

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 10 SPEECH PROPAGATION IS THE HEART OF THE SGI

‘Propagating Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, sharing Buddhism with others, is the heart of the SGI,’ says SGI President Ikeda. ‘Toward that end, we as leaders must first of all pray earnestly and challenge our own human revolution.’

SGI President Ikeda’s speech at a Soka Gakkai nationwide executive conference, held at the Gumma Taho Training Center in Kusatsu, Gumma Prefecture, Japan, Aug. 10.

A true Buddhist is one who rushes to the side of those suffering the most, those in the most painful circumstances.

Propagating Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, sharing Buddhism with others, is the heart of the SGI. Toward that end, we as leaders must first of all pray earnestly and challenge our own human revolution. We must lead the way by taking action ourselves, while at the same time fully supporting our fellow members in their efforts to introduce others to Buddhism.

The path of kosen-rufu is the path walked by the Daishonin. It is the supreme path of happiness. Let us cheerfully, wisely advance in harmony along this path, as we steadily expand the scope of our kosen-rufu movement.

The secret to helping young people develop is taking action together with them.

Happiness is determined by our state of life and by the depth of the philosophy we live by. To be happy requires strength. Weakness leads to unhappiness.

I especially hope that the young women will become women of indomitable spirit and inner strength. And I hope that their seniors in life, the women’s division members, will warmly support them.

What is the secret to helping young people develop their potential? It is important not to unreasonably take them to task. There are also times when praise alone will not adequately move people’s hearts. While on occasion it is important that we give our juniors specific advice and direction, it is even more important that we work with them, together taking action for kosen-rufu.

Everyone is a capable person. The efforts we make now to raise outstanding capable people will determine the course of our movement for the next hundred years.

Here today, we have women’s division representatives from every region of Japan. All of our triumphs and successes for kosen-rufu could not be possible without the women’s division, the sun of our organization. I am deeply grateful for all of your noble efforts, and I offer you my highest praise.

‘No worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true reality.’

I am holding dialogues with leading thinkers around the world, one of whom is the futurist Hazel Henderson. Dr. Henderson and I have been collaborating on a dialogue for eventual publication, in which we are discussing the future of our planet, Mother Earth, while aspiring for a Century of Women, a Century of Children. In the course of our

dialogue, Dr. Henderson has indicated her high regard for the social involvement of SGI members.

Dr. Henderson mentioned that Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, were both educators and people of action — with Toda a mathematician and businessman, as well.

Developing one's spirituality and listening to one's higher self are necessary, she observed, but should be complemented by engagement in socially concerned activism. In this respect, she said, she admired the positive, optimistic way of life of SGI members.

Buddhism teaches that “no worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true reality” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1121). The workings of politics and business in the real world do not run counter to the correct teachings and principles of Buddhism. The Daishonin, quoting the preceding passage [by T'ien-t'ai], comments, “A person of wisdom is...one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world is governed” (WND, 1121). In accord with these words of the Daishonin, the SGI has been engaged in society, contributing to peace and people's prosperity and welfare. We have succeeded in all our undertakings.

Thinking people around the world accurately perceive the significance of our socially engaged efforts.

Movements that change the course of history always start with friendship and trust.

Dr. Henderson began a fight against air pollution in New York City in the 1960s, when she was, as she describes herself then, an “ordinary housewife.” In our dialogue, I questioned her in considerable detail as to how she expanded her personal protest into a widespread civic movement. She told me that she began by talking to other mothers at the neighborhood park, while they were watching their children play. Starting with the simple question “Don't you think the air here is bad?,” she engaged them in repeated discussions, and eventually they formed a small group to challenge the problem.

Movements that change the course of history begin with ties of friendship and trust formed between individuals. And it was in this way that Dr. Henderson formed a citizens group for clean air.

During her daughter's afternoon naps, Dr. Henderson began to write letters to the mayor of New York City and other city officials, asking them to address the issue of air pollution. In the beginning, she received only dismissive responses, but she refused to be discouraged.

