HOLTZ REFLECTS ON A HALF-CENTURY WITH THE PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP

January 7, 2025



Part 2 of 2

January 7, 2025

By Hayley Gorenberg

On the cusp of retiring after a half-century, Park Slope Food Coop (PSFC) General Manager and first-ever staff member Joe Holtz reflected on pivotal moments for the Coop. Here is Part 2 of the Linewaiters' Gazette *farewell—or perhaps one can say "exit interview" with Holtz.*

Early on, Holtz focused attention on the Coop's physical plant as central to the estab-

lishment's continued existence. The first PSFC space was on the second floor, without an elevator. "You had to schlep really heavy things upstairs. Cases of groceries are heavy!" With the understanding that hauling "80-pound cantaloupe crates from California" upstairs was unsustainable, Holtz approached the owner of the building about leasing the first floor, with an option to buy at a fixed price by 1980.

After the Coop pulled off that initial purchase, Holtz went next door to the owner of the "twin" of the Coop's building, requesting that if that owner decided to sell, "You shouldn't forget to talk to us, because we might want to buy it." That second purchase followed in the late 1980s, as did a similar conversation with the owner of Kline's rug cleaning business—with that property marking a third purchase.

> "YOU HAD TO SCHLEP REALLY HEAVY THINGS UPSTAIRS. CASES OF GROCERIES ARE HEAVY!"

The properties served Coop goals of growing the range of products and ability to serve member needs.

"Improvement is important," Holtz says, recalling a standout conversation with a member who approached him to say, "I love the Coop, and I'm quitting. Why? Because I'm a busy person." It was problematic for the otherwise enthusiastic member that the Coop was open on a very limited schedule and carried a relatively narrow band of items. "I've got a family. I don't have time to work and go to multiple stores. There are so many things I can't get at the Coop."

"That was like a roadmap," Holtz says. "That was such a gift. How do I make it so that person doesn't quit in the future?" Soon the Coop was open for longer hours, and carried a wider range of products.

Product choices

Some product choices came easily, guided by members. At one point the Coop carried nonorganic as well as organic kale and collard greens. But the nonorganic greens didn't sell well. Even a single case a week didn't stay fresh. "Members spoke!" says Holtz. "Organic kale was almost every time better-quality. So we dropped nonorganic." The Coop still carries lemons, oranges and one-pound bags of carrots—both organic and nonorganic. "We double-market certain things. It's the will of the members." Pineapple is also double-marketed and "very often nonorganic costs more. Why? They taste better. Why don't we handle nonorganic bananas? Organic got up to 100 cases a week. Nonorganic—even five cases, we had trouble moving them fast enough."

From early days, Holtz exercised judgment to bring quality to Coop shelves; price was a factor, but not the only driver. When Holtz started visiting the Hunts Point green market in the mid-1970s, he found two choices of green peppers, priced at a difference of eight cents per pound. He bought the better peppers for eight cents more.

"Red leaf lettuce: We never thought twice. Always bought the local, because it was better. It didn't matter that it was four dollars more a case; we had a good price on so many things, the fact that we had a slightly less good price on lettuce—but better quality? We had the luxury of not having to worry, because members realize pricing is done honestly and transparently, and that we can have good food and support local agriculture when possible."

Years ago the Coop decided to stock nonorganic honeydews from one source only. "Why? Because they're the best honeydews. Why? Because his company only ships the best ones. People were blown away by them. We still get them. Instructions to a produce buyer are, 'If you're going to buy conventional honeydews, these are the only ones you buy.' Even when they don't have much give, they are delicious. The less expensive honeydew? No one shoulda bought it! That's the kind of thing you learn over time. It became clear that it was OK for us to make a quality decision that would really be serving the members better."

> “WE HAD THE LUXURY OF NOT HAVING TO WORRY, BECAUSE MEMBERS REALIZE PRICING IS DONE HONESTLY AND TRANSPARENTLY…WE CAN HAVE GOOD FOOD AND SUPPORT LOCAL AGRICULTURE.”

