

UCCLA MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Ottawa (8 April 2011) -

CONTROVERSY OVER CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: UCCLA'S POSITION

Misrepresentations have been broadcast about the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association's position with respect to the taxpayer-funded Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

UCCLA wants all 12 CMHR galleries to be thematic, comparative and inclusive. We have never opposed the inclusion of the Shoah (Holocaust) in a gallery recalling the many incidents of genocide and crimes against humanity that have befouled human history. We are, however, against any group's suffering being elevated above all others in this national museum, and that includes allocating a separate gallery for the genocidal Great Famine of 1932-33 in Soviet Ukraine, the Holodomor. Overwhelmingly (60.3%) Canadians reject preferential treatment for any group. And we have never equated the Holocaust with the Holodomor or any other genocide. We do reject having any "hierarchy of suffering" implied or advocated in this museum's galleries and exhibits.

UCCLA's Animal Farm postcard does not 'paint Jews as pigs.' Claiming that is a calumny. And those introducing offensive remarks made by Islamic extremists into this debate, then implying that UCCLA or its supporters share their views, are indulging in yet another example of deceit.

The orchestrated outcry about the Animal Farm postcard reflects the desperation of those who, having failed to counter UCCLA's legitimate concerns over the proposed contents and ongoing governance of this national institution, are now resorting to bully-boy tactics and name-calling to obfuscate the truth - which is that MOST Canadians want this publicly-funded museum to focus on Canadian stories and human rights, not human wrongs.

Genuine dialogue can still reconcile this controversy. We believe Israel Asper had a genuine and decent vision of what this museum could become, for Canada and the world. We believe his dream can still be achieved. But it won't be if all we do is fall upon each other.

The distinguished Holocaust scholar, Professor Michael Marrus, has said recently that the CMHR "needs a rethink." Exactly right. We've been saying so all along.