

Don't Hold Back

We can either step aside and be mere onlookers, SGI President Ikeda says at a June leaders meeting, or we can be true heroes who stand up for what's right and keep fighting to the end.

Let me congratulate you on this wonderful and enjoyable leaders meeting! Though Japan is experiencing hard times, the Soka Gakkai is doing just fine. We have demonstrated excellent progress. Everyone is envious of our success.

The great French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712– 78) wrote in his work *Emile*: “There is no happiness without courage nor virtue without struggle.” Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda often discussed *Emile* with me. Without courage, there is no happiness, and it is impossible to create a life of value. This is an unchanging rule of human existence.

The English poet Lord Byron (1788–1824) wrote, “Whatever I may & have or shall feel — I have that within me that bounds against opposition.” that occasion. Mr. Makiguchi was 57 years old when he decided to take faith. Most men at that stage of life would have been happy to enjoy the rewards of their achievements — in his case, as a respected school principal — and pass their last years in ease and personal enjoyment. But Mr. Makiguchi tossed that ease aside and embarked on a life-or-death spiritual struggle.

All this from the age of 57! I am sure that some of you gathered here today are the same age. Most of you are no doubt younger. You mustn't allow yourselves to grow old before your time. Please live your lives with the same energy and vigor that Mr. Makiguchi displayed. Please live with a youthful spirit. That is what Buddhism teaches us to do, and it is how life ought to be lived. If you make a commitment to work for the sake of others, you will be rejuvenated. If you devote your life to helping others, you'll stay young. The power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo guarantees that. On the other hand, if you live only for yourself, you will age prematurely.

It's your life. I hope you will lead it energetically and positively. This is not a duty or an order. It is something I hope you will consciously choose to do.

People, Become Wise

The focus of Mr. Makiguchi's spiritual struggle was especially directed toward eliminating the deeply entrenched Japanese mentality — the legacy of centuries of feudal rule — that you can't beat city hall. He insisted that the age when the authorities could boss around the Japanese people was over. It was time for the emergence of self-government, where the people themselves were responsible for overseeing how their taxes were put to use. For the first time in centuries, the people, who were accustomed to being treated as little more than the government's slaves, attained the right to participate in government. They were respected as individuals — equal and autonomous participants in public life. At the same time, Mr. Makiguchi knew that, if the people failed to exercise that right, if they were cowardly and spineless, neither the nation nor society could change. These are the pioneering insights we find in his great work *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (The System of Value-creating Education). He was truly a great man.

Mr. Toda respected Mr. Makiguchi from the bottom of his heart, and he staked his life on the mentor-disciple bond. I was deeply moved by this solemn attitude of respect and

Title: Don't Hold Back

Subject: World Tribune 08/07/98 n.3203 p.1 WT980807p01 Tokyo, Japan 06/16/98

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 06/16/98 Back Hold Japan Makiguchi Messages News People President Speeches Tokyo
Tsunesaburo

devotion. I always felt what an incredible person Mr. Makiguchi must have been for Mr. Toda, my own mentor, to esteem him so highly. As time passed, I came to more fully grasp Mr. Makiguchi's greatness, and that is why I take every opportunity to honor him.

Mr. Makiguchi repeatedly called for the people to become wise, to awaken, to find courage, to join forces. My own calls for the people to develop wisdom and discernment follow the lead of the teachings of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda. And they in turn all derive from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

Don't Be a Bystander

The Latter Day of the Law is an evil age defiled by the five impurities. Life, the times, the people, their ideas, their hearts — everything is horribly polluted. It is also an age of conflict and dispute. Strife is never-ending, and people readily sacrifice others to their own selfish interests. This is the kind of age we are living in.

As Buddhists, what is our basic direction in the Latter Day of the Law? Mr. Makiguchi referred to the famous lines — a comment by Chang-an on a Nirvana Sutra passage — quoted by the Daishonin in the Gosho: “If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy.... One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent” (MW-2, 187). Mr. Makiguchi declared that we must discard false friendship and instead speak out strongly, without hesitation, for what we know is right. We have to say what must be said, refusing to compromise the truth. That was the point he wished to stress.

Mr. Makiguchi also urged us never to abandon people who are courageously putting their lives on the line for the sake of justice and truth. He stated that throughout history people who performed acts of great good were always subject to intense persecution. The majority of the people — though they might have been decent and honest citizens and perhaps even secretly sympathized with these brave individuals who were being treated so harshly — generally felt helpless and stood by silently as the latter risked their lives. Such individuals Mr. Makiguchi called “people of small goodness.” They did not do anything very wrong or evil nor did they do anything very right or good.

All too often people of great goodness, alone and unaided because people of small goodness simply stood by and watched, have been defeated in their cause. Yet there have been those champions of justice who, though besieged on all sides, endured, kept fighting and triumphed in the end. They are the true heroes, the heroes among heroes.

This was Mr. Makiguchi's penetrating understanding of history. He stated clearly that it was not enough simply to admire and venerate courageous individuals who champion justice and work for good. That was in fact the cowardly way out, he admonished. Bystanders who try to protect themselves from harm while appearing sympathetic to the cause of goodness are the lowliest of cowards.

We have also seen such people in our own Soka Gakkai. They used the organization to garner respect for themselves, but when the time came to fight, they did not stand up for the truth. No, they looked on, thinking only of protecting themselves. This is cowardly. Cowards erase all the benefit they have acquired and at the same time accumulate the causes that lead to a life-state of Hell.

Buddhism is strict. If we betray great good, we commit great evil.

Mr. Makiguchi is clear on this point. He calls out for us to scorn and denounce those of small goodness who look on silently while brave individuals uphold justice and fight valiantly for the people, for all humanity, amid persecution and attack. And he asks us: Are you now, or in the future, going to stand timidly with those of small good and be an onlooker, or are you going to join forces with those who fight on the side of good for

justice and truth? Think hard, he says, and choose which side you will be part of.

SGI members always fight bravely on the side of the champions of truth. This is the SGI spirit. And it is the true path of mentor and disciple of the SGI — the path of lions! Let each of us choose, here and now: Are we going to move forward boldly on this noble path or not? This is what Mr. Makiguchi asks of us; this is his conclusion.

What Matters Is What We Do

In 1939, Mr. Makiguchi traveled to Fukuoka in Kyushu (the southernmost of Japan's four main islands) to propagate the Daishonin's teachings. While he was there, he said to a woman who had just joined the Soka Gakkai, "Mark my words: countless young people will follow in my footsteps." He said that he would write that promise down, as proof of his convictions. Mr. Makiguchi's unshakable confidence is the true spirit of the Soka Gakkai.

This written promise was later confiscated by officers of the Special Higher Police, the "thought" police of the Japanese military government.

Today, 70 years have passed since this towering hero of the Soka Gakkai, Mr. Makiguchi, took the first step in his undying spiritual struggle. Let us continue that struggle, confident that victory hinges on determination, fighting spirit, hope, perseverance and, above all, unity! It doesn't matter what others may do. What matters is what we do. We're the ones who have to take action. By doing so, we each become an immortal hero, too; a victor in our spiritual struggle. We cannot leave our work to others, thinking someone else will do it for us; such an attitude spells only personal defeat. So today, let us set forth again with the powerful unity of youthful heroes to achieve a history of magnificent triumphs for the SGI.

End of Part 1