Then there were stocking choices that implicated questions about production methods. The Coop did not initially carry meat. When the GM voted to stock meat, Holtz was personally relieved that it excluded factory-farmed meat. “I’m personally happy with that,” says Holtz. “Does that mean some people will decide they won’t be members? Some people want meat to be part of their lives, and they can’t afford meat that’s not factory-farmed.”

Could some people say the choice not to stock factory-farmed meat fails the test of “leading with cooperation,” because the cheapest meats are factory-farmed? Holtz acknowledges there may be an argument: “That’s sort of saying, ‘The Coop’s not for you.’ I’m not particularly happy with that. On the other hand, the alternative of being part of factory-farmed meat culture—that personally for me is a step too far.”

Boycotts

The Coop has joined boycotts over time and historically participation has been “very much noncontroversial,” Holtz said, referencing Nestle and occasional boycotts called for by national labor leadership. Calls to boycott products from Israel, on the other hand, reveal significant division in the membership. Holtz remarked on being “horrified by what’s going on in Gaza… horrified by attacks on civilians because they happen to be in the vicinity of people Israel wants to kill,” and also “horrified by October 7.” He continued, “If members voted on a ceasefire and return of the hostages, I suspect well over 90% would vote in favor.” In contrast, he said he believed a stance about boycotting products from Israel (as opposed to letting members decide what to purchase) would show deep divisions. “I’m worried about the members who will never join in the future and the members who will now leave,” he said. “We have little prac-

tice when a community is split, thousands on each side. I think the fact that there are thousands on each side is an incredible problem for the Coop. I frankly don't know how the Coop decides this or gets out of this conundrum."

International and post-retirement cooperation

Over the course of 50 years, Holtz has developed deep expertise and affinity for the International Principles of Cooperation, springing from mid-19th century concepts of a cooperative in Rochdale, England.

> "I LOVE TALKING TO PEOPLE FROM OTHER COOPS, EVEN IF THEY DON'T WORK THE WAY WE DO."

Core to his commitment to those principles, for anyone seeking assistance in exploring creation of a cooperative: "The answer is always 'yes.' It's in the cooperative principles to say 'yes' to a young person who wants to learn about cooperatives. It's our duty." Relatedly, "coops help coops," he said, adding, "I love talking to people from other coops, even if they don't work the way we do."

By way of example, when the United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives had a conference in New York City years ago, organizers asked for meeting space to plan, and PSFC shared work space. The conference then asked whether PSFC members would help at the registration table, and PSFC gave members work credit to help.

In the 1980s Holtz made up a packet of "important things to do if you want to start a coop like PSFC." He mailed it all over the United States, and "made clear I was there to help them, and not just by sending something in the mail." Then he extended help abroad. To help start a food cooperative in Paris, Holtz and GC Ann Herpel participated in years of weekly Skype sessions, helping to plan, discussing structure and how to source fruits and vegetables.

After he retires on the last Friday in June 2025, 50 years after he was hired in June 1975, Holtz plans to visit a bevy of European cooperatives in coming years, “not as a paid consultant, but just as a person who wants to do this. Just to say, ‘Hi, how are you doing?’” He intends to return to New York City, but if he ever left the city for another locale, “the day I move there, I’m joining the food coop, even though they don’t operate like we do, and they’re not going to give me an opportunity to run a checkout line and stock the shelves. It’s still a community-owned business that’s not part of mega-corporations of the world.”

COORDINATORS’ CORNER: OUR COOP AT RISK

January 7, 2025

COORDINATORS’ CORNER

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIK SCHURINK

By the General Coordinator Team

January 7, 2025

Despite 52 years of success, our Coop's future is not guaranteed. As General Coordinators, part of our role is to identify risks to the Coop, and we believe growing divisiveness among members is one that we should all be paying attention to.

Many are aware of a campaign by a group of members, PSFC Members for Palestine, advocating a boycott of Israeli goods. However, the broader membership may not fully understand the narrow perspective of this group or the risks their actions pose to the Coop.

