

Historian Discusses the Real 'Braveheart'

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

Tokyo, April 4

The life of Scottish national hero Sir William Wallace, portrayed in last year's Academy Award-winning movie *Braveheart*, was the subject of a discussion between SGI President Ikeda and a University of Glasgow professor today.

Wallace (c. 1272–1305) rebelled against the arrogant attempt of King Edward I of England to impose direct rule over Scotland. Wallace, a champion of independence, rallied the common people to fight the oppressors. Under his leadership, they at one point completely routed Edward's well-equipped army. The English eventually returned to Scotland. And Wallace continued to resist them. But in the end he was betrayed by a friend and cruelly executed, his severed head and limbs placed on public display.

Dr. J. Forbes Munro, an economic historian at Glasgow University, said that the English wanted to make a public example of Wallace in order to snuff out any further ambitions the Scots might have had of defying England.

Rather than cowing the Scots, this barbarous act caused outrage and galvanized them to action. The flame of resistance continued to burn so brightly that by the beginning of the 14th century — a little more than two decades after Wallace's death — Scotland secured recognition as a separate kingdom from England. Later, in 1707, England and Scotland, together with Wales, joined in a union, the Kingdom of Great Britain.

Reflecting on Wallace's courageous life, Mr. Ikeda observed that in both life and death this heroic patriot changed the course of history. He then shared a Robert Burns poem with Dr. Munro, an admirer of Scotland's national poet, that celebrates that famous resistance movement. It is titled "Scots Wha Hae," and the last stanza reads:

*We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!
Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow! —
Let us do, or die!*

Professor Munro also mentioned that a document Wallace and other resistance leaders sent to the Pope still exists. Apparently, it was used as a reference by the drafters of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Praising Scotland's remarkable history, President Ikeda said that a brilliant spirit will transcend both time and national boundaries and will forever shine in the annals of history.

Glasgow University, where Dr. Munro teaches, is one of the oldest educational institutions in the world. Founded in 1451, the university is famed for establishing the world's very first faculty of engineering. In the 19th century, its scientists and economists played an active role as progenitors of the Industrial Revolution, which so dramatically transformed the world. It counts among its alumni such illustrious names as: Adam Smith, the celebrated economist; James Watt, the developer of the steam engine; and Lord Kelvin, who formulated the absolute scale of temperature that bears his name.

When President Ikeda received an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow in June 1994, Dr. Munro delivered the address citing the reasons for the conferral. An exchange program has been in effect between Soka University and the University of Glasgow since 1987. So far, 150 Soka University and Soka Women's College students

Title: Historian Discusses the Real 'Braveheart'

Subject: World Tribune 05/09/97 n.3138 p.1 WF970509p01 Tokyo, Japan 04/04/97

Author: SGI Newsletter

Keywords: 04/04/97 Braveheart Discusses Educators Forbes Heroes Historians International Japan
Munroe News People Real Scholars Tokyo Wallace William

have studied under the program.

During the discussion, the professor expressed his absolute delight at seeing so many Soka University students active throughout the world. Even though they are still young, he said, they have incorporated the philosophy of value-creation in their lives as they boldly make their way through the world.

Querying his guest on a host of topics, the SGI leader wanted to know how the city of Glasgow became the driving force of the Industrial Revolution. Professor Munro gave three succinct reasons: education, a geographic location advantageous to trade and rich deposits of iron and coal. The people of Scotland, he said, who at the time were relatively poor compared to those in other parts of Great Britain and Europe, used these three assets to their advantage with the diligence and earnestness for which they are known, successfully gaining a competitive edge over other regions.

The two went on to discuss Oxford and Cambridge universities and their long tradition of producing great leaders. Then turning to British prime ministers who he thought had brought great reformation to society, Dr. Munro cited Sir Robert Peel, who took office in 1834, and David Lloyd George, who headed the ruling Liberal Party during World War I. Saying that both men were innovators, Dr. Munro went on to observe that great leaders understand the times they live in, what changes are needed and how to bring them about.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Munro presented Mr. Ikeda a poem by the English poet A.E. Housman (1859–1936) titled “The Cherry Tree,” a gift from his wife.

WT