

To Develop Each Person

SGI President Ikeda gave the following address at the SGI Executive Conference in Tokyo, April 17.

I offer the warmest of welcomes to all of you noble and worthy Bodhisattvas of the Earth, representatives from 56 countries and territories, who have gathered for the SGI Spring Training Course. Thank you for making the long journey here.

The other day, I received some exciting news from Toru Yamaguchi, a recent Soka University graduate, who also attended Kansai Soka Junior High School and the Tokyo Soka High School. He wrote that in researching his graduation thesis, he came across seven articles written by the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), that are not included in any volume of *The Collected Writings of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi*. These articles are extremely valuable.

The energy and ability of young people are wonderful indeed. The academic advisor for Mr. Yamaguchi's thesis was Professor Shoji Saito, a leading authority on Mr. Makiguchi and editor and compiler of his *Collected Writings*. Professor Saito, who warmly watched over his student's research, was delighted when he tracked down these articles.

Mr. Makiguchi was truly a great man. He might be described as a well supplied by an inexhaustible spring. His disciple, the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, was the pump that drew the water from that well. For my part, I have always regarded it as my mission and duty to be the one who uses that water to nourish the earth so that beautiful flowers may bloom.

Encouraging the Young

One of the articles Mr. Yamaguchi stumbled upon is titled "Memories of Maeda," which appeared in the the May 3, 1923, issue of the educational magazine *Educational Realm* (Kyoiku Kai). The Maeda he refers to is Yoshio Maeda, a young teacher at the Taisho Normal Elementary School when Mr. Makiguchi was its first principal.

While an elementary school teacher, Mr. Maeda passed the very difficult higher civil service examinations. He was featured in the magazine as a bright young talent in the world of Japanese education, and Mr. Makiguchi contributed an essay to the issue — an essay full of affection and high expectations for his former colleague.

Mr. Maeda later became the director of Tokyo's Tama Boys Reform School and a commissioner of the Ministry of Education, devoting himself to the instruction and moral education of children and teenagers.

At the time, Mr. Makiguchi had not yet embraced Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, but his sincere concern for the young people who worked under him was already integral to his nature. He valued all of their talents and strove to nurture them. For example, if they wished to attend college at night, he did whatever he could to make it possible. Some went on to become judges, prosecutors and attorneys. Mr. Maeda was one of these teachers. Mr. Makiguchi's determination to help his young colleagues surpass him in their achievements was a sign of his personal greatness.

This essay on Maeda reveals just how earnestly Mr. Makiguchi worked to find and recruit young talent. For example, he writes, "We received as many as 150 resumes for the

26 available teaching positions [at the newly established Taisho Normal Elementary School] from applicants who had come to us using all possible connections at their disposal.”¹ But even then Mr. Makiguchi wasn’t satisfied. Determined to invite talented people from around the country to teach at the school, he actively solicited friends and acquaintances to refer bright and able candidates to him.

Mr. Makiguchi’s criteria were, in addition to a serious commitment to teaching, the applicant’s aspirations and a specialty.² He concentrated exclusively on finding and raising talented and capable individuals. In *The System of Value-Creating Education* (Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei), he writes, “The root of the difficulties we currently face in all areas of society is a lack of talented people.”³

I am happy to report that a friend of ours from China lavished praise on the SGI recently, declaring, “Many peaches and damsons adorn your gateway” — meaning that our organization is rich and fragrant with many talented people. We are celebrating a springtime of capable people. How delighted Mr. Makiguchi would surely be!

An Atmosphere of Free Discussion

In this essay, Mr. Makiguchi encourages young people to make the most of their talents. He was a leader who inspired and energized the youth. I hope all of you, too, will be such leaders in your respective countries.

According to Mr. Makiguchi, no matter how bright and learned people may be, if they are forced to silently endure the harassment of ill-natured seniors, they will eventually lose their enthusiasm and interest; they will grow passive and cowardly.

Mr. Makiguchi was perfectly aware of this negative tendency of Japanese society. That is why he created, in a most natural manner, an environment where people felt comfortable discussing and debating ideas without reservation.

Such is the world of the SGI.

Mr. Makiguchi remarked that it was exhilarating to see youth engaged in frank and rigorous debate, energetically pursuing arguments based on logic and reason. Of course, when a debate grew too divisive and no solution was in sight, he was excellent at bringing the viewpoints together and, after listening to them all carefully, coming to a conclusion that all parties found convincing and satisfying.

Why? Because, as a teacher, Mr. Makiguchi was always committed to what was best for the children, for the students, and that commitment informed his judgment. It is here that we can see Mr. Makiguchi’s superlative leadership.

I hope that, in the SGI organizations in your respective countries, you will keep your sight on the fundamental goal of working for the sake of the members and kosen-rufu, and advancing together firmly united in purpose. As long as we have that unity, we will never be deadlocked.

I add my hope that the youth division members will treat their seniors in faith, who have fought hard and valiantly for many long years, with the highest respect and endeavor to learn from them.

Persecution Arising From Resentment

Suddenly, in 1919, authorities pressured Mr. Makiguchi, then in his late 40s, and the other teachers committed to operating an ideal school, as the authorities sought to drive Mr. Makiguchi from his post. It started when an influential local figure demanded that his child receive preferential treatment, and Mr. Makiguchi flatly refused. The man’s resentment and the plotting of a major political figure in the Tokyo city assembly seem to have played a part as events unfolded. The incident was directly linked to what was later recognized as

Title: To Develop Each Person

Subject: World Tribune 08/22/97 n.3153 p.12 WT970822p12 Tokyo, Japan 04/17/97

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 04/17/97 Develop Each History Japan Kosen-rufu Makiguchi Messages People Person President Speech Speeches Tokyo Tsunesaburo

the corruption of the city government.

The political leader who persecuted Mr. Makiguchi came under fire as a major suspect in scandals that later surfaced, and he was forced to resign from office.

At this juncture, Mr. Maeda and the other young teachers banded together to defend Mr. Makiguchi, fiercely opposing moves to oust him. In the essay, Mr. Makiguchi describes their efforts:

[The youth] knew that if they conferred with me they would only cause me further trouble, or that I would stop them. So without consulting me at all, they opposed my dismissal. They broke relations with one of the teachers [who was in league with the politician seeking to dismiss Mr. Makiguchi], and the remaining 25 formed an alliance and signed a petition of protest, giving the educational authorities a great deal of trouble.... Strongly united, all 25 of them handed in their resignations simultaneously, and there was nothing anyone could do to stop them.⁴

“If Mr. Makiguchi is fired, we quit, too!” The youth staunchly stood by Mr. Makiguchi. No one could quell their indignation at the wrong being done to their principal. The sincerity and commitment to justice displayed by the young teachers moved even their opponents. The parents of the students joined forces with the teachers and, to protest the attempt to dismiss Mr. Makiguchi, kept their children from school for three days. Here we see historical evidence of just how respected Mr. Makiguchi was by the youth, and how fervently the people supported him.

A ‘People’s Movement’ Dedicated to Justice

Another noteworthy point in this essay is that Mr. Makiguchi uses the expression “people’s movement.” He says that the actions of the young teachers who stood up against the oppressive measures of the authorities were, in spirit, “a small manifestation of the so-called people’s movements that had sprung up everywhere after the World War [I] — representing resistance to the tyranny of the ruling classes and the oppressive governments of political leaders who were subservient to them.”⁵ Mr. Makiguchi was one of the first to spot this major new trend in the world, the rise of people’s movements.

Despite his supporters’ vociferous protests, Mr. Makiguchi was not allowed to remain principal of the Taisho Normal Elementary School. Instead, he was transferred to the Nishimachi Normal Elementary School. It was there that he had his historic encounter with Mr. Toda in the spring of 1920.

Seventy-seven years have passed since then. Today, the Soka movement, forged from the brilliant alliance of youth committed to justice and truth, and carrying on in the footsteps of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, has spread magnificently throughout the world. Let us continue to boldly advance the great people’s movement for peace, culture and education in the 21st century under the banner of Buddhist humanism.

This SGI training course brings together in one place the most noble and praiseworthy leaders of the people from around the globe. With a prayer from my heart that your stay in Japan will be enjoyable, pleasant, fruitful and productive, I close my remarks today.

WT

1. “Maeda-kun no Omoide” (Memories of Maeda), *Educational Realm* (Kyoiku Kai), May 3, 1923, pp. 98–101.
2. *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo*, ed. Seikyo Shimbun Editorial Committee (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1973), p. 66.

3. *The Collected Writings of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi* (Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu), (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1983), vol. 6, p. 25.
4. "Memories of Maeda," pp. 100–01.
5. "Memories of Maeda," p. 101.

Title: To Develop Each Person
Subject: World Tribune 08/22/97 n.3153 p.12 WT970822p12 Tokyo, Japan 04/17/97
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 04/17/97 Develop Each History Japan Kosen-rufu Makiguchi Messages People Person President
Speech Speeches Tokyo Tsunesaburo