This small group of activists, made up of about 10 members, first of all set a concrete goal: to have air-pollution forecasts included on TV weather reports. They divided up the task of writing to high-ranking executives at all of the major networks. They also wrote to the head of the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C., to the governor of New York and other public officials. They made steady efforts to win allies to their cause, tenaciously advancing their movement step by step.

The group also called on all of the top advertising agencies, hoping that some company would donate publicity work, but none were willing. After visiting 20 firms, the group members decided that they would try just one more — if that company refused as well, they would give up. Fortunately, the last organization they approached agreed to help.

As a result of their unflinching perseverance, these environmental activists finally achieved their desired goal of having the New York air-pollution index included on TV

weather forecasts. One network first led the way, and then all local TV stations, most radio stations and the local newspapers quickly adopted the practice. In a short time, the use of the air-pollution index also began to spread beyond New York.

Soon, the New York City Council enacted two laws concerning air pollution. And shortly thereafter, the U.S. Congress passed the Federal Clean Air Act [in 1970].

This was a historic struggle and an epochal achievement for the environmental movement.

A way forward can be found, if everyone combines forces.

In the struggle for improved air quality in New York City, Dr. Henderson realized that it was possible to change the situation through persevering.

She recognizes that ordinary people may often start out thinking that projects are impossible, or that the obstacles facing them are too big. But she asserts that a way can be found, if everyone combines forces. Not all walls, she says, are so thick and strong that we cannot find a doorway somewhere and make a breakthrough.

Dr. Henderson emphasizes the value of finding partners and expanding alliances. She also advises civic movements to make use of the power of the mass media, in the good sense.

In other words, to achieve what is just and right, we must have the strength and wisdom to win people over to our side and to turn everything to our advantage. With some humor, Dr. Henderson says that to be an effective civic activist and global citizen, it is sometimes necessary to be bold and almost brazen.

She also stresses philosophy and spirituality. A civic movement, she maintains, must have a philosophy, and each of its participants must possess a noble spirituality. The SGI, she says, has such a philosophy.

In this, the Century of Women, the protagonists of the SGI's civic movement, which upholds a profound philosophy and lofty spirituality, are none other than the women's and young women's division members. How noble are women who embrace the Buddhist Law!

The Daishonin clearly states, "A woman who embraces this sutra [the Lotus Sutra] not only excels all other women, but also surpasses all men" (WND, 464). More than 700 years ago, the Daishonin loudly proclaimed the Buddhist view of respect for women. I hope all of you will cheerfully advance, filled with pride and confidence in this fact.

Let us expand our network, based on the principle 'Buddhism manifests in society.'

Citizens speaking out, empowering themselves, and working together—this is the lifeline of democracy. President Toda sternly declared: "There is no need to fear authority. There is no need to fear anyone, whoever they may be. The fear of authority leads to the destruction of democracy. If that were to happen, what a tragedy it would be for the ordinary people, who are the ones who will suffer! Ultimately, sovereignty rests with the people."

I especially hope that the women's leaders, as "shining suns of the SGI," will warmly encourage and embrace their fellow members, who are striving in their missions in their respective fields, and do their utmost to enable each person to bring forth his or her potential and grow.

The Soka Gakkai's network reaches out into society on a wide variety of levels. This includes such specialized groups as the Doctors Division, the Women's Division Nurses Group, the Young Women's Division Nurses Group, the Academic and Science Division,

the Educators Division, the International Division and the Writers Division. Our splendid Arts Division also shines. The activities of the Business Professionals Division, the Executives Division, the Community Division, the Housing Complex Division, the Rural Areas Division and the Remote Islands Division are remarkable as well.

By expanding our diverse network built on the principle of “Buddhism manifests in society,” let us work toward the further growth of our kosen-rufu movement in the 21st century.

There is no power stronger than the power of our faith.

On July 27, I had the opportunity to engage in a memorable discussion with Ukrainian Ambassador Yuriy Kostenko, a wonderