

# How to screw up a convention

by Gary Fouse



Conventions are supposed to be fun affairs. Generally, they are boondoggles designed to waste money, eat and drink. Apparently, that was the hope at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association in Philadelphia this past week. No, these are not comprised of the thousand or so Esperanto speakers in the world, though I'm sure a couple were there. These are university teachers of English and other language-related fields.

But there was a skunk at the party. A group of Israel-haters (They are in every university.) were attempting to get the MLA to pass a resolution for an academic boycott of Israel. As many of you may know, Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) is all the rage in academia these days. It attracts virtually all the loopy, left-wing professors like moths to a flame. So it was not surprising that some of the crowd wanted to push this anti-Israel resolution, which has absolutely nothing to do with language teaching.

It appears that the BDS supporters somewhat detracted from the jolly atmosphere of the conference, bringing a degree of tension and angst. (Most attendees still managed to fill up the hotel bar as good convention attendees do.) The blog, Legal Insurrection, run by Cornell law professor William Jacobson (He's on our side), had a source, an MLA member, who was inside the conference and who