

Boycott could bring Ben & Jerry's its just desserts

Viewpoint

The following editorial appeared in the New York Daily News

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“Peace, Love & Ice Cream” is the motto of Ben & Jerry’s. All was sweet and good when they stuck to flavors like Phish Food and sponsored Free Cone Day. Happy cows and all that. Even conservatives could still love Chunky Monkey despite Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield having long mixed in their hippy-dippy Vermont lefty politics supporting this or opposing that. After all, even ice-cream salesmen have free speech.

But now they are acting, having signed on to the anti-Israel boycott, divest and sanction (BDS) movement, ending all sales in “Occupied Palestinian Territory,” in which they’re including Jerusalem’s Jewish Quarter.

The brand, a part of U.K.-based global giant Unilever, has dropped its Israeli distributor and says it is seeking a new one who will abide by their boycott of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. That’s not going to happen, so while the Holy Land may have milk and honey, it won’t have Chocolate Therapy.

Very pleased are the BDS crowd, Israel-haters and assorted anti-Semites, but it’s an ice-cream headache for Unilever, despite its pledge to “remain fully committed to our presence in Israel, where we have invested in our people, brands and business for several decades.” The Biden State Department has rightly reiterated its denunciation of BDS. American stores are yanking Ben & Jerry’s off of shelves. There are calls for bans in state after state, from Texas to Florida.

New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, the sole trustee of a pension fund with more than a quarter-trillion dollars in assets, has written to Unilever, with the financial warning that the conglomerate could be placed on the fund’s list of “companies participating in BDS activity.” No firm should want to be on that very naughty list.

DiNapoli, who likes ice cream as much as anyone, is right that Unilever’s Vermont subsidiary is moving into a bad place for its own bottom line. You play with boycotts, you might get boycotted. You play with fire, you might get burned — or frozen out.