

CUC Democracy Resolutions passed May 22, 2005

**CANADIAN UNITARIAN COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND MEETING  
Held in Hamilton, Ontario, May 20 to 23, 2005**

**IMAGINE CANADIAN DEMOCRACY RESOLUTIONS:**

***DEMOCRACY RESOLUTION No. 1: DEMOCRACY IN EVERYDAY LIFE***

The Resolution as amended, passed unanimously.

1. The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), assembled at its Annual General Meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, on May 20-23, 2005, and pursuant to its resolution in May 2003 authorizing a two-year study on democracy,
  - 1.1 Remembering that our fifth principle is to covenant to affirm and promote the right of conscience and *use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large*,
  - 1.2 Realizing that a truly democratic society emerges from the use of democratic values and practices in everyday life, and
  - 1.3 Realizing further that the democratic process could be better understood and more effectively used in our families, enterprises, associations/societies and congregations,
  - 1.4 Believing that a vibrant democracy requires that its citizens clearly understand and practise their responsibilities,
  - 1.5 Noting that many leaders, coaches and teachers practise a top-down rather than a democratic model of behaviour, and
  - 1.6 Observing that a strong democracy requires equal opportunity for all to participate in its institutions and decisions:
  
2. Resolves to foster a stronger culture of democracy in Canada, aiming to make it a way of life, by establishing a Democracy Monitoring Group to assist the CUC in encouraging Unitarians and Universalists (UUs) to undertake actions such as the following:
  - 2.1 ENCOURAGING families in their planning and decision making to include all family members to the maximum extent appropriate to their ages.
  - 2.2 DISCUSSING with teachers, parents, students, principals and school boards ways in which plans and decisions might be made more democratically,
  - 2.3 URGING Social Responsibility Committees to discuss in congregations and communities the possibilities for more democratic organization of businesses, schools, churches and other institutions,
  - 2.4 ORGANIZING after-service workshops or other meetings to discuss aspects of democracy,

2.5 ENCOURAGING their fellow citizens to consider more democratic and participatory charters when establishing new organizations or institutions,

2.6 ENCOURAGING leaders in sports and the arts to promote a more egalitarian ethos by rewarding team effort, and by ensuring that all those who are willing are given a reasonable chance to contribute,

2.7 ENCOURAGING UU members to introduce more participatory practices in their workplaces, and

2.8 Preparing a booklet on how democracy can be better integrated into everyday life.

## DEMOCRACY RESOLUTION No. 2: DEMOCRACY IN GOVERNMENT

**The Resolution, as amended, passed unanimously.**

1. The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), assembled at its Annual General Meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, on May 20-23, 2005, and pursuant to its resolution in May 2003 authorizing a two-year study on democracy,

1.1 Knowing that our fifth principle is to affirm and promote the right of conscience and *the use of the democratic process in our congregations and in society at large*;

1.2 Observing that low voter turnout at government elections at all levels is an issue of concern,

1.3 Noting that voters, and youth in particular, appear to be disillusioned with politics and elections, and

1.4 Observing that the use of wealth by people, corporations and other organizations to influence government decisions creates a disparity of power that is unhealthy in a democracy, and

1.5 Observing that there appears to be a reluctance by those in political power to change the *status quo*, or to be accountable;

2. Resolves to encourage all levels of government to:

2.1 REVIEW governing and electoral processes and institutions with a view to reforming or replacing these,

2.2 FOSTER ways to increase voter turnout and create an informed electorate,

2.3 EXPLORE, through study, debate, trial or other appropriate means, the implementation and use of more direct democratic processes in governance,

2.4 Continue to SEARCH for ways to restrict the use of money by lobby groups to influence governmental decisions,

2.5 FOSTER research and debate into what degree of disparity in wealth is healthy in a truly democratic society, and whether disparities in wealth should be reduced towards some suggested optimum,

2.6 REVIEW policies and legislation that would increase the transparency of government and corporate actions.

2.7 ENCOURAGE the establishment of alternatives to the corporate business model.

### **DEMOCRACY RESOLUTION No. 3:**

#### **DEMOCRACY WITHIN OUR UU CONGREGATIONS**

**The Resolution, as amended, passed unanimously.**

1. The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), assembled at its Annual General Meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, on May 20-23, 2005, and pursuant to its resolution in May 2003 authorizing a two-year study on democracy,

1.1 Recalling that our Unitarian and Universalist (UU) principles uphold *the inherent worth and dignity of every person*, and the right of conscience and *use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large*,

1.2 Recognizing that participatory democracy requires, on the one hand, strong leadership to get the job done and, on the other hand, widespread congregational involvement in church life and decision-making,

1.3 Understanding that UUs seek to fulfill their spiritual needs through a continuing process of self-discovery and interaction with fellow UUs,

1.4 Noting that although our principles affirm acceptance of one another and a diversity of viewpoints, we are not always tolerant of novel views or values that are outside established church practice,

1.5 Realizing that democracy is a way of life and our RE program offers an excellent opportunity for learning democratic practices,

1.6 Acknowledging that each UU congregation has a responsibility to foster its own democratic processes,

1.7 Believing that the welfare of all UUs can be better met in a democratic environment where all are welcome, and

1.8 Trusting that promoting democratic practices in church life will bring about the openness, equality, transparency and empowerment that make for a stronger and more supportive church community;

2. Resolves to search for ways and means to increase the use of the democratic process by:

- 2.1 ENCOURAGING the CUC Board to be leaders in and advocates for adopting democratic and transparent procedures in CUC internal affairs; recognizing the need for the Board to speak with one voice, once decisions have been taken.
- 2.2 URGING Ministers, and Committee and Board Chairs to embrace processes and procedural rules that promote democracy in our congregations,
- 2.3 ENCOURAGING all UU congregations to enhance inclusive governance and planning, and to exchange useful democratic practices with other congregations,
- 2.4 ENCOURAGING UU congregations to budget for up to full financial support for congregational delegates to attend the CUC Annual Meeting and urging all delegates to know and understand their congregation's views on the topics to be discussed,
- 2.5 DEVELOPING a "lifespan" Religious Education program that models and teaches everyday democratic practices,
- 2.6 ENCOURAGING congregations to welcome youth (17 and under) into the fold with a formal ceremony, granting them duties and responsibilities appropriate to their age,
- 2.7 EXPLORING the use of post-service forums to continue a dialogue or provide information on the theme of that Sunday's service, or on any issues that have arisen in the congregation, to its own culture.
- 2.8 FOSTERING the use of democratic procedures in exchanges with other faiths, and
- 2.9 ENCOURAGING UU congregations to hold workshops promoting discussion on how to make democratic practices a natural addition to enhancing church life,

#### **DEMOCRACY RESOLUTION No. 4: RE-EXAMINATION OF THE MEDIA**

##### **The Resolution, as amended, passed.**

1. The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), assembled at its Annual General Meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, on May 20-23, 2005, and pursuant to its resolution in May 2003 authorizing a two-year study on democracy,
  - 1.1 Recalling that Unitarians and Universalists (UUs) covenant to affirm and promote *a free and responsible search for truth and meaning*,
  - 1.2 Believing that access to comprehensive and factual, unbiased information is essential in a democracy,
  - 1.3 Concerned with the growing concentration of the media that leads to lack of discussion and lack of distinction between fact and opinion,
  - 1.4 Noting that TV and radio news programs increasingly aim to entertain, not to inform, and noting a consequent dearth of critical analyses,
  - 1.5 Noting that politicians and powerful organizations have always tried to shape public opinion,

1.6 Noting that many TV and radio hosts often are not sufficiently knowledgeable or free to challenge false claims made by politicians and speakers for powerful organizations,

1.7 Observing that democracies such as Canada, Germany, the UK and others rely on publicly-funded national networks to promote more independent reporting of the news, but that the CBC's funding has been cut in recent years,

1.8 Noting that commercial messages advocating products and practices deleterious to our environment, human rights and social programs are not balanced by public interest advertisements critical of such messages,

1.9 Observing, further, that many citizens have not yet learned to treat newscasts critically;

2. Resolves that a Democracy Monitoring Group assist the CUC Board in encouraging Unitarian congregations to:

2.1 PROMOTE the principles of diversity and balance in radio and TV programming.

2.2 PETITION the Government to legislate stricter limits to media concentration, to publicize ownership of media, and to restrict the number of media outlets one company may control,

2.3 PETITION the government to create favourable and equitable fiscal conditions for non-profit organizations dedicated to independent news reporting and analysis, in all media including the internet.

2.4 ADVOCATE that the Government increase funding for the CBC,

2.5 Request TV and Radio networks and other media to accept a reasonable proportion of citizens' public interest messages and documentary material,

2.6 PROMOTE the inclusion of critical thinking and media analysis in the curriculum of Canadian schools, where this is not already the case,

2.7 Approach Canadian TV, radio and print networks to educate their audiences on the techniques used by political, corporate and other propagandists; ask networks to air shows on how concentration of the media affects diversity of opinion, and how proprietorship and advertising influence programming and editorials;) and ask networks and newspapers to include stories and shows that illustrate how Public Relations is used to create certain opinions and emotional reactions in readers, viewers and listeners; ask advertising agencies and public relations firms to create ads explaining how their industries manipulate public opinion.

2.8 The CUC lobby the Government of Canada and the media on these issues.