Why a Boycott Threatens the Coop and Its Financial Sustainability

A boycott risks dividing our community and weakening the Coop. We've already seen increased tension at General Meetings (GMs), in *Gazette* letters, and through complaints to the Dispute Resolution Committee. We've also heard from many members, including staff, who plan to leave the Coop if a boycott passes. This could result in thousands of departures, and it would be irresponsible to assume endless interest from new members. Without new members to replace those who have left, the financial impact could be catastrophic.

Impact on Prices and Staff

Financial fallout from a boycott could force tough decisions such as raising prices or laying off staff. If the Coop is forced to raise prices because of shrinking sales, low-income members will bear the brunt of those price increases. Moreover, if prices rise, some members may reconsider the value of their membership if the price difference between the food they buy at the Coop and other stores narrows.

Reducing staff or cutting benefits would be equally unacceptable. Our hardworking staff, many of whom tirelessly supported the Coop through the pandemic, rely on the income and benefits from Coop employment. A divisive boycott could jeopardize their

livelihoods.

Legal Risks

Boycotting Israel carries additional risks. In 2016, then-Governor Andrew Cuomo warned: “If you boycott Israel, New York will boycott you.” Thirty-four states, including New York, have legislation restricting Israeli boycotts. While these laws don’t currently prevent a Coop boycott, doing so may invite scrutiny from state agencies. At the federal level, the new administration has signaled it would target organizations they deem to be antisemitic. Proponents of an Israel boycott might not see their actions as antisemitic but many others do, including those in positions of political power on both sides of the aisle.

As witnessed after a similar boycott succeeded at the Olympia Food Coop, our Coop risks litigation from members unhappy with the outcome. Even if the litigation fails, the financial costs and time required from management staff would be significant.

Boycotts at the Coop

Since 1973, boycotts at the Coop have historically received overwhelming support, often near 100%, with none below 80%. Currently, a boycott must receive 75% or more of the votes at a GM in order to be considered advice to the board in favor of a boycott. The 75% vote threshold ensures widespread support of the membership and better reflects the International Principles of Cooperation. Those principles, embraced by the world-wide cooperative movement, prioritize cooperation and participation over political, ethnic or religious differences. Lowering the vote threshold to 50%, as is being proposed by PSFC Members for Palestine, threatens to undermine these principles and harms the Coop.

Hybrid Meetings Proposal and Its Link to the Boycott

A proposal to adopt hybrid GMs, allowing both in-person and remote attendance, may

soon be presented at an upcoming meeting. This initiative is supported, in part, by the pro-boycott group. While hybrid meetings could enhance accessibility and participation, such a significant governance change requires careful study. It has been the Coop's decades-long tradition to form a committee to study any proposed changes to Coop governance before bringing the changes to a GM.

Before voting, members need answers to important questions: How will member privacy and security be protected? How will the potentially high costs of well-executed hybrid meetings be managed? What impact will hybrid participation have on the GM's deliberative process? What other logistical challenges do hybrid meetings present, including ensuring that members attending in-person and those attending virtually have equivalent experiences? Until these concerns are addressed, this proposal should not move forward.

A Broader Strategy

PSFC Members for Palestine need the hybrid meeting proposal to pass because it is part of their strategy to boycott Israeli products. Why? Venues have refused to host GMs if the boycott item is on the agenda because of the inflammatory nature of this topic. In addition, their large email list would have an outsized impact with hybrid meetings in effect.

Their strategy has three parts, as outlined in their communications:

1. Convert all General Meetings to hybrid.
2. Reduce the boycott vote threshold from 75% to 50%.
3. Vote on boycotting Israeli products.

We are not opposed to studying and considering other formats for the General Meeting, including hybrid meetings. We are opposed to changes in the governance struc-

ture for the sole purpose of advancing this group’s goal to boycott Israel.

Take Action

We believe most members, including those on all sides of this issue, want to protect the Coop from these risks. We urge everyone to:

- Write to the *Gazette*.
- Attend General Meetings.
- Discuss these issues with fellow members.
- Vote against:
    1. Hybrid GMs as proposed at this time.
    2. Lowering the boycott vote threshold from 75% to 50%.
    3. Boycotting Israeli goods.

Together, we can protect our Coop’s future.

Note: The Coop currently carries less than 10 items from Israel.

