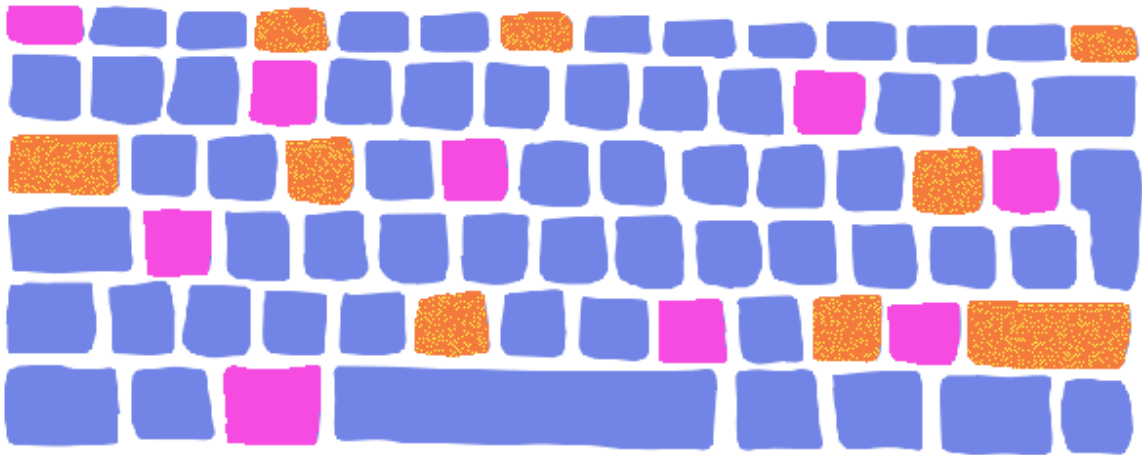


AUGUST 14, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PSFC CARD PHONE INTEGRATION IS ALREADY HERE

Dear all,

Hey, I noticed in this July 2 article that the Coop is working on making a phone-based option for displaying a member's barcode, and that right now the barcode is just available via the website.

I wanted to make sure you are aware that as far as Android phones go, it's already possible to add your PSFC membership card to your phone's digital wallet. I have mine added to my Google Wallet, and from there I can bring a barcode up on my screen that readily scans me in to the Coop.

Happy to give some instructions if needed.

Max Miller

THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE RULING AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE COOP

Dear fellow members:

Millions of justice seekers of every ethnicity have had their aspirations heard by the International Court of Justice in the Hague. On July 19th, the ICJ ruled that the illegal settlements in the occupied territories must be evacuated and reparations made to those who lost their land.

This is the strongest opinion ever issued by the ICJ.

The Court found that "the regime of comprehensive restrictions imposed by Israel on Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory constitutes systemic discrimination based on, inter alia, race, religion or ethnic origin."

We are all enjoined not to be complicit in this apartheid scheme. PSFC has a role to

play by adopting the nonviolent boycott, divestment and sanctions principles urged by Palestinian civil society since 2005.

Ann Schneider

PROTECTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THROUGH IN-PERSON VOTING

Dear fellow Cooperators,

After attending a few recent General Meetings, I am concerned about the impact that the group PSFC Members 4 Palestine is having on the democratic process of the Coop and how this would look in a world of hybrid voting. While this group preaches democracy and inclusivity, their actions are in direct contradiction of these values.

While I value a diversity of opinions in the Coop community, even when they diverge from my perspective, the tactics this group employs are chipping away at the integrity of the democratic process.

If you haven't attended a recent General Meeting, allow me to fill you in. It is evident that the conversations and decisions of the group are predetermined. The decisions that result from this feel orchestrated rather than organically derived from member input and healthy debate. Debate on agenda items and resolutions is limited because "their" decision has already been made before anyone has even scanned in their membership card to walk into the Picnic House.

It seems that this atmosphere has also led to a loss of decorum. I have observed Coop members wearing PSFC Members 4 Palestine pins uncooperatively sneer, giggle and generally bully anyone who dares to express an opposing viewpoint.

These actions undermine the values of the Coop, where every member should be free

to express their opinions and participate. If we let this behavior continue to fester, our debates will continue to lack the breadth and depth required for a healthy democratic process.

I'm concerned that if we move to online voting, this group would silo into their own side conversations and chat rooms instead of engaging in actual conversation. For this reason, I strongly support preserving the current in-person meeting format. The free and open exchange of ideas is essential for the health of the Coop community.

In cooperation,
Tali Rasis

WHILST DEBATING A BOYCOTT, CONSIDER A DOCUMENTARY'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Members:

For all those following world events with profound implications for our Coop, I highly recommend *The Night Won't End*, a searing film about life and death in Gaza under Israeli assault. The film, produced by Laila Al-Arian for the Al Jazeera documentary series *Fault Lines*, is free on YouTube. It eloquently conveys the grief, horror and courage of ordinary Palestinians who have watched their world reduced to rubble. Far worse than any fear for personal safety is the dread of knowing that loved ones, especially young children, are likely to suffer and die. I am haunted by moments such as the sequence during which an ambulance dispatcher remembers the two paramedics who were sent to rescue 6-year-old Hind Rajab: "I won't see heroes like them again. They knew they would be killed, and yet they went."

As the Coop engages in a necessary (and healthy) debate about whether to adopt a boycott of products implicated in Israel's crimes, the discussion can wind up feeling abstract. That's especially the case as U.S. election coverage takes over the head-

lines, crowding out the unbearable reality of unfolding genocide. As we continue to discuss how our Coop might take a small but meaningful step in alignment with the powerful international movement to free Palestine, it's important not to lose sight of what's at stake in human terms. Among other things, Al-Arian's film memorably contextualizes the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of July 19. That opinion clarifies once and for all that Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territory (including the ever-expanding West Bank settlements) is "unlawful" and that "all States are under an obligation" to reject this illegal presence. The online news sites Mondoweiss and Electronic Intifada have good articles about the ICJ opinion.

In cooperation,
Jan Clausen

A RESPONSE TO "FEAR-BASED ACCUSATIONS" REGARDING PSFC MEMBERS FOR PALESTINE

Dear Fellow Members,

A Coop member for over 20 years, I'm writing to share my experience of petitioning in front of the Coop with Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine. I'd never canvassed at the Coop, and I was a little nervous at first. So, I was delighted by how many folks were in support of and/or wanted to hear more about our proposal for a targeted boycott of Israeli goods. I had thoughtful conversations with many members. The few who weren't interested simply said "no thank you" or "definitely not" and headed inside.

Given this experience, I was dismayed by the tenor of some of the letters in the July 23 Gazette. Those letters used words like "impose," "blanket ban" and "Coop-wide boycott" as though we are proposing to autocratically deprive fellow members of their right to make their own shopping decisions. These fear-based accusations need

to be corrected. PSFC Members for Palestine proposes a targeted boycott (of Sabra, SodaStream and Israeli produce), and we would like all members to have an opportunity to vote on that idea in a way that is accessible and open to all. It is that simple. To suggest that this is divisive or harmful to Coop unity underestimates our community and the messy but vital democratic experiment that Coop membership entails.

Other letters suggested that we avoid politics or focus more on local issues instead of “geopolitical advocacy.” In my view, being a member of the PSFC is an inherently political act. A core Coop principle is to be a “responsible and ethical employer and neighbor,” and I’m pretty sure that doesn’t simply apply to Union Street and environs. Our neighbors in Palestine deserve our attention and care. Voting on a targeted boycott proposal seems like the bare minimum.

With love,

Nancy Mercado

FROM AN ANTI-ZIONIST JEW

Dear Coop,

Authors of several recent letters published in the *Gazette* have expressed claims to represent the opinions of Jewish Coop members. Editors of the *Gazette* have let these statements stand without note that these are the thoughts of Jewish Coop members in support of the Israeli state, people who are not and never will be authorized to speak on behalf of all Jewish Coop members.

Jews are not monolithic. We are diverse in national/regional origin, religious belief, culture, language, race and political ideology. One need not be Jewish to be a Zionist supporter of the currently configured Israeli state, whereas I, like many Jews in the United States and around the world, oppose Israel for its apartheid government and its ongoing

ing commission of genocide.

I would never attempt to speak for all Jews or all Jewish Coop members and I am deeply disturbed by those who purport to represent my interests or needs as a Jew. I reject the Zionist claim that people who oppose the Israeli state are anti-Semitic or self-hating. I request that if the *Gazette* continues to publish letters that explicitly or implicitly speak for all Jews or Jewish Coop members, the editors include a disclaimer that these are the opinions of only one person or one segment of Coop Jews.

Alyce Barr

"DEMOCRACY" AT THE COOP

Dear fellow members:

Part of the definition of democracy includes the following:

"...protected rights that ensure the majority does not abuse its power to violate the rights of the minority." I would love to know which aspects of the proposed BDS vote adhere to these democratic values?

it's quite insulting that the pro BDS members of the Coop insist on simply "having the conversation" to adopt a boycott of Israeli goods while presenting the vote as upholding "democracy." Someone wrote "Regardless of whether you agree with me, we all deserve the chance to weigh in on this crucial topic. Let's bring this matter to a vote and let the members decide!"

No thank you. You can't scream "democracy" about a topic that a lot of members see as discriminatory. If the Coop is forced to have this conversation AGAIN as it did TWICE in the past, that will bring legitimacy that my country where I was born and

consider my second home is temporary and disposable.

We also seem to be “having the conversation” quite often at the Coop. Every *Gazette* issue, General Meeting, nearly every day someone is handing out propaganda and lies about “having the conversation.” However, it’s interesting. They seem to only be conversing with each other and no one else. DRC complaints regarding the war have gone up in addition to carts being vandalized. Also, people seem to really love crossing out “Israel” on the couscous box.

It’s getting harder for me to go to the Coop as often as I used to in the past. I now stretch out my visits as far apart as possible. No more lunches or random pop-ins for a quick snack. I want to avoid the place as much as I can as long as the BDS vote hangs over it. So much for democracy.

Jonathan Tobias

Editor’s note: The August 14, 2024 issue of the Linewaiters’ Gazette ran the above letter titled “‘Democracy’ at the Coop” signed by Jon T, who requested anonymity. The editor granted this request without inquiring about the reason for it, possibly in violation of the LWG letters’ policy. The writer of the letter is Jonathan Tobias.

JULY 23, 2024

August 14, 2024



Letters to the Editor, July 23, 2024

Support for Parents of Young Children

Dear Coop Members,

I have been a Coop member for 23 years, and I am struggling more than ever to keep up my membership because I am now a single parent of two children, ages four and

eight. I totally understand that the Coop tried its hardest to reinstate childcare, and it wasn't possible. So, what is the plan now to support parents? Could we contract with a local daycare center (and offer them free labor)? Could parents be allowed to bring their child with them while they work a shift (perhaps within a certain age range for certain types of shifts)? The Coop has been very thoughtful about making accommodations for many different types of members with special needs to remain in the community. We must now use that same creativity and inclusive spirit to figure out how to better accommodate the large number of members who have young children.

Daniel Vitali

ISO the Vitamin Aisle Guide Sheet

Dear Friends,

I have not seen the sheet that was at the end of the vitamin aisle where I could look something up and reference what I was looking for. Am I missing something?

Regards,

Bruce Zeines

Response from a receiving coordinator:

Dear Member,

Thanks for your question. When people ask me this I first briefly explain the organization of the aisle, which is divided into columns of shelves A through H, and each shelf has a number starting with the hanging items as number 1. The A to H are an organizational system, not the names of products. I then point the shopping member to the look up computer, which is on the side of the ice cream case. You may know some of

this, but for those who don't: enter a keyword into the search and items with that word will appear in a list. The list has a "Location" column. For the supplements aisle, the location column will say something like "Aisle 4b Location B6," where B6 indicates what column and shelf the product should be on. Sometimes, it's true, as products come in and out of stock they might get pushed to the next or previous shelf. But at least now you know the approximate area to look in!

Thanks again for the opportunity to explain the system for those not familiar.

Martha, Receiving Coordinator in supplements

Feeling Kind of Cranky

Dear Cooperators,

I know I'm getting older, parts of my body seem to ache more than they used to, and I do get upset at more things than I did in the past, but it may be due to the fact that I'm recently retired and have more time to contemplate. If you ask my wife I have way too much time to think about minutiae, but I've always thought about it, just starting to dig into it a little deeper.

As I was working a checkout shift, which I don't do that often, I was scanning for customers to check out and noticed two workers, maybe a little less motivated than I. One was reading a book and it was a big book, the other was looking at their phone. During that time there were customers looking to check out their goods and I called a customer over to my counter. I looked up after I checked out that customer and saw that the worker/members were still not doing what they needed to do and people were waiting on line. I didn't have time to bring it up with the squad leader but did feel like I would feel less cranky if the worker/members did what they were supposed to be doing.

*Thank you,
Mark Paperno*

Hybrid Meetings Would Improve Coop Democracy

Hello!

In 2021 New York City voted in the most consequential local election in a generation where, due to term limits, we elected essentially a new city government. Despite its importance, only 21% of NYers voted. At the time, I worked at an organization whose mission was to improve local democracy. After that election, I was tasked with researching and publishing policy recommendations to improve turnout.

I give this background to say I have spent plenty of time considering ways to improve voter participation. A key principle in improving turnout is removing barriers. In the case of PSFC, the requirement that voting must be in-person is the most obvious barrier. Politically, Coop members likely support policies like “no-excuse absentee,” which opens up absentee ballots to all, so they don’t need to go to the polls. Such policies improve voter turnout and expand the electorate. Hybrid GMs are the Coop’s version of this policy.

In-person meeting requirements are a barrier for many. I live 45 minutes from the Picnic House. Adding an hour and a half total commute often becomes the deciding factor as to whether I attend. It isn’t just me. PSFC includes members from all five boroughs and even across state lines. Where someone lives shouldn’t determine their participation.

Due to the in-person voting requirements, members with disabilities or mobility impairments are often excluded from Coop democracy. Working parents and caretakers are also excluded from participation when they lack adequate childcare.

The Picnic House's maximum capacity is 240 or 1.5% of our membership. This means even when members want to vote on consequential decisions like the markup rate, mask mandates or a second Coop location, 98.5% of members can't participate! Hybrid meetings would improve participation by opening up GMs to all members, regardless of ability, location, or circumstance.

Dan Kaminsky

Her Body, Her Choice

To the Editors,

I'm writing in as a new member of the Coop. After two years of living in Park Slope, my family and I were finally able to navigate out of the unaffordable and disappointing local grocery options and—lo and behold—secure a membership. We felt like we won the lottery, but the reward was more cheese and kale options.

My first Coop shift entailed filling small bags with bulk spices in the basement. It was fun to scoop cumin and curry while chatting away about random topics. Phones were away, and we were just there being human. It was really special. I was hooked!

Three days later, I was shocked to learn that a group is pushing to incorporate a blanket ban on products from Israel. Is this the same Coop I joined? I want us to protect the Coop. It's truly a unique, special place for community and inclusivity, a place to celebrate things we have in common. A proposed blanket ban on Israel-associated products is misguided and shortsighted.

Proponents of the ban claim they want to increase democratic participation at the Coop. Is making choices for me democratic? How? I am not Jewish, but believe that standing up as an ally right now for Israel and my Jewish neighbors is important, espe-

cially as we witness incidents of hate increase in Brooklyn.

I've always been a part of the "progressive left," even when I disagree with some of the more extreme tactics of my cohorts. But I'm also a student of history. We must not stay quiet when others try to take away our freedom of choice.

Meg Robertson

On Our Coop's Roots

Fellow Coopers,

I've been disturbed by the assertion, both in recent General Meetings and in the pages of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, that political issues do not belong in the Coop. I strive to live by the critical contribution of second-wave feminists that "the personal is political." Indeed, this principle is at the foundation of the Coop, which strives to eschew transactional and exploitative food practices in favor of sustainability, community investment and fair labor. Without these very politically-minded ideas our beloved Coop would be just another organic grocery store.

Based on these recent claims that politics do not belong in the Coop, why should we take care to buy produce or coffee grown following certain fair labor practices? After all, the lives of farm workers have no bearing on my life in Brooklyn. The answer, of course, is that it is not acceptable for us to shut our eyes to the world around us. This principle is one we must try to follow generally, but especially since we are all members-owners of a cooperative involved in food purchasing, making us complicit in exploitation or accomplices in justice.

Conscious choices, whether to collectively contribute labor, stock food in accordance with certain principles or to act on political convictions via member democracy, are a

vital part of our Coop. True large-scale issues such as food-related exploitation or climate change must be solved through many small actions equaling a greater whole. But the idea that this is an excuse to nihilistically bury our heads in the sand is antithetical to our community's most basic principles (one of which is **solidarity**). Any idea that divisive issues or politics do not belong in the Coop is absurd on its face, and should be left down the street at Union Market.

Aaron Posner

A Call for Mediation

Dear Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine,

I am writing on behalf of concerned Coop members. We fear your proposal to impose an anti-Israeli boycott aligned with the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) campaign may lead to increased physical and emotional harm to Jewish members. Some of us have already experienced verbal assaults and physical intimidation.

We acknowledge the passion and dedication your group brings to the cause of Palestinian rights. At the same time, we ask you to recognize that antisemitic hate crimes remain disproportionately high in many places, including here in New York City, which is why security measures are necessary at our synagogues, schools, and community centers.

The heightened tension since October 7 has validated and exacerbated our fears. We support the vision of two nation-states—Israel and Palestine—living side-by-side in peace. However, the rhetoric used by the BDS campaign and some members of your group, which often demonizes Israel and its supporters, undermines this vision and conflicts with the inclusive values of our Coop. The mission statement says:

“We are committed to diversity and equality. We oppose discrimination in any form. We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member.”

To this end, we propose a mediation session to address the following issues:

1. Clarification of how you intend to align the agenda of BDS with the principles of the Coop.
2. Discussion of the rise in confrontations among Coop members and strategies to ensure the safety and respect of all members.

Mediation could demonstrate that dialogue and mutual respect can lead to positive outcomes. We hope to work cooperatively with your group to find a solution that upholds the values of our Coop.

Sincerely,

Ramon Maislen, Coop 4 Unity

Another Jewish Coop Member for BDS

Dear Coop Members,

I write as a long-time Coop member and the daughter of Holocaust survivors. My grandfather was involved in the Zionist movement in Austria in the 1930s. As a teenager, I was involved in the leftist Zionist movement. However, over the last 40+ years, I have painfully come to realize that the establishment of Israel, as it is **currently** configured is increasingly problematic. I support groups in Israel such as “Refusers” and “Voices Against War” who are working within Israel to support an end to

the war AND the development of a more just and equitable society

Since last October, I've experienced horror and grief at unfolding events in Israel and Palestine. I mourned the deaths of Israelis and the taking of hostages. I've demonstrated with groups like Jewish Voice for Peace, demanding an immediate ceasefire and mourning the mounting toll, including the gruesome deaths of *many thousands* of Palestinian children in Gaza. I'm outraged that, even as famine spreads and Gaza's hospitals lie in ruins, our own government keeps using our tax dollars to fuel these atrocities.

I've always valued the Coop as not only a grocery store but a place to implement our visions of justice in the world. Through decades of experience with progressive activism, I've seen that unjust power is never defeated through persuasion alone. It has to be directly confronted. This was true in apartheid South Africa and is true for Israel. Boycotting Israeli products is a nonviolent method of creating constructive pressure that supports Palestine, and as such seems like a perfect fit for the Coop. Regardless of whether you agree with me, we all deserve the chance to weigh in on this crucial topic. Let's bring this matter to a vote and let the members decide!

Sincerely,

Judith Loebel

Food Justice at the PSFC

Hello,

At June's Annual Meeting, a member gave a terrific presentation on the efforts of the PSFC Animal Welfare Committee to research our producers' animal welfare practices and to encourage our membership to make better ethical choices when purchasing

animal products. Particularly heartening was when General Coordinator and Coop buyer Joe Szladek offered his gratitude during the discussion period, noting that PSFC buyers regularly consult the AWC info guides when making their decisions. I was proud to see that our community, from membership to administration, was taking great care to consider the ethical dimensions of our food consumption.

I was then disappointed when, while introducing himself during his own presentation on the Coop's buying, Szladek made light of the current debate over how to respond to the ongoing violence in Gaza with a joke to the effect of: *"In addition to helping write the Coop's foreign policy, I work as one of our buyers..."*

Szladek's crack obscures our community's ongoing investment in food justice, which has often expressed itself in policies critical of foreign governments. As founding member Joe Holtz proudly reminds us, the PSFC protested Apartheid by boycotting South African apples, and protested the Pinochet regime by boycotting Chilean grapes. At a moment when mass starvation is being wielded by Israel as a weapon of collective punishment, when 95% of Gazans are projected to face acute food insecurity through September, when many are going days without a meal and dozens of children have already starved to death, now is not a time to reduce our Coop to a mere grocery store where our ethical consideration is irrelevant. Rather, it's a time to stay true to our historic commitment to collaboratively developing food practices that align with our community's values.

*In cooperation,
Morgan Võ*

Coop Priorities

To the Editor,

Congratulations to Tess Brown-Lavoie and Keyian Vafai, whose election to the Coop's Board of Directors was met with jubilation. Both candidates boast impressive backgrounds in, respectively, agriculture and politics. However, the number of "Yes" and "No" votes each candidate received is a clear indication that one issue dominated this year's election, with the two most vocal anti-BDS candidates receiving the most "No" votes, and the winners staunchly advocating a Coop-wide boycott of Israeli goods. (In the interest of transparency, I checked "Abstain" next to all four of these candidates. Certainly, everyone has the right to their own beliefs and priorities, but I voted for local leadership over geopolitical advocacy.)

Leaders form coalitions from dissenting factions, while advocates often ascribe the opposition with moral inferiority, thereby making them easier to dismiss, something I thought all four of these candidates did in their own ways. Beyond political expedience, I question the wisdom of elevating a geopolitical issue, even one as heartbreaking as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, above local issues with more immediate impact on our grocery-based cooperative. Efforts to ameliorate the suffering of innocent Palestinians and Israelis are laudable. But is imposing a singular Middle Eastern position on a pluralistic Brooklyn community the most effective way to help innocent civilians? To be sure, the Coop has plenty of members with family in the region, and I sympathize with the agony that they are feeling. Even so, just as I wouldn't use an emotional justification to conduct political activism at my place of work, I continue to hope that within the Coop, we can temper our own strong feelings about a fractious issue with respect and compassion for people who disagree with each other, many of whom are dealing with unfathomable loss. To many, it feels like the Coop is finally on the verge of adopting policies that align with their beliefs, and letters like this are unwelcome disruptions to an exhilarating moment of triumph. My hope is that, amid this fervor, you make space for those who disagree and that going forward, all members retain the right to make our own shopping decisions.

In Cooperation,

Brian Shuman

New Board Composition Is Cause for Concern

Dear Coop Members,

The composition of the Board of Directors following the recent election should be a major concern for all Coop members, whether pro-BDS or pro-Unity. The board makes the final call following member votes and has other crucial responsibilities. Almost all board of directors support a boycott of Israeli products, inspired by the BDS movement.

To illustrate, if the Supreme Court were in complete control by one set of political views, it would undermine trust between citizens and the government system. This is very similar to what is happening at the Coop these days.

Jewish members of the Coop feel under attack, coinciding with a sharp rise in anti-semitic hate crimes in New York and a shocking rise in hate remarks towards Jewish members since BDS promotion began. These alarming signals, combined with the current Board's bias, make the Coop very hostile for many members.

I used to enjoy coming to the Coop for shifts and shopping, feeling part of an inclusive community. Now, it feels very unpleasant. Regardless, I will still come because inclusion means accepting everyone, regardless of political opinion or ethnicity. I'm optimistic that the Coop will see better days, as I truly believe that the vast majority of Coop members support the principle of inclusion and don't want politics to be a part of every visit to the Coop.

Thanks,

Yuval Inselberg

How to Love Our Coop

Dear Members,

Judging from the letters section of the recent *Gazette*, the pearl-clutching hysteria over members who support a targeted boycott of Israeli goods and increased member participation in the Coop's democracy gives a false perception that our beloved Coop is being torn asunder by rabid and disruptive antisemitic ne'er-do-wells. As a member for close to 30 years and a Jew, I have never felt better about the Coop than I do now. The people advocating for a targeted boycott and for General Meetings that would afford an opportunity for greater participatory democracy are dedicated, hard-working and sincere. The huge participation in our recent Board of Directors election and the overwhelming victory of two of our most dedicated members is an indication of just how eager the membership as a whole is to the prospect of a healthier democracy. The actions of Members 4 Palestine, were it not for the self-named "Unity" group, will doubtless make the Coop a MORE inclusive, vibrant and healthier place than it has ever been and one that I'm proud to be a member of. General Meetings, now limited to only a tiny percentage of members who aren't immunocompromised or hampered by child care and other issues, will soon be a mix of those able to attend physically plus those attending remotely. As someone who's been to dozens of General Meetings over the years, I can't wait! And to those fellow members who claim to be feeling "unsafe" or "uncomfortable" because of the efforts of Members 4 Palestine, I extend a warm-hearted invitation to my house for supper this autumn. Just reach out. I love to cook, and you are welcome.

Carol Wald

Appreciation for Courageous Conversations

Editors and fellow members,

As a newer member of PSFC, it was great to attend the May 28 GM. I valued hearing more of the workings behind the groceries along with the opportunity to hear the voices of other members. Notably, the call to action toward the creation of a committee to address plastic usage made me feel more at home as a member knowing that others care about the scourge of plastic and are willing to call the rest of us into initially hard, self-sacrificing action.

I felt similarly weeks before when I was first approached by a two soft-spoken fellow members asking if I'd sign a petition in favor of the Coop dropping certain targeted Israeli products from Coop shelves in solidarity with an international BDS movement.

As I have been deeply disturbed by the bombardment, starvation and horrific conditions to which the people in Gaza have been subjected, meeting these Coop members was a breath of fresh air. In an instant, the Coop felt like a safer space to speak my beliefs, and it was heartening to meet members interested in the Coop joining its economic leverage to a worldwide effort to pressure our sibling nation of Israel to do better.

I've been part of food coops since 1989, and have come to rely on them as a place where members organize together for community building and social growth: where hard questions are asked, and asked again if need be. Since meeting and getting involved with the sincere, thoughtful, and diverse cohort of PSFC Members for Palestine, my feeling of belonging at the Coop has deepened, along with my interest in working to help the Coop be the best it can be.

Alan Lewandowski

BDS IS ANTISEMITIC: THE EVIDENCE

Editors,

Violent antisemitism is resurgent as the BDS agenda—the delegitimization of Israel—is promoted around the world.

As of January 2023 The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism has been adopted by 1,000 global entities, at least 37 nations including the United States, many cities, other government entities and numerous colleges. One element of this definition is “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination.” By this definition, both BDS and Hamas are antisemitic, as explained below.

The Antisemitic Goals of BDS and Hamas

According to Palestinian BDS founder Omar Barghouti, “No Palestinian will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine.” While BDS claims to be nonviolent, its goal is similar to that expressed in the Hamas Covenant: “Israel will exist ... until Islam will obliterate it.” These words confirm genocidal intent on the part of BDS and Hamas, an effort brutally begun on October 7, 2023, with promises of more to come.

Germany’s Requirement for Naturalization

Hopefully we can agree that Germany knows something about antisemitism. According to CNN, all applicants for German naturalization must affirm that Israel has a right to exist.

The Board of Directors’ Responsibilities

The directors must not only reject proposals that create legal or financial jeopardy. They must also decide whether a proposal is in the best interests of the purposes for which the corporation was formed and whether it complies with the Coop’s Mission Statement, which doesn’t include a political purpose. Clearly this never-ending cru-

sade, painfully divisive and deeply offensive to many, isn't in the best interests of this cooperative project. Therefore, the new pro-BDS majority of directors should give serious thought as to their personal and political motives for possibly inflicting an anti-semitic movement on this food coop.

Sylvia Lowenthal

Brief Responses to the 5 Most Common Coop Anti-BDS Arguments

To Coop members,

Our coop should be apolitical

1. PSFC is a political project founded on cooperative principles that are contrary to the norms of our economic system.
2. PSFC has a long history of activism, including many boycotts dating back to our inception.
3. Continuing to purchase products from companies that support or profit from what is happening *is* a political choice.

Why single out Israel when other countries have poor human rights records?

The fact that other countries have poor human rights records isn't a reason not to boycott a country that has recently killed 40,000 people. A targeted boycott of select Israeli products does not prevent us from boycotting goods from other countries. If people are concerned about certain countries, they should be encouraged to submit an agenda item and make their case.

A boycott would harm facets of Israeli society that aren't responsible for the oppression of Palestinians

PSFC Members for Palestine is advocating for a targeted boycott of products that directly profit from or support the ongoing genocide and occupation.

PSFC Members for Palestine supports violence

Boycotts have a rich history as a nonviolent tactic to promote social change. As a Jew, I am deeply disturbed by the violence being enacted in my name and grateful to be organizing with a diverse group of members to hold the Coop accountable to its mission. PSFC Members for Palestine does not and has never advocated violence. It is untrue when people claim this, and the *Gazette* should not print such falsehoods.

Boycotting Israeli products is antisemitic

As a Jew, I understand an action to be antisemitic if it discriminates against Jews due to their Jewish identity. A targeted boycott has nothing to do with the ethnic or religious identity of Jewish Israelis. Instead, it is a response to the bombardment of Gaza and the history of occupation.

Rachel James

Where have all the Jews gone?

Fellow members,

“Hey, where did those peanut-butter puff snacks go? My kids loved those.”

“Ah, *Bamba*, you mean? Those are snacks produced by the Israeli oppression. We

can't have those in our Coop."

"Yes, of course... And my favorite hummus, I don't see that here anymore..."

"Ah, Sabra hummus, you mean? Yes, it's made by Israeli apartheid lovers. We can't have that in our Coop."

"But what about the *challah* bread? My Jewish neighbors buy that for *Shabbat*. It's made in Brooklyn! Surely that can't also be linked to—"

"Ah, Green's Kosher Bakery *challah*. The *challah* had to go too, I'm afraid. We asked if they were good Jews or if they were genocide-supporting, Zionist Jews. They seemed afraid to answer. We can't have that in our Coop."

"I see. Can I ask you one last question? Where did all the Jewish shoppers go? I don't see my Jewish neighbors here anymore."

"Hm, I'm not sure about that one. We were just boycotting the world's only Jewish state; you know, the Zionists. We weren't boycotting the Jews."

"Shouldn't we also boycott countries like China, Iran, Russia, Yemen, Syria, Sudan..."

"Nah, just the Jewish one for now. Just Israel."

Eight-in-ten U.S. Jews say caring about Israel is an essential or important part of what being Jewish means to them, and nearly half of the world's Jews live in Israel (Pew Research Center). I hope you can understand that Israel is an important part of your Jewish neighbors' identities.

Legitimate criticism of the Israeli government is not antisemitic. The BDS movement, which singles out the Jewish state and denies its right to exist, is antisemitic. Please do not allow antisemitism to be normalized at the Coop. Your Jewish neighbors need

your support.

Jonathan Aranov

Re: “ACROSS THE AISLE: MY WALK AND TALK WITH A BDS ADVOCATE”

To the Editors,

It's depressing to see the *Gazette* giving a platform to the twisted gaslighting violent fantasy of one member's take on BDS.

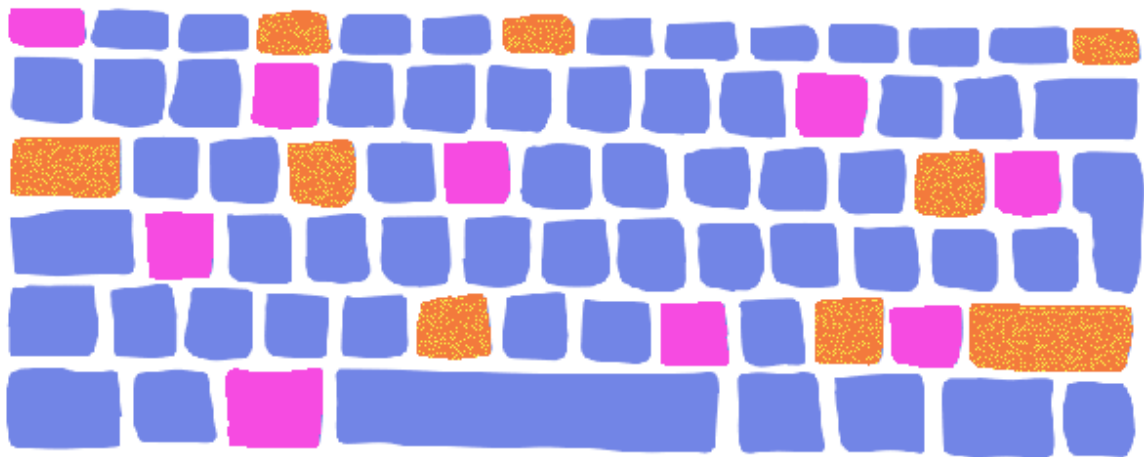
What's being done by Israel to Gaza with the financial backing of the USA is one of the greatest moral atrocities of our lifetime, and it did not begin as a reaction to Hamas on October 7. To be silent, to equivocate, to deny, is to tacitly endorse an act of generational evil. It's no wonder our members for BDS don't want to buy peppers or soda machines under these conditions. For me, it is impossible to read the facts and watch the videos and come to any other conclusion.

Lisa Guido

JULY 2, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



TRAGEDY

Dear Editor,

The Coop sells my favorite brand of salsa

but only “mild” and “medium”

Where is the “hot”?

I must buy my Green Mountain Gringo elsewhere

Louise Palmer

LONG SHOPPING HOURS

Hello,

Has the Coop considered returning to pre-COVID shopping hours? I seem to remember the shopping floor opening at 6 a.m. and closing at 10 p.m. Our current hours of 8 a.m.–8 p.m. can be pretty limiting during the work week.

Lucia Brockaway

THE GENERAL COORDINATORS RESPOND:

Prior to the pandemic, the Coop was open 8 a.m.–10 p.m., Monday through Friday, 6 a.m.–10 p.m. on Saturday and 6 a.m.–8 p.m. on Sunday. The General Coordinators are planning on extending the hours until 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday, but do not have a date on which the hours will change. We have operational challenges that need to be resolved before making the change. We currently do not have plans to open earlier on the weekends because of other operational challenges.

KEEP ON ROCKIN' IN THE FREE WORLD (AND IN THE PSFC)

Hi fellow members,

I have a cute short story and media I wanted to share... not sure if it will qualify for posting:

I work in the Membership Office and on my last shift this May I took a call from a fellow Coop member, who explained he was missing some shifts because he was going on tour. Working in the music industry, I naturally asked which tour—he and his choir were invited to play on the nationwide Neil Young tour. What a coincidence! I was going to see Neil Young twice that week (ended up actually being three). He said he's Reverend Billy Talen and the Stop Shopping Choir, many of whom are Coop members. Neil Young had just plucked them out of the blue and asked them to go on tour with him. I always knew there were various people who worked in the music industry among Coop members, but how serendipitous that I picked up this call and was going to see this show, and that most of the group were Coop members!

Just wanted to share videos of them playing in support of Neil Young in Bridgeport, Connecticut and to acknowledge their achievement and their awesome message of stop climate change/save the Earth!

Thanks,
Natalie Freilich

POETRY OF POLITICS

To the *Linewaiters' Gazette*:

Please keep politics out of the Coop;

it does not improve the store.

Just a world more full of weeping

knocking on the door.

Rodger Parsons

LET'S PIVOT BACK TOWARD OUR STRENGTHS

Dear Park Slope Food Coop,

I have seen a flood of letters with regard to the deadly crisis in the Middle East—letters supporting Israel, letters Supporting Palestine, letters calling for a boycott and letters opposing one. Clearly, members of the Coop have many different ideas.

Regardless of what we believe, the Park Slope Food Coop likely cannot solve the problem, and continued debate will only serve to divide and anger our members. Rather, we should focus our energies not on what we cannot solve, but on what we can: supporting our local farms, fighting food insecurity in our own neighborhood, preaching about sustainable food and farming and helping other food coops get started.

Individual members should feel free to support Israel, Palestine, both or neither. But no member should feel that the Coop is not a safe haven to shop. Let's concentrate on what we do best.

David Meltzer

A THIRD WAY: ENGAGEMENT

Dear Coop,

As our Coop members passionately explore a path to promote a peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis, I want to highlight grassroots, civil society-based groups working on the ground that are worthy of our encouragement as they make a positive difference in people's lives through direct engagement with each other.

Standing Together is a movement mobilizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel against the occupation and for peace, equality and social justice. Co-lead by an Israeli and a Palestinian, this group bravely confronts critical issues head on. The Abraham Initiatives' mission is to advance social inclusion and equal rights for Israel's Palestinian citizens in order to promote a more just society existing alongside an independent, sovereign Palestinian state. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel promotes human rights and civil liberties for everyone in Israel *and* in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Recognizing the practical need to address environmental issues that do not abruptly stop at a community's border, the Arava Institute, currently lead by a Palestinian, brings Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians together in graduate studies while confronting their political and cultural differences.

These are just a few examples of humans on the ground, dealing directly with each other. Disengaging from one another is not an option they are willing to take.

In cooperation,
Steven Gold

GROUNDHOG DAY: THE WAR WITHIN THE COOP

Dear Members,

Twelve years ago, in March of 2012, the Coop held a large and very expensive meeting that required security arrangements in order to vote on whether to hold a referendum on boycotting Israeli products. The outcome was a definitive vote against such a

referendum in favor of cohesiveness, and against divisiveness, within the Coop.

Like the *Dobbs* decision that reversed what was considered settled law concerning abortion, the Coop's current activism by those determined to reverse the anti-referendum vote are back again and if they fail again who knows how many times they will resurface to make still another such proposal, put the Coop in offensive social turmoil and waste Coop time and financial resources.

And given the very minimal relevance of this movement to the Coop's purpose and values, why should this proposal even be allowed to come to the floor a second time?

Recently, a growing number of academic institutions, the primary sites of BDS activism, are refusing to adopt the BDS agenda, which includes banning association with Israeli scholars and universities, in favor of their core purpose of education and academic debate.

And predictably, anti-Israel activists are becoming increasingly destructive and anti-American, burning Israeli and American flags outside the NYC Israeli embassy and defacing the Brooklyn Museum and the homes of the museum's president and Jewish board members with red paint, labeling them "white supremacist Zionists," among the many incidents,.

Finally, note that since January 2009, the Gazette has published 377,684 words concerning this marginally relevant topic, likely dramatically more than any other subject.

On the basis of the arguments provided above, I urge the agenda committee and the board of directors to refuse a second attempt to bring the BDS proposal to a vote.

Sylvia Lowenthal

TRUTH AND/OR CONSEQUENCES

Dear Members,

The internet makes it possible to retrieve all kinds of information practically instantaneously. It's also excellent for spreading misinformation and disinformation, also known as untruths, false statements or lies.

We are all human and we all want to believe the things that support our confirmation biases. We owe it to ourselves to be curious and to verify things before hitting the "like" button or sharing with others. It's even more important to verify when dealing with content that informs our actions and opinions.

Our *Linewaiters' Gazette* and our General Meetings are also platforms that are susceptible for spreading disinformation and misinformation. A member could knowingly or unknowingly repeat an untruth. The Coop should not be a platform for false information. Who should be responsible for ensuring this doesn't happen?

The onus should fall on the member. I suggest that if a member provided a statement to the *Gazette* or the GM, and the statement is later demonstrated to be untrue or incomplete or misleading, that member should lose the privilege of publishing and speaking to the GM for at least one year.

This is a harsh consequence for lying. But if free speech is valued, then it also must be true and accurate and falsehoods should have a cost. Our Coop platforms should not be carelessly abused.

Barbara Mazor

IN DEFENSE OF A PROPOSED BOYCOTT

To the Editors,

I'm a long-time Coop member. I remember when the Coop chose to boycott grapes. Though I adored grapes, I decided that justice was more important than my taste buds. I was a teacher at Smith College during the apartheid struggle in South Africa. I taught my classes in the administration building, occupied by the students. I worked with students, faculty and administration to call a five college teach-in that resulted in significant divestment from South Africa. I was at the Coop meeting that voted not to vote on the current BDS movement. Since then I have been silent. But I do believe that Israel, a state, is doing itself and Jews—and I am a Jew—and the ideas of Judaism, a grave disservice by its eight-month attack, its targeting of hospitals, universities, homes, refugee camps. By its inability to defeat the great violence of Oct. 7 with the greater violence of this relentless assault with U.S. weapons. My concern for the welfare of all people makes me believe in the justice of a BDS Movement that would urge the state of Israel to change its ways. BDS is a nonviolent movement, and the Coop is a nonviolent space, with rancor toward none, good food for all. Would that we could do more to help all those facing starvation. Nevertheless, we are not demanded to finish the work, neither are we allowed to abandon the nonviolent work for justice that lies at the heart of Judaism.

Yours in peace,

Karen Malpede

THE COOP DOES NOT BOYCOTT ISRAEL

Coop members,

Park Slope Food Coop does not boycott Israel in any form and it never will. For good reason. Public boycott advocates (PBAs) here and / or outside PSFC are...

Anti-PSFC: A member at the latest Open Forum openly called for division inside PSFC instead of unity, saying "This is a divisive time," as if it proved something; Another member in the last *Gazette* sneered at cooperative volunteer labor here as "a veneer of virtue."

Anti-working class and anti-creative class: Masked assailants with weapons locked workers inside at Columbia University and physically harassed security workers at Brooklyn Museum, then left behind damaged buildings and artwork for low-wage immigrant employees to clean up.

Pro-violent threats: PBAs splashed the Brooklyn Museum's Jewish leaders' houses with paint and painted red triangles (Hamas' trademark targeting symbol).

Pro Jew-hatred: At the NOVA Music Festival Exhibition, I personally witnessed Hamas supporters and PBAs happily celebrating together outside calling for more Jewish deaths.

Pro-terror: PBAs at PSFC have never ever criticized the truce-breaking, LGBT-murdering, mediievally misogynistic, terror-campaign of Hamas towards Jews and Palestinians alike.

Those against boycotting Israel stand naturally with PSFC's mission of non-violence and cooperation, yet the rest of PSFC's response has been inadequate. Everyone, floor members, GC's, staff, etc., please speak up!

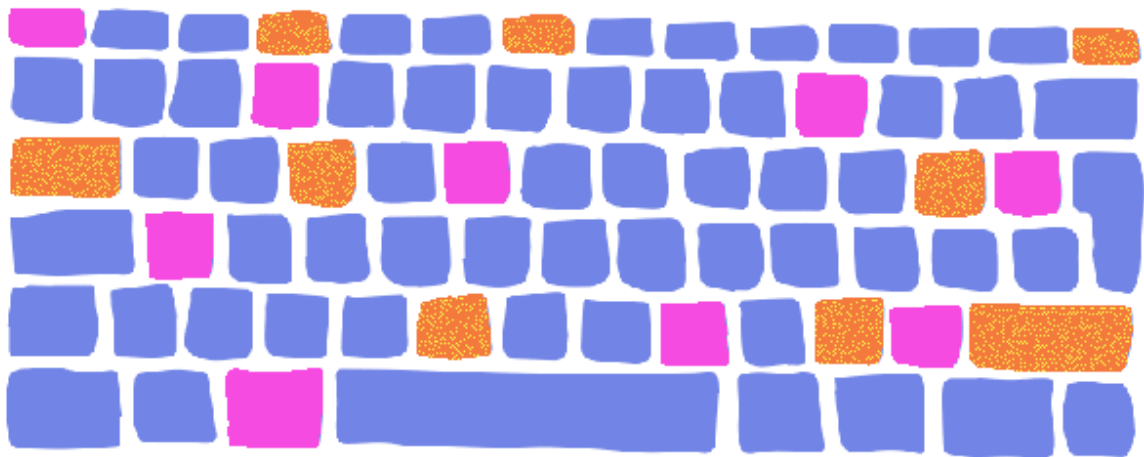
Those of you who have signed boycott of Israel petitions may have had no idea what you were supporting. If you can, remove your name and then help to keep BDS outside our Coop.

Jesse Rosenfeld

JUNE 11, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CROISSANT INFLATION

To The Editor:

The croissants got smaller. Likewise, this letter was reduced in size.

Jonas Geduldig

GERMAN GRAD STUDENT SEEKS TO INTERVIEW PSFC MEMBERS FOR THESIS ON FOOD COOPERATIVES

Editor's Note: As part of our commitment to the International Principles of Cooperation, our Coop often works with people from other Cooperatives and people studying Cooperatives from all over the world. Sadia Rahman attends a university in Germany and would appreciate talking to individual members of our Coop. If you can, please contact Sadia. Her contact information is in the letter below. -Joe Holtz, General Coordinator.

Dear Members,

My name is Sadia Rahman. I am actively looking for Coop members for interviews who are enthusiastic about enhancing the growth of comprehensive and eco-friendly organic agriculture. I am pursuing my Master of Science (M.Sc) in Transition Management. I am currently involved with a research project (WERTSCHÄTZEN) at the Justus Liebig University (JLU) Gießen on food cooperatives. Please find some more information (in German) on the project website. In the framework of the project, a master thesis will be written about exploring the potentials and challenges of organic and local value chains: a case study on Park Slope Food Coop. In advance I want to share some information about the project: It focuses on strengthening local and organic value chains and is sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Our research aims to identify potentials and challenges for the further development and dissemination of food cooperatives in Germany. It also seeks to promote knowledge transfer and networking among stakeholders.

Your shared daily experience and learnings will encourage me to work well with this project. N.B., I am in Germany, and unfortunately, I cannot reach you physically but I am available for an online interview. If you want to encourage me with your knowledge and supervision regarding Park Slope please send me an email at: s.rah-

man.sarah@gmail.com or sadiasarah1996@gmail.com.

My phone number is +4901783174726 (I am also available on WhatsApp, Botim).

Together we can make this world a better place.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sadia Rahman

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Fellow members,

I'd like to acknowledge the moving letter by a Muslim parent in the previous issue. There are moments when we are reminded of a child's unencumbered lens on the world. Their daughter's observation noting the lack of a Ramadan endcap display—and what it said about her aspirational vision for a more open Coop—was one such instance.

Then I saw that the letter was signed anonymously, out of safety. It saddened me for reasons I can't fully enumerate here, but I will offer one: Many recent letters have routinely characterized those who support a boycott of specific Israeli goods as somehow secretly, inherently violent. For Muslim members in particular, we hear decades-old echoes of accusation, discrimination and sanction that still reverberate today. With this in mind, may we as a community reflect on why a fellow member had to make a choice between identifying as Muslim and sharing their name.

To the parent who submitted the letter: jazakAllah khair, from one Muslim to another.

Sincerely,

Abdi-Hakin Dirie

P.S. While I'm here, I also want to acknowledge the great piece on Ramadan dishes and traditions by Leila Darabi, spotlighting other Muslim Coop-ers. Thank you.

DANGEROUS OVERREACH

Dear Cooperators,

I am deeply troubled by Ramon Maislen's recent letter to the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Maislen is running for the Board of Directors. His message is one of inclusivity and mutual respect. However, his letter suggests something far different. In it, he stated that he felt the current Board had "made the wrong decision" in voting in agreement with the membership on the Personnel Committee proposal at the April GM. (This is standard procedure; the Board acts similarly to the US Electoral College, in that it essentially ratifies the vote of members.) He claimed, without specifying, that failure to pass the proposal would lead to "potential litigation"—though, as I understand it, the Personnel Committee has been understaffed for two years without incurring legal problems. Also without substantiation, he claimed that "political ideology" had "tainted" the procedure for the vote. Most alarming was Maislen's willingness to violate the long-standing neutrality of the Board, which goes against his own assurances, per the minutes of the March GM, that he would follow longstanding voting procedures at the Coop.

I think this is dangerous. We do not always agree on issues at the Coop, but I would hope that we all respect the democratic processes we've established for working through our differences. We deserve board members who will fight to uphold our principles, not run roughshod over them.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Samyn

Editor's Note: Jeannette Samyn mischaracterizes the Board when she writes that it is like “the Electoral College” and “it essentially ratifies the vote of the members.” Plus she says that the Board has a “long-standing neutrality.” These statements are not true about the role of the Board, its authority or power. When members vote they are essentially giving advice to the Board, which the Board can accept or reject. Per GM procedures: “Directors are not required to ratify decisions made by the GM, however; they are legally bound to use their business judgment and act in the best interests of the corporation, and if they believe that a decision of the GM is illegal or irresponsible or is not in the best interests of the Coop, they should not ratify it.”

ACTUAL HATRED AND DIVISIVENESS

To the Editor:

Having peacefully canvassed outside our Coop (April 1, 2024) for the boycott of Israeli goods I certainly can attest to hatred and divisiveness within our community referenced in these pages. I experienced both firsthand when a fellow member-owner called me a Nazi, a label I wholly reject. We are a democratic body and the sooner this issue is brought to a vote the better—our commitment to diversity and equality demands no less.

Damien Neva

REJECTING ANTISEMITISM AT THE COOP

Dear Fellow Coop Members,

We are deeply concerned about an anti-Semitic incident that occurred in front of the Coop on May 16.

A Jewish Coop member was canvassing for our group 'Coop For Unity' to help recruit members to fight the antisemitic, violent and divisive BDS movement at the Coop. A person leaving the Coop shouted "Nazi" and "Seig Heil" at them. This incident represents more than reprehensible harassment; it is deeply antisemitic and disturbing.

A letter published in the May 21 issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette* argues that BDS is not inherently antisemitic. While we strongly disagree with that assertion, we feel even more strongly that labeling all criticisms as inherently NON-antisemitic overlooks the real and harmful antisemitism that some BDS supporters propagate.

The Park Slope Food Coop is founded on principles of respect, inclusivity and community. Unfortunately, the recent incident demonstrates that antisemitism is present at the Coop and must be actively confronted. In order to root it out, members who flagrantly exhibit antisemitic sentiments, including the person who perpetrated this recent incident, should be facing appropriate disciplinary action from the Coop as a signal that antisemitism has no place here.

Please stand with us against all forms of hate and ensure our Coop remains a safe and welcoming space for Jewish members. If the aura of BDS continues to linger at the Coop, these incidents will continue to multiply and threaten to disrupt everything the Park Slope Food Coop stands for. It's time to ban BDS from the Coop once and for all.

If you witness or experience antisemitism at the Coop, please report it to the Dispute Resolution Committee immediately by going to the Membership Office or emailing

foodcoopdrc@gmail.com.

Signed,

Tali Rasis, Jonathan Tobias , Jesse Rosenfeld, Sondra Shaievitz, Barbara Mazor, Yuval Inselberg, Maya Bodinger, Ramon Maislen, Joshua Geller, Shahar Yannay, Assaf Ariely, Aaron Karas, Rebecca Lassman, Naomi Bernstein, Kristen Zeligs, Diana Chase, Larisa Fomovsky, Nogah Rotstein, Nathalie Hirschtritt, Tatyana Tcheka, Jamie Alexander Principe, Sylvia Tobias, Allison Halpren, Bozhena Vistman , Maor Gordon-Guterman, David Feller, Elian Jeifez, Harvey Lang, Evan Abel, Forrest Zlochiver, Jason Kahan, Chana Balk, Ted Nusbaum, Dalit Shalom, Ivona Hertz, Roni Feller, Rebecca Gladstone, Jackie Loeshelle, Perry Swergold, Diana Maislen, Jordan Feldman, Leah Rosenblum, Marc Cohen, Abby Greenbaum, Simone Safyer, Marina Bank, Tzach Roitenberg, Marina Bank, Susan Miller, Regina Beider, Aaron Miller, Jonathan Aranov, Josh Suskewicz, Michelle Feldman, Daniel Alter, Ashley Abess, Rachel Abrams, Lorin Goldhirsch, David Engelman, Mindy Werner, Boris Granolic, Sunny Koll, Adam Sussi, Diana Maislen, Dave Swartz, Daniel Gustafson, Adam Price, Rachel Suskewicz

AGAINST THE WEAPONIZATION OF PEACE

Dear Fellow Members:

Upon reading letters claiming that those supporting a boycott of Israeli products have “threatened the inclusive culture of the Coop” and are “divisive,” I couldn’t help but think of Dr. King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” In it, King airs his frustration with those who prefer “a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice.”

A similar dynamic has now emerged in the Coop. Members advocating for the Coop to join Palestinian civil society’s Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign in light of

Israel's latest genocidal operation in Gaza have been met with calls for "unity" and "inclusion" and lamentations that politics have "threatened the delicate fabric of our cooperative." Legal scholar and human rights lawyer Yuvraj Joshi refers to this dynamic as the "weaponization of peace," in which calls for peace "primarily function to stifle the pursuit of racial justice" and maintain an unjust status quo. BDS advocates are blamed for sowing tensions by members who use words like "peace" and "unity" to mask a tacit apologism for Israel under "a veneer of virtue."

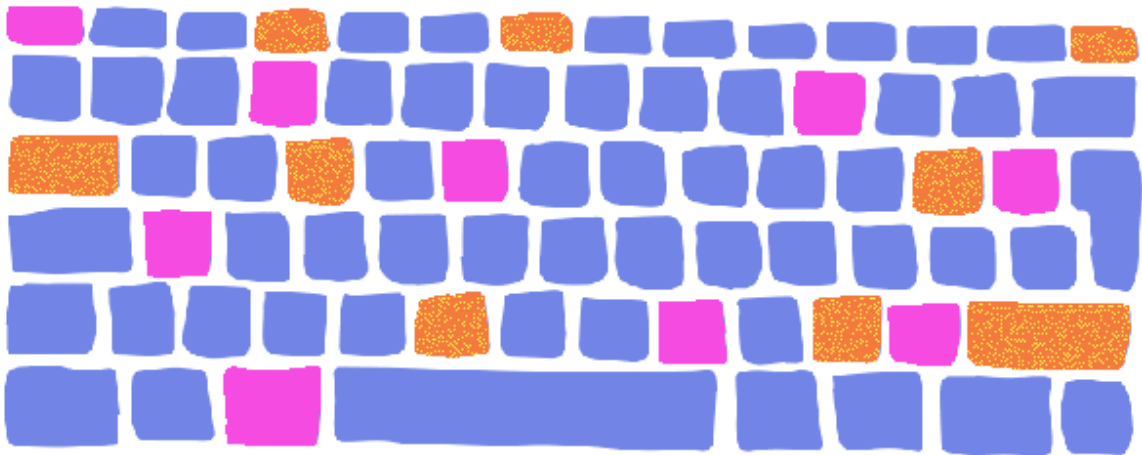
BDS supporters did not create this tension at the Coop; it was already there. I feel that tension, for instance, when I wait in line, crossing my fingers that I don't get sent to the cashier proudly wearing his IDF t-shirt. Tension, however, doesn't have to be seen as something negative. It has the potential, as Dr. King states, to be a "constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth." But fulfilling that potential requires truth telling and uncomfortable but necessary conversations, not hiding behind hollow calls for "peace," "unity" and "inclusion."

Corbin Laedlein

MAY 21, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Editor's note: The Gazette acknowledges that a math error was published in Morgan Vö's April 30th letter and in Dena Beard's letter below. Both letters claim that only .015% of members can assemble at our General Meetings, when in fact the correct number is 1.5%.

Keep Our Ramps Wild and Wonderful

FELLOW RAMP ENTHUSIASTS,

Ramps are an exciting and fleeting marker that warm weather has finally arrived and harvest season is around the corner. The fact that they are a native species that can only be foraged, and their season is so short, makes each bunch special.

However, I noticed that the ramps the Coop sells come with the bulb and root intact.

The bulbs are like the heart of a ramp—they're what make them grow. Harvesting the entire bulb and roots prevents the plant from regenerating in future years.

According to responsible foraging practices, ramps should be snipped from the leaves only to allow the bulb to grow a new plant in future years. Some botanists also recommend taking only one of the two leaves of the plant—leaving the remaining leaf to photosynthesize.

It takes several years for ramps to mature. If you couple bad foraging practices with over-harvesting due to extreme demand, there's a real risk that patches will be depleted and ramps will become extinct.

I'm concerned our current supplier may not be engaging in sustainable and conservation-minded foraging practices. According to my research, NJ-based Meadows and More, which is carried by Farm to People and Fresh Direct, offers responsibly foraged ramps. Perhaps there are additional suppliers.

Shouldn't we be leading the charge in demanding responsible foraging practices? If we want ramps on our plates each spring, we've got to give them a fighting chance to regrow.

Together, we can ensure that ramps stick around for generations to come.

In cooperation,

Dan Gustafson

Return Policy

DEAR MEMBERS:

The Food Coop allows returns of certain products within 30 days of purchase, provided that you have the Paid-In-Full receipt. This MUST be presented, per policy.

I use a debit card to pay for items and after reconciling my receipt, recycle the receipt.

Some items, like a product in a glass jar or can, may not have an apparent problem until you use it. In my case, two glass product jars had caps on too tight to open, even after using hot water, grip cloths, and jar openers.

I have no problem with the time limitation. But I asked the Office if they could provide a copy of the paid receipt and the answer was no.

I am curious if it is the case that the Office doesn't store paid receipts or perhaps could store the receipts to assist members with returns.

Perhaps the Coop would consider elective electronic receipts so that we don't have to print out receipts for members who don't need the paper. The electronic receipts could be sent to a member's email. Many stores have this option. This can save a lot of paper.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

*In Cooperation,
Stewart Pravda*

Contra Assertions of Coop Leadership, Its Bylaws Do Not Bar Hybrid General Meetings

DEAR MEMBERS,

At April's General Meeting, a member led a welcome discussion about making the Coop more accessible to working families and other members who are less able to fulfill work requirements and physically attend General Meetings. Her proposal was met with spirited approval. Several members shared encouraging ideas. Everyone in the packed Picnic House agreed that more of our nearly 16,000 members should be "in the room" for Coop General Meetings.

And then the Coop's General Manager took the mic to temper enthusiasm for a hybrid meeting option (i.e., in-person and online). "Read the bylaws," he admonished. General Manager Joe Holtz reminded us that our bylaws, written in the 1970s by a lawyer-member, require all votes be cast "in person." And so, he intimated, the Coop cannot simply approve holding its meetings online.

Well, I have read the bylaws. And the Coop's meeting guide. I've also consulted with a fellow lawyer who advises New York cooperatives like ours.

Our bylaws state: "*All votes shall be cast in person and no proxy voting shall be permitted...however...the Board may...direct that a mail ballot be taken*" In other words, all votes must be cast personally, not by "proxy," and during the General Meeting—except when the Board directs voting by mail.

New York law, which governs the Coop, agrees. State law specifically says that "in person" presence at board meetings is fulfilled via any technology that allows everyone participating to hear each other contemporaneously, i.e., conference calls, Zoom, etc.

Though they were drafted in the 1970s, the Coop's bylaws continue to serve us well - today. The good news is state law and our bylaws tell us that our "in person" voting requirement is met equally by physical *and* online presence at General Meetings.

Onwards,

M.J. Williams, Esq.

Hybrid Meetings Will Provide True Inclusion

DEAR ALL:

I'm writing in support of the proposal to allow hybrid (online and in-person) General Meetings, which at the time of my writing has been obstructed from being heard for several months. As a Coop member-owner with disabilities, this proposal is personally important to me, as well as important to the health and vibrancy of the Coop as a whole.

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, disability communities noted that schools, workplaces and other organizations, which had previously balked at providing virtual and hybrid options as disability accommodations, suddenly found ways to make that approach work. Many, including myself, hoped organizations would learn from this—and many have continued to provide hybrid options. It's disheartening to see that the Coop has backslid and, despite clearly having the capacity to conduct virtual meetings, the Agenda Committee and General Coordinators are digging in heels rather than embracing the opportunity to truly include all members of our community.

It's also worth noting that, as a place of business, the Coop may have obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure equal access and communication for members with disabilities. I wouldn't want the Coop to run afoul of the law; and even

more so, as a community that purports to care about its members, I would hope the Coop wouldn't want to be in violation of the spirit of the law and of inclusivity.

This proposal is deeply important to members with disabilities, as well as parents, caregivers and many others. All of us deserve to participate in the Coop's General Meetings and policymaking. I hope the Coop will finally allow members to hear the hybrid proposal at a General Meeting, and I urge everyone to vote in favor.

*In cooperation,
CJ Glackin*

Bullying and Mockery at General Meeting

TO THE EDITOR:

I attended the April General Meeting and wanted to share something I heard there. I have been a Coop member for 5 years, but have not attended a GM previously. What I heard was a group attending the meeting laughing at multiple speakers. The laughter was not at jokes or awkward pauses. They were laughing with derision. They were laughing over people with whom they disagreed. I find their behavior unacceptable and creating a hostile atmosphere at what is supposed to be an inclusive community meeting. I also worry that their bullying will discourage members from speaking at the GM.

I ask that in future meetings if this or other groups attempt to menace our fellow members, those running the meeting do not tolerate it. I plan to be at my second meeting as soon as possible and hope to not see this behavior again.

*Thanks,
Nathalie Hirschtritt*

Is the Coop a Welcoming Environment for Its Muslim Members?

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Last month, while walking aisles of the Coop, my young daughter asked, “Why are there no things for Ramadan at the Coop?”

I turned to her, surprised.

She pointed to the endcap. “Here—where the Coop always puts the Christmas and Easter and Hanukkah stuff... you know.” I gave her a response about how Ramadan isn’t a consumer holiday (yes, she understands what that means), and we moved on to croissants.

See, growing up Muslim in NYC, I never expected my Muslimness to be affirmed, represented or even acknowledged positively in spaces like our grocery store.

In fact, a few weeks earlier, the night before the first of Ramadan, the Coop didn’t even have any dates on the shelf, let alone anything else that acknowledged the start of Ramadan. Yes, maybe there were some in the basement. Yes, maybe there were lots of other Muslim Coop members shopping for their Ramadan dates that night, but still: The night before Ramadan, there were no dates on the shelves.

That night, I realized that the Coop was a place that maybe didn’t want me—or at least didn’t know me, or didn’t care to.

This Ramadan, as I watched Muslims across the sea be slaughtered, I wondered: Is the Coop, whose ethos is about community and cooperation, concerned at all for its Muslim members and whether they feel safe and welcome in its climate of silence, erasure and “neutrality”?

My daughter's question was a hopeful one. She didn't see any reason why Ramadan items wouldn't be displayed prominently in her grocery store where the Christmas and Hanukkah items go.

She's right. We deserve to feel welcome, safe and affirmed in our Coop, too. I thank PSFC for Palestine for their advocacy that makes us feel less alone.

With hope,

A fellow Coop member

(The author of this letter has requested their name be omitted for safety reasons.)

Let's Stick to Our Mission: Trust and Respect for All!

FELLOW MEMBERS,

I have been a member of our cherished Coop for about 8 years. I value our cooperation. I love being a part of a trusted neighborhood institution. Our Coop works because we work together, despite our differences. The mission statement reads: "Working together builds trust through cooperation. We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member."

However, since some members reignited efforts to join the BDS movement I have not felt trust or safety in the building. On the eve of Passover, I visited the Coop to pick up some last-minute things for my Seder, one of which was matzah. As I placed the box of matzah made in Jerusalem in my cart, I had an overwhelming wave of fear pass over me. What if someone were to challenge my purchase because I chose the Israeli matzah? Was I prepared to discuss and defend my purchase? No one should experience fear of confrontation within our Coop walls, especially when purchasing a

food needed to celebrate one's religion.

This issue is far too divisive and will rot our precious community. Let's preserve trust and safety. Can we please put the BDS talk to rest? Each member can make their own informed choice of what to purchase. Let's practice what we preach!

Abigail Greenbaum

My Bamba, My Choice

DEAR EDITOR:

I buy EcoLove Shampoo and Conditioner at the Coop. They are beautiful, environmentally-sound, Israeli products. As an Israeli, I am proud of the innovation and to have them at my Coop. The movement to stop selling Israeli products at the Coop is profoundly triggering to me and it makes me feel like I do not belong at the Coop, that there is no room for an Israeli person among its members. I am not alone. The message is, "If it's from there, we don't want it here."

I wonder, when US governmental policies led to the separation of children from their parents at the US/Mexico border, and toddlers were subsequently held in cages, how many Coop members deeply opposed this policy, and how many were horrified by the actions of the first Trump presidency, and how many still had the privilege to continue to earn a livelihood notwithstanding the actions of their government, and their deep opposition thereto?

The privilege of being psychologically troubled without an actual disruption to your life is not lost on us. If you think that ending the nightmare in the Middle East will be the result of a Bamba boycott and it makes you feel better not to buy it, then don't. I'd like to, though.

Discovering Joy in Al Arz Tahini: A Delicious Recipe Inside!

FELLOW SHOPPERS,

I hope this letter finds you well and within arm's reach of the delightful creaminess of one of my favorite Coop products: Al Arz Tahini! There's something about its smooth texture and rich flavor that brings my palate great joy.

If you have yet to discover this gem while browsing the aisles, you can find it nestled near the nut butters. Not only does it satisfy my cravings, but it also carries a meaningful story of inclusivity and support for human rights. Did you know it's made by an Israeli Arab who champions LGBT rights? It's truly inspiring to see a product that not only tastes great but also stands for something meaningful.

Now, onto a delicious and quick tahini recipe that's one of my favorites, a Date Tahini Smoothie:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of your favorite milk
- 1 frozen banana, sliced
- 4 pitted frozen dates
- ¼ cup of Al Arz Tahini
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Dash of sea salt
- Ice cubes

Instructions:

1. In a blender, combine the milk, banana, dates, tahini, vanilla extract and sea salt.
2. Blend until smooth, adding ice cubes as desired for thickness.
3. Pour into a glass, take a sip, and savor the creamy goodness of standing against BDS and supporting products that promote unity and understanding.

I hope you give this product a try! Here's to spreading love, inclusivity, and delicious flavors with every jar of Al Arz Tahini.

*In cooperation,
Tali Rasis*

On Antisemitism

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS:

To all those labeling the BDS campaign as antisemitic, your accusations are contributing to an international campaign of dangerous misinformation and fearmongering. You endanger Jews by degrading the meaning of antisemitism, which everyone should take seriously. In 2021, a distinguished group of Holocaust, Jewish studies and Middle Eastern studies scholars convened in Jerusalem to craft a comprehensive definition of the term—a corrective to definitions of antisemitism which wrongly conflate Judaism with Zionism.

The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism states: “Supporting the Palestinian demand for justice and the full grant of their political, national, civil and human rights” is NOT antisemitic. Neither is “evidence-based criticism of Israel.” Also included in the declaration: “Boycott, divestment and sanctions are commonplace, non-violent forms

of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic.”

Disingenuous rhetoric forces us to clarify language when it is weaponized in bad faith. Accusing PSFC Members for Palestine of being “violent” or “antisemitic” is akin to reducing the brave students currently protesting on their campuses against genocide to “outside” and “violent” “agitators.” There is no violence in demanding divestment from complicit institutions, no violence in demanding justice for a state that has murdered over 40,000 Palestinians in less than seven months. However, it is harmful and dangerous to falsely accuse such movements of threatening the safety of others, as when our fellow Coop members coordinated a campaign threatening the Brooklyn College Tow Center with violence if they rented it to the PSFC for a boycott discussion. Such campaigns produce a dampening effect on our ability to engage in genuine debate, and bring a carceral logic into our community that enables the kinds of violent crackdown on peaceful protest that we are seeing all across the world.

Read more on the JDA [here](#).

From Jewish Coop members,

Harry August, Alyce Barr, Anya Bernstein, Mischa Berlin, Naomi Brussel, Allison Chomet, Jesse Daniels, Susanna de Martino, Moriah Engelberg, Andy Fidoten, Naomi Fischer, Tal Frieden, Aaron Friedman, Caroline Friedman, Claire Glass, Sophie Glickman, Willa Glickman, Hannah Gold, Maurice Goldberg, Phoebe Helander, Rachel Levenson, Madeleine Levin, Jake Lichter, Julian Meltzer, HanaKyle Moranz, Mallory Muratore, Willy Naess, Todd Neufeld, Aaron Posner, Bob Rosen, Gemma Sack, Djuna Schamus, Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones, Mai Schotz, Zachary Schulman, Monroe Street Schostal, Hillela Simpson, Adam Thoma-Perry, Jess Wachtler, Carol Wald, Fay Walker, M.J. Williams

Coop Unity

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS:

If you are reading this letter, then you already are aware there is a group of members who are exploiting Coop resources to promote the highly divisive and controversial BDS Movement. This movement includes the unlawful, destructive and violent demonstrations at US college campuses that occurred at the end of April 2024. The BDS Movement's goal is to eliminate the State of Israel and return Jews to a condition of powerlessness.

If you agree the Park Slope Food Coop should not be used as a forum for BDS, you are not alone. We have joined together to preserve the Coop community's cohesiveness. We are Pro-Peace, Pro-Coexistence, Pro-Coop.

We are Coop Members for Unity. You can join us and learn more at this link.

Barbara Mazor

Coop Members for Unity

Let the Coop Be Unified Against Genocide

TO THE EDITOR:

Recent letters have called for a unified Coop—one that values diversity and welcomes all. Disguised by these familiar terms for progressive values is an underlying demand to support Israel by purchasing its products. According to those who call for unity, this support must be unconditional. If not, the Coop will be disunited, uninclusive, even anti-Semitic. If we follow this logic, this support must continue while Israel commits

genocide against Palestinians, killing over 30,000—including over 15,000 children; it must continue while Israel allows and fosters illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian land; it must continue while Israel blocks virtually all food and medical aid from entering Gaza and creates famine; it must continue while Israel denies equal rights to its Palestinian citizens, keeping them under military rule; it must continue while Israel surveils and arrests and imprisons Palestinian children and adults without charges; it must continue while Israel remains a separate and unequal state where Palestinian Israelis cannot even travel on the same roads as Jewish Israelis.

Is there another country that supplies Coop products, a country that is committing similar atrocities? Is there another apartheid state that sells its goods to the Coop? If so—we must immediately unify to boycott products from such countries, just as we must now unify to boycott Israeli products.

*May we use our cooperation to repair the world,
Alyce Barr*

Consistent Foreign Policy

DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS:

Not that I'm in favor of the Coop having a foreign policy, but if we have one, we should be consistent about our beliefs.

If a boycott of Israeli goods should be adopted, the Coop should also boycott all goods from:

1. The People's Republic of China, because of their genocidal treatment of the Uighurs and Tibetans, and its repression of the people of Hong Kong.
2. The Russian Federation, because of its unnecessary war of aggression against

Ukraine, their illegal annexation of Crimea, and their continued occupation of portions of the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, in defiance of international law, and their bans on LGBTQ+ movements and imprisonment of LGBTQ+ activists.

3. The Kingdom of Morocco, because of their continued occupation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, in defiance of international law, and its imprisonment of LGBTQ+ people.
4. The Republic of Turkiye, because of its continued oppression of its Kurdish minority.
5. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, because of its treatment of its only legitimate opposition party, including barring its candidate from the next election on no legitimate grounds.
6. The Republic of Azerbaijan, because of its ethnic cleansing and oppression of its Armenian minority in Nagorno-Karabakh.
7. The Republic of Serbia, because of its continued denial of independence to the ethnic-Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo.
8. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, because of its military coup and refusal to accept the results of its democratic 2021 election.
9. Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, because of their direct assault on international, including American, shipping in the Red Sea.
10. Iran, Iraq and Pakistan, because they level the death penalty for LGBTQ+ relationships.
11. Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, Mauritania, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for imprisonment of LGBTQ+ people.

Greg Costikyan

Let's Give Institutional Neutrality Its Due

DEAR *LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE*,

Institutional neutrality will keep any issue which offers no tangible benefit out of the Coop. BDS is one such issue. They have turned up the heat but offer little light in the discussion. Union Street is not the Middle East.

Iran and Hamas have no intention of making peace and mostly foment terror. Don't - make the Coop a battleground. There are plenty of places to go for that game.

The Coop is a beacon of how sensible management works. Politics can spoil the fruit of years of patient and loving labor. The best way forward is keeping outside issues outside the Coop.

Rodger Parsons

Democracy, Guardrails and the Coop

DEAR COOP MEMBERS:

One thing I find so interesting about the Coop is that it serves as a social experiment in democracy, testing how democratic principles can be effectively implemented. Different countries and organizations apply democracy in various ways, but at its core, it emphasizes the rule of the majority, ensuring decision-making reflects the collective will and is grounded in equality and fairness. In other words, merely calling yourself a democracy doesn't make you one; you need to stay true to its core principle. This principle is that every member's vote contributes equally to shaping our policies and laws, balancing majority interests with protections for minority rights.

In our Coop, applying democracy means not just following majority rule but also installing guardrails to protect the basic rights of all community members. For example, a decision to boycott certain products should consider the impact on members who

find these products a core part of their identity. This raises a difficult question: What is more important in democracy, the basic rights that should never be compromised, or majority rule? Ideally, when these work together, democracy is at its best.

We should strive to achieve this balance if we are truly serious about democracy. This is indeed a process, but to move in that direction, I suggest adding a guardrail to avoid boycotting products based on ethnicity.

Sincerely,

Yuval Inselberg

A Practical Solution to the Coop's GM Venue Issue

DEAR MEMBERS,

Considering that less than .015% of our membership can assemble at our current General Meeting ("GM") venue, it's discouraging that the Coop's administration has given up on finding a larger venue for GMs with popular agenda items. Instead, it's using difficulties with renting a venue as a means to prevent popular agenda items from being presented to our membership.

I invite the General Coordinators ("GCs") to prove me wrong, but I have particular insight into this issue.

As readers might recall, I direct Brooklyn College's Tow Theater, which the Coop sought to rent for two different Coop meetings. Because one of these meetings concerned a boycott of certain Israeli goods, a dozen Coop members, opposed to this boycott, falsely claimed Brooklyn College would witness violence if it hosted the meeting. These threats worked, and Brooklyn College will no longer rent to the Coop. Still, I offered to assist the GCs with finding another venue, as long as they would ensure

Coop members would not harass another institution. The GCs rebuffed my offer. Moreover, the GCs have clarified that they will do nothing to prevent members from engaging in intimidation tactics that interfere with Coop business and democratic processes. Since October 2023, the GCs have managed to find only my venue, will not accept help with finding another location and will permit Coop members to sabotage future rentals with violent threats.

As a result, when the Coop administration tells a member that their GM proposal requires a larger venue, the administration is really saying that the member proposal will not be heard.

We should reject suppression of our democratic process and demand the Coop administration place all member proposals onto GM agendas. A practical and productive solution that circumvents this censorship is holding online or online/live GMs. Let's do it!

Dena Beard

DEAR COOP MEMBERS,

I attended the April GM, where I heard several comments referencing a letter from Dena Beard in the April 30th issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. I am extremely disturbed by the incident reported in that letter and would like to alert my fellow members to the urgency of correcting the problems it highlights. In brief, following Joe Holtz's announcement at the March GM that the Brooklyn College Tow Center was a possible venue for a future GM involving a BDS proposal, Coop members who oppose the proposal contacted the Brooklyn College administration and used scare tactics to scuttle the arrangement. As a result, Brooklyn College will not rent to us.

In other words, Coop members who are afraid of the results if we follow the democratic decision-making process mandated in our bylaws successfully intervened to sabo-

tage that process. This sets a very dangerous precedent, especially if this serious breach of cooperative principles goes unchallenged. Making a bad situation even worse, the episode caused negative professional consequences for Dena herself.

When one member raised this matter at the April GM, General Coordinator Ann Herpel replied that people are free to file a complaint with the Dispute Resolution Committee. She then spoke of a recent email in which she cautioned members against contacting potential meeting venues, either to facilitate arrangements or to lobby against a rental—as though the two sorts of “infraction” were somehow comparable.

I had hoped the GCs would offer more constructive leadership in this situation by making clear that threats of violence and obstruction of Coop operations are unacceptable and uncooperative. Absent that messaging, we the members are still faced with the pressing task that Dena’s letter outlines: “It is essential that we find ways to renew the Coop’s democracy.”

*In cooperation,
Kumru Toktamis*

One Response to Allegations of a “Coordinated Campaign” of Intimidation regarding BDS Discussion

DEAR EDITOR:

In a letter titled “Coop Members Engage in Intimidation Campaign” (Apr. 30, *Linewaiters’ Gazette*) Dena Beard writes she “received 11 voicemails and was forwarded an email sent to senior Brooklyn College leadership that urged them to deny rental requests by the PSFC.” The rental request was for discussion of BDS. Ms. Beard further implies that she initiated the availability of her workplace, The Tow Center, stating “I offered space to help the Coop carry out its member-driven operations.”

Ms. Beard states she believes the communications were a “coordinated campaign” and “each message suggested that violence would occur if the college rented to the PSFC.” She does not state which party the callers indicated could be violent. She does not produce any quote from the email to support her claim. She provides no evidence for what she describes as “being bullied and harassed,” “intimidation tactics” and “adversely affected professionally.”

If Ms. Beard feels intimidated by a few voicemails, then surely she must understand how some Coop members feel about using Coop resources to promote the annihilatorist BDS movement. In light of the recent violent campus pro-BDS demonstrations, concern about violence coming from the BDS side is not unreasonable. Brooklyn College is a publicly funded institution and New Yorkers have a right to voice their opinion on how it is used.

Avishay Mazor

Ignore a Boycott’s Impact on Members at Our Own Peril

DEAR MEMBERS:

The rise of antisemitism in Brooklyn should concern everyone in our community. The suggested boycott of Israeli goods is a divisive issue, unsupported by many members. The divisiveness is causing unnecessary personal anguish to many members of our community. Ignoring the impact is a deliberate choice.

It is critical that we abide by the Coop’s democratic model and debate this issue in a civil way, in accordance with our rules and bylaws. I have personally witnessed and heard about the harassment of members of our community. For example, a member was yelled at in line simply for being Israeli and not supportive of the BDS movement. Though I believe that people should promote the causes they believe in, the intima-

tion of other members is unacceptable and not in line with the spirit of the Coop.

I am against this boycott, aligned with BDS, which not only targets Israeli products but also organizations and grassroots initiatives like Peace Now. I don't believe the ideas promoted by BDS are aligned with the Coop's values. Israeli products are a small part of the wonderful international offerings of our local Coop and part of why I love shopping here. I also value the diversity of the Coop community, which has members from all over the world and borough.

Though, of course, individual members should remain free to make buying choices that align with their values, I opposed implementing this on a Coop-wide level. There are atrocities happening globally; to single out Israel seems unjustified. While I understand the intent behind the boycott is a peaceful protest, bringing this debate to our Coop seeds division. We should engage democratically, respecting each other's viewpoints and following cooperative principles. Cooperation is at the core of our community, not confrontation and shouting at people you disagree with.

Diana Chase

Let's Build Community, Not Destroy It

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS,

Since joining the Coop just two years ago, one of the things that I have found most striking is the true diversity of thought, which seems to exist in fewer and fewer spaces as our world becomes more divisive. If we adopt BDS, we will alienate member-owners who may not agree with the movement's tactics or objectives. Our Coop should strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all members, regardless of their political beliefs.

BDS unfairly singles out and demonizes Israel, undermining efforts towards peace and dialogue. By endorsing BDS, the Coop would take a stance on a highly complex and contentious issue, potentially polarizing our community and detracting from our shared goals of sustainability, social responsibility, and creating community.

Instead of endorsing BDS, I believe our Coop should focus on fostering dialogue and understanding around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Let's work together to build a more inclusive and united community, where diverse perspectives are respected and celebrated.

Aaron Karas

Community, the Antidote

FELLOW MEMBERS,

These past several months have been some of the loneliest of my life.

Jews are 0.2% of the world's population. Our voices are easily drowned out by the masses, and many of us are afraid to speak up. We watch our neighbors stay silent as antisemitism rages throughout our city and our world. But the loudest voices are not always the right ones.

So, today, I am using my voice. Maybe it will reach beyond the noise.

Most of my family lives in Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people. They are not monsters targeting civilians and committing genocide as several Coop members have stated, as if their libel is decided fact. My Israeli family members are good, loving people. They left their families to fight in a war they did not start or wish for. They fight to protect their children from terrorism and to return our community's kidnapped people.

I walk the streets here, surrounded by antisemitic graffiti on lampposts and buildings. I watch as Jewish students around the country are intimidated and harassed at school, while “peaceful” student protestors are thanked by Hamas and the Islamic Republic of Iran. And I see the insidious rot of antisemitism taking root in our beautiful Coop under the guise of the BDS movement.

I wonder—is this community, this neighborhood, this city, this country, a place where I belong? Should I abandon my home here?

But then, I remember the resilience of the Jewish people. The antidote to the hatred is more community, more connection, and more togetherness, not less. We will lean on our non-Jewish community members who see truth past deception and seek unity over division.

And as Jews have done for over three thousand years, we will lean on each other.

Jonathan Aranov

Taking Issue with Selective Fact-Checks

DEAR EDITOR:

I was disappointed to read the following in an article covering the February GM:

“[Member Jesse Rosenfeld] stated that the BDS website itself describes ‘armed resistance’ and ‘any action, whether one considers it legally or ethically justifiable.’ [Note: This reporter’s review and fact check of the BDS website did not find these words; rather, ‘non-violence’ and opposition to ‘discrimination, including anti-Semitism.’]”

Since the reporter did not fact check any other member statement quoted, it’s surprising to me that Rosenfeld’s line was singled out. It’s doubly surprising to me that the

reporter was unable to find support of armed resistance on BDS's site!

One search of the phrase "BDS armed resistance" led me to the statement put out by BDS on October 7th. The statement does not mention the mass kidnapping and murder of civilians, including infants, nor speak out against brutality and violence, but instead venerates the "powerful armed reaction" of that day, regardless of "how international law regulates it"—exactly as Rosenfeld said.

I encourage members to search and read for themselves. The statement is not hard to find, and it speaks clearly to BDS's perspective on violence and whether Jewish lives should be valued.

There is something uniquely upsetting about reading BDS's statement and knowing that, while it existed in plain sight, the *Gazette* reporter chose to ignore it and instead highlighted BDS's ostensible stance against antisemitism (which, even if it were true in practice, is irrelevant to their stance on armed resistance.)

If I may suggest: *Gazette* readers understand that quotes of members' statements and opinions are just that—statements and opinions. There's no need to fact check what members are saying, especially if fact checkers can't check without bias.

In cooperation,
Tamar Lindenbaum

The Board of Directors Failed Us on April 30

DEAR COOP MEMBERS:

My name is Ramon Maislen, and I'm running for the Board of Directors to ensure that the Coop is not put in legal or financial jeopardy.

Unfortunately, recent General Meetings (GMs) have put us at risk. The actions of PSFC Members for Palestine are detrimental to the Coop and prioritize personal agendas over Coop welfare. They are encouraging members to vote against Coop interests even when they are unrelated to a boycott.

Discussion at recent GMs has been devoted to discussion of boycotting a handful of products out of the thousands we sell rather than actual Coop issues.

At the April 30th GM this had real consequences. The General Coordinators spent months working on policies to strengthen the HR policies after it became apparent that the current policies were outdated and leave the Coop open to litigation. Joe Holtz made a compelling case as to the importance of passing agenda item: “Personnel Policies: Personnel Committee, and General Coordinator Roles.” Despite the lack of credible counterarguments, the PSFC Members for Palestine voted as a bloc against the agenda item.

Sadly, what we’ve seen over the past few months is that a vocal minority is dominating the conversation. I encourage more members to come to the GMs and make sure that your voice is heard.

Critically, I believe that the Board of Directors (BOD) made the wrong decision in voting with the majority on April 30th. The BOD had an obligation to vote in favor of the Personnel Committee agenda item to ensure the Coop doesn’t face potential litigation. I hope that you’ll vote for Sondra Shaevitz and me (45 years of collective Coop membership) so that we can ensure that voting on agenda items is never tainted by political ideology.

Ramon Maislen

Want to Join Coop Members in an Upstate Summer Community?

DEAR MEMBERS,

Just want to give a shot out to my summer community upstate, a parallel universe to the Food Coop with lots of dual cooperators. Two hours out of the city, Lake Huntington Summer Community is retro (as in salsa and potlucks) and a great place to benignly neglect your kids while reading a good book or napping on a chaise. We're a loosely situated group of bigger houses and cottages on a communal 17-acre property in Sullivan County, a ten-minute drive to the Delaware River and the site of Woodstock. We have a great pool with lifeguard and gated shallow section; a beautiful lake for swimming, boating, and fishing; tennis courts; woods to roam; baseball and basketball; a playground; and, most importantly, a revolving cast of fun-loving kids, from toddlers to teens.

Check us out online at this link.

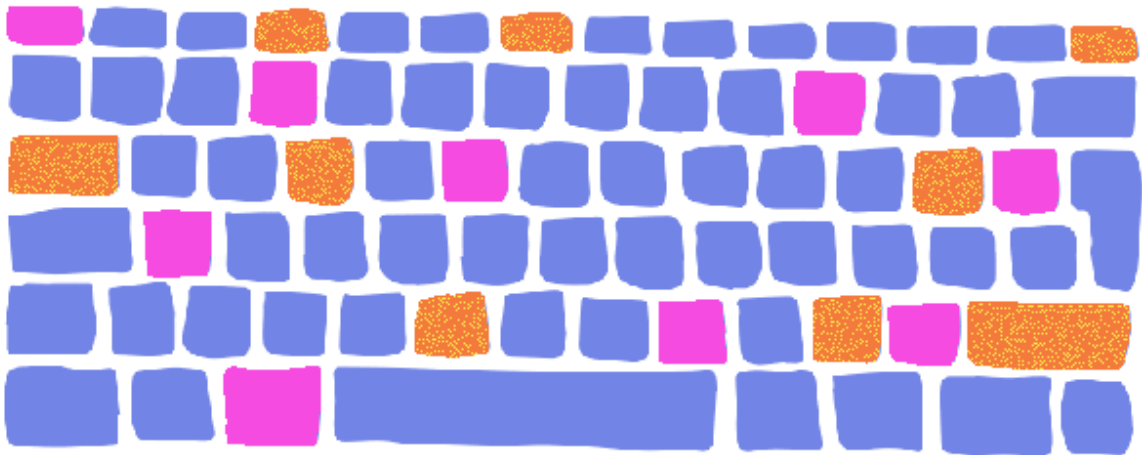
Hope to see you this summer!

Allie Pennell

APRIL 30, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Please Expand List of Vegan Foods

Dear Park Slope Food Coop,

As a vegan who has been a member of the Coop for over 20 years with a vegetarian daughter, I am of course very happy with the wonderful selection of fresh produce you carry year-round. But I am constantly disappointed by some of the packaged

products which are either lacking in options, or which have been discontinued.

For instance, for years the only real vegan jerky we have carried is the same extremely dry Primal Spirit sticks. There are many vegan jerky brands now—for instance Louisville Vegan Jerky, which can be found at Whole Foods and is excellent—and even Beyond has their own brand now. Please let's have more vegan jerky options!

Also, in the yogurt department we could really use more Silk soy yogurts or some other brand of soy yogurt, for instance a vanilla flavor and a plain soy yogurt. Forager is tasty, but cashew (and oat and coconut) yogurts have NO nutritional value—no protein or calcium. Soy is the most nutritious type of yogurt and milk for vegans.

Lastly, please bring back Sweet Earth Benevolent Bacon, Quorn Chiqin Fillets, and Meatless Grounds (vegetarian), Earth Balance Vegan Cheddar Flavor Squares, Wholly Veggie Buffalo Cauliflower Wings, Van Leeuwen vegan chocolate ice cream, and Mings Bings Plant-based Egg and Cheese flavor if possible. It would also be great if we could sell Impossible Burgers in addition to our other Impossible products.

Thank you so much for considering,

Eva Airdjis

Needed: More Transparency In Regards to General Coordinators Team

Dear Coop Members,

In the aftermath of General Manager Joe Holtz's suspension in the summer of 2022, Personnel Committee Member Jean Callahan was quoted in the *Gazette* as saying there were "deep and painful divides" within the Coop Coordinators group.

I wrote a letter to the *Gazette* that fall asking how the Coop could allow such discord to be hiding in our organization as we shopped and worked.

In the time since I heard nothing about the issue, so at the recent March General Meeting (GM) I asked about the situation. We were informed that the General Coordinators team has been working with the NY Peace Institute (an organization that promotes peace in our community). I said this was great, but it was too bad that it took my question at the GM almost two years later to learn about it.

We are now in the process of establishing new “Personnel Policies, Personnel Committee, and General Coordinator Roles.”

I think these procedures ought to include mechanisms for more transparency and communication between the coordinators, the Personnel Committee and the members, such that we are informed about things like the above, and more!

The membership deserves to be kept up to date about coordinator and Personnel Committee activity ongoingly. Not just when a major issue is percolating, a big decision is pending or a crisis is taking place. What about a report in every *Gazette* issue about what these people are thinking about, the projects they are working on and what they are discussing in their meetings?

Andy Feldman

Value of Walkers

To the editor:

As a Coop member for 22 years, I think the system of walkers has been one of the most useful and practical improvements that I’ve observed. I remember some letters that derided it, but it has truly stood the test of time.

I notice instances where shoppers are left waiting longer than necessary or practical. Wouldn’t it make sense to expand the number of people doing walking shifts at higher volume shopping times to eliminate long waits?

Nice opportunity for a pleasant walk while serving a useful purpose. All while giving your dog some exercise if you wish!

Cordially,

Saul D. Raw

Expanding Access to General Meetings

Dear Fellow Coop Members:

I'm writing to advocate for a proposal I submitted in December 2023 to make General Meetings hybrid (in-person and online).

I submitted this proposal to support member participation. Our current GM venue is the Prospect Park Picnic House, with a capacity of 240. Our membership is 15.5k, which means a maximum of 0.015% of us can participate in the Coop's policymaking on any given issue. The PSFC mission states that we "seek to maximize participation at every level." Given the precedent-setting pandemic-era online GMs, it's regrettable that we aren't utilizing everyday technologies to fulfill that mission.

Since submitting this proposal, I've talked with folks for whom expanded avenues of attendance are critical to their ability to help shape our Coop. These are people with accessibility needs, for whom travel can be burdensome and large gatherings potentially dangerous; caregivers, whether new parents or people with ailing family, who need to stay close to loved ones; members who live in different boroughs, or even different parts of the state or country. If these members contribute their labor, they deserve the opportunity to have a say in the Coop's governance.

Since submitting my proposal, I've been notified multiple times that I should prepare to present, only to be told that for one reason or another it has been taken off the agenda. The latest reason was that the Picnic House can't hold all the people who would want to talk about this proposal, and larger venues aren't available; I don't

take pleasure in this irony.

If you support this proposal, please reach out to our administration and let them know you'd like to see it come to the floor. We all deserve to participate, and to me, this proposal is straightforward common sense.

*In cooperation,
Morgan Vö*

Endorsing Ramon Maislen and Sondra Shaievitz for the Board of Directors

Dear Fellow Coop Members,

I would like to endorse Ramon Maislen and Sondra Shaievitz for the Board of Directors. Ramon and Sondra both spoke at the March GM. Their responses were clear, agreeable, and focused exclusively on the role.

I would gladly call them both "Pro-Coop."

Ramon and Sondra have many decades of membership experience between them. This sweat equity is important: I feel uneasy about so many other candidates since they have only a few years at the Coop and want to jump into such an important role. Some of them have admitted to only attending a few General Meetings, if at all. This role requires a deep-rooted understanding of our community and organization. That understanding can only be acquired through long-term experience, both in working shifts and in participating in our organizational processes.

Ramon and Sondra come with a great deal of experience in business and law. Their experience focusing on the legal and financial bottom line for our Coop is vital to our stability.

Ramon and Sondra appear fully capable of setting aside personal opinions for the

greater good of the PSFC. They accept what the Board role has always been, to simply approve the wishes of the general meeting and not to use it for activism inside or outside the Coop.

I encourage fellow members to support Ramon Maislen and Sondra Shaievitz by voting YES for them during the election. It's worth noting that according to PSFC's voting guidelines, you can vote YES for more than one candidate (two yeses, for example, is fine), and you can vote NO for as many as you'd like. Also important—candidates require more YES votes than NO votes to be elected.

*Sincerely,
Eliañ Jeifez*

What Happened to Jason Toothpaste?

Fellow Cooperators:

Did you notice the “new and improved” Jason toothpaste? We've tried three different flavors and they're all disgusting.

I reached out to Hain Celestial, the parent company, and they provided the old and new ingredient lists. They're almost completely different products: two thirds of the ingredients changed and the only ones to remain the same are water, glycerin, silica and stevia extract—and stevia jumped up from almost the bottom of the list to close to the top. (I think stevia is the ingredient that I find so disgusting.)

This is just a simple example of American capitalism. Someone makes a great product and builds up a small base of loyal customers, a large corporation buys them out, tries to expand market share by releasing a “new and improved” version that'll appeal to the masses, and destroys the product in the process. This is why we can't have nice things.

*Petty rant over,
Christopher Diamond*

Coop Members Engage in Intimidation Campaign

Dear Members,

I am a new member of the PSFC and the Director of the Tow Center at Brooklyn College.

The General Coordinators inquired about renting the Tow Center's theater on February 13, 2024, for a Coop-wide discussion about a boycott of Israeli products. They requested extra security, so I assured them that our events were overseen by a private security firm.

I attended the March GM for work credit, where Joe Holtz announced the Tow Center's theater as a potential meeting space, but also that the Coop would no longer need the venue. On March 27, Joe withdrew the inquiry. On April 1 though, Joe emailed me to see if the theater was still available.

Before that, from Friday, March 29, through Sunday, March 31, I received 11 voice-mails and was forwarded an email sent to senior Brooklyn College leadership that urged them to deny rental requests by the PSFC. This was clearly a coordinated campaign by Coop members opposed to any discussion of a boycott. All these communications followed a script; each message suggested that violence would occur if the college rented to the PSFC. Of course, based on these threats, Brooklyn College can no longer rent the theater to the Coop. Additionally, I've been adversely affected professionally and, since most of these messages were left by Coop members, I now feel much less comfortable at the PSFC. I offered space to help the Coop carry out its member-driven operations, and I do not appreciate being bullied and harassed.

How can the Coop have difficult conversations if intimidation tactics like these contin-

ue to obstruct discussions? It is essential that we find ways to renew the Coop's democracy.

Dena Beard

Voicing Dissent: Standing Against BDS Petition at Park Slope Coop

To the Editor,

In recent weeks, supporters of the BDS movement have been stationed prominently outside the Coop, actively soliciting signatures for a petition urging a boycott of Israeli products. One of them wrote to the *Gazette*, painting a rosy picture of the reception she received.

However, there's growing sentiment among some of us that this campaign is deeply offensive, fostering divisiveness within our Coop community and exhibiting shades of antisemitism. Attempts by at least one Coop member to engage with the BDS supporters and express his concerns were met with disregard. Members who have approached the front desk with their objections have been informed that while the Coop has received numerous complaints, it cannot prohibit petitioners from gathering signatures on the sidewalk.

While acknowledging the right of individuals and organizations to advocate for their causes outside the Coop, many of us are eager to voice our opposition within our community. The apparent silence of passersby should not be misconstrued as silent consent; rather, it reflects discomfort and disagreement with the BDS petition. Numerous Coop members, including friends and acquaintances, share this discomfort and wish to ensure that our dissenting voices are also heard.

In cooperation,

Maya Bodinger

Refusing Our Complicity

Dear Members,

During February's GM, it was suggested that we should donate to the aid group Anera instead of pushing for a boycott at the Coop. As of April 2nd, Anera announced that it would be pausing operations in Gaza following the IDF's targeted strikes of three World Central Kitchen vehicles on April 1st, which killed seven aid workers, as well as the killing of Anera aid worker, Mousa Shawwa, by an IDF strike on March 8th. These killings follow the indiscriminate slaughter of more than 33,000 Palestinians by IDF violence since October of last year.

Supporting relief efforts is necessary, as is stopping the ongoing genocide. When relief is being cut off and aid workers themselves are murdered, our focus must be to refuse our complicity in the violence that exacerbates the need for relief in the first place. We can and must do many things at once, including enacting a principled boycott of Israeli goods at the Coop.

*In cooperation,
Laura Henriksen*

A Ban on Israeli Products Threatens the Coop's Spirit of Inclusivity

Dear Editor:

My favorite thing about PSFC is the warmth and diversity of our community. As a cooperative of Brooklyn residents with a myriad of unique identities and perspectives, every one of us is joyfully accountable for the labor required to keep PSFC's doors open and our shelves stocked. For me, the privilege of having access to produce that's affordable, local and organic is a huge plus. However, what I appreciate most is the spirit of our collective that has transformed grocery shopping from a tedious chore into an expression of belonging. I rarely leave a shift without learning about a new veg-

etable or getting inspired by a fellow PSFC member to try a new recipe. Our modern world is a hectic, complicated and scary place, and PSFC feels like a haven from that. We care about each other. Over the past six months, well-meaning members of “PSFC Members for Palestine” have threatened the inclusive culture of our Coop with a call to ban products from Israel. They align themselves with the BDS movement whose messaging is widely known to incorporate antisemitic tropes about the perceived powers and evils of Jewish people. Antisemitic discrimination has triggered atrocious violence throughout history and is currently fueling attacks on Jewish people and spaces in New York City and throughout the United States. The conflict between Israel and Hamas is deeply polarizing; by adopting a ban against Israel, we would be inviting antisemitism into the PSFC. Such an act would alienate Jewish and pro-Israel members and attract negative PR. Most importantly, this boycott would undermine and erode our culture and values. We owe it to our community and to PSFC to be a beacon of inclusivity and belonging. It is for this reason that I oppose a ban on products from Israel.

Sylvia Tobias

Don't Like It? Don't Buy It!

Dear Linewaiters' Gazette:

Recently I was approached on the sidewalk in front of the Coop asking to sign a petition supporting a boycott of Coop products imported from Israel. This came a week after my neighbor's home was vandalized with “FREE GAZA” spray paint (their door has a visible mezuzah), and days before I was told in a CEC 15 meeting if I had a problem with antisemitism in my son's school, I should just send him to private Jewish day school.

We moved to Park Slope 10 years ago, in part because of its beauty, friendly vibe and proximity to the park. Within the month I dragged my husband to the Food Coop's orientation. I'm a registered dietitian and value good quality food. I naively never locked

my brownstone door during the day, that is until October 8th (we also have a visible mezuzah).

The hate that's invaded our community these last six months has been painful. You don't have to like or support a government or country overseas, but we're neighbors. We deserve a right to feel safe and welcome in Park Slope and at the Food Coop. Lately I have felt neither. This boycott is divisive. If buying tahini to make sabich sandwiches—the kind I like to get in Tel Aviv—bothers you so much, don't buy it.

So much of what we eat is rooted in who we are. Why are we ostracizing members? We should be welcoming differences in our community, not fueling hostility between each other. This demonization of Israel is outright antisemitism and there is no place for it at the Food Coop.

*Thank you,
Shira Sussi*

Boycotting Israel is Hurtful to Many of Us, and Hurts the Coop

Dear fellow members:

My message about the recent push to boycott Israeli products is simple and heartfelt: The proposal is deeply hurtful.

The last six months have been nightmarish for those of us with a direct connection to Israel and Palestine. This is a traumatic and scary time. Divisive efforts like BDS make it worse, not better. A boycott is hurtful because it assigns all the blame to one side, delegitimizing the experience of Israelis wrapped up in a complex conflict, along with the vast majority of Jews who have deep ties to Israel. And, it must be said, boycotting Jews has a dark and sinister echo of centuries of systematic and murderous antisemitism in both Europe and the Middle East. Critics of Israel have an affirmative obligation to distance themselves from antisemitism, and an indiscriminate tool like a

countrywide boycott fails that test.

Some say that the fact that the boycott hurts is the point. But we should be better than that, and also mindful of our obligations as a community. Hurting Coop members is also hurtful to the Coop itself.

I understand the desire to take a stand, support suffering people and oppose war. But this boycott is not simply a convenient way to express solidarity with Palestinians under bombardment. We as a community owe it to our members with ties to both Israel and Palestine not to oversimplify the situation, and not to demonize people on either side.

Instead, let's devote our energy to positive and healing acts. Some of the products we carry at the Coop come from peace and co-existence initiatives in Israel and Palestine. Instead of boycotting them, let's feature and celebrate them.

Josh Suskewicz

Re: PSFC for Palestine

To the Editor and Fellow Coop Members:

If you don't want to buy peppers grown in Israel, don't buy peppers grown in Israel. To insist, however, that everyone else must follow suit is domineering, wrong and, in this case, antisemitic.

For over 2,000 years, Jews have been singled out, isolated, scrutinized and subject to abuse. Explicit antisemitism is no longer socially acceptable. Today, however, Israel offers a convenient proxy for those who cannot tolerate a Jewish expression of independence and sovereignty. Antipathy to Israel is not only fashionable, but the price of admission in many progressive spaces.

Israel is not above reproach. Absolutist and single-minded calls to eliminate it, however, are another thing entirely. No one's calling to eradicate other Coop sources with troubling human rights records such as Honduras, Ecuador or, for that matter, Texas. Yet "PSFC for Palestine" is openly committed to a movement that opposes Israel's mere existence. According to its own proponents, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement aims to eliminate the world's only Jewish state.

At the end of the day, a Coop boycott would not even register on the Israeli economy. It would, however, invariably lead many Jewish Coop members to feel unwelcome and send the message that it's acceptable to single out Jews for mistreatment. In that light, the zeal with which some have taken towards vilifying Israel understandably leaves many, including this Coop member, feeling rattled.

Michael Snow

Regarding a Potential Boycott of Israeli Products

Dear Editor:

We've been here before. Some years ago there was a proposal to boycott Israeli products at the Coop. A rundown of products found that there were only a few products of Israeli origin that the Coop carried. Additionally, of course there were very divergent opinions within the Coop on Israel. We must look to the effective meaning of any boycott and the divisiveness of any movement within our membership. We have agreed, for instance, to no longer carry Cheerios, because of concerns about glyphosate. Most Coop members were in agreement on this. An Israeli boycott does not have the same level of support. Curiously, concerted action by people who claim to support Palestinians led SodaStream some years ago to close its West Bank facility, thus removing jobs from Palestinians. Was that a win for Palestinians overall? We must look at the long-term effects of any action we take on the issue at hand but also on our ability to operate as a food store with a diverse population.

In Cooperation,
Adam Segal-Isaacson

The Divisiveness BDS Seeds Is Antithetical to the Coop Mission

Dear Fellow Members:

I was born in Israel and spent my formative years there. My grandfather, who emigrated to Israel after the Holocaust, was a small farmer who grew clementines and was a member of an agricultural cooperative. Perhaps, through random chance, I have crossed paths with a fellow PSFC member-owner who directly enjoyed the literal fruits of his labor.

The events of the October 7th massacre in Israel and the ongoing hostage crisis in Gaza weigh heavily on me on a daily basis. I also, deeply and unequivocally, empathize with the suffering of Palestinians and innocent civilians affected by the ongoing war on Hamas. I hope the silent majority of member owners also simultaneously hold both of these truths with heavy hearts.

My hope for the region is to achieve a just and lasting peace. The BDS approach undermines efforts for peace and coexistence by seeding resentment instead of encouraging cooperation. The BDS movement is in direct contradiction with peace-building, and makes reconciliation impossible. With this in mind, I cannot support the Coop joining the BDS movement.

The BDS movement makes it clear that peaceful coexistence is not its goal when they condone violence and criticize organizations and businesses that advocate for dialogue and mutual coexistence.

If the Coop votes to join the BDS movement, it will be in direct conflict with my values of supporting a peaceful resolution between Israel and Palestine and my household will, with broken hearts, leave the Coop.

*Sincerely,
Tali Rasis*

BDS: Historically Rejected By Responsible Parties

To the Editors, Members, and Board of Directors,

BDS is a movement that primarily plays out on college campuses, where students vote to have their institutions divest from Israeli companies, refuse cooperation with Israeli universities and where students disrupt Israeli speakers. Support of this movement on campuses has also, not surprisingly, resulted in harassment, exclusion and even attacks on Jewish students, as well as damage to property. Several lawsuits are pending against these institutions for permitting an antisemitic climate, and government agencies are amping up policies against antisemitism. Nor is there evidence of university administrations acting on these student decisions.

As to food coops, more than a decade ago only one American food coop, Olympia, voted to boycott Israeli products, to the best of my knowledge. All others voted no: Port Townsend, Davis, Sacramento, Seattle, Ann Arbor, and finally, Park Slope, whose super-majority vote against a referendum in 2012 was essentially a vote against joining BDS.

The primary reasons for their decisions given by leaders at these coops were the lack of qualifications to take actions on international conflicts and to resolve the conflict in the Middle East; that such actions countered the purposes of a food coop; and that such actions would damage coops. In the case of Seattle Central, a committee member there called consideration of the boycott “a malignancy to our business.”

There is no evidence I can find that apart from our Coop, any other is revisiting campaigns to join BDS.

I add here that in 2016, the NYC Council voted, by a super-majority, in favor of a reso-

lution “condemning all efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel and the global movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction the people of Israel.” Similar proposals have been passed by New York State and other states.

Sylvia Lowenthal

Why Is the PSFC a Success Story?

Dear Coop Members:

Before joining the Coop, I was skeptical about the concept. Despite my reservations, the allure of affordable prices and quality produce convinced me to give it a try. I vividly recall my first shift, thinking, “Let’s just get this over with and return to my usual business.”

However, to my surprise, I discovered a peculiar joy in arranging fruits and vegetables. Initially, I couldn’t pinpoint the source of my contentment. Over time, it became clear: The satisfaction didn’t stem from the task of organizing produce itself, but from feeling connected to a diverse community of individuals, all united in the simple act of sorting carrots and apples. It was beautifully straightforward and profoundly unifying. At the end of the day, we’re all fundamentally alike, no matter your profession, where you were born, or your political views. There was a place for everyone to feel welcome.

I’ve enjoyed every shift at the Coop, growing to value its true inclusiveness and, of course, the exceptional food.

Recently, however, the atmosphere has shifted. Politics and polarization have crept in, threatening the delicate fabric of our cooperative. The Coop is at a critical juncture. I earnestly hope we can all recall the core principles that have sustained our community since 1973 and strive to preserve this wonderful community as healthy and truly inclusive for all.

*Thanks,
Yuval Inselberg*

Taking Issue With Coordinators' Corner Column

Coop Members,

I am 68 years old and I joined the Coop when I was 23. For many years I was proud to be part of a cooperative that was tied to issues of food and labor justice. I learned from the Coop that organic growing practices were more important for farm workers than for me as a consumer, and that supporting their right to work without exposure to harmful chemicals was paramount.

Fast forward to now: Joe Holtz's recent piece (March 19 Coordinators' Corner) has upset me to my core. I'm frustrated and ashamed that the Coop has not taken a stand against the Israeli genocide, against Israel's deliberate starvation of Gazans, its aid blockades and its destruction and theft of Palestinian farmland. BDS seems like the least we could do.

I have known Joe Holtz since I joined the Coop. I have valued and respected the work he did to establish and sustain the Coop. In his writing, he worries about the Coop's future 50 years. Fifty years from now, it is very unlikely that Joe or I will be alive, but people can judge us then by what we did and said now, in the face of this genocide.

Alyce Barr

Response to 2/26/24 Coordinators' Corner

To the LWG Editors:

I was dismayed and disappointed by the opinions expressed by Joe Holtz in his February 26 Coordinators' Corner column. His byline states that he speaks on behalf of

all the General Coordinators. I would like to know by what process the rest of the coordinators agreed with what he said and why their names did not appear.

He states that some members feel unwelcome at the Coop because of the language of a petition. Who are these members and what is making them feel unwelcome? We as members and humans have the right to question and criticize our own government and any other foreign government, especially the conduct of a foreign state that is taking our tax dollars. I have read the petition from PSFC Members for Palestine and find nothing that could be interpreted as harassing about it.

I think it is an abuse of position and privilege for Mr. Holtz to favor one group of members over another and claim to represent the persons who direct the Coop. This is his personal opinion and has a chilling effect on open discussions and in a sense “poisons the jury pool” that will later be allowed to participate in some kind of far-off vote or consensus process (which I sincerely doubt will ever occur — it’s all rhetoric to me). I think as a Coop it is an overdue time for us to have discussions about power and privilege and how they are used unfairly.

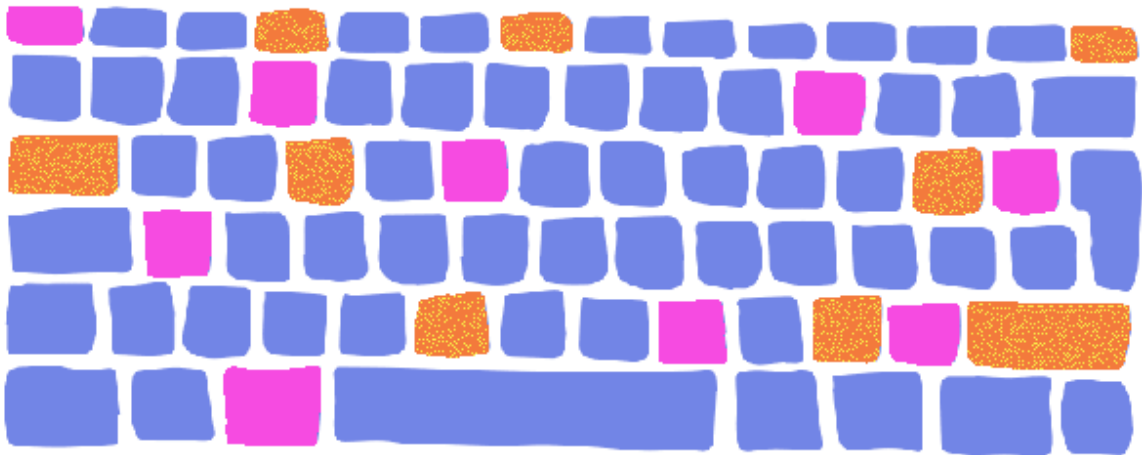
Yours truly

Amina Ali

APRIL 9, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PROVENANCE PLEASE FOR ALL COOP PRODUCTS

Dear Fellow Members:

Can we add country of origin as dedicated information on shelf labels? On housewares, on dry goods—the Coop is about educated choices. I know we make a sign

when we're proud of something, usually involving fair trade, but I would appreciate this information for all items, especially as the tech team programs labels like we now have in produce.

Thank you,
Lisa Guido

REFINING MEMBER USE OF THE PAGING SYSTEM

Dear Fellow Members:

While many of the initiatives to improve the Coop's sonic experience, from a "Shift DJ" discussion item at a GM a few months ago to a PSFC Spotify channel, are music-oriented, there is one simple thing that every member who is able can do to go easier on the ears of your fellow shoppers and workers.

Our awesome paging system enables anyone using it to be heard using our "inside voices," but there is an enormous difference between ending a page with a finger and the amplified collision of plastic that blasts everyone at the Coop when a page is ended by hanging up the phone.

For many, this is one more piece of noise pollution, like sirens and hydraulic bus brakes, that we simply tune out. But for others, it is an unnecessary aural assault that can be avoided with a small amount of mindfulness.

Please. If you use the paging system and you are able, use your finger to hang up the quiet way.

Thanks,
Brian Shuman

WHAT'S THE PLAN FOR WORKING PARENTS?

Dear Editor:

Two years ago, the world—and our member work requirements—asked us to return to a version of the “way it was.” A single mother of two—as hardcore a Food Coop member as you can get—told me she was leaving.

“What am I supposed to do?” she said.

Many families feel abandoned by the new policies of the Coop. With work, school, meals and bedtime, they find it increasingly difficult with the online platform to even schedule a shift, let alone worry about who'll care for their children while they do it. This leads to an increased work debt many are reminded of every time they need to buy food for their families.

“Why must I ask permission to shop at a store I've been a member of for over 10 years for having a lapsing grace period after being suspended for not doing shifts that are impossible to schedule?” is a sentiment I've heard more than once.

In the past few years, I've spent a lot of my (limited) free time and energy working to bring back childcare, and when we voted as a community, the item overwhelmingly passed. Then we hit a hiccup: our childcare insurance policy is impossible to renew.

So, what now? We've already lost many families, and we continue to fail to serve young families who are members, especially those in single parent households. The end of childcare should not mean the end of support for working member families.

As we move into the next 50 years of cooperation, we need to ask ourselves how will equity, in addition to cost efficiency and convenience, shape our idea of membership

and work requirements? How can we make it easier for families with young children to complete their required shifts?

Lauren Belski

HUMAN-SIZED PORTIONS, PLEASE

Dear Gazette:

Buying four bags of smoked paprika, three bags of peppercorns, five bags of parsley and so on, I would suggest a larger serving size in our member packed goods. If we could have a number of larger sizes of bags so I don't clear out the tamari roasted pepitas and smoked paprika in one run, I'd feel less guilty and I think many members with larger households would be happier, plus fewer wasted bags.

Here's my Coop spiced pasta recipe for a quick easy meal (feeds four):

Ingredients:

2-3 tbs of parsley

2-3 tbs of oregano

3-4 tbs of garlic

1-2 tsp of Aleppo pepper

Salt to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

½ cup of olive oil or whatever else you like

1 lb of pasta (I prefer Molisana brand but whatever works, gluten free can be fine too)

Optional: Fresh grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

Steps:

Boil 7 cups/1.7 liters of water in electric kettle and transfer to pot or boil on stove.

Pour pasta in water and give an initial stir, cover and bring to boil, drop to lowest flame that keeps it boiling, maybe smallest burner. Stir every couple of minutes so it doesn't get stuck together.

When the pasta reaches correct tenderness (which is usually indicated via the time shown on the pasta package), drain water over another vessel to save some pasta water.

Dump pasta in a big bowl, pour olive oil over it and add in $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the pasta water.

Pour all the spices in and stir for a bit till everything is coated with oil and spices.

Serve into bowls and add black pepper, salt and/or cheese as needed.

Enjoy,

Mark Paperno

NATIONAL GRID? HA! NATIONAL GREED'S MORE LIKE IT.

To the Editor:

A Coop member since the 1980s, I raised my family in the neighborhood, and one of the changes I've become keenly aware of is the skyrocketing cost of utilities. Their rates are putting New Yorkers in debt; the greed of National Grid hurts us all. It makes exorbitant profits off captive ratepayers while poisoning those who live in their shadow with their product, a potent greenhouse gas.

It's unconscionable that utilities across the country are building infrastructure we don't need, don't want and can't afford at a time when the city and state of New York are passing legislation that will wean us off this high-emissions fossil fuel completely by 2050, a few decades into the future.

We must do this to have a livable planet. Yet, seeing the end of business as usual, National Grid is milking the system as fast as it can, expanding pipes and infrastructure because that's where their profits lie. Money pours into the purses of executives and investors while the public struggles to pay bills. And methane, the main component of "natural" gas, is 86 times the heat-trapping gas as carbon dioxide, when measured over a 20-year period. We now experience unhealthy emissions in the air and from our stoves and pay exorbitant fees at the same time—all of which is contrary to the spirit that we stand for.

But we can do something.

While our Coop was established to provide healthy food at affordable prices, it's up to us to stand up to National Greed and oppose their latest rate hike proposal, which translates to over \$30/month more per household or a total of \$3.8 billion. To make your voice count, call your legislators and Governor Hochul, and demand they pass the NY HEAT Act, S2016, which would limit utility bills for low- and moderate-income ratepayers to six percent of income.

JK Canepa

A NOVEL IDEA: BOYCOTTS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Fellow Coop members,

Why spend the time, money, and emotional energy on renting out a large space, hir-

ing security, and debating a contentious issue endlessly when there is another possibility?

The people in favor of boycotting Israel would like to see their beliefs and shopping decisions forced on others. As a democratic institution, why are we looking for imposed mandates as solutions to divisive product issues when we have individual shopper decisions as a freer, more representative alternative?

I propose a novel idea: the individual boycott. What could be more democratic than each shopper making their own purchasing decisions based on their unique backgrounds and political persuasions? Products under minimal turnover thresholds due to these individual boycott decisions could then be removed from shelves.

Let's allow members to "vote" through their purchases, and we can avoid this whole *balagan* (commotion). How many of us really want to ruin an evening of our lives debating the conflict in the Middle East? Believe me, faster than you can say *gefilte*, I'll be the first to schlep my tuchus to whichever hapless venue the Coop finds to host a vote on the topic. But do I want to do that when I could be sitting on my couch munching on Bamba? Not really.

Do you want to single out the only Jewish state because you believe it to be the world's greatest evil as it fights a defensive war to return its hostages from a barbaric terrorist organization? Be my guest! YOU do not need to buy products from Israel.

I, for one, will proudly continue to stock my cart with Sabra hummus until the end of my days. Please, let's stop with this bupkis and focus on what unites our community instead.

Jonathan Aranov

POLITICS ARE PERSONAL

To the Editor,

I am dismayed to learn that the Coop and the *Gazette* are once again putting politics before the cooperation and respect that the Coop has embraced since its founding.

I have been a member for over 20 years, and it was this feeling of community, combined with the quality of food and respect for farmers and the environment that has made me proud.

I am a Jew who strongly supports the Palestinian cause. I show my support in many ways—personal ways. I don't need the Coop to tell me what products to buy or what products to boycott. I urge the Coop to permanently table this discussion. Sadly, if this political battle is allowed to rage at meetings and in the *Gazette*, or worse, if the Coop begins banning products based on political considerations, I will have to resign my membership.

In cooperation,

Helene Davis

BDS AND THE INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

Dear Coop Members,

While I disagree with many points in Joe Holtz's recent Coordinator's Corner column, this letter addresses only his unsupported claim that the Coop can best "welcome"

members by avoiding a vote on boycotting Israeli products. How can anyone anguished over Israel's genocide in Gaza (including, by the way, Palestinian members) feel welcomed by Joe's preferred approach?

Writing "on behalf of the General Coordinators," Joe insists that a BDS boycott would transgress the International Principles of Cooperation. He paraphrases the first IPC principle as "essentially stat[ing] that coops welcome people" from divergent backgrounds. The actual language is: "Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination." Joe relies on the slippery word "welcome," used in the sense of "make comfortable." But being free from discrimination has nothing to do with being sheltered from controversy. If a boycott is enacted, the Coop will remain just as open to members who dislike that provision as it currently is to BDS advocates. A healthy cooperative must be resilient enough to accommodate serious disagreements, using democratic methods to decide a course of action.

Broadly hinting at the GCs' distaste for those methods, Joe writes: "Regardless of [a potential] vote's outcome, thousands of members could feel unsupported by their Coop and may choose to withdraw their membership." These are scare tactics, given that a tiny, vocal group of people desperate to shield Israel from legitimate criticism appears to constitute the "anti" side of the debate. Joe correctly notes that "The GCs... are obligated to support the Coop's democratic processes." I urge them to take their thumbs off the scale as we address this vital matter.

Jan Clausen

BOYCOTTING A BOYCOTT

Dear Editors:

Letters, opinions related to the Hamas war are wholly inappropriate and must be rejected.

Letters, opinions related to Hamas's terrorism and war are wholly inappropriate and must be rejected.

Boycotts, especially those against those that FIGHT anti-American, anti-Western Jihadi terrorism have NO PLACE in Park Slope.

We've had ENOUGH division and polarization in America, in American Politics, in Park Slope, and in the COOP.

THANK YOU FOR REJECTING any such offensive and objectionable initiatives.

J. Anthony Levy

INCLUDE MEMBER INPUT IN LETTERS POLICY CHANGES

To the Editors:

As a group of proud Jews particularly affected by *Gazette* standards, we feel that your Letters policy changes required input from us. We needed to be consulted on your new standards for Letters to the Editor and Member Contributions so that the new standards would allow all members to see in print that we feel welcome at our own Coop.

You made clear with your suspension of letters that content in letters and contributions are a very real problem to be considered, and we agree one hundred percent. A

respectful dialogue between the Gazette editors and our group in the same room would have been productive.

Instead, the Editors took about a week, seemingly without consulting anyone but themselves.

That Israel is criticized is not the issue. Israel is subject to more legitimate criticism by Israelis than anyone else. Yet we read a great deal of illegitimate criticism in the Gazette, and our harsh and deadly history shows us the veiled anti-Semitism underneath. Some of it is not veiled at all, just taking new forms that may be unrecognized for now by others. Our group cannot know what is legitimately offensive to other Jews and other groups of people in general until we are told. And others cannot know what is legitimately offensive to us unless they are told. More dialogue, not less, can bridge this gap in understanding.

The only litmus test in this regard for submissions to the Gazette is whether a Coop member feels unsafe and/or unwelcome in the Coop. This group of proud Jews have collectively felt both since October 7th of 2023.

Jesse Rosenfeld (+150 signatories)

Editor's response:

The change in policy regarding letters was further amended in early March. Letters and member contributions concerning the ongoing violence in the Middle East and its potential impact on the Coop are no longer restricted.

A RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF OVERREACH

Dear Members,

I would like to respond to Kristian Nammack's February 28 letter on the subject of the vote to dissolve the Committee Oversight Committee (COC).

Mr. Nammack charges that the vote was based on "untruths." Having witnessed the formation and actions of the COC as a member of the Agenda Committee until October of 2023, I would like to address the alleged "falsehoods."

Firstly, he asserts that the COC "never attempted to arbitrate committee disputes—that is the job of the Dispute Resolution Committee." That is incorrect; the DRC concerns itself with the actions of individuals, not committees. The COC's own previous description of its mission on the Coop website declared it would serve as "a liaison between committees, members and staff," suggesting that the COC would indeed try to mediate between various groups.

Secondly, he says that the COC never claimed that it would reduce the staff's workload. This was a part of the original proposal passed at the January 2022 GM: "Importantly, the proposal is intended to increase the ability of committees to reduce staff work."

Thirdly, the COC did attempt to take on work credit management. In response to the Structure and Reporting Requirements for New Coop Committees at the April 2022 GM, the COC again declared its mission: "Supervise all committee reports and requirements including scheduling updates and tracking work credits." Left unaddressed and unresolved was that the Coop already had systems in place for reporting all work credit. Even so, further encroachments upon staff time and member privacy occurred when the COC took it upon itself to try to inspect the past work records of thousands of members, not just those on Initiative committees. The purpose of these investigations was unclear, but the inappropriateness of this endeavor, the lack of any mandate and the enormous demands on the staff were suggested at the GM.

Mr. Nammack ignores why the resolution to disband the COC passed by a near 3 to 1 margin. As staff member Jana Cunningham's presentation made clear, the COC failed

to perform its mission to have committee members of both Essential and Initiative committees report to the Gazette, GM, and website their information and activities. Instead, the COC took upon the task of forming a complaint desk and investigating the decisions made by Essential committees. There was no language anywhere in the final item approved by the GM to authorize these activities. It was only after the October 2023 GM that the COC removed from the Coop website its self-declared mission to “investigate committee activities as requested.” The COC’s staff liaison, Joe Holtz, has never explained why this language appeared on the website in the first place or why it was promptly removed after Ms. Cunningham called our attention to it at the October GM. Notably, he didn’t defend the COC’s activities at either GM where the fate of the committee was being determined.

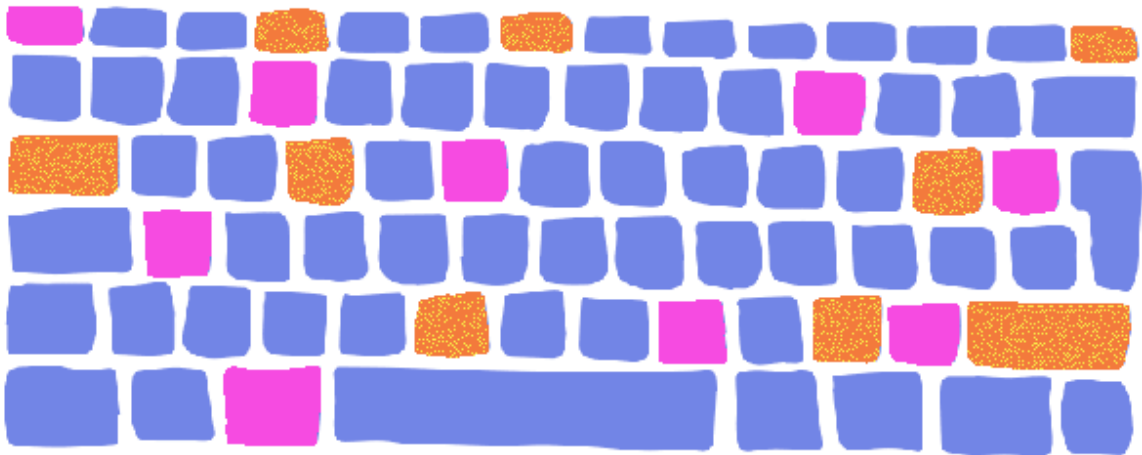
As was her prerogative, Ms. Cunningham took the feedback she received at the October GM and modified her item to specify for a full dissolution of the Committee Oversight Committee. Surely, the January GM and Mr. Nammack’s letter make clear that, given the COC’s gross overstepping of its stated purpose, she was right to do so. Casting doubts on a longtime and highly respected staff member who went far beyond the call of duty to do what she felt was right for the Coop, Mr. Nammack has provided only further justification for disbanding the Committee Oversight Committee.

In cooperation,
Cynthia Payne

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Editors' Note: The *Gazette* is ending its pause on the publication of member letters and articles related to the war in the Middle East. As is the case for letters on all topics, letters should be no more than 300 words in length. The Letters Editor reserves the right to run a representative selection of letters on any given topic, in the event multiple letters make identical points.

ARE YOU TOO INDULGENT WITH YOUR PLASTIC BAG USE?

Dear Coop,

10:30am. Doing my shift at the Coop. Checkout. My first client of the day, a young man with a hat comes to the checkout, and says “Hi,” timidly. He has a light basket, full of fruits, cereal bars, grains and pasta. Apples in a plastic bag, bananas in a plastic bag, oranges in a plastic bag. How can I discretely convince him not to pack the fruits he will peel before eating in a plastic bag?

11am. A smiling elderly woman. She’s cold and mentions proudly that she’ll be very happy to cook a soup and a chicken broth, when she gets home. She bought carrots, celery, celeriac, beets, leeks and chicken. All in separate plastic bags. How can I kindly convince her not to pack her vegetables in plastic bags?

11:30am. A tall man with broad shoulders rushes to checkout. No time to say hello, no time for a smile. Four bagels, four plastic bags. How can I politely convince him he may not need so many?

12:00pm. A jovial man arrives, loaded with two big full baskets, and asks me to check out them out separately, with two different receipts. He tells me that he shops for a neighbor who broke his arm. Bags of cereals, bags of dry fruits, bags of bananas, bags of carrots, bags of potatoes, bags of sweet potatoes, bags of beans, bags of zucchinis, bags of eggplants, bread in a bag, eggs in a bag, pork in a bag. How can I gently convince him to rethink his approach?

12:30pm. A couple with a beautiful baby. They seem tired but fulfilled. They help each other, one unloading the basket, the other packing: plastic bags in a plastic bag. How can I softly suggest alternatives?

Nathalie Van Braekel

The following letters were originally submitted for publication in the February 27 issue of the Gazette:

OUR COOPERATIVE NATURE REMINDS US: BOYCOTT

Fellow members,

Food—like art, science and sport—is political, simply on the basis that it is inseparable from human affairs. The Coop has naturally understood this truism, as evident from our history of boycotts. And so, as I read recent letters arguing against a boycott on Israeli goods, I cannot help but wonder if at some point we have lost part of our progressive spirit.

Namely, vague appeals to “keep the peace” (and, I sincerely ask, for whom?) strike me fundamentally as calls to place civility over morality. All they do is center our mere want for oblivious comfort over the urgent need to reckon with what’s happening. The counterfactual I sadly entertain is that if only American civil society—the Coop included—had held Israel accountable when it was imperative, perhaps the enormous loss of life we continue to witness could have been averted. Tragically, the borne-out reality is genocide.

I’m thinking of a friend of mine from Gaza who was raised as a farmer. Even before the current crisis, Israel would besiege their family farm every few years. Greenhouses, countless crops, the family home—all lost. Each time, they’ve managed to rebuild for the survival of their family and community, as they are endeavoring to do once again.

With them in my thoughts, I ask us to keep a humble perspective. I myself come from

a place recovering from war. Our community at the Coop is beyond fortunate to be in safety and abundance. We will be fine. Instead, fellow shoppers, think (and speak) about Gaza. A boycott is not only principled—it's the least we can do.

*For a just peace,
Abdi-Hakin Dirie*

TO HELP THE COOP COOPERATE, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT BDS!

Dear Coop members:

Much of the discourse around a boycott will likely revolve around the conflict itself. Here, I'd like to put that charged issue aside and point out the immense importance this conversation has to the functioning of the Coop in general.

The PSFC mission statement states: "We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy-making to running the store." Our mission statement sets this lofty goal, but for years we have been falling short. A typical General Meeting sees less than 1% of members turn out to make their voices heard. Compare this to the last time BDS came up: nearly 10% of members showed up to engage in the discussion. While the issue is undoubtedly contentious, this level of engagement is healthy for the democratic process, as is learning to discuss charged issues in respectful ways.

Due to increased engagement demands, members are pushing for GM's to become hybrid. Currently, the maximum capacity for our GM's is around 240 people, meaning less than 2% of the Coop can participate on any given night. This is a structural barrier to creating a thriving democratic institution.

Hybrid meetings would increase our capacity for engagement while enhancing accessibility for our disabled and older adult members, working parents, students and

those with limited capacity in their schedules. Such a foundation would bring the Coop into the 21st century, allowing it to fulfill its democratic ideals for generations to come.

Moriah Engelberg

IN SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP

Dear members,

Many of the arguments against a PSFC boycott of targeted Israeli goods rest on the idea that voting on the issue would be dangerous for the Coop. While some of these claims intentionally mischaracterize the boycott movement as violent, others may be grounded in genuine concern. For those who worry that the Coop can't withstand conflict, I'd like to share my experiences canvassing with PSFC Members for Palestine.

Many members I've spoken with have been excited to sign our petition. One said, "nothing else would have made me stop!" One person engaged with me for several minutes before calmly stating, "I strongly oppose this." No one was hurt in the disagreement! My most memorable interaction was with a woman who told me that signing our petition was emotional for her because she had been part of the debate in the past organizing against BDS at the Coop and had done a lot of work and learning since then.

I was moved that she shared this, and since then I've been thinking about the bravery of changing one's mind, and how often it is necessary for progress. When I was growing up, many Democrats opposed gay marriage; many people who now view MLK and Nelson Mandela as heroes once saw them as terrorists. Our progress beyond these backward ideas is largely due to activism, conversation, and the democratic process. We may not all agree on the strategy of using our money and collective voice to

stand against Israel's oppression of Palestinians, but if we believe in democracy and progress we must be allowed to engage. My interactions with Coop members have shown me that we are capable of participating in democracy, even when a topic is challenging.

*In cooperation,
Sophie Glickman*

CENSORSHIP WON'T SOLVE ANYTHING

To the editor:

There have been calls to censor members who want to boycott Israeli products. For example, the January *Linewaiters' Gazette* featured arguments that the Coop should refuse to publish op-eds that promote BDS.

BDS aside, it would be wise to remember the Coop's roots—we are a radical experiment in direct democracy. The statement of cooperative identity says Coops “are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.” Not only do our principles embrace active input by members; democratic deliberation is at the core of how we function. Democracy can be messy and uncomfortable, but silencing those we disagree with will not quell that discomfort. A thriving democratic institution tolerates dissent and creates space for a variety of different perspectives.

The common response to that argument is that our democratic principles shouldn't apply to hate speech. This argument rests on the notion that boycotting Israeli products is a violent display of anti-Semitism. As a Jew, and someone who is committed to fighting for justice, I care deeply about combating hate in all forms. Anti-Semitism is all too real and on the rise. Yet, fundamentally I don't believe boycotting Israeli prod-

ucts is anti-Semitic.

A useful working definition of anti-Semitism is acts of hatred, hostility or prejudice targeted toward Jews due to their identity. Firstly, boycotting is not an act of hatred; it is an act of nonviolent civil disobedience against governmental policy. Secondly, a boycott of Israel is not being called for due to the religious or ethnic identity of Israelis. It is a direct response to atrocities being committed against Palestinians.

On contentious issues, regardless of our opinions, we must fight the instinct to censure those we disagree with and let the democratic process unfold.

Dan Kaminsky

NO, A BOYCOTT DOESN'T SINGLE ISRAEL OUT

To the Editors:

In a recent edition of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, members argued that a vote to boycott unfairly singles Israel out when there are many extremist regimes in the world. Yes, there are many oppressed peoples worldwide. If those making this argument are concerned about them, they should propose boycotts against other oppressive entities too. Discussing BDS doesn't mean we can't also extend the boycott conversation to promote justice and liberation in other geographies.

The idea that we are singling out Israel overlooks PSFC's rich tradition of boycotting products (or companies) from countries perpetuating injustice. The Coop boycotted South Africa for decades to protest apartheid. We boycotted Chile during the years of the Pinochet dictatorship. In 1995, we boycotted products from Colorado when it passed sweeping anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. In 2004, we boycotted Coca-Cola for their record of mistreating workers. We boycotted Domino Sugar and Flaum Appetizing

products over their labor practices. We've pulled our money from Citibank over their support of the Dakota Access Pipeline. These are only some of the boycotts the Coop has voted for in its 50-year history.

Building on this tradition, Israel's actions demand that we have a membership-wide conversation about BDS. Since October 7, Israel's U.S.-funded military assault on Gaza has killed at least 27,708 Palestinians, including at least 11,500 children. At least 67,317 people have been wounded. 10,000 are missing under the rubble. Horrifying as these numbers are, they will only have grown by the time you read this letter. Gaza is on the brink of famine. Israel is blockading life-sustaining supplies and deliberately destroying hospitals. BDS is a non-violent movement to put pressure on Israel to stop this devastation. It is morally imperative that the PSFC membership discusses it openly.

Zahra Khalid

BDS DEBATE WASTES COOP RESOURCES

Dear *Linewaiters' Gazette*:

A group calling itself "PSFC Members for Palestine" are exploiting Coop resources to promote the anti-Israel BDS movement. They are wasting their time and the time of our coordinators and GM attendees by insisting the coordinator pursue securing a location for an item [a boycott of products made in Israel] that has no chance of passing the 75% boycott threshold.

The results from the January Harvard CAPS/Harris Poll show this group is out of touch with how the majority of Americans view the conflict. It is folly to assume the diverse Coop population would differ significantly from these results.

The murders, beheadings, rapes, mutilations and kidnappings committed by Hamas on October 7 are considered to be terrorist attack by 80% of the respondents, and 74% believe Hamas is genocidal. Seventy-five percent say the attack on Israel was not justified. Eighty percent support Israel over Hamas. Sixty-nine percent think Israel is trying to avoid civilian casualties. Most importantly, 79% think Hamas needs to be removed and 67% think there should be a ceasefire only after the hostages are released and Hamas is removed from power.

The letter on the group's website implies support for the opposite of the above-stated positions.

If this group truly cared about human rights they would be advocating for co-existence, Palestinian democracy, removal of the tyrannical Hamas kleptocracy and release of the hostages. But they don't. They should not be permitted to further abuse Coop resources. Their behavior is very uncooperative.

Barbara Mazor

A COOP BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI GOODS CAN MAKE WAVES

Dear Editors:

From the Montgomery bus boycotts to apartheid South Africa, boycotts are a non-violent, effective tactic in achieving justice. For those concerned about the genocide in Gaza yet argue that a Coop boycott wouldn't make an impact, let us not underestimate PSFC's reach.

Boycotts withhold money as a means of political action. We stock over 20 Israeli products. Based just on Soda Stream sales, it likely exceeds \$100,000 annually. A boycott begun last decade would have redirected \$1 million away from the Israeli military. We

can find new suppliers closer to home and more aligned with our principles.

A boycott is about much more than money. The Coop is a well-respected institution. In 2012, when BDS last came up at the PSFC, it made national and international news. Prestigious papers like the *New York Times* covered the story. Then-Mayor Bloomberg and other elected officials weighed in. Many people and institutions are interested in our little Coop.

The megaphone the Coop holds isn't just aimed at the press. In Congress, PSFC is represented by Dan Goldman, who has refused to call for a ceasefire and voted to censure Rashida Tlaib. A boycott would signal he is not aligned with the constituents and institutions he represents. Some of the most powerful people in the world, Hakeem Jeffries and Chuck Schumer, live mere blocks from the Coop and neither have even called for a ceasefire. This proposed boycott can show our elected that Brooklynites stand for peace and justice.

A Coop boycott isn't just a drop in the bucket; ripples create waves!

Ann Schneider

BDS DEBATE THREATENS SAFETY OF SOME COOP MEMBERS

Dear Editors:

Following the horrific racially motivated murder of George Floyd and other tragedies, it was heartening to see the coop swing into action to support our Black community members. The Coop adopted a strong statement rejecting racism in all its forms, and a squad was formed to address issues of unconscious bias at the coop. Sadly, this compassion and support has not extended to our Jewish community members.

Since the barbaric atrocities committed in Israel on October 7 by terrorists, and the resulting massive explosion of anti-Semitism and horrific violence against Jews worldwide, a group of Coop members have inexplicably decided that this is an ideal time to try to bring BDS to the Coop. It goes without saying that if the Coop stops carrying the 10 Israeli products we currently carry, events in the Middle East will not be affected in the least. What such a vote will do, and the aggressive campaign to push this vote upon the Coop (a vote that failed by a very wide margin in the past), has already done, is to make many of our Jewish members feel unsafe and unwelcome.

We are a community of many religions and races. When a group of us is facing global hatred and violence, it is incumbent upon us to support that group. How anyone could look at what Jewish people are facing worldwide, and conclude that the best response for our community is to make our Jewish members feel vulnerable, unsafe and unwelcome is shocking and in conflict with our mission.

Please keep abreast of the votes coming up at our general meetings. If a vote on BDS is forced upon our beloved Coop, please show up at that meeting and cast a vote for kindness, compassion, empathy and unity.

Thank you.

Sondra Shaievitz

COMMITTED TO THE COOP AND TO EACH OTHER

To the Editor and Fellow Coop Members:

As the campaign to boycott Israeli products at our beloved Coop proceeds, it is essential that we all commit to acting with integrity and respect for the Coop, our Mission Statement, our fellow Coop members and the dignity and worth of all peoples. We must take our mission statement seriously and avoid products that depend on the ex-

exploitation of others. Though we may disagree about boycotting Israeli products, and though emotions will sometimes run high, a commitment to those core values and to our wonderful Coop will see us through. Ultimately, we—and the Coop itself—will emerge the stronger. I have faith in you, my fellow members!

Carol Wald

A GROUNDED RESPONSE

Dear PSFC:

I am a new PSFC member, but first joined a food coop in 1983. I am also Jewish and a third-generation Holocaust survivor. I have family in Israel, from infants to pensioners. Finally, I am a lawyer and have long been politically engaged.

In sum, I have deep grounding to respond to two themes in some members' objections to a PSFC boycott of Israeli goods.

1. A boycott would be divisive; the Coop shouldn't take sides; the Coop shouldn't get involved in international affairs.

This ship has sailed. The Coop is not neutral. With every order placed for Israeli goods (Sabra hummus, SodaStream products, produce), the Coop is actively being divisive and taking a side. Every day, the Coop is choosing to purchase and sell goods from a nation which the World Court held is plausibly committing genocide with forced displacement, detention, looting, death, maiming, starvation, thirst and disease.

2. The Coop should be "safeguarded" from a boycott of Israeli goods.

To the contrary, the Coop is taking unreasonable risks by choosing to sell Israeli prod-

ucts. Daily, the Coop mocks its own mission, specifically its commitment “to avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others.” All products originating from Israel depend on that nation’s exploitation of Palestinians. By carrying these goods, the Coop offends its values and risks losing members, including me, who expect the Coop to honor its mission.

I’m informed that over 1,100 members have already signed a petition asking the Coop to boycott Israel goods. It is unreasonable for the Coop to risk losing these and other members.

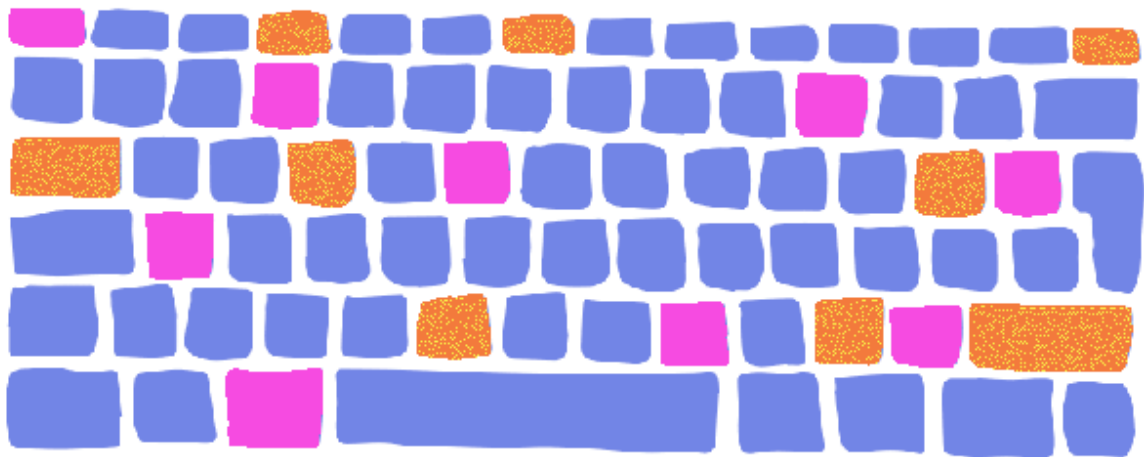
To safeguard its integrity and longevity, the Coop should voluntarily cease selling Israeli products and actively facilitate a member vote on an Israeli goods’ boycott.

In struggle,
M.J. Williams

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Editors' Note: The *Gazette* is pausing the publication of all member letters and member articles related to the war in the Middle East while we revise our submissions policy.

LINWAITERS' GA-ZINE?

Dear Linewaiters' Gazette,

At the November GM a member asked about the *Gazette* being brought back to a print edition, and the question has stuck with me. The transition to a digital *Gazette* has clearly had many advantages (some of which were covered in detail in an article May 2022), however I agree that something tangible may have also been lost in this move.

The appeal of spontaneously collecting a physical edition while shopping is tempting, and some other recent new publications—such as the *New York Review of Architecture*—have triumphed in their role as primarily physical things, to be folded into pockets or left on tables, and which are full of idiosyncratic sketches and graphics. Even the simple ability for editions of the *Gazette* to be continuously archived at the Brooklyn Public Library to expand on their current collection could be of value.

I understand that the cost and time of producing a traditional print edition in parallel to the digital version might be challenging. However, while walking around Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines at the Brooklyn Museum this week, it occurred to me that the *Gazette* could learn from the scrappy, improvised and imperfect world of zines. I propose that, for each digital release, someone takes a turn to print out the new articles, letters and graphics, and paste them into a haphazard zine master copy layout. We could photocopy a dozen and leave them by the entrance, and if the stack runs low, we could just photocopy some more! Each edition could be unique and represent the graphic whims of whoever was responsible for the cut and paste job, and each edition would be photocopied to demand—low cost recycled paper, and tailored to how many copies are needed.

Zine-cerely,
Dan Bergsagel

DISBANDING THE COC TONIGHT AT THE GM—AN EXAMPLE OF STAFF OVERREACH AND POOR GOVERNANCE FOR A COOP

To the editors:

I just returned from the January GM a few minutes ago and, as one of the four members of the COC, which was disbanded tonight, I am both a bit relieved yet quite disappointed. Relieved to no longer be in a crossfire of an unwillingness to collaborate and illuminate; disappointed at a very poorly run process.

The agenda items (Oct. and last night) were mostly based on untruths, namely:

- We never attempted to arbitrate committee disputes—that is the job of the Dispute Resolution Committee.
- We never claimed we would reduce staff workload. Not sure where this idea came from.
- We never tried to take on work credit management. That is done by Staff.

After that October discussion—where the COC leader Brian responded to clear up some “misunderstandings”—i.e. false allegations—we thought everything was amended. Then suddenly in early January we discovered there was an agenda item to disband us. A few of us attempted to reach out to the proposing staff member to discuss but were met with a stone wall. No communication.

Earlier today, I took the time to read the Agenda Committee’s memo “How to Develop an Agenda Item for the General Meeting.” Among the suggestions—not evidenced by this process at all, are:

- Write out your proposal or discussion item and check it for clarity.

- Seek background information.
- Publicize your idea.
- Ask for feedback.

It concerns me that this kind of forceful, top-down behavior is at play at the Coop. It also concerns me that the Agenda Committee did not make any effort to fact check the allegations made about the COC in tonight's agenda item—which was filled with falsehoods.

Just a warning—this is a slippery slope. We are a member-owned coop, and our governance should reflect that.

Kristian Nammack

ACCESS FOR ALL COOP FAMILIES

Dear editors,

I've been a member for 10 years, though I spent many of those away from the borough, and then away from the state. When I rejoined last year, I was so happy to find a vibrant and thriving Coop. I brought with me my now 6-year-old daughter, who fell in love immediately with the place, believes (correctly) that you can find "everything" there, and pesters me daily about when she can work a shift. We are passionate about the Coop in our family! I've begun seeking out ways to get more involved, to both give back to and learn from this community that has fed and nurtured us so well. But for reasons I'm sure a lot of parent-members can relate to, I'm limited by work and family obligations. I'd like to attend the General Meetings, but I simply can't. However, if these meetings shifted to a hybrid model that accommodated virtual attendance, this would help so many who want to participate, but currently are not able —

parents, immunocompromised individuals, people who have mobility, health, work, school or any other kind of constraints. I applaud the Coop for recently reinstating masking midweek; it's a powerful way of expressing commitment to and care for each other. The same principle of access and inclusion should be extended to the General Meetings. These, too, should be spaces where all of us feel welcome.

Sincerely,
Genevieve Yue

SOMETHING NEW IS NOT WORKING WELL AT THE PSFC

Dear Coop:

I haven't been able to shop at the Coop for at least the past 30 days, despite having completed four shifts between late September and early January and having two future shifts scheduled. Yes, I had five free passes and they were already used up, because I have a family, and I shop often via bicycle. They did not replenish after the shift I worked in January. Yes, I fell behind in my work shifts. Yes, I have been a member for 30 years but am too young to "retire". Yes, I spoke to Coop staff members about this. I was told that the new system is not going to change because it is working well for the Coop. Attendance for work slots is at an all-time high. Got it. The greater good, for sure. But what about members like me? This is a call to open up a discussion about the need for some leeway, nuance. I kept my money in the Coop during the pandemic when it was struggling and when I had to wait in line for three hours each time that I shopped. Now I need to go to Whole Foods instead of shopping where I have shopped for three decades. There's no good reason that a 30-year member should shop at Whole Foods because of a one-size (doesn't) fit-all policy. I mean, we wear masks two days a week to accommodate certain members. Let's find some creative solutions regarding suspension rules to fit a few more members' needs.

Rebecca Stronger

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

August 14, 2024



BRING BACK CHEAPER ITEMS

To the editor:

I have been a member of the Coop since 2009, off and on (spending time in California, Texas and Colorado since then, made it hard to fulfill work requirements from thousands of miles away). I find myself often eschewing offerings at the Coop—mostly staples like flour, sugar and pasta—because I can find them cheaper at capitalist enterprises like Target. Coop members tend to be foodies, hippies or people looking for cheap food; I feel like the Coop is serving one and two better than three. Since I am currently unemployed, I slot into categories one and three (punk, not hippie, but hey). If I remember correctly, the Coop is an IGA member, and has access to products from Krasdale, the IGA's store brand. I, for one, would happily purchase generic, store-brand merchandise at low prices from the Coop, rather than patronizing another establishment for them, if they were available. And if I remember correctly, the Coop used to offer select Krasdale-branded goods, but no longer does.

I respectfully submit that the Coop should resume stocking Krasdale merchandise for staples such as flour, sugar, and possibly some other categories, to better serve the needs of their income-constrained members.

Regards,

Greg Costikyan

RICK'S PICKS (PICKLES)

Dear Coop:

Rick's Picks started by sourcing and manufacturing pickles in the Hudson Valley. As I recall this was a point of pride and part of the sales pitch by the company.

While the company is still based in Brooklyn, for the items that the Coop carries, these are now sourced and manufactured outside of the U.S. But you really have to look closely at the label to see the tiny print for country of origin. It is under the much larger corporate location of Brooklyn.

We have since purchased McClure's Pickles instead. These are still made in the States.

*In cooperation,
Stewart Pravda*

RECENT DISCLOSURES RAISE ISSUES OF FINANCE CONTROLS

Dear fellow Coop members,

Two recent disclosures reported in the *Linewaiters' Gazette* lead me to wonder if the Coop should explore more formal financial decision-making.

At the May general meeting, General Manager Joe Holtz said he had decided to issue a \$100,000 "informal agricultural loan," according to the *Gazette*, "to a farm in financial need" who had approached the Coop.

At the November meeting, Holtz said he "personally makes the investment decisions" on \$7 million in Coop funds in consultation with a member, according to a *Gazette* report.

Joe Holtz is a deeply valued Coop leader and I very much appreciate his decades of service. Further, I do not take particular issue with either of the aforementioned decisions, about which I know little.

But I do not believe any single officer of the Coop, no matter how well regarded, should have the authority to make decisions impacting such quantities of money. In addition, I believe it would make more sense for decisions to be guided primarily by financial policies set by members through some formal structure such as committee rather than by individual members selected by an officer personally.

I urge further discussion of these matters.

In cooperation,
Ryan Tate

AN INFORMED MEMBERSHIP

To the editors:

The Coop's direct democracy model requires an informed membership. People have limited time. They need to know the issues, and they need to know when important votes are happening. Critical to this are the sterling efforts of the editorial staff of the *Gazette* and the reminders emailed to the membership in the week before each GM.

Unfortunately, the system does not always work perfectly, leaving many members in the dark about important votes. Take, for example, the October 31 vote to reintroduce a partial mask mandate. This issue was debated at the September 26 GM. But the *Gazette's* report on the September GM was not published until November 7, a week *after* the Halloween vote on the new mask mandate. Nor do the monthly reminder emails always include information regarding upcoming votes in the text of the email. For the October 31 meeting, for example, the email included only a link to the agenda, which may be why some were surprised to find out that a two-day mask mandate had been reintroduced.

Coop members have strong views on many topics. Ensuring that members know when votes are on the agenda will surely increase participation in the GM and the quality of the Coop's democracy.

Julian Brod

Response from General Coordinator Ann Herpel: The General Meeting agenda is available on foodcoop.com up to 21 days prior to the General Meeting. The agenda is also promoted on social media shortly after it is published on our website. Members do not have to wait until the Coop sends an email to learn what's on the agenda.

TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY

Dear members,

“Come on, people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now”

Chet Powers song lyric, 1967

On a recent weekend, I found no less than three people with clipboards outside the Coop, urging members to support BDS. When approached by one, I explained why I could not support this continuing divisiveness and finger-pointing, as neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians are without blame. Not to mention that if you want to call out countries that have harmed others, you need look no further than the United States. And as in the United States, where not all of us agree with government actions, not all Israelis agree with Israeli policy and not all Palestinians agree with Palestinian policy. Banning a particular product from the Coop may be affecting a small

family business that doesn't agree with their government. Casting blame on one side or the other doesn't solve the problem.

I shared my past experience with a Dialogue Project workshop. People were asked questions about their connections, however remote, to Arab and Israeli lands. Group discussions helped participants better understand one other.

I mentioned a recent virtual meeting of Standing Together, an organization combining Israelis and Palestinians who are working to foster peaceful communications. Israeli and Palestinian people shared their thoughts in a workshop joined by almost 2,000 people worldwide.

I urge people to make their own decisions about which Coop products to buy and learn about initiatives that promote peaceful communications, such as:

1. *Standing Together*, Israel
2. *Combatants for Peace*, Israel/Palestine
3. *The Parents Circle - Families Forum*, Israel/Palestine
4. *Women Wage Peace/Women of the Sun*, Israel/Palestine
5. *EcoPeace Middle East*, Israel/Jordan/Palestine
6. *Hand in Hand*, Israel
7. *Jerusalem Peacebuilders*, U.S.

*In cooperation,
Cynthia Blayer*

SIGN THE PETITION TO BOYCOTT ISRAELI PRODUCTS AT PSFC

To the editor:

On a recent Sunday (January 14, 2024) afternoon outside the Coop, I signed a petition in support of a boycott of Israeli products at our cooperative. It's bad enough by accident of birth my taxation aids the Israeli genocide in Gaza, but that my elective cooperation with a seemingly like-minded community also does is unacceptable and must be stopped immediately. I urge fellow members to join me in signing this petition by PSFC Members for Palestine, which is searchable online by that name.

Damien Neva

OUTSIDE THE COOP

Dear Coop:

This evening (January 11, 2024) as I went to enter the Coop to shop, I was swarmed by three individuals with clipboards and info about their cause relating to the Coop. This was in the area of the signposts numbered 1, 2 and 3 for immediate line waiters, closest to #1. I experienced being swarmed as disorienting and disconcerting. I also experienced these individuals as rude and belittling when they laughed at me for ignoring them and their cause. It wasn't like I was being approached in a friendly manner by one individual and given the option to engage or not. There were two petitioners to my left and one to my right, leaving me feeling encircled, and almost trapped.

I think there should be a Coop rule similar to ones at voting polling sites. Petitioners should be held to standing a certain number of feet away from entry and line waiting

for the Coop. Engaging with petitioners should be an optional experience, not an in-your-face experience.

I felt like I was being harassed at entrance of the Coop, as opposed to being benignly approached. Over the years I have experienced many petitioners in front of the Coop for various causes, or at the top of the block at Union & 7th Ave. This was the first time I felt threatened. The Coop has always felt like a safe space. This evening, it did not.

Barbara Bedick

THANK YOU

Dear Gazette:

We publicly thank the General Coordinators for their dedication, fortitude, and initiative in safeguarding the Coop. We 100% support the decision to remove the BDS discussion item from the November GM Agenda.

Anita Aboulafia

Ralph Friedman

Jill Friedman

Felicia Glucksman

Leonid Gorokhovsky

Asya Gorokhovsky

Bob Graziano

Sybil Graziano

Feotiniya Grechko

Allison Halpren

Fran Hawthorne

Elian Jeifez-Neiman
Maya Koenig
Joshua Kranz
Ben Krawitz
Corrine Lang
Harvey Lang
Constantine Kaniklidis
Sylvia Lowenthal
Diana Maislen
Ramon Maislen
Avishay Mazor
Barbara Mazor
Marjorie Ordene
Rodger Parsons
Saul D. Raw
Michael Rieman
Jesse Rosenfeld
Marion Stein
Nancy Spitalnick
Gerald I Weider

RESPONSE TO GAZETTE

Dear editors:

Happy New Year!

I was disheartened to see communications about BDS, especially after the terror attacks on Israel on October 7th. BDS as a movement is unfit for a community that embraces the background of all of its members. I joined the Coop after a particularly

difficult time in my life and was in search of more community of like-minded people who are as food-obsessed as me. So seeing support for a movement that attempts to justify violence on a day when people were massacred because of their religion, is not aligned with the Coop's mission statement to "make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all."

It is not appropriate for the *Gazette* to be publishing letters supporting the BDS movement if it does not represent all of the community members or for that policy to be considered for adoption.

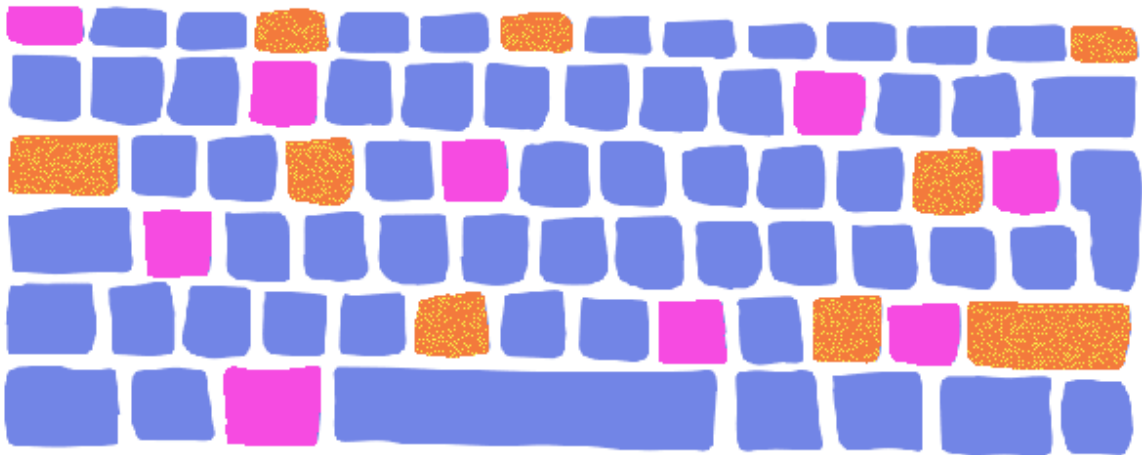
Looking forward to seeing you in the Coop soon.

*Thank you for your time,
Rebecca Gladstone*

LETTERS

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CURRENT POLITICS

Dear Coop,

The current politics in this nation have reached a critical mess. The right and left battle it out in a tone-deaf contest of wills. The conflict frequently takes on a somber

tone. It sometimes seems more like a war. Troubles in the Middle East have a similar ring. Bringing either conflict into active debate will do nothing for the Coop but sew consternation and conflict. We've got a great crew; the ship is steady.

As a successful progressive institution, we have kept ourselves above the fray. Taking the high road is always difficult. Allowing the Coop to remain free from choosing a side will permit peace to prevail.

There is a better path for America, and Israel and the Palestinians. Keeping the little store on Union Street free of such political matters is best. If we put our love and energy into the store, it will come back to nourishing us. As does the crew; keep us on course—in spite of storms.

With Hope,
Rodger Parsons

BDS WRONG FOR THE COOP

To the Editors,

I am a retired area coordinator and current member of PSFC. I'm a fourth generation American and I don't belong to any religious congregation. I've never been to Israel. My ancestors came to America to escape antisemitic persecution.

I simply cannot take part in an organization that singles out the world's one and only Jewish state for special condemnation. There is plenty of uncooperative extremism all over the world including Palestinian suicide bombers. It is repugnant to me to think that the prestige of the Coop is being used to glorify one side versus the other in the Middle East.

The continued publicity that BDS would receive, if we hold a referendum, is an embarrassment to me, your retired employee. Further, if the referendum were to pass, I would have to resign my membership. I wonder how many other employees and members would be driven away too. Antisemitism is wrong even in the name of free speech and democracy.

Bonnie Q. Kaplan

BDS

Dear Editors,

BDS, and their statement on October 7th, makes it a movement unfit for a community that embraces the background of all of its members.

Supporting a movement that attempts to justify violence on a day when people were massacred because of their religion is not aligned with the Coop's mission statement to "make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all."

That being said, it is not appropriate for the *Gazette* to be publishing letters supporting the BDS movement or for it to be considered for adoption by the Coop.

Jackie Loeshelle

SUPPORT OUR COOPERATIVE SPIRIT

Dear Editors,

From 2010 through 2015, the Coop was engaged in a controversy that could have destroyed the Coop. A small group of members set out to have the Coop endorse a political position that had no connection to the Coop's core mission. The effort ultimately failed. The costs to the Coop were high: countless member and coordinator hours; thousands of dollars for meeting space rental; loss of precious GM time; and irreparable damage to the Coop's reputation.

Prior to the murders, beheadings, rapes, and kidnappings committed by the genocidal terrorist organization Hamas on October 7, the matter appeared to have been put to rest. But following the October 7 massacre, some members reintroduced this controversy. It is ill advised, toxic, and pernicious. We cannot allow the social fabric of the Coop to be torn asunder again. Our highest priority must be the well-being and preservation of our Park Slope Food Coop.

But shouldn't Coop members be allowed to use our resources to promote causes dear to them? Yes, within the limits, as noted in *Gazette* submission guidelines. BDS violates those guidelines. BDS is part of the anti-Israel movement that seeks to deny the Jewish people the right of self-determination in a portion of their historic homeland. Hamas and multiple additional terrorist organizations endorsed BDS as the "Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine." The anti-Israel protests have been violent, engaging in harassment and vandalism. They make false accusations against Israel and call it "legitimate criticism." The anti-Israel movement is discriminatory, violent, and hateful.

The Editors must abide by *Gazette* guidelines and cease publishing letters on this topic. There is no shortage of sources of information and misinformation for anyone interested.

Barbara Mazor

BDS

Dear fellow Coop Members:

I am very concerned with the impact that the BDS movement is having on the Coop community, particularly given the brutality of the Oct. 7 terrorist attack on civilians and the massive spike in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attacks around the world since the Oct. 7 attacks.

I will also share an observation. I used to see a significant number of clearly religious Jews shopping as members of the Coop. I have not seen them since the BDS movement became active in our community. I feel like this has driven away members, and its resurgence after the Oct. 7 terrorist attack is making remaining Jewish members, myself included, *highly* uncomfortable, possibly even unsafe.

I am sympathetic to both Israel and Palestine. I believe in a sound, two-state solution. But the Coop is a community where people have differing views and for the Coop to boycott one side will split our community and feed into a growing insecurity of Jews in our community. I think this is harmful to the Coop. It is more important for the Coop to fight anti-Semitism and, I will add, Islamophobia, in our own community than to target a foreign nation.

I think an isolated boycott aimed at Israel is the wrong way to handle this. If the Coop is going to boycott entire nations (I am not convinced we should), we need to establish clear criteria of what would trigger such a boycott and apply that unbiased set of criteria to every nation we import from. To target one nation and ignore every other nation is biased and problematic. Make it a simple rubric that is used without bias and apply it to all nations or do not boycott any nations.

Thank you,

David Michaelson

BDS

Dear Editor,

As members since 2010, my husband and I are heavily invested with untold hours of work, in the PSFC.

We are appalled that the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, the official organ of the PSFC, has been publishing letters of support for BDS. It is no secret that wherever BDS takes hold, violence ensues. This is a fact and it is part of the BDS mandate.

Are we now to stop our membership at the because it will become a dangerous, or at best, uncomfortable place for us?

There are many venues where people who want to engage in political debate can go. The PSFC should not become one of them, and must certainly not give platform to one side of the Israel-Palestine conflict, where passions run high and, to many of us, are deeply personal.

Please stop publishing letters that create a climate of hostility in the PSFC for so many of its members who come in good faith, to work and to shop in peace.

Baila Olidort

Lubavitch International

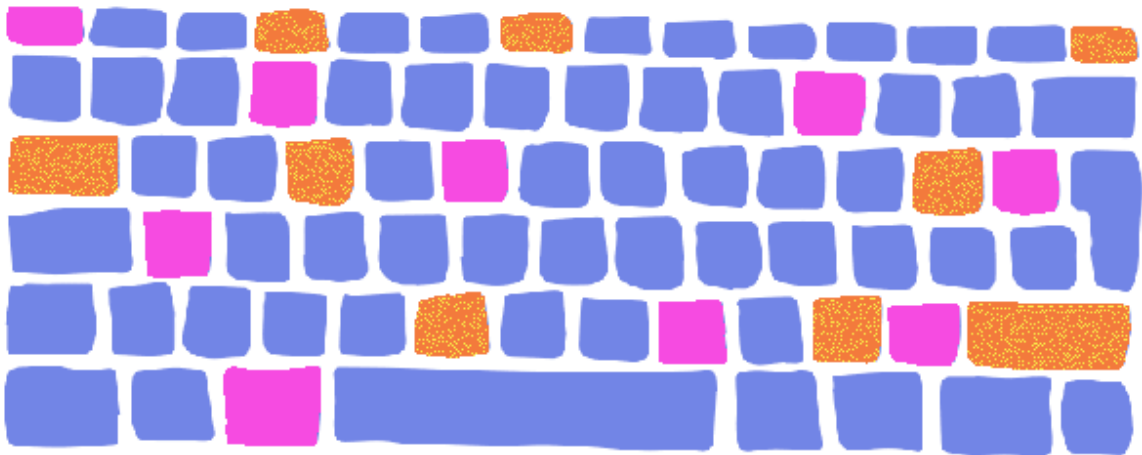
Editor-in-Chief

www.lubavitch.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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 re-

cent 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 J.Crew! 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 [http-](http://)

s://www.reddit.com/r/psfcmisconnections/ and click "Request to Join." And should you wish to reach out with thoughts, questions or ideas, please email me at ps-fcmisconnections@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 insti-

tutional 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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

August 14, 2024



DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

To the Editor:

I am sometimes disappointed to find that a favored food has disappeared from our Coop shelves without explanation, never to reappear. Some time ago, for example, we lost Sesmark Sesame Thins crackers and, more recently, frozen orange juice con-

centrate of any kind. I think it would be helpful for our buyers to post a brief explanation, perhaps on the website, for each distinctive product discontinued; for example, poor sales, producer violation of labor standards, etc.

In cooperation,
Curtis Skinner

EXTENDED SHOPPING HOURS, PLEASE

Dear *Linewaiters' Gazette*,

Can we get a Coordinators' Corner update from the General Coordinators about extending shopping hours? It looks like there are lots of people waiting to join and existing members clamoring for open work slots. What's the plan?

Thank you,
Lisa Guido

PLURALISM IS A DEMOCRATIC VALUE

Dear Fellow Members:

During the Open Forum at the October General Meeting, a member suggested reconsidering the Coop's joining the Boycott, Divestments and Sanction movement. This suggestion was met with applause. When the Open Forum was closed to allow time for the business of the meeting to be addressed (note: the meeting still required a resolution to extend 15 minutes to accommodate all agenda items on the slate), several

attendees called out “Shame!” and “Undemocratic!”

As should be evident to anyone paying attention, a large number of our fellow members object strenuously to the Coop selling Israeli products. As should also be evident, both by expression of views and by sales volume, a large number of members support the sale of Israeli products.

If we truly aspire to democratic ideals, why is it so hard to allow members to make their own choices? BDS supporters should be welcome to exercise whatever commercial behavior comports with their moral cosmology, and fellow members who have different viewpoints should be able to do the same. Imposing one moral position on an issue that clearly holds a myriad of deeply considered perspectives strikes me as monolithic self-righteousness masquerading as “democratic.” Pluralism, no matter how offensive, is a democratic value. Tyranny, no matter how well-intentioned, is not.

Brian Shuman

BDS REDUX

Dear Members:

In years past, Coop members debated the advisability of joining the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, a nonviolent campaign to secure justice for Palestine. Launched in 2005 at the behest of Palestinian civil society organizations, BDS has proven a powerful tool in the effort to end Israeli apartheid. The Coop as a whole never signed on to BDS, but individual members have long chosen to boycott items produced in Israel or made by companies supportive of the Israeli state (e.g., SodaStream).

As shown by the terrible events of Oct. 7 and later, the BDS campaign is more rele-

vant than ever. As I write, more than 10,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israel's barbaric bombing campaign, combined with a blockade that deprives the civilian population of food, water and medical care. According to CNN, "Children are nearly half of all casualties." In my view, it's an ethical imperative to mourn all the victims, Jewish and Palestinian, while absolutely rejecting Israel's genocidal rampage. (Yes, what we are seeing meets "A Textbook Definition of Genocide" according to Holocaust scholar Raz Segal in an article published by *Jewish Currents* on Oct. 13.)

In keeping with our stated commitment to "avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others," I fervently hope that the Coop will now take steps to join the BDS movement. We stood up to help end South African apartheid. Palestine deserves no less.

Jan Clausen

Please note: the article by Raz Segal referred to in the letter can be accessed at *Jewish Currents*. Statistics from CNN are available at: "Civilian death toll: Israeli and Palestinian fatalities continue to rise amid the war with Hamas" | CNN

UNITY AT THE COOP

Dear Members:

Let's keep each other safe in light of recent events in the Middle East.

If we are to accept photographs and personal accounts of Palestinians on the ground, then we are also to accept photographs and personal accounts of Israelis on the ground. The massacre visited upon Israel on Oct. 7th is real. The destructive follow-up of the Israeli invasion is real. The follow up murder to that of a rabbi in Detroit is real. The continuous global threats against Jews and Muslims are real. Present horrors will

be replaced by fresh horrors.

Ongoing battles around who did what first are only fights about where it all started thousands of years ago. The only winners are the normalizers of hatred for Jews and Muslims. The latest headlines can't capture reality any more than they can about immigration. Therefore this is not a fight that the Coop should step into lest we are seen as supporting violence.

We need different dialogue here to discuss this. In our internet-influenced world of trolling, let's do better. Inside this organization, I invite us all to be Pro Coop. Let's take time to listen to each other, cooperate, even when we disagree. Listening is doing something productive. Blaming isn't. Unity for our membership remains the arc of our Coop's intent.

Concern for group B is not reduced by showing concern for group A. It's not pie.

Jesse Rosenfeld

COMMITTEE REPORT CONFUSION?

Dear Editor,

The Linewaiters' Gazette, like all elements of the "Fourth Estate," provides an important function in Coop governance by shedding light on and informing members about critical and overlooked issues at the Coop. This is why I've been dismayed to find in my brief experience trying to submit a committee report to the *Gazette* that it operates in complete darkness. There is no masthead. To contact the *Gazette*, there is only a single email address and it is anonymous. Questions sent to this email address go unanswered. There is no transparency and seemingly no accountability. It is completely unacceptable for our newspaper to operate as it does behind a veil of secrecy.

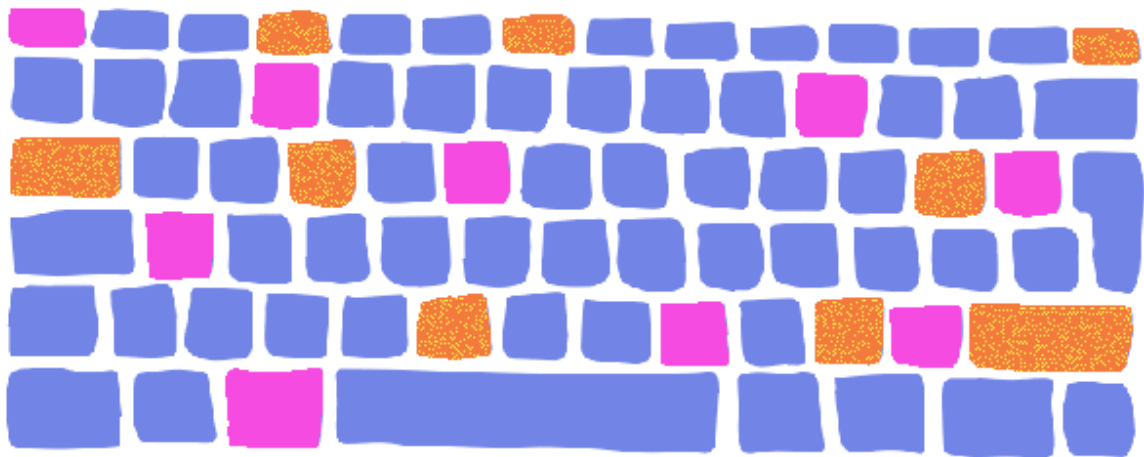
Sincerely,
Avi Fisher

Coordinator's Note: Committee Reports, like all submissions for Gazette publication or consideration for publication, are sent to a single email address. Content is then distributed to one of four editorial teams. Content that meets standards, which in the case of committee reports includes a limit of 750 words, will advance to publication. When reports require changes, editors generally send feedback to authors if their time permits. It is, however, incumbent upon the writer to adhere to guidelines. Regarding a Gazette masthead: its revival is in the works.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



LOVE THE *GAZETTE!*

Just a note to offer my compliments to the writers and editors of the most recent issue. So interesting and well done!

Beth Harpaz