



Rev. Charles Eddis of Montreal warms up to his subject, expresses himself forcefully,

then relaxes but keeps a watchful eye on the proceedings at the CUC's Annual Meeting.



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Conversation that launched the CUC

• Rev. Charles Eddis, a leading figure in founding of the Canadian Unitarian Council, reflects upon events of two decades ago . . .

"If we don't do something to ensure that our interests are looked after, then the continental organization will be flavored strictly American."

The speaker was Doug Borden of Montreal. The date was December 3, 1960. A new denomination combining the Unitarians and the Universalists was soon to come into being, headquartered in Boston. Seventeen Unitarians from eight Ontario and Quebec churches were meeting in the library at Toronto First Congregation to pursue an elusive dream. Back in 1940 E.J. Lucas of Winnipeg described it as "the formation of a Canadian Conference to include every church of our faith from coast to coast."

Some progress had been made. *The Canadian Unitarian* had been published from 1941 to 1946, and resumed publication in 1957. Canadians had been holding rump meetings at the annual May meetings of the Amer-

Moving forward

"We have been focusing on growth for the past two years. The Red Deer (Alberta) Fellowship was officially recognized by the UUA in the past year and new societies in Edmonton and eastern Ontario are possibilities.

"Many societies in western Canada are experiencing rapid growth, while others throughout Canada are increasing in numbers.

"However, the recent rapid increase in property values in Vancouver has placed a large obstacle in the way of the construction of a new church for the North Shore society."

ican Unitarian Association. Bunny Turner of Pointe Claire (formerly of Toronto and Calgary) had been appointed a Canadian social co-ordinator. But no one had devised a way to move Canadian aspirations for a Unitarian vehicle of their own out of low gear. Was the country too large, Unitarians too caught up in other priorities?

Those of us meeting in Toronto that December day all wanted a Canadian Unitarian council. We had, however, no mandate from any one save ourselves. We represented only Ontario and Quebec. All we could confidently do was take a first step which seemed but half of one, to set up an Ontario-Quebec Conference to deal on its behalf with Canadian interests.

With the new denomination about to be formed, we felt an urgency to define our own needs and concerns. During the afternoon, they became clear: publicity, pamphlets, social action, conferences, liaisons with Canadian organizations. Wanting all the churches and fellowships in Canada to know of our plans and our ultimate goal, we agreed to inform them to see if they wished "to participate in further deliberations."

We met again in Toronto on December 27. Don Stout, minister in South Peel, Ontario, had drawn up an organizational plan for us to consider. It looked good. In fact, as I took it in, I found myself getting excited. I had recently spent some years in the Unitarian ministry in Alberta. I found myself saying to the meeting, "If we make a few changes, this plan will do for the whole of Canada. What's more, I think the rest of Canada will go for it. Why should we try to



At the close of the 20th CUC Annual Meeting, Ella Davis of Victoria (right) turned the CUC emblem over to Marjorie Bourke of Montreal, where the next conference will be held. Rev. Charles Eddis (centre) will play host at 1982 meeting.

set up an eastern conference now, when a Canadian Unitarian council is what we want?"

Soon all heads were nodding. Why not? So on April 8, 1961, some 50 to 60 Canadians attending the annual meeting of the Meadville Unitarian Conference (the old district) in Montreal approved the plan, and elected a nominating committee. On May 14, while the Unitarian Universalist Association was being founded in Boston, some 50 Unitarians and Universalists from places as distant as Halifax and Vancouver met that Sunday morning, adopted the proposed organization plan, and elected the Board.

Overnight, it seemed, the Canadian Unitarian Council had come into being. We have not looked back since.

— Charles Eddis

Struggle, survival

How valuable is the help given Canadian societies by visiting UUA staff from 25 Beacon Street?

At Victoria, Harry Doak of Moncton, N.B., told Eugene Pickett: "I don't think our small society would have survived without the UUA's support in those early horrible years of struggle!"

Brian Reid is another who salutes Boston for its energetic co-operation with the CUC. "We have more than excellent relations with the UUA," he said. "Recent benefits included their sending an interim minister to Victoria and an extension minister to Calgary."