2025 COOP BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS ARE DUE

January 7, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN DONOHUE

Interested in serving on the Coop's Board of Directors?
Nominations are now open!

OPENINGS

There are two openings on the board. Members serve three-year terms.

CANDIDATE DEADLINE

If you wish to submit your name for nomination, you must declare your candidacy by submitting a statement of up to 750 words to gazettesubmissions@psfc.coop. Candidates may also opt to include a small photo. Candidate statements and photos will be published in the *Gazette*. Deadline for candidacy submission is Saturday, March 1, 2025.

DECIDING AND VOTING

Candidates will have the opportunity to present their platform at the March 25, 2025 General Meeting. Every member will receive an online ballot via email in May. Paper ballots will be available upon request. The votes from the advance online voting will be combined with the in-person votes at the Annual Meeting, to be held on June 24, 2025.

DUTIES OF THE DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors comprises five elected Coop members and the senior General Coordinator present. Members serve three-year terms. Members of the board are expected to attend GMs monthly. They receive Coop work credit for their attendance. From our inception in 1973 to the present, the monthly General Meeting has been an integral decision-making body of the Coop. Since the Coop was incorporated in 1977, we have been legally required to have a Board of Directors. The Bylaws of the Park Slope Food Coop state: “The portion of the Board of Directors meeting that is devoted to receiving the advice of the members shall be known as the General Meeting…The members who gather to give advice to the directors may choose to vote in order to express their support or opposition for any of the issues that have come before the meeting.”

For more information about Coop governance, please see The GM and the Board of Directors *and* Amended Bylaws of Park Slope Food Coop*.*

PRINT ‘GAZETTE’ FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE SEEKS MEMBERS

January 7, 2025



The *Linewaiters' Gazette* is the heartbeat of our community.

COVID necessitated a transition to a purely online format for the decades-old institution. Now as we emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever, the store is feeling more and more sterile and members are interested in bringing back the energy and livelihood of a print edition.

At the December GM, members voted to create a year-long committee dedicated to researching and understanding opportunities to fit a physical newspaper into the evolved workflows of our changing Coop.

We are seeking up to five members to join the team.

All are welcome to apply—we're specifically interested in meeting members who might have some of the following skills:

• Deep knowledge of desktop publishing tools like Adobe InDesign.
• Experience with print publication production.
• Experience working on self-directed projects.
• Experience with qualitative research projects.

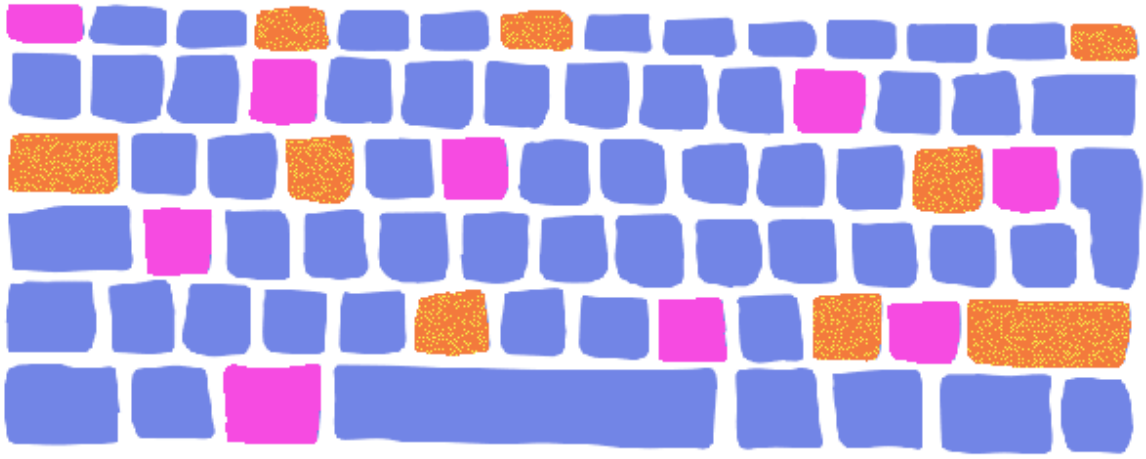
Most of all, we are looking for empathy, energy and curiosity. The work will be mostly self-directed and will fill the two hours and forty-five minutes for each shift rotation. Workslot credit will be provided.

