

**PUBLISHER'S COMMENTARY  
GREET THE NEW ERA  
WITH HOPE AND WISDOM**

Happy New Year 2000! For seven years, my SGI-USA friends, I have been privileged to talk to you in this column. Looking back I was amazed to realize that this is my eighty-fifth article in the publisher's commentary column. It has been a wonderful challenge—although at times deadlines seemed to come upon me so fast I often felt it was a weekly, rather than monthly, column!

What encouraged me to meet this challenge was your response and support. This column was my chance to hold a dialogue with you in my mind. I would like to have visited and talked with each of you in your homes, but as that was impossible, this was at least an opportunity to share with you what was in my heart.

I was surprised that what often struck a chord with you was some simple anecdote about my life—my childhood, family or early practice as a Soka Gakkai member. It reminded me that we should never underestimate the value of personal experience in explaining Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Once we have established heart-to-heart communication through sharing our life experience, then talking about the philosophy or theory of Buddhism is more meaningful.

In his thesis "The Selection of the Time," the Daishonin explains the importance of understanding the relationship between events and the time in which they occur. As the year 2000 approached, I began to ponder what this meant to our organization. It is the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai and the fortieth anniversary of President Ikeda's inauguration as third president and first overseas visit to the United States. I realized that it should also be the time for me to pass the baton of leadership as general director to another. Even though I still have two years left in my present term, I keenly felt that this time was best for kosen-rufu of America. SGI President Ikeda says that change creates energy. Change leads to a dynamic future—it creates momentum, and this is how I wanted the SGI-USA to enter the year 2000.

Therefore, I recommended that Danny Nagashima succeed me for the remainder of my term. Please join me in supporting him as our new central figure as we stand to greet the new era with hope and wisdom. He is a man of action and great passion. I have absolute trust in him to lead our precious organization into the year 2001 and May 3. In my new position as executive advisor to the SGI-USA, I promise you I am not going to slow down nor will my sense of responsibility and mission for kosen-rufu diminish at all.

We should not be afraid of change; rather, we should welcome it with courage because this is how we generate the power necessary to face the coming millennium. Once again, I want to tell you how much I appreciate your support for the past seven years.

Sincerely,

Fred M. Zaitso