

SOKA GAKKAI MEMBERS SUE HIGH PRIEST AND HEAD TEMPLE BY TED MORINO EDITOR IN CHIEF

Some Soka Gakkai members in Japan have recently sued High Priest Nikken Abe and Taiseki-ji, the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu, over their destruction of Grand Main Temple (Sho-Hondo). Three class action suits have been initiated:

- Fifteen Soka Gakkai members from Fujinomiya City, where Taiseki-ji is located, sued High Priest Nikken and Taiseki-ji at the Shizuoka District Court on Jan. 17. They seek around \$219,000 in compensation for the psychological duress they say they have suffered from the temple's destruction. According to the document they submitted to the court, they all made monetary offerings in 1965 for the construction of the Grand Main Temple, cutting down exhaustively on their daily expenses to do so. The plaintiffs contend that their offerings were made with the understanding they were given from Nichiren Shoshu that the Grand Main Temple would be maintained far into the future. The original conditions governing the donations have been breached, they claim.

- Twelve Soka Gakkai members in Numazu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, filed a similar suit against High Priest Nikken and Taiseki-ji on Jan. 25. They seek around \$79,000 in compensation for the donations they offered to Nichiren Shoshu for the upkeep of the Grand Main Temple. They argue that the reasons given by the priesthood for the temple's demolition were invalid, this constituting a breach of good faith.

- Tadao Nomoto, a Soka Gakkai member in Hachioji City, Tokyo, filed a suit against High Priest Nikken on Jan. 26 for the return of about \$49,000 that his mother donated to Nichiren Shoshu in 1990. The plaintiff, executor of his deceased mother's estate, charges that the donation was specifically for the maintenance of the Grand Main Temple. His mother received a citation signed by High Priest Nikken that reads "we gratefully accept this contribution, made and kept for the maintenance of the Grand Main Temple so that it may be bequeathed to posterity in perpetuity."

High Priest Nikken's remark earlier this year that "the Grand Main Temple was nothing but the epitome of slander, because its foundation was offerings from Soka Gakkai members" was the last straw for these Soka Gakkai members.

Tomomi Hara, one of the Fujinomiya plaintiffs, explains: "As we reside near Taiseki-ji, we saw the Grand Main Temple being dismantled every day. It was indeed a painful sight. I could not hold back tears of regret. We have been bearing with this situation, but in January this year, High Priest Nikken went on to call the Grand Main Temple the epitome of the Soka Gakkai's slander. We could not hold back our anger at his distortion of the truth. Since the priesthood's mentality is so off—so far from understanding the sentiments of ordinary people—they don't understand how much we went through to save money for the Grand Main Temple's construction. Because of their strange mentality, they went ahead to destroy the Grand Main Temple without a second thought, never giving us any notice of their decision and ensuing action."