To apply, please email alex@alexgodin.com with any relevant experience and the words “Coop committee application” in the subject line.

JANUARY 7, 2025

January 7, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Give more TLC to the Food Coop!

Greetings!

The Coop is amazing. For more than 50 years, this neighborhood community has out--competed corporate giants, offering better products at lower prices. But this success is fragile. The existence of this institution is truly miraculous and should not be taken

for granted. Perhaps members have already forgotten our dire financial condition during the pandemic?

Good governance and the pragmatic business approach of the management team have been key to this success. Far from promoting rigidity, the Mission Statement and the Environmental Policy Guidelines are replete with language such as “will strive,” “we prefer,” “we try,” providing flexibility to buyers and GMs to ensure that they do good, without harming the business.

Sourcing of affordable, local and organic produce is prioritized. But there are also nonorganic and imports in our bins, including Mexican blueberries, Belgium endives, Israeli peppers, Peruvian mangoes. Plastic bags are not offered at checkout, but there is a choice of compostable and traditional produce bags, and even spinach in big plastic containers. And yes, we do carry products from multiple undemocratic or deeply flawed countries, and even from states which ban abortion.

A Coop that places ideological purity ahead of its mission statement, adopts nonconsensual policies, tinkers with governance or pursues narrow partisan issues unrelated to its core mission is likely to experience what is typical for such businesses: decline and potential failure (think of X).

We are riding on the shoulders of 50 years of community effort. We should strive to continue improving the Coop, perhaps expanding to more locations, acting as a model to new communities, and thereby supporting our ecological transition while improving the health and pocketbooks of more people. At a minimum, let’s not mess it up!

Bruno Grandsard

Time for a Hybrid Meeting Option

Dear Coop Members,

At the September General Meeting, there was a presentation about moving to hybrid meetings, which would give us the choice of either remote or in-person participation. This would open the way for so many more people to join in vital PSFC discussions and votes. It is an essential accommodation when, for various reasons, many who want to participate are unable to get to the Prospect Park Picnic House on Tuesday nights. (It's telling that at a recent GM I attended, the Picnic House was over capacity, meaning that if members *do* turn out in greater numbers, we don't even have a venue large enough to hold them!).

The presentation on hybrid meetings was clear and very well received. I expected the item to be on the agenda for a decision within a month or two. What happened? Assuming a positive vote, it will still take some time to implement this sensible proposal. Let's move ahead together!

Winston McIntosh

(B)ring in the Fun in 2025

To the editor:

A big thank you to the Fun Committee for the Happy Hour at BierWax on December 5.

They truly lived up to their name. It was just so much fun to be out and with friendly people. It was a wonderful reminder of what the Coop can be. Beyond just a grocery store with good prices.

I'm looking forward to more events from the Fun Committee in 2025.

Barbara Mazor

Help for Coop Members Parenting Small Children

Fellow Members,

As COVID wound down, I was thrilled when our Coop reinstated member labor and returned to more familiar shopping procedures. Unfortunately, childcare, a long-standing support for families with young children, was yet another seemingly permanent casualty. We've been told that the Coop can no longer obtain affordable insurance for it.

If we cannot reinstate childcare, there are other ways to support families with young children, in particular, single-parent families. We can offer them longer than one year of parental leave from required work; I suggest at least three to four years, enough time for free daytime childcare in the form of 3K and Pre-K, to be available. I also suggest that this could be extended on a case-by-case basis, as needed. Perhaps a committee of members who are single parents could help us develop guidelines.

We can also offer an easy means for parents of young children (and so many others) to participate in Coop governance via virtual attendance at our monthly General Meetings. Currently, the only members who can take part in our GMs are those who can get to the Prospect Park Picnic house at 7p.m. on the last Tuesday of each month. For parents of young children (especially single parents), people who live far from the Picnic House, those with mobility issues or other caregiver responsibilities, there is no option to join these meetings, to offer opinions on important Coop matters, to bring proposals to the floor, or to vote on others' proposals.

