

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

A Fabulous Issue

Wow! What a fabulous issue of *World Tribune* (Oct. 15)! I could feel the positive energy and commitment behind this event. The beautiful photos and comments made me feel I had been there. What a wonderful celebration!

—CHANDRA SOUZA,
Fremont, Calif.

Authoritarianism

I would like to offer a response to an article in the Oct. 8 *World Tribune* in hopes of creating meaningful dialogue. The article, by Jeff Farr, was about authoritarianism in our organization. I feel his assertion was that while such behavior by priests is reprehensible, in our organization, those who seem authoritarian are merely undergoing their “human revolution.”

While I think it is important to understand that there are many people in the SGI who are sincerely working toward kosen-rufu, who make mistakes and are, after all, “only human,” I think it is a mistake to believe that true authoritarianism, defined by someone who exercises power for their own agenda or to maintain status quo, cannot exist within the organization. This mentality of “they are all bad,” and “we are all good,” is dangerous. In its extreme, this kind of thinking has led to war.

As soon as we refuse to look at ourselves, and instead focus on the evil doings of others as if we existed in some kind of a pure vacuum, isolated from the rest of the world, we cease to grow. Chances are there exist some sincere priests in Nichiren Shoshu who are trying to make positive changes from within. Several have already seceded from the ranks as a protest against injustice.

It is logical, then, that if good can exist within evil, the opposite must be true as well. Just because the goals of the SGI as an organization are pure does not mean that everyone in the organization shares those goals. There are those who would serve their own interests, using the practice to oppress anyone who would oppose those interests. This poses a much greater threat than the priests because it threatens to destroy our solidarity as an organization. We must fight against that kind of slander with all our might.

In closing, I would like to quote President Ikeda, ironically, from that very same issue of the *World Tribune*. He explains, “If our leaders stop fighting passionately against evil and injustice, merely putting on a great act of giving guidance, occupying themselves solely with protecting their own interests, it is a sign that their faith is bankrupt.” Once again, it is important to distinguish between a sincere leader who holds a different view than you and someone who is truly authoritarian. It does exist. We must not ignore it.

—DAVE EVANGELISTA,
New York

Expressing My Gratitude

I'm not going to assume that you have never received a letter like this, but I felt compelled to write it anyway. The purpose of this letter is to express appreciation and gratitude.

In 1997, I stopped subscribing to the *World Tribune* for no particular reason other than (now that I look back on it) sheer arrogance. I became a little “bored” with the paper (or so I had convinced myself). For a while, it seemed like I was doing OK, and then I began to feel disconnected from President Ikeda and didn't even relate to the fact that because of the *World Tribune* (especially because of it) a practicing SGI member can receive President Ikeda's and others' guidance and experiences in each and every issue. In each and every issue of this paper, there is some type of encouragement from President Ikeda — no matter to whom or to what group he is addressing. You can in most cases apply it to your life (if you're open and into real human revolution).

I had to learn this the hard way (unfortunately, that is how I learn some things). I would not subscribe to the *World Tribune* no matter what anyone said. I had arrogantly convinced myself that I did not need it. Then at a Sunday morning chanting session, my district leaders once again encouraged those of us who were not receiving the newspaper, to please consider it. Don't ask me why, but I asked for the subscription envelope and paid my money. And then basically forgot about it.

A few weeks later when I arrived home from work, my first issue of the *World Tribune* arrived was sitting on the table. My initial reaction shocked me. In that moment I realized how much I had missed it—and was just being stubborn about admitting it. I was so happy to see it, I almost started crying. The next morning on the bus, I read the article that President Ikeda wrote about the importance and necessity of HOPE and my heart was so encouraged I just bowed my head in gratitude.... I felt uplifted and grateful to President Ikeda for his ceaseless efforts....

—JANICE BENNETT,
Washington, D.C.

About the Environment

Having just finished reading “Earth Odyssey—Around the World in Search of Our Environmental Future” by Mark Hetsgaard, I found Frank Hotchkiss' Perspective in the Oct. 1 *World Tribune* on good news about the environment laughable. I agree with Frank's statement that there are environmental problems and we should act on fact not fear, but he has grossly glossed over the severity of the problems.

Frank is right— the jury is still out on the issue of global warming, but I would advise prudence. He comments that “Forest growth in the U.S. now exceeds forest harvesting.” Great, but in the Northwestern U.S. and Canada, corporations are still attempting to cut down old growth forests. And the destruction of forests in many areas of the planet are horrendous. The forests in South East Asia and South America are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Frank talks of “Fear of overpopulation...makes it sound like there will be no more open space in a few years.” Well, 70 percent of the population growth is in cities, where many poor people move off of uninhabitable land to try to make a living. And, tell the people in China the planet doesn't have a population problem.

Frank mentions an article that says the air is cleaner in the U.S. Well, it isn't in Seattle. The degradation of air quality is evident when I compare pictures taken in the past where I could clearly see Mount Rainier and now it is barely visible. There has also been a huge

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depletion in the population of bottom fish, and we are in danger of losing our beautiful salmon which has sparked international fishery disputes.

Mark Hertsgaard traveled to the most devastated parts of the planet; China where in places the burning of coal creates a world where the sun hardly shines; places in Africa that can no longer support life; Bangkok with constant grid lock and polluted air; Russia where toxic nuclear waste has devastating effects on the populace; Brazil where unfair distribution of property causes people to destroy the forests, and the U.S. where a baby born creates 13 times as much environmental damage over the course of its lifetime as a baby born in Brazil, and 35 times as much as an Indian baby. We cannot separate ourselves from the environmental destruction that is going on in other places or irresponsible consume because our backyard appears clean.

Am I an alarmist? No I am an environmentalist. And no, an environmentalist doesn't, as Frank states, "Only sees victory in limiting or even eliminating human production, consumption, development and progress." President Ikeda has stated in his dialogue with Arnold Toynbee: "In an attempt to conquer the natural world, mankind has upset the fixed, basic rhythm of nature. Having suffered and having been brought to the verge of destruction by man's actions, nature is now rebelling against humanity." And I disagree with Frank that talking of these problems "encourages hopelessness."

In *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 6, President Ikeda states: "The Sutra speaks of 'perceiving the truth exactly as it is.'" This is the only way we can take effective action. And in *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, President Ikeda states "that the fundamental cause for the continuing onslaught of natural disasters, epidemics and famine lay in the confusion in the religious realm, the basic spiritual foundation of human society." So I choose to stay aware of the terrible effects that greed and stupidity can have on our environment and to chant and behave responsibly so our beautiful planet will be preserved for generations to come.

—DIXON HAMBY,
Bellevue, Wash.
<http://www.dixonet.com/>

I am writing regarding the Perspective piece in the Oct. 1 *World Tribune* by Frank Hotchkiss titled "Some Good News About the Environment." This is one of the clearest and most concise descriptions of our environmental issues that I have seen. Mr. Hotchkiss has calmly and accurately identified the concerns and some of the resolutions, as well as some of the reasons why so many people have been led to act, or demand action, based on fear and misinformation instead of fact.

Most importantly, I believe that Mr. Hotchkiss has presented perfect proof of the benefit of a Buddhist perspective. "Buddhism is reason," we have always been told, and this article exemplifies that concept. Congratulations on printing such a well-written and well-thought out piece.

—ANDY HANLEN,
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