JANUARY 28, 2025

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The January 7 edition of "Coordinators' Corner: Our Coop at Risk" elicited a large and emphatic response from Coop members. We received some 60 letters most of which took issue with the general coordinators' positions vis-à-vis the possibility of a boycott

of products made in Israel and the possibility of holding hybrid general meetings. The letters below offer a representative sample of these voices. —Letters Editor

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Shade Grown Coffee at the Coop—Good for Biodiversity and Yummy

Dear Editor:

I am grateful that the Coop now reliably sells really yummy shade grown coffee from No. Six Depot. The coffee plant evolved as a shade grown species, meaning that it grows in the understory, beneath a diversity of larger trees. More complex habitats, with differing tree heights and different tree species, foster bird diversity. Different bird species are often associated with feeding at different heights in the tree canopy. Shade grown coffee offers this type of habitat structure that fosters bird diversity. However, nowadays, much of the world's coffee has been bred to grow in full sun, and no longer participates in complex habitat structures, resulting in much lower levels of biodiversity when compared to shade grown coffee plantations.

Murray Lantner

The Right Choice

Dear Fellow Members:

I'm not sure who on the staff put Extra Peaceful Olive Oil on the shelf, but it was the right move at the right time. The Park Slope Food Coop is a gem, like all organizations that search for decent social alternatives rather than serve as a center for profit-making or political posturing.

Such organizations face, from time to time, challenges that take one side or perturb its purpose. The label of the olive oil bottle includes the following: “Produced collaboratively by Arab and Jewish women in Israel.”

It is not just an alternative to BDS, it is an avoidance to taking a side in the conflict. It posits a sensible path. The world is awash in disappointing leadership. Netanyahu, Trump, Putin and Xi Jinping are not so much leaders as they are perpetrators of perturbation.

This particular product offers a different path—not taking a side in a battle but collaboratively seeking a peaceful solution. It’s as simple as that. It’s one of the reasons I love the Coop. The world is not working well right now. Some Arab and Jewish women in Israel are.

Rodger Parsons

Where Are the Standards in Letters to the Editor?

To the Editors:

I do not understand how it benefits the Coop for the *Gazette* to continuously publish letters from the same three or four people who make outlandish, unsubstantiated claims about other members’ alleged intentions and beliefs. I am getting tired of the right of myself and others to advocate for the boycott of a foreign government that is supported by our tax dollars, a government that consistently denies the human rights of the Palestinian people and wages war on civilians in nearby countries. It is outrageous that our right to free speech is equated with terrorism.

The obvious purpose of these letters is to create confusion and make slanderous statements. Their baseless and unproven accusations violate the *Gazette’s* own Fair-

ness Policy and Respect Policy.

It is not up for debate that we are entitled to our rights of freedom of speech and peaceful organizing.

I recommend that the *Gazette* staff review their own policies before they print any further letters, and not publish the same authors continuously.

Thank you,
Amina Ali

No to the Status Quo

My Fellow Coop Members,

I read the Jan. 7 letter from the General Coordinator team with great frustration and concern. Their panicked attempt to discourage the adoption of a hybrid meeting format read, to me, as an abdication of responsibility. To question, in the year 2025, how a hybrid meeting could possibly meet the needs of the membership is naïve. A group of competent people committed to a truly participatory democratic process would eagerly pursue a hybrid meeting structure rather than throwing up roadblocks under the guise of level-headed stewardship.

The General Coordinators seem to be far more interested in preserving the status quo than ensuring that the will of the membership is heard. If this letter is a true reflection of their leadership philosophy, I encourage them to resign.

Amanda Friedman

Coordinators' letter in Jan. 7 issue

To the Linewaiters' Gazette:

My initial reaction to the misleading, fear-mongering letter "Our Coop at Risk" was anger, but it was followed by deep sadness and a sense of betrayal.

I love the Coop because it represents a more just, more democratic way of doing business. The coordinators' letter undercuts those values. Instead of confronting injustice, it advocates acquiescence; instead of expanding democracy, it seeks to override, even silence, members' voices.

Let's not fail our cooperative values, and let's not fail the great moral test of our time.