The Picnic House holds around 200 people, and our Coop has over 15,000 members. If we want to call our Coop a democratically run organization, we need to do much

better in making its democracy more inclusive. Hybrid meetings would be a great start.

Cooperatively,
Alyce Barr

Conflict Resolution, Not Conflict Escalation

To the Editor:

Eight agenda items relate to the campaign to make the Coop part of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement.

I sponsored the seventh, item 901, which would "pause any member vote on items relating to a boycott of products associated with Israel pending four mediation sessions within six months from the vote on this item and issuance of a document containing a statement by each side."

The proposal that the Coop declare its allegiance to BDS polarizes the membership. Joe Holtz wrote in the *Linewaiters' Gazette* on February 26, 2024, for the General Coordinators, that the Israel boycott is qualitatively different from other boycotts that have been proposed in the past, and the campaign could result in thousands of members withdrawing. The differences in beliefs about the Israel-Palestine conflict have reached the point of vilification and overt hostility between members. There is no mechanism for resolving member disputes arising out of political identities and other belief systems. The Dispute Resolution Committee is not equipped to deal with such disputes—and there are now multiple cases before the DRC resulting from this conflict. It seems self-evident that an attempt at collective conflict resolution would benefit the Coop.

Agenda Committee guideline number 2 provides that “an item may be placed ahead of others submitted earlier if the item requires more immediate attention or its timely consideration at the GM is beneficial to the efficient running of the Coop.…”

I requested that the Agenda Committee expedite discussion of item 901. The Agenda Committee did not do so, nor has it responded to my question how it applies Guideline 2.

To promote cooperative dispute resolution, I urge that the Agenda Committe schedule discussion of item 901 ahead of earlier pending boycott-related items or explain why Guideline 2 does not apply.

Noah Potter

Mission Statement in Support of Coop Culture

Dear members,

A BDS proponent approached me some weeks ago, asking me to support their proposal. I said it doesn’t align with the Coop mission. “That’s not really true,” she retorted. The word “really” is of interest here.

I’d like to share my POV regarding the BDS boycott proposal, informed by the Coop’s mission statement. One could argue that the following sentences from the statement are relevant to their proposal:

“We seek to avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others.”

However, “exploitation of others” relates to the labor culture at the company and how it treats staff; those companies are presumably independent from the government of

the country they're in.

"We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member. We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policymaking to running the store."

This applies within the parameters of the aforementioned items in the mission statement, not losing sight of the first line of that last paragraph: "We are committed to diversity and equality. We oppose discrimination in any form."

Yet…if there is a reason to exclude suppliers in Israel, it would be that "We prefer to buy from local…producers." If suppliers in Israel would be excluded for that reason, it would be legit…*and apply to all suppliers in all faraway places, all politics aside.*

If it has to come to a vote, I'd suggest to appeal to Coop members as individuals and as allies of each other by way of Coop mission, no matter their backgrounds. Beyond that, I believe in the power of the individual consumer to forgo a product for whatever reason, political reasons included. It'd be a great thing if we did more of it.

Erik Schurink

Towards a Liberatory Coop

Dear Coop Members,

As we edge closer towards the end of the year, I've been reflecting on the ways in which I show up in community and how the Coop and its values are an extension of my own. I feel an immense amount of gratitude for access to such an abundance of quality food, but also for the potential that the Coop has to become a liberatory space for the people. As a member, I believe that it's critical that we demand that the goods

that we have on our shelves be reflective of our values. It's a radical act to choose not to purchase food from mega corporations and instead, to support small businesses and regenerative, family-owned farms.

In the same vein, I refuse to support a genocide and the occupation of stolen land. And I feel hopeful knowing that so many other Coop members share my commitment. I look forward to the day when we'll make it official, following in the footsteps of leaders at Olympia Food Co-Op in Washington state, as well as our neighbors at Greene Hill Food Co-Op. As an expression of their solidarity with Palestine, Greene Hill members voted in October to join the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, pledging not to stock Israeli products in their store until the end of the occupation.

