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In 1963, Japan was preparing to host the Olympics in October the following year. This sparked a growing interest among the Japanese in internationalization and the world at large. Also in 1963, the English version of the Japanese pop song "I Look Up When I Walk" became a hit in the United States under the title "Sukiyaki." In June that year, it was No. 1 on the U.S. pop music charts.

Events such as these gave the Japanese people a sense of self-confidence and brought the outside world closer to home. However, even though people were becoming more aware of the bigger picture, no one in Japan was offering a way to create peace or thinking about what youth should be doing to contribute on the world stage.

Against this backdrop, Shin'ichi Yamamoto's editorial in the Soka Gakkai study journal *Daibyakurenge*, "Youth, Become World Leaders," set down concrete guidelines for the youth of the Soka Gakkai. His call was not limited to a select group; he urged all the youth division members to become world leaders, and clearly showed them how to achieve that goal. These guidelines revealed Shin'ichi's philosophy and convictions as a Buddhist.

Japanese society at the time was becoming more and more fixated on academic achievement and credentials, and people were beginning to think that one could not be a leader of society without having graduated from a "top" university. Shin'ichi, however, was not caught up in such an illusion. Of course, knowledge and intellectual ability are important, but academic background does not equal these things. Nor does it equate to one's competence as a human being.

Leaders need knowledge and intellect, but they must also have the wisdom to make the best use of these capacities. They also need courage, conviction, passion and initiative. More than anything, a true leader must possess character and humanity; he or she should be self-disciplined and genuinely concerned about others. These qualities are inseparable from the beliefs and philosophy such a leader upholds. As Nichiren Daishonin writes, "If the Law that one embraces is supreme, then the person who embraces it must accordingly be foremost among all others" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 61).

Shin'ichi was confident that the youth of the Soka Gakkai had the potential to become great world leaders. This confidence struck the hearts of the youth who read his editorial, galvanizing them, and they determined that they would develop into world leaders to meet Shin'ichi's expectations. The seed of a firm resolve, the source of remarkable growth, had been planted in the fertile soil of their young lives.



*Shattering the darkness,
The powerful tolling
Of the bell of revolution
Heralds a new dawn.*

*Wherever its voice may reach
There we shall build
A society humanity has longed for.*

As they sang their new “Song of Revolution,” the student’s voices reverberated throughout the Taito Ward Gymnasium in Tokyo. The 6th student division general meeting was held on July 14. The participants’ faces were bright with excitement, and their fighting spirit energized the venue.

That was only to be expected. They had just reached their membership goal of 20,000, which had been set at the 5th general meeting the previous year. They had gathered from all over Japan to celebrate their great victory. Those who work toward a clear goal in the endeavor to create peace based on the Daishonin’s teachings, who strive to achieve it, and persevere until they win, shine with vitality and life force.

The student division members present had taken the lead in the struggle for kosen-rufu in the “essential phase” of the Soka Gakkai’s development. At the meeting, standing secretaries were appointed for the Kansai, Tohoku, Chubu, Chugoku and Kyushu regions, securing the organization’s foundation across the nation.

The members were spirited, ready and eager. Goro Watari, the head of the student division, addressed them enthusiastically: “We have surpassed our goal of 20,000 members that was set at our meeting last year, and as of today there are 20,316 student division members. Let us rejoice together at this victorious gathering!

“I propose that toward next year’s general meeting we aim for the goal of 40,000 members! What do you think?” Thunderous applause rocked the gymnasium. The goal meant doubling the membership, and would be next to impossible to achieve in one year without tremendous dedication and effort. Yet the members met this suggestion with an ovation of agreement.

Smiling brightly at this vigorous response, Watari continued: “All right then. Let us work together toward our new goal of 40,000 members.

“Now, regarding our activities on campus. For students, your community is the university. I therefore think it is important that we conduct our activities with our respective universities as home bases. I propose that we form volunteer-led organizations on each campus through which we can actively promote our ideas. Do you agree?”

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the
novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.
The events take place in 1963.