

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SPEECH THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON THE YOUTH

SGI President Ikeda's acceptance speech on the conferral of an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of Delaware, Newark, Del., the United States, held in conjunction with a Soka Gakkai nationwide youth division leaders meeting, the 17th Soka Group General Meeting, the 15th Gajokai General Meeting and the 23rd Byakuren Group General Meeting, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, Hachioji, Tokyo, on Jan. 15.

You Are My Successors!

Soka Gakkai second president Josei Toda declared: "A new era is created by the passion and power of youth."

My hearty congratulations on this first gathering of the new year for our talented youth division members, the leaders of the Soka Gakkai in the 21st century! I want to state clearly, here and now, that you, the members of the youth division, are the successors on whose shoulders the entire responsibility for the future of kosen-rufu and the Soka Gakkai will fall.

A warm welcome also to our fellow members from abroad who have joined us today.

And my deepest appreciation to the interpreters. I look forward to your kind assistance again this year.

Honor From Acclaimed Academic Institute

Most esteemed President Roselle, Professor Callahan, and Mrs. Norton: I humbly accept this honor I have received from your august and internationally acclaimed institution of higher learning, the University of Delaware, as a representative of our SGI members in 148 countries and territories around the world. Thank you very, very much.

In truth, I should have visited the University of Delaware to accept this honor. Before I could fulfill that obligation, however, President Roselle and his party were kind enough to travel to Japan and carry out this dignified ceremony here. I must offer my sincerest gratitude for your consideration once again.

[University of Delaware (UD) President David Roselle; Dr. Raymond Callahan, UD professor of history; and Mrs. Mary Norton, an educator who has taught courses on philosophy, ethics and critical thinking and who is the widow of UD professor of philosophy Dr. David Norton, traveled to Japan from the United States to confer the honorary degree on the SGI leader.]

Today we also have with us representatives of the SGI-USA, which has made a fresh departure toward the 21st century. One of them, Women's Division Vice Leader Linda Johnson, is a graduate of the prestigious University of Delaware.

Behind-the-Scenes Effort Sets the Stage for Future Glory

Being held concurrently with this gathering today are the respective general meetings of the Soka Group, the Gajokai and the Byakuren Group [behind-the-scenes groups that support the smooth running of meetings and ensure the comfort and safety of members as

well as the security of Soka Gakkai facilities], the precious core members who will become the leaders of the kosen-rufu movement in the 21st century. Congratulations on your general meetings! Thank you for your tireless efforts day in and day out. Today's top Gakkai leaders, just like all of you, once exerted themselves diligently as members of the Traffic Control Group (forerunner of the Soka Group) and the Soka Group, supporting the members from behind the scenes. The same is true of many of your seniors in faith.

I would like to accept this singular honor from the University of Delaware together with all of you, as a symbol of the infinite glory that awaits all who work with selfless devotion behind the scenes.

It Starts With a Single Individual

The University of Delaware traces its origins back to a school founded in 1743 through the commitment and dedication of one young man. That young man was a Scotch-Irish clergyman by the name of Francis Alison, who emigrated to America from Ireland. During America's colonial period, there was not a single college nor even a good grammar school in any of the British territories there. When Alison realized the lack of educational institutions in his new homeland, he decided to establish one himself.

With great personal effort, he opened a free school in his own home in the township of New London, Penn. Alison served as the mainstay and cornerstone of the school, which became known as the New London Academy. This school was the precursor of today's University of Delaware.

[The free school founded by Alison changed its location several times, setting up eventually in Newark, Del., roughly eight miles from where it began in New London, Penn. It changed its name many times, becoming the Academy of Newark in 1769, and then Newark College in 1833, Delaware College in 1843, and the University of Delaware in 1921. The main campus of the University of Delaware today is in the city of Newark.]

The first students of the free school ranged from 8 to 16 years of age. Today, young people of the same age from the future division are with us. Thank you for your great efforts! In particular, I would like to congratulate the members of the junior high school division on the 35th anniversary of their division's founding!

Inheriting the Founder's Spirit

Alison was an early advocate of the separation of administrative, legislative and judicial powers and other democratic ideals that were truly "revolutionary" at the time, and he shared those ideas with his students. The first graduating class, which had received personal instruction from him, inherited his spirit and went on to make great contributions to American society in the realms of government, business and public opinion. Among them were governors, congressmen, doctors and scholars. Three members of the first class were later to sign the historic Declaration of Independence.

The State of Delaware, where the university is located, was the first state to ratify the new constitution, from which it has earned the nickname, "the First State." Members of the first class of Alison's free school also played an active role in the new constitution's establishment.

Though a group or institution may be small and have only a few members, as long as it has a strong core it is possible to build the foundation for eternal development.

All of you gathered here today are talented members of the "first class" of our youth

division for the new century, people whose brilliant light will shine across the new millennium. Please forge ahead dauntlessly, with pride and self-confidence, encouraging and supporting each other along the way. Never abandon your faith!

A History of ‘Always Giving One’s Best Effort’

Dr. Roselle, an eminent mathematician, is the 25th president of the University of Delaware, with its hallowed tradition of more than 250 years. Dr. Roselle says that he wants to be known as the president who did the most for this university, and is committed to demonstrating this resolve in concrete form. He states that this is the way he lives his life.

In accord with this conviction, President Roselle has, over the last 10 years, led the university to unprecedented development, while placing the highest importance on the welfare of each student. For instance, the University of Delaware has been named one of the 10 U.S. institutions demonstrating “bold leadership” in classrooms according to the National Science Foundation. This is a golden achievement that all connected with the university can be proud of.

I hope that all of you, the members of the youth division, will also establish a record of careful, steady achievement in the respective spheres of your mission, so that no matter what anyone else may say, you can declare that you’ve done your very best.

Life, at times, may seem like one long drag, but the challenge is to find a way to make life interesting and exciting. That is the drama of human life. The point is to discover enjoyment and excitement amid the challenges of daily life. Our hearts, our minds, possess a wisdom that enables us to change anything unlimitedly.

The training we receive in our youth, our Buddhist practice and our participation in Gakkai activities all help us build an indestructible, diamond-like spirit that finds life itself a joy. All these challenges benefit our lives.

‘Dialogue Among Civilizations’ – A New Watchword

Recently, the term *dialogue among civilizations* has become a watchword of our times. Thirty years ago [in October 1970], I conducted a series of dialogues on the subject, “Civilization—East and West,” with Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894–1973), a leading proponent of European unification and founder of the Pan-European Movement. Our dialogues were later published in book form in Japanese. From that time, I have actively striven to pursue inter-civilizational dialogue with leading figures around the world.

At the end of my dialogue with the great British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975), Dr. Toynbee took my hand and said to me: “Dialogue will play a major role in forging harmony between the cultures, peoples and religions of the world. In order to bring the world’s people closer together, I hope that you, young as you are, will extend this dialogue far and wide.” These were his last words to me, and I promised to do as he asked.

With that promise locked firmly in my heart, I set about to engage leading thinkers from every continent in dialogue, and have to this day participated in more than 1,500 inter-civilizational dialogues. And more than 20 of my dialogues with leading intellects from around the world have been published.

U.N. International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations in 2001

The motto of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which I founded four years ago based on Mr. Toda’s ideal of global citizenship, is “Dialogue of

Civilizations for World Citizenship.” I was happy and honored that the United Nations subsequently designated 2001 as the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

Next month [February 2000], to commemorate the centennial of Mr. Toda’s birth, the Toda Institute will sponsor an international conference in Okinawa, which will be attended by leading scholars around the world. The theme of the conference is “Dialogue of Civilizations: A New Peace Agenda for a New Millennium.”

The topic of “dialogue among civilizations” is also slated for discussion at the G-8 Summit to be held in Okinawa in July of this year.

Yesterday [Jan. 14], President Roselle and his party met and talked with officials of Soka University. I received a report of their discussion and it contained some important points, so I would like to share some of them with you today.

Dr. Roselle remarked that while the 19th century was the century of chemistry, and the 20th the century of physics, the 21st century will be the century of biotechnology. The great discoveries in chemistry and physics, he said, have resulted in both positive and negative experiences for humankind. We must take care, he cautioned, that we do not suffer from the same kind of negative experiences in the 21st century.

Mrs. Norton then added that biotechnology touches upon the very secrets of human life, so it is crucial that we proceed based on a firm ethical and moral foundation. There is a vital need today, she said, for philosophy and ethics.

I agree completely with both Dr. Roselle and Mrs. Norton. In fact, this is one reason that I have continually called for humankind to make the 21st century “the century of life.”

At any rate, from today I have the honor of being a member of your fine university, a citadel for world citizenship, and I am determined to work even harder in my endeavors.

My young friends of the youth division, please join me in courageously and vigorously rousing great waves of dialogue among civilizations, among people, and on the subject of life.

Why Are We Persecuted?

The late Dr. David Norton, a great philosopher, had a deep understanding of the SGI movement and was always ready with warm words of encouragement and support. Why is the Soka Gakkai, an organization working to bring the world’s people together through its movement for peace, culture and education, maligned and persecuted in Japan? Dr. Norton’s reply to this question was splendid. The first reason he gave was the jealousy of an anachronistic clergy. The second reason he cited was a powerful reaction on the part of nationalist, authoritarian and parochial forces in Japan, which are against any movement that seeks to make the people strong and independent.

Despotic leaders, it is true, fear the solidarity of the people. No matter how forbidding such leaders may appear, they are really cowards inside. That is why they fear the forces of truth and justice, and why they persecute them. Nichiren Daishonin, too, was persecuted because of his devotion to truth. Since the Soka Gakkai is an organization dedicated to truth, an organization directly linked to the Daishonin, it is only natural that we, too, should undergo persecution.

Fear Nothing

Dr. Norton, who was always engaged in a relentless spiritual quest, warmly encouraged the members of the youth division, urging them to “fear nothing.” He strongly hoped that the youth would work to firmly secure respect for cultural diversity, an indispensable

factor for ushering in a new era for humankind, and also particularly defend freedom of religion, one of the cornerstones of democracy.

On June 6, 1944, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi celebrated his last birthday in prison, while continuing to wage his unrelenting struggle against militarism by engaging the prosecuting authorities in dialogue, rigorously refuting their erroneous views. On that very day, the decisive battle of World War II, the Allied invasion of Normandy, in Northern France, began.

Professor Callahan, who is with us today, is a respected historian renowned for his studies of military history. Why did the Invasion of Normandy, the largest military operation ever mounted, succeed?

Learn Quickly

Professor Callahan has suggested that the reason for the Allied victory was that the Allied forces demonstrated a greater ability to learn quickly and adapt to big changes. How true! We must learn from this lesson of history.

What was the source of their adaptability? While many reasons may be given, we should note first of all that the Allied forces were younger than their opponents.

According to one source, the average age of the Nazi forces guarding the Normandy coast was 45. Some soldiers were 56 or older. Further, the soldiers with seniority threw their weight around, giving rise to a bureaucratic and sluggish organization. In addition, the Nazi defense took its orders from Hitler, who was far away.

Contrast this with the average age of 25 for the Allied forces. The Allies commanded a force of courageous youth, who were undaunted by sudden changes. In addition, their commanders were always there on the battlefield with them, giving orders. The Allied soldiers also burned with a strong determination never to retreat, and to win without fail.

Youth itself is an incredible strength. It is a source of tremendous power. No tyrant is a match for it. Youth in itself means that you are a royal champion of life.

The Soka Gakkai has always won its struggles because the youth have taken the lead. That's why our focus in the future, too, must be the youth. Unless we focus on the youth, we will have no future.

Those of you who are in your 20s, in particular, are our greatest hope. If you make your heart one with mine, our movement will definitely succeed in the 21st century as well. I hope you will rally together those of your same age group and forge a solid alliance of shared purpose.

Since you are young, I hope you will speak out bravely. If you are timid and do not fight for what is right, you are only preparing the way for your own defeat.

I urge the men to learn more from the strength of women.

For the women, I wish happiness. Becoming happy is the purpose of life. Please walk unswervingly along the path of happiness, letting nothing distract you from its course.

Leading an Exhilarating Life

As a youth, it is your duty to fight against evil and injustice. We cannot give rise to good, unless we bring an end to iniquity. If we don't remove the poison, we will succumb to it; no medicine will be to any avail.

There is nothing more wonderful than devoting one's youth to the cause of justice and truth. Please live out your lives as champions of justice and truth. I want you to win out in all life's struggles with a joyous sense of exhilaration.

Please build a solid foundation in your youth, so that one day you can look back and say: “My life was a good one. It was fun. It was interesting. It was enjoyable.”

I am praying, and waiting, for your growth, your victory and your magnificent achievements.

In closing, allow me to offer my prayers for the excellent health of Dr. Roselle and the distinguished guests here today and for the brilliant development of the University of Delaware, which is leading the way to a century of education.

Thank you very much. (Said in English.)

(Translated from the January 20 issue of the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper.