discussing and voting, to balance the commitment to preserving human life and rights with the effective functioning of the store.

In both articles, the GCs fall short of the Coop's founding principles of "respecting the opinions, needs, and concerns of every member" and seeking "to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store." Why should a boycott alone require a 75% supermajority unlike all other potentially divisive issues? The only reason I can see is the GC's blind spot on this one topic. However, the most critical democratic advance is hybrid GMs. Boycott-opposed members would also benefit from hybrid GMs.

How is it respectful and participatory to exclude members from GMs given a lack of evening childcare? It is highly unlikely that a referendum at a hybrid GM would lead to a mass exodus of thousands of members as threatened by these articles; what factual basis is there for that assumption? Some might leave if the boycott motion passed. There are many would-be members to join.

In Cooperation,  
Eve Goodman

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## **THE GENERAL COORDINATORS ARE NOT THE ENEMY**

Dear Coop Members,

I'm writing because there are concerning developments at the Coop that may not be widely known. Unless you attend General Meetings (GM) or carefully follow the *Gazette*, you might be unaware that there is a group of members actively working

against the General Coordinators (GC). In fact, I would call it a witch hunt.

These members, two of whom are on the Board, are making false accusations at GMs, sowing seeds of distrust and creating “gotcha” moments to cast the GCs in the worst possible light. Example one: An Agenda Committee member missed the deadline to place a new member recruitment ad in the *Gazette*; believing mistakenly it had been placed, GC Ann Herpel said as much at a GM. Though this was a simple human error, individuals have repeatedly used this negligible incident to publicly shame and embarrass the GCs. They’ve wasted valuable staff time by rehashing this and dragging the GCs through the mud. Example two: At the January GM, one of these Board members made bogus claims about labor violations against the Coop. This is just two of many similar incidents.

Why are they doing this? Maybe it is retribution because the GCs haven’t supported their political agenda. They want you to believe that the GCs are the enemy. In reality the GCs are doing exactly what we hired them to do. They work tirelessly to make sure our Coop continues to thrive, to get us the best food for less money, and to be a good employer. They are succeeding.

These people want you to lose faith in our GCs. Don’t fall for it. Please pay attention. The Board of Directors elections are just around the corner. It’s up to us to protect what we have built together. If you want to know more, just ask me.

Sincerely,

Karen Mancuso

Membership Coordinator

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**YES, WE’RE POLITICAL... BUT ALSO A COOP WHERE PEOPLE SHOULD CO-**

## **OPERATE!**

Greetings:

Some Boycott, Divest, Sanction (“BDS”) opponents argue that introducing politics into the Coop is a bad idea, while some advocates defend their activity on the basis that the Coop is political with a history of boycotts. I think this discussion misses the mark.

If organizing a local community, with its own detailed rules & regulations, voting system, taxation (i.e. working requirements!) and support for local farmers, is not political... I don't know what is! So yes, the Coop is a political organization, and that is fine.

If political advocacy is part of the Coop's DNA, it is also a Cooperative run according to participatory principals which place open-minded cooperation at the center of our activity. Those who think all issues should be settled by voting perhaps believe that the Coop is a republic, where majority rules, damned be minority rights. But the Mission Statement is clear: “We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member. We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store.” Past boycotts have been narrow in scope/impact, consensual, supported by the General Coordinators and did not personally impact many members.

BDS fails to be in compliance with our mission statement on several accounts: first, the organization is secretive, exclusionary and refuses to engage with opponents—not exactly cooperative behavior. Second, it is not consensual, and fosters tremendous divisiveness. Third, it is discriminatory against one country/group, and does not respect the rights of a substantial group of members; the atmosphere it fosters at the Coop may actually violate Title VII. And finally, it clearly jeopardizes the future of the Coop.

In Cooperation,  
Bruno Grandsard

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## **ENOUGH HIDING BEHIND “DEMOCRACY”**

Hello,

Amazing quote from a letter-writer in the last issue of the *Gazette*. It was also refreshing:

*“If there are Coop members who are against the principles of our Coop’s democracy, and would leave based on a strong majority of membership voting on any proposal, then they should not be Coop members.”*

It’s astonishing for those people pushing BDS to hide behind “democracy” when it was clearly stated by the General Coordinators how every initiative the BDS people are pushing are far from “democratic.” It’s nice though to finally see how the pro-BDS members feel about us. They don’t want us there so it was good to hear someone - come out and say it.

We are not going anywhere and we will fight BDS until the end and call you out every step of the way.

Jonathan Tobias

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## **THE LIE BEHIND “HYBRID” VOTING**

Hello Coop,

The first time hybrid voting (online and in person) was floated as a feature of Coop

governance was some months ago at a General Meeting. Joe Holtz was explaining to a BDS supporter why we can't just adopt hybrid, that we need to change the by-laws. Their immediate response was, 'How do we change the by-laws?'

People, people, people. Hybrid voting is not, never was, and never will be, about democracy, working families or the immunocompromised. Those buzzwords were trotted out later to sweeten the Big Lie.

BDS is merely a 'non-violent' arm of Hamas (who claims to represent Palestinians), a very violent militant extremist movement that terrifies and oppresses Palestinians, uses 'slave' to label those of African descent, caricatures African Americans as birthing monkeys, is itching to forcibly displace 6,000,000 Jews of Middle Eastern and European descent (genocide, anyone?) and is part of the Muslim Brotherhood who wants to colonize the world under a Caliphate. BDS itself champions Hamas, including the rape and kidnapping and infanticide of October 7, and wants to kick you out of the Coop if you disagree. BDS is nothing more than slogans spouted by the reckless. From the very start, a vote for hybrid has been a vote to open the door to voting for all of the above and it takes little effort to find it in their own words.

Don't be fooled into thinking this is a debate about democracy. Voting against the hybrid model is voting against a BDS faction who support everything you find repellent, including genocide. Drop everything. Show up to the General Meetings. Keep our Coop a cooperative.

BDS needs the Coop. Not the other way around.

Jesse Rosenfeld

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## **THE GENERAL COORDINATORS' PATRONIZING TONE**

Dear Coop Members,

In addition to my many substantive disagreements with the Coordinators' Corner column in the January 7 issue, I was offended by the patronizing tone taken by the GCs, who wrote: "The broader membership may not fully understand the narrow perspective of this group [PSFC4Palestine] or the risks their actions pose to the Coop."

First of all, why assume naiveté on the part of the "broader membership?" And second, what does it mean to frame as "narrow" the efforts of Coop members to help call a halt to Israel's killing spree and the colonial occupation that gave rise to it? How is it "narrow" for Coop members who are themselves Palestinian, and/or Muslim, and/or Arab, to call out our Coop's complicity with these horrors? How is it "narrow" for anti-Zionist Jewish Coop members to reject the cynical use of identity politics to shield Israel and its US partner in crime? How is it "narrow" for members who lack some obvious personal connection to the issue to nonetheless feel responsible for correcting blatant injustice that's bankrolled and armed using our tax dollars?

In the January 28 *Gazette* issue, the GCs double down on their patronizing approach, admonishing the membership that the 75% supermajority requirement for approving a boycott must not be repealed, as this would "divide the Coop." I would like them to explain what is "non-divisive" about allowing a small minority of voting members to block a boycott that is desired by a majority of up to 74%? Is that because, in the GCs' eyes, those who desire a boycott are "narrow" by definition? Does each "narrow" opinion in favor of a boycott count as a mere fraction of each opinion against? Is that what the GCs are saying? Is this their vision of democratic decision-making?

In cooperation,

*Jan Clausen*

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## **I LOVE THE COOP BUT...**

Fellow Members,

A friend and I were talking about the recent Coordinators' Corner piece. They asked me how I felt about it. "Furious," I replied. "I love the Coop but it keeps wronging me."

Over and over I have expected our Coop to operate as it is described in its mission and in the documents that detail policies and procedures. I expect even-handed leadership and fairness. But over and over—just like the recent article, and the 2019 union busting antics—I have seen upper management using a heavy-handed, "we know what is best," top-down style of leadership.

Of late, our General Coordinators have been openly anti-democratic. It seems they only support member participation in governance if it will bring about outcomes they approve of, and that they will stop at nothing to suppress proposals they disagree with. They've told us that hybrid meetings could result in a boycott of Israeli products (which they don't want) so they also are unsupportive of hybrid meetings. If only they could take a broader view: hybrid meetings could create openings for participation for a wide range of Coop members, on myriad topics.

If this is truly a cooperative, then where are the General Coordinators' efforts to cooperate—instead of dictate? Where is evidence of General Coordinators listening to members who do not agree with them. What I see in their article is open hostility—not cooperation.

Everyone who knows me knows I love the Coop, and cooperative models of engagement. Going into my 20th year of membership, I want more for and from the Coop than the limited perspectives imposed by management.

In Cooperation,  
*HanaKyle Moranz*

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## **SUPPRESSION OF FREE SPEECH**

Dear Fellow Members:

I joined the Park Slope Food Coop more than 50 years ago and I was primarily attracted to it not only because it provides the community with good food at good prices, but also because of its willingness to take stands on numerous moral issues.

This latter tradition has prevailed for decades, until recently. The current actions of the Coop General Coordinators are not only at variance with our long history of support for moral issues, they constitute an effort to suppress free speech and must be strongly opposed.

Pressuring Israel, peacefully, to change its policies regarding the Palestinians is a moral imperative that none should shrink from...especially the Coop membership.

While some members may leave the Coop because of the BDS boycott effort, a larger number of people are likely to join.

*John McGettrick*

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## **CAN THE COOP GOVERNING STRUCTURE EVOLVE?**

To the editors,

I was disheartened to read the statement of the General Coordinators (“Our Coop at Risk”) in the January 7, 2025 *Gazette* claiming, essentially, that the boycott of Israeli products would lead to the collapse of the Coop. I am not surprised by this support of the Israeli destruction of Palestine. The General Managers have done that before.

In the *Gazette* of March 8, 2012, Joe Holtz wrote that a vote against having a Coop-wide referendum about boycotting Israeli products would be a vote for the Coop. This tactic was and is, to spread fear among Coop members. The GCs now say if we oppose Israel’s genocidal attack on the Palestinian people, we will destroy our Coop.

The GCs are our employees. They direct our paid staff. As the Coop has grown to more than 16,000 members, our decision-making process has placed more authority in the hands of the GCs. They have to keep the Coop functioning and they do it very well. But the governing structure of the Coop has not evolved with its burgeoning membership. We are still subject to a few decisions made by fewer than five percent of the members at monthly General Meetings. And the GCs make many other decisions for us.

That’s why hybrid General Meetings are a better option.

Many members can’t do more here than their work shifts and grocery shopping. They may rarely think about the political aspects of our Coop. But many members know that oppressive regimes and corporations can be challenged by boycotts.

The century-old war on Palestine continues, culminating now in the murder of tens of thousands of Palestinians. Hybrid meetings might bring greater member participation. It might show us that the vast majority of Coop members support a boycott of Israeli products.

*Naomi Brussel*

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## **GENERAL COORDINATORS OVERREACH**

Dear Editors,

I'm deeply concerned about the irresponsible and fear-mongering editorial posted by the Coop's General Coordinators in last month's *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Given their elevated platform and the placement of this letter, it seems that the general coordinators are using a bully pulpit to make it clear that they are in direct opposition to bringing a potential boycott of Israeli goods to a vote, and they are maligning the good faith efforts brought forth by PSFC for Palestine to bring this essential and timely question to the membership. It's disingenuous to use low-income members and Coop staff as a wedge and to use the potential of diminished sales to argue against bringing something to a democratic vote. The truth is that nothing at the Coop requires a 75% vote. Even changing the bylaws only requires a two-thirds majority. The general coordinators are "bringing divisiveness to the coop" and spreading misinformation by posting a letter like this one.

Best,

*Nancy Mercado*

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## **PSFC AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

To the Editor:

With "hybrid" the PSFC would be in compliance with the second Principle of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA): Coops are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting the policies and making decisions.

Coop members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote). PSFC did have democratic governance, in compliance with ICA's second Principle during the Covid--Zoom GM meetings.

ALL members could vote on the agenda items at the monthly GM Zoom meetings.

*Mary Buchwald*

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## **UMBRAGE AT THE GENERAL COORDINATORS' INCONSISTENCY**

Greetings:

I recall attending a General Meeting many years ago where a member spoke up about how the water bladders the coop was stocking were produced by a subsidiary of a corporation that also produced munitions and how there were alternatives available that were not owned by corporations that produced munitions. Maybe he suggested other brands? I then remember a staff thanking the member for the information and saying that they would switch manufacturers. It occurred without comment.

The Coop is a political project. We have values and we stand for things. I wish we stood for more things!! Where our money goes matters.

The Coordinators' Corner pieces of the last two issues proposes that the Coop won't be successful if a boycott of Israeli products passes without near unanimous support—a bar that is not even required to amend our bylaws, the agreement that makes us a cooperative. I think it is fine to \*want\* that level of agreement but ludicrous to demand it, especially when the vote we are considering is among the impassioned people who are able and choose to attend an in-person general meeting.

Finally, it saddens me that the General Coordinators have felt it necessary to weigh in

on hybrid meetings (against) and a boycott of Israeli products (also against) but didn't feel it was necessary to weigh in on the proposal to remove masking at the coop, a policy that would endanger the actual physical health of vulnerable coop members.

Best,

*Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones*