

Comments on changes in the UUA-CUC relationship

Mark Morrison-Reed

Hi! I want to show you something.

[On the screen is "The Rant" - a commercial illustrating the differences between the US and Canada.]

Some ad! It's overstated, amusing and aggressive, offensive and certainly nationalistic. Does it leave you feeling uncomfortable? Maybe pissed off and if not, then confused? It is a caricature of a Canadian going uncharacteristically into a rant about how he wishes to be seen by Americans. It's an over-simplification of the truth, but it still captures truth. And it probably got your attention which is something Canadians have learned they can't take for granted.

I want you to try on Canadian shoes for a moment: Think about how as Unitarian Universalists we all too frequently define ourselves over against Christianity. As the Molson ad makes clear that is the way Canadians relate to the U.S. It is also the way that many of your coreligionists in Canada feel about the UUA. When you make up only 3.4% of our North American movement, but still keep hoping your experience will be reflected in the positions, in the culture, in the mores of the association and it is not, frustration mounts.

Consider two of this year's Study/Action Issues "United States Election Reform" and "Separation of Church and State." They have nothing to do with Canada. Consider we take it for granted it is our prerogative to speak prophetically exclusively on American issues without pausing to reflect whether we are speaking as an international continental body or as a national body.

It does make a difference.

Consider the sixth principle of the UUA, which affirms "the goal of world community with peace liberty and justice for all." The formulation that Canadians typically use when speaking of what society aspires to is: peace, order and good government." A Canadian articulation of our religious values would give more emphasis to communal needs and less to individual liberty. It is not an accident that Canada provides universal health care and it is not an accident that Canada does not practice capital punishment, nor create Tim McVeighs. These realities are an expression of a different communal ethos.

I want to show you something else.

[\[Reads the newspaper headline - image is about 51K\]](#)

This article from the Toronto Star could have been a description of the recent CUC meeting, except you'll see it was written in 1969. The UUA and the CUC have renegotiated their agreements some eight times in the past thirty plus years. Intentions have always been good but given the often unacknowledged cultural differences, chauvinism, the extreme imbalance of power between the two organizations and currency fluctuations that are beyond our control the

problems have proven intractable.

Last month the CUC Annual General Meeting was once again held in Montreal. There, delegates ratified the most recent agreement reached between representatives of the UUA and CUC Board by a vote of 83%. This agreement will see the delivery of district services shifted from six different districts to the CUC and the transfer of 1.5 million dollars to aid in paying for those services. The agreement does not change the status of Canadian congregations as members of the UUA.

These changes are bewildering for those who have never paid any attention to the fact that we are a continental movement, and painful for those who have been proud to be cross-border districts. But for many who have vested their hopes in a pan-Canadian movement it is a dream come true a great new partnership.

A partnership of faith, made in faith, and made possible by the generosity of the UUA. For that the CUC gives thanks to our Moderator Denny Davidoff, the negotiating team, and the UUA Board of Trustees. Money and ministers from south of the border have nurtured the movement during its entire history and we appreciate that. We have a good relationship, but we think this will make it even better because Canada will be a peer rather than a dependent.

Another journey toward wholeness.

The time has come to get on with the next phase of our relationship. Our future is before us. It is open to possibilities limited only by our inventiveness commitment to our faith, generosity of spirit and vision of a global religion, which is where we are headed as American Unitarian Universalists, Romanian Unitarians, Philippine UUs, Khasi Hills UUs, and Canadian Unitarians & Universalists.

My name is Mark Morrison-Reed. I'm a Canadian Unitarian.

By the way, want another piece of trivia to take home? The founder of Molson Brewery, John Molson, was also a Canadian Unitarian had had plans to start a congregation in the 1830's and failed. Another Canadian Unitarian with a dream.