

## FROM OUR READERS

### IN RESPONSE TO PUBLISHER'S COMMENTARY

THIS is in response to the publisher's commentary in the September 1998 *Living Buddhism*. It encourages members to not be influenced by harsh weather conditions when doing activities for kosen-rufu, looking back to the courageous example of Nichiren Daishonin. This is certainly a commendable view, but it misses another extremely important point about the adverse weather we are currently experiencing.

In 1992 in Brazil, then again in 1997 in Japan, the United Nations sponsored international conferences on the protection of the earth's environment. At these meetings, scientific evidence was compiled from around the world, which strongly indicates that it is the behavior of human beings—polluting the air and water, cutting down forests, etc.—which is upsetting the balance of nature and now is beginning to adversely affect the weather around the globe. As the commentary in *Living Buddhism* says, these weather changes have led to the premature deaths of people in many parts of the world.

America continues to lead the world several times over, in per-capita consumption of natural resources, as well as production of both waste and environmental pollution. The situation is already serious, but if population-giants, like China and India, with their long, proud histories, continue to develop and were to approach even a significant fraction of the amount of per-capita consumption and waste that exists in America, it is unpleasant to contemplate the environmental response and loss of human life.

As an American, currently living in Japan, I have been concerned about these issues since my high school days in the early 1970s. Today I drive a car as little as possible, using a bicycle to go to and from work, or to run errands. My family recycles most of the garbage we produce and we make a point of turning off electricity when it's not being used. In Japan it's quite common for some drivers to leave their cars running when they park and enter a building, anywhere from a couple of minutes to ten, fifteen minutes or longer. I wrote a message in Japanese, explaining that such behavior is both wasteful of gas and pollutes the air, and I now put copies of the message under the windshield wiper of cars that are left running without a driver.

The SGI has explicitly supported the campaign for abolition of nuclear weapons, since President Toda made his declaration against them in 1958. This is praiseworthy, but an equally insidious threat to humanity is our gradual destruction of the natural environment. The environment is something we can begin to save through our daily behavior. Conversely speaking, we can worsen the threat by ignoring the problem in our daily lives.

Of course the SGI cannot be expected to embrace every issue or cause which concerns general society. The main purpose of our organization is to encourage each other in faith. Nevertheless, the issue of the widespread destruction of the

Title: From Our Readers: 11/98

Subject: Living Buddhism 11/98 v.2 n.11 p.2 LB9811p02

Author:

Keywords: 11/98 Commentary Publisher Readers Response

environment is certainly important to us as Buddhists, who promote the principle of the oneness of life and its environment.

In particular, the way we conduct activities is important in this regard. With the current focus on neighborhood discussion meetings, many of us may not necessarily need to use our cars, but could walk, ride bicycles or busses to meetings. This is one way we can show society we are aware of and are actually doing something to lessen the global destruction of the environment.

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