

CLOSING ARGUMENTS TO BE HEARD IN SEATTLE INCIDENT TRIAL

Closing arguments will be heard Dec. 7 in the Seattle Incident trial. A verdict is expected from the Tokyo District Court in early 2000.

The trial, which started in 1995, involves a defamation lawsuit filed by High Priest Nikken and Nichiren Shoshu against the Soka Gakkai and its publications. In order to prove he has been libeled, Nikken must convince the court that Mrs. Hiroe Clow's account, which was carried in Soka Gakkai publications, of his March 1963 dispute with prostitutes and subsequent run-in with Seattle police is untrue.

The 26th session of the trial was held Oct. 26, at which time attorneys for the Soka Gakkai introduced further evidence refuting Nichiren Shoshu's claim that defense witness and former Seattle police officer Ronald Sprinkle was not present at the incident because he was on active military duty (see the Oct. 15 *World Tribune*, p. 2). The new evidence included affidavits from various officials of the U.S. Air Force and Seattle Police Department.

In a new affidavit from Mr. Sprinkle, he explained that, although he joined the Air Force Reserves in 1962, he held down his job with the Police Department at the same time that he was in training at Paine Field Air Force Base near Seattle.

Regarding Nichiren Sho-shu's allegations that Mr. Sprinkle's badge and gun were officially checked in and not in his possession at the time of the incident, Mr. Sprinkle testified that because the guns issued by the Police Department then were not of the highest quality, he had for years carried his own gun while on duty.

And as for the badge: While Mr. Sprinkle had checked his personal badge in for the duration of his military training, the Police Department had a system in which "loaner badges" were issued to police officers reporting for work without badges. Mr. Sprinkle testified that he believes he had been issued a "loaner badge" the day of the incident.

Providing background to Mr. Sprinkle's testimony was the testimony of Thomas Bowie, the commanding officer of the Air Force Reserve training unit to which Mr. Sprinkle was assigned. Mr. Bowie stated that Mr. Sprinkle was in his unit, and that he remembers Mr. Sprinkle was also a Seattle police officer at the time. He also stated that he had no opposition as Mr. Sprinkle's commanding officer to the latter's police work while under his command.

The Soka Gakkai's attorneys also submitted to the court many pieces of documentary evidence showing Mr. Sprinkle to have been working as a Seattle police officer at the time of the incident.

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— JEFF FARR