If we are a collective that believes that the Coop is reflective of our values, then we must continue to decide how the millions of dollars that we spend on food every year will demonstrate what they are. Audre Lorde spoke truth when she wrote:

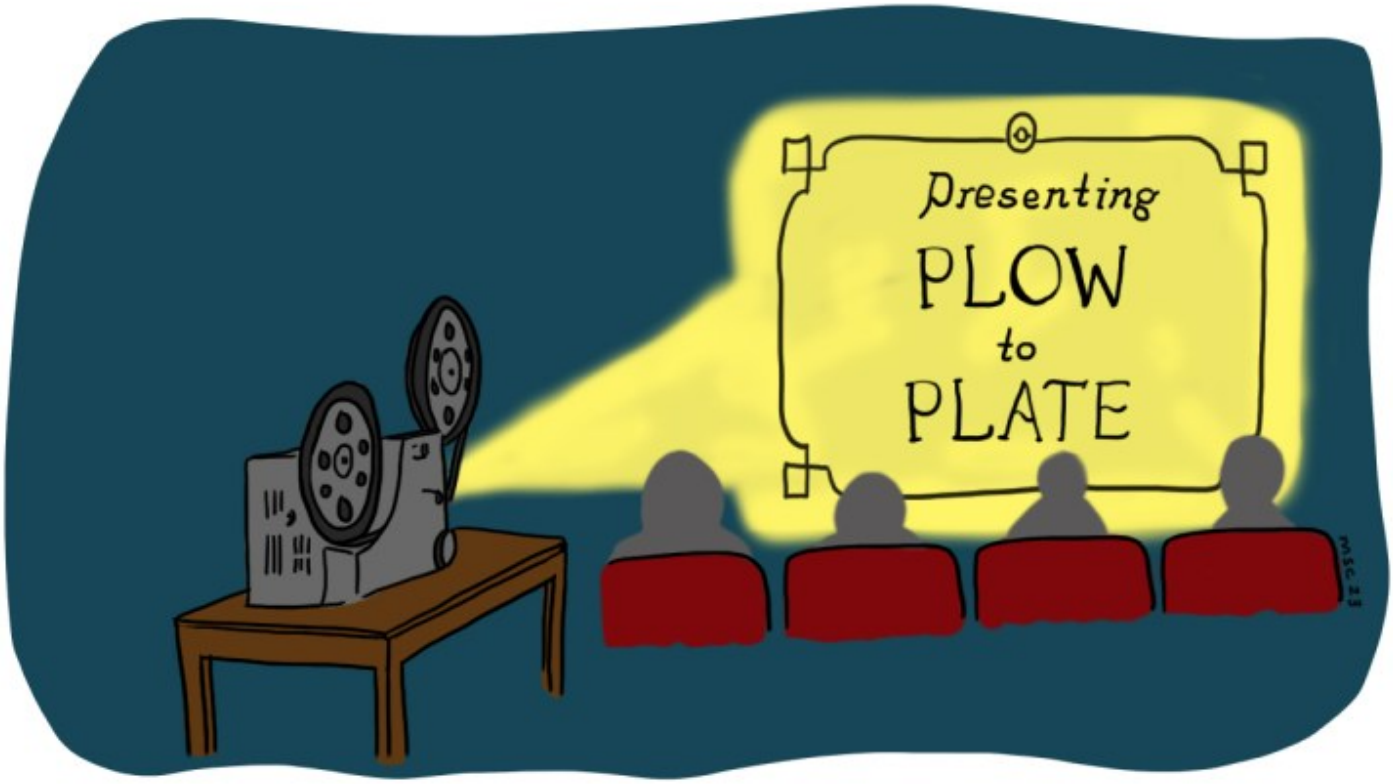
And I dream of our coming together

encircled driven
not only by love
but by lust for a working tomorrow
the flights of this journey
maples. uncertain
and necessary as water.

Taylor Pate

PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS 'FED A LIE: THE TRUTH ABOUT SEED OILS'

January 7, 2025



January 7, 2025

By Adam Rabiner

For some time, my daughter Ana has been interested in diet, health and nutrition, and I noticed her influence when she joined my wife and me on shopping trips to the Coop. No longer could we buy Oatly, our favorite brand of oat milk. Similarly, certain brands of crackers and cookies were suddenly verboten and our family now had an affinity for ghee, avocado and coconut oil. What was going on? Unlike her parents, Ana, perhaps subject to influencers on TikTok, was tuned into the anti-seed oil movement, the theme of film *Fed a Lie*.



Fed a Lie's central contention is that highly polyunsaturated Omega-6, seed and vegetable oils are manufactured processed foods harmful to human beings. They cause linoleic acid (LA) to build up in our bodies and cells; a pro-oxidative, inflammatory, toxic and nutrient-deficient process that drives cell stress and death. Oils pressed from corn, soybeans, sesame seeds, peanuts, cotton and grapeseed must be heated, refined, bleached, deodorized and oxidized. Cotton seed oil was originally a replacement for whale oil used strictly as a lubricant for machinery. In 1911, Procter & Gamble (P&G) wanted to sell it as a food and created a fake lard they branded as Crisco. This was the first instance of a vegetable oil marketed to be consumed by humans as a replacement for butter, lard and tallow. Margarine was cheaper than butter, so consumers were happy. In 1948, P&G donated $1.7 million to the American Heart Association, a small and sleepy organization, after which consumers were led to believe that vegetable oils were healthier than animal fats.

Fed a Lie relies heavily on certain statistics to make its case against seed oils. Several graphs are displayed throughout the film. One shows that the total calories consumed per person per day between 1999 and 2018 remained steady at 2,500 but during the same period, obesity climbed from 30% to 42%. Other charts show similar growth in

various chronic diseases, which were exceedingly rare in 1900 but grew steadily thereafter, after the introduction of seed oils into the American diet. Notably, during the 20th century, when all these bad health results were trending, the consumption of saturated fats remained steady. The consumption of vegetable fat surpassed animal fat for the first time in the mid-1960s.

Today, an American consumes an average of three to five tablespoons of seed oil per day through a cornucopia of products: salad dressings, cakes, fried foods, and bread. These concentrations are equivalent to consuming 60 to 70 ears of corn or two pounds of soybeans, which is humanly impossible and evolutionarily inconsistent. *Fed a Lie* posits that seed oil consumption is the greatest change in history to man's diet. Certain populations like the Maasai warriors of Kenya and Tanzania, whose diet still consists largely of milk, meat and blood, and the Tokelauans, whose South Pacific diet consists largely of coconut, fish, tuber and fruit, have virtually no heart disease, diabetes or obesity.

Fed a Lie concedes that replacing saturated fat with seed oils lowers LDL—or "bad"—cholesterol but argues that this has not diminished death rates due to heart or other diseases. The film bolsters its case by claiming that Ancel Keys' influential 1958 Seven Countries Study, which purportedly showed lower rates of heart disease among populations that consumed less saturated fat, was flawed due to cherry-picking certain countries over others. The film argues that scientists and clinicians need to zoom in and look at the quality of every individual study on this topic rather than zoom out and take the averages.

One can argue that correlation is not the same as causation and therefore dispute the central message and warning of *Fed a Lie*. Yet the film is not preachy, and it's difficult to argue with its suggestion to shop the supermarket's periphery for whole, natural "ancestral foods" such as meat, fish, nuts, fruits, tubers, and vegetables rather than its middle aisles to avoid the hidden seed oils in the many "food-like substances" that are boxed, canned, labeled, and packaged.

Shortly after watching, I visited my pantry for corn tortilla chips bought during my last shopping trip to the Coop two weeks earlier. Mysteriously, even after all this time, the bag remained unopened. I noticed it contained safflower and/or sunflower oils. Though I had not read the label until then, Ana surely had. Time to try another brand.

Fed a Lie: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m.

Screening link: https://plowtoplatefilms.weebly.com/upcoming-events.html

To be added to our mailing list for future screening announcements, please email a request to plowtoplate@gmail.com.

Adam Rabiner lives in Ditmas Park with his wife, Dina, and child Ana.