Cooperatively,
Linda Ewing

The Hypocrisy of Our General Coordinators

Dear Editor:

I've been proud to be a member of the Coop, with all of its history and mission statement and principles of accessibility and community participation, as evidenced by ongoing masked shopping days, for one example. Which is why I am perplexed and, the longer this goes unaddressed, frustrated at the lack of movement on hybrid General Meetings. This has been something many members have supported and has been discussed since late summer last year—why the foot-dragging by leadership to vote on this, or at least continue the discussion? The longer this is ignored, the less it seems

an oversight and the more it seems intentional, which raises other questions.

On a related note, the General Coordinators are not helping their case with their letter criticizing members pushing for a boycott of Israeli products. It is disappointing and, frankly, bold for leadership to use their bully pulpit to assign blame to PSFC Members for Palestine for fracturing the community when leadership is equally responsible for that division. Protecting the status quo is a position, as inconvenient as it may be to acknowledge. It is illiberal to shut down discussion of this as divisive; good leadership fosters communication and looks for common ground. It doesn't vilify good-faith, principled positions.

In order to maintain the trust of membership, it behooves leadership to be responsive with members, be consistent in acting on our community values of accessibility and encouragement of member participation, and hold a vote on hybrid General Meetings. Enough with the games and passive-aggressive power plays. Even members we may disagree with deserve respect and to participate in Coop matters.

Maria Boncyk

Bring the Targeted Boycott of Israeli Goods to a Vote

Dear Editors,

Put up or shut up—bring the targeted boycott of Israeli goods to a vote. Thumbing the scale against the boycott like was so cravenly done in the Jan. 7 2025 *Linewaiters' Gazette* issue betrays a bad faith amongst the General Coordinator team on this matter. We are the Coop, bring this boycott to a vote and let it reflect the will of our body.

Damien Neva

In Defense of Democracy—a Messy and Vital Institution

Dear Fellow Members,

I am alarmed by the anti-cooperative recommendations paid staff are making to our supposedly member-led community.

I joined the Coop because I believe that communities are best served by institutions offering true democratic power and participation. As I've watched thousands of Palestinian civilians killed and starved in a war that I believe threatens the security of Israelis and Palestinians alike, I've pleaded with government officials to follow international law and restrict funding to a government committing war crimes. When it became clear they would not, I turned to local organizing. In an institution like the Coop, I have a voice in where my dollars are spent, and as the leading example of its kind, our collective action as a community has a broader impact.

During General Meetings, I've heard from other members who do not share my beliefs (and from many who do). I have no desire for a boycott to be implemented that does not reflect the support of our collective body. But I am alarmed by the suppressive behavior in the letter from the Coordinator Team, openly stalling a hybrid meeting model because PSFC Members for Palestine's "large email list would have an outsized impact with hybrid meetings in effect." All Coop members are on the email list inviting us to General Meetings; the many of us who have also opted to advocate for a boycott only represent an "outsized" impact to those who wish to minimize our perspective.

I am also appalled by the suggestion that we consider who the incoming presidential administration will "target" when setting Coop policy. In the coming months, independent democratic organizations like ours will be more important than ever. Protecting our messy but vital democratic process is paramount, regardless of whether a boycott

is passed.

In Cooperation,
Sofía Campoamor

Calling Out Fundamental Dishonesty

To the editor,

As the matter of BDS is being worked through by members, I am eager for discussion to continue in a democratic and open manner—whatever the outcome.

The piece recently published under the “Coordinators Corner” was not that. It was a fundamentally dishonest piece. It wasn’t meant to educate, inform or argue a point.

It was meant to mislead.

Hard conversations deserve honesty and bravery. These authors offered neither.

There is a real discussion to be had about supporting Israeli industry, but it cannot occur if honesty is optional.

Walter Kaplan

On Hybrid Meetings

Dear Editor:

I attended most of the monthly meetings when they were on Zoom—all about accessibility and nothing to do with BDS (whether it was a topic of discussion or not). Going to the park on a winter Tuesday night is a lot to ask! I have not attended since we stopped Zoom.

I'm disappointed to read our General Coordinators buying into specious paranoid anti-democratic arguments (Coordinators' Corner: Our Coop at Risk from Jan. 7, 2025).

A rare positive outcome from the pandemic was the updating of our online functions, in member voting and member services.

Lisa Guido

Singling Out Israeli Goods

Dear Coop Members:

We have every right to boycott a country based on civil rights issues, but why are we singling out just one? If we boycott products from one country over civil rights issues then we need to add several more to that list. We sell products from China, Sri Lanka and Egypt to name just a few that are accused of significant civil rights issues by the U.N. and Amnesty International, among other groups.

If the boycott passes, we will need to examine all products we sell that come from countries with poor civil rights records. Otherwise, we will be hypocrites by deeming that only one country is worthy of a boycott, while turning a blind eye to all others. If we choose to do this then it will prove that we are not as liberal, open-minded and progressive as we'd like to think we are.

Michael Katz

Response to Coordinators' Corner

Good morning,

I'm writing to express my strong discomfort with the recent Coordinators' Corner. The claims against the boycott campaign are deeply troubling. Not only are they fearmongering, but they also misrepresent the values and goals we are working hard to uphold at the Coop.

More unsettling, however, is the assertion that a hybrid meeting model would harm the Coop's culture and democratic process. This position ignores the public safety risks we continue to face, going into the sixth year of a deadly pandemic, amidst surges in other contagious illnesses like norovirus and flu A. As someone who has been immunocompromised for over a year, I can attest to how difficult it has been to adjust to this new reality, made even harder by ableist practices like the one proposed by the General Coordinator Team.

The GCs' position appears to be aimed at undermining a democratic process that should be open, transparent and inclusive of all voices. The boycott and hybrid proposals aren't about division; they are about making Coop processes more equitable and values-driven, and giving more members the opportunity to engage meaningfully. The GCs' attempt to shut down this dialogue with misinformation and overreach is unacceptable.

As a proud Coop member, community organizer and third-generation New Yorker, I hope to see the Coop grow in service of the values of democracy, social responsibility, care and cooperation that it claims to uphold.

Solidarity,
Solange Amor

A Grateful Response to Coop Coordinators

Fellow Members,

I want to thank the Coordinators for taking an unequivocal stand against BDS at the Coop. It is my sincerest hope that the letter in the Coordinators' Corner represents an inflection point in this protracted, divisive conflict at the Coop.

Thank you, Coordinators, for calling out the strategic plan of the PSFC Members for Palestine to use hybrid voting to rush through a series of votes that would result in a Coop-damaging boycott.

Due to the ever-shifting nature of antisemitism, Jews suffer from a timing problem: Before good people begin to take action against new manifestations of antisemitism, the Jewish community must absorb and withstand the brunt of harm. We see this in the NYC government report that detailed hate crimes against Jews accounting for 54% of all hate crimes in NYC in 2024. We see this in the replacement of the word "Jews" with "Zionists" in calls to cleanse our public spaces. And we see this in boycotts based on the relentless delegitimization of the one and only Jewish state, Israel.

But we are a resilient people—we love our traditions, each other, our Jewish homeland and our neighbors. That love and pride in our identity has enabled us to weather all that history has thrown at us since the beginnings of our story over 3,000 years ago in the land of Israel.

We survived many attempts to destroy us and delegitimize us in the past, and we will survive the efforts of the PSFC Members for Palestine, too.

So, thank you again to the good people of the Coop—my Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors alike—who are currently taking a moral stand against a movement driven by

hate that does no good for anyone.

Jonathan Aranov

Response to Coordinators' Corner

Dear Coop Members,

I was already disappointed that, for over one year, the General Coordinators obstructed our Coop's vote for a popular Hybrid meeting proposal—an issue of democracy. I was then disgusted by the GCs recent denouncement of the Hybrid proposal and PSFC Members for Palestine in the last *Linewaiters' Gazette*. They based their arguments on the fiction that "thousands" of members might leave if a boycott passes. The bogeyman threat that members "might leave" is not a coherent rationale for the Coop Coordinators to undermine the will of our membership. They are deducing this from a handful of emails and letters sent by a vocal minority of members.

While they offer no concrete evidence, here's some data that we do have: PSFC Members for Palestine is the largest campaign of Coop members in the Coop's fifty-year history; its petition has over 3,000 signatories. The candidates it endorsed for the Board of Directors won with more votes than any candidates in Coop history. The board candidates who ran against the boycott—both lost with the most "no" votes ever received by board candidates in any Coop election. If there are Coop members who are against the principles of our Coop's democracy, and would leave based on a strong majority of membership voting on any proposal, then they should not be Coop members: They don't believe in the values stated in our membership manual, namely, the Second Principle of Cooperation—Democratic Member Control. Let actually-cooperative members take their place.

In Cooperation,

Sophie Glickman

Is the PSFC Any Better Than Costco?

Fellow Members,

I was really troubled by the latest “Coordinators’ Corner.” Its attack on PSFC Members for Palestine was disingenuous and manipulative.

One would hope that the Coop would put its considerable talents to designing and implementing a decision-making process grounded in a thoughtful and safe consideration of a boycott. Unfortunately, the opposite has been true; the Coop leadership has worked at every turn to prevent such a process from happening.

One thing I find particularly reprehensible is their repetition (without repudiating it) of the ludicrous slur that PFSC Members for Palestine, many of whom are Jewish, are anti-Semitic. By repeating the slur without repudiating it, the coordinators give it force while pretending it’s not coming from them.

I have felt for a long time that the coordinators, while arguing that the discussion would tear apart the Coop, have in fact been supporting the Israeli occupation.

In the face of 14 months of incessant bombing of hospitals, schools, apartment buildings, of daily images of children killed and neighborhoods in rubble, of unspeakable horrors in the news every day, the coordinators have not even hinted that they might be troubled by the ongoing slaughter and the clear intention—voiced by so many of Israel’s leadership—to completely destroy Palestinian society in Gaza and the West Bank.

The Coop was founded in the 1970s on principles of community built on cooperation,

participation, and democracy as an alternative to the corporate food system which was symptomatic of so much that was wrong with our society. If 50 years later, we can't even discuss and vote on how to apply those principles because it might affect the bottom line, what are we?

Just a buyers' club really. Costco with a veneer of environmentalism.

Is that what we want to be?

John Gordon

Virtue Signaling

To the Editor,

Given the editors' alleged principles, I was shocked (not for the first time) that they would publish a letter including the statement: "I refuse to support a genocide and the occupation of stolen lands" (Jan. 7, 2025 edition). This is an unacceptable, unsubstantiated reduction of one of the most complex international conflicts to a simplistic libel, one that has incited anti-Semitic hatred and violence around the world. It's but another example of the virtue-signaling that has dominated the Coop's culture since 2009, with no guardrails against vilification of a state fighting an unquestionable existential battle.

Israel has enough enemies, including Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Houthis (did I leave anyone out?), without the Coop joining the destructive "non-violent" efforts of the BDS movement to delegitimize Israel. Boycotting the few Israeli products carried at the Coop will make absolutely no difference to the outcome of this conflict but members are free to make their own decisions. The fact that it's repeatedly been made clear how offensive this movement is to many Coop members seems to

have no impact on the would-be Hamas-supporting members who wish for the destruction of the one and only Jewish majority state in the world.

Sylvia Lowenthal

Why a Boycott

Dear Gazette:

I'm a Coop member and I write this message to say that our Coop is not at risk. It is misleading to use those words to incite hate against BDS. Boycott is our peaceful way to stop arming the killing machine. I was shot with two dumdum bullets by an Israeli sniper with American guns in 2002. Dumdums are bullets that explode inside the body and leave huge damage. I'm still in pain. Please help us by stopping to fund the army that kills my people.

Warmest,
Khaled Jarrar

BDS & Israeli products

To the editors:

I love the PSFC to which I have belonged for nearly 50 years, like Joe Holtz. I would never wish to do anything that might jeopardize the health and cooperative wealth of the Coop. BDS is a legitimate political tactic and hence it can be legitimately proposed to a cooperative organization like the Coop. The Coop might vote and once the vote is completed it might be announced what the vote was. The Coop members

might wish to impose upon us at that time a decision about whether or not we wish to purchase products from Israel. Until such time, each shopper is welcome to pursue their own boycott, or not. If sales of Israeli products plummet, then that is also a successful way to create a boycott. Each one of us, in the end, must decide about what we feel about what the U.S. is fueling in Gaza—the destruction of its population with an intent to make the Gaza strip unlivable for the current population—if this not genocide, then, it is, at very least, ethnic cleansing. I cannot imagine that most of us wish to support the targeting of a civilian population, children and noncombatants, and destruction of the health care system and basic sanitation, the targeting of doctors and journalists and children. Our options for effective action are severely limited. Nevertheless, it feels imperative for each one of us to familiarize ourselves with the bombardment of the Gaza strip and to decide how we might wish to respond.

Sincerely,
Karen Malpede

A Demand for Transparency

Dear Editor:

I write to understand more about the Coordinators and who they are. Is a list of the current Coordinators available on the Coop website?

If not, such information should be made available and easily accessible to the members, particularly if such Coordinators use their positions of power and influence to promote anti-democratic processes within the Coop and sabotage proposed reforms like a hybrid general meeting structure (see the latest Coordinator’s Corner, which is a shameful and embarrassing use of this platform).

If the Coordinators wish to make their opinions known, they should make their faces

known. Say it with your full chest.

Signed,
Christopher Pepe

Editor's Note: Names and photos of general coordinators at the Coop are readily available—and long have been—on a poster in the entrance lobby and on the second floor.

Hybrid Meetings Are Long Overdue

Dear fellow Coop members,

Over the years, I've convinced friends to join the Coop, arguing that it represents a community-led space that resists the otherwise impersonal, inaccessible, top-down structures we encounter in our everyday lives. While I still believe this, I am disappointed by the bad-faith opposition to a shift that would make our Coop vastly more inclusive and democratic: making all General Meetings hybrid. It is even more appalling that some insist on suppressing the membership's democratic workings to tip the scales on one potential future vote, and are willing to accuse fellow members of being dishonest about their legitimate accessibility concerns in the process.

I joined the Coop in 2019 but couldn't attend a GM until the meetings went remote in 2020; my pre-COVID work schedule and commute time to the Picnic House had made it impossible before. Now that we've returned to in-person-only meetings, vital conversations and votes about the future of this place are once again left to a very small minority of members. People who do not have childcare access; whose work schedules are unpredictable; who can't risk another COVID infection; or who face barriers traveling to the Picnic House (among so many other groups) are left without a say in Coop matters. I am still COVID-cautious, both for my own safety and that of others, and the current indoors, mask-optional GM setup asks me to compromise those concerns in or-

der to fully participate in the Coop.

If we really believe in an inclusive, member-led co-op model—or if we, as our mission statement says, “seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store”—we will take this sensible step to make meetings and votes more accessible to all members by going hybrid.

Mai Schotz

We Need Ethical Leadership

Fellow Members,

The Coop has always been a community driven by principles of democracy and ethical actions. Boycotts are a cornerstone of free speech and democracy, and suppressing this form of expression undermines the democratic principles upon which the Coop was built. Embracing hybrid meetings upholds the Coop’s commitment to accessibility and transparency, ensuring every member can voice their perspective and contribute to decision-making. Expanding access strengthens, rather than divides, our collective interest in shaping the Coop’s future.

Lowering the vote threshold from 75% to 50% ensures that the Coop operates as a true democracy, where decisions reflect the will of the majority. A 50% threshold means every voice has equal weight in shaping our collective future, whereas a 75% threshold sets an unreasonably high bar and privileges the status quo over progress.

Claims that a boycott would financially ruin the Coop are rooted in fear, not fact. The Coop’s financial stability relies on our collective participation and shared commitment, not on passive avoidance of contentious issues. Would some members leave? Perhaps. But ethical leadership isn’t about placating everyone; it’s about doing what’s

right.

Legally, while anti-BDS legislation exists, it largely targets state entities and is often legally dubious. Numerous organizations across the U.S. have engaged in BDS campaigns without legal consequences. Framing a principled boycott as “anti-Semitic” conflates criticism of Israeli policies with prejudice against Jewish people—a fear mongering narrative that erases the diversity of Jewish voices supporting BDS.

This is about more than numbers of risk; it’s about who we are. Will we stand on the side of justice and dignity, or will we allow fear to paralyze us? A boycott of Israeli goods is not a threat to the Coop—it’s an opportunity to affirm our values and stand for justice.

Signed,
Leah Susman

Correction to Dec. General Meeting Report

Dear Editor:

I wanted to request a correction in the Dec. GM Report. Specifically, this paragraph:

“[Ann Herpel] also noted that the Agenda Committee had placed a notice about the election in the *Gazette*, on FoodCoop.com and on the Coop Corner bulletin board, as required.”

This entire paragraph is misleading and incorrect. The Agenda Committee did not place a notice in the *Gazette* until after the election. That’s why the election was unfair.

The post on foodcoop.com was not visible on the front page, and also, it was posted in 2021. Follow this link from The Internet Archive to see that it was originally posted in 2021. You can also have a look at the Food Coop website to confirm that there is no way for a member to find this post. Furthermore, while it's good to post openings in as many places as possible, according to our procedures it's not how members are to be notified. The notification is required in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

Members were also not notified of candidate openings at the General Meeting, which the Agenda Committee claimed several times. If you review the meeting minutes, you can see that the announcement for other committee elections were noted, but not that of the Agenda Committee.

Lastly, the post on the Coop Corner bulletin board also happened after the election.

Thank you.

Warmly,
Keyian Vafai

Emotional Blackmail in the Linewaiters' Gazette

Dear Members:

Reading the latest *Linewaiters' Gazette*, I was distressed to see the General Coordinator Team put such a heavy-handed thumb on the scale in the ongoing debate about BDS at the Coop. And I find the emotional blackmail of unwarranted claims that this debate might destroy the Coop particularly reprehensible. Please stop!

Robert Rosen

In the Corner for the Coordinators' Corner

Dear Membership,

We, the undersigned, thank the General Coordinators for taking a principled stand against the campaign to have PSFC boycott Israeli goods. The GC's have correctly identified the financial and legal dangers associated with this destructive campaign.

Aaron Miller

Alan Brown

Alan Salzberg

Amy Potter

Anita Aboulafia

Arkadiy and Aleksandra Malamud

Avishay Mazor

Baila Olidort

Barbara Mazor

Batya Lerner

Bonnie Loewenstein

Bozhena Vistman

Bruno Grandsard

Carina Hueber

Carol Wiener

Catherine Weinstock

Chaim and Shula Scharf

Christina Gantcher

Constantine Kaniklidis

Corrine Lang

Dave Marcus

Diana Maislen

Eddie D.

Elizabeth King

Ellen Simon

Eric E.

Erik Diamond

Fran Hawthorne

Fran Saunders

Frances Weiner

Frumie Lev

Frumie Lichtenstien

Gerald Weider

H. Schweitzer

Hannah Lieberman

Harry Schweitzer

Harvey Lang

Jamie Alexander

Jamie Alexander Principe

Jena Goldman

Jesse Rosenfeld

Jill Levy

Jonathan Hirsh

Jonathan Lief

Jonathan Tobias

Josh Levy

Josh Suskewicz

Judith Foster

Karen Shaw

Larisa Fomovsky

Lauren Rosenblum

Linda Marsanico

Linda Wong

Liora Cobin

Lorin Robyn Goldhirsh

Madeleine Nash

Malcolm Varon

Malkah Spitalny and husband

Maor X.

Marjorie Ordene

Meg Robertson

Mike Gantcher

Mindy Werner

Mirele Rosenberger

Murray Lantner

Naomi Bernstein

Neal Kantor

Noah P.

Nogah Rotstein

Nona Aguilar

Norm Green

Olivia Hughes

Perry Swergold

Ramon Maislen

Rebecca S.

Roberta Arnold

Rodger Parsons

Rosalie Weider

Sarah Eisinger

Sarede Switzer

Saul Raw

Sondra Shaievitz

Steven Berke

Susan Miller and husband

Sylvia Lowenthal

Tali Rasis

Tim Rohde

Yuval Inselberg

Zachary Konigsberg

Zara W.