

Beyond the Usual

New ways of thinking aren't easy to come by. But General Director Zaitzu recently said new thinking is exactly what the SGI-USA needs. "It is not enough to simply outline principles," the general director told the Central Executive Committee. "I feel we need to move beyond the usual to new ways of thinking, fresh ideas, clear definitions and renewed determination and prayer."

Going beyond the usual — that's a great challenge, but if the SGI-USA is going to make its 10 new visions (see p. 5) into 10 realities, new thinking is essential. Many of the leaders gathered at the FNCC for the committee meeting said that the SGI-USA is headed in the right direction, and that eventually we'll get there. But if we want to get there by 2001, they said, we need lots of new ideas.

It's important in this regard to consider where the best new thinking comes from — it seems to be found in our philosophical roots. Nichiren Daishonin writes in the Goshō: "When a tree has been transplanted, though fierce winds may blow, it will not topple if it has a firm stake to hold it up. But even a tree that has grown up in place may fall over if its roots are weak" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 109).

In this next stage of the SGI-USA's history, the new ideas that will stand the test of time are sure to come from those who rack their brains about the intent behind the 10 visions. Their intent is perhaps best expressed by the first vision, that *the members will be happy*. All the roots for new thinking are there in the 10 visions and their purpose to help people become happier.

Nichiren Daishonin understood this principle of roots better than anyone. In 1253, he introduced a new idea — that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was the direct path to enlightenment — but it was an idea completely rooted in the Lotus Sutra. When the Daishonin said that all people could become Buddhas, he shocked the Japanese people, especially his priestly peers, but all he was saying was the same thing Shakyamuni had said thousands of years previously.

Of course, introducing new thinking often goes hand in hand with doing away with old thinking. When Nichiren Daishonin introduced Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, he at the same time denounced the old thinking of the Nembutsu, Zen, Shingon and Ritsu sects. Although an idea isn't bad just because it's old, there may be many old ideas in our organization we want to change. We may even feel like taking a chain saw to them and cutting a new trail through the woods. Watching old ideas topple over, after all, is sometimes a lot of fun.

But we shouldn't damage the roots. The ideas may be old, but we have to respect their roots and all the sincere effort that went into developing them. Their intent, too, was to help people become happier — this intent has remained constant throughout our organization's history. Without concentrating on and protecting our philosophical roots, nothing new will grow. "Without wood, the fire will burn out," Nichiren once wrote. "Without earth, plants cannot grow" (MW-1, 217).

Over the next four years through 2001, our 10 visions for the organization will be a tremendous source from which new thinking will appear. The more we can understand the purpose behind the visions and find practical applications of them, the closer we are to making the SGI-USA into the organization we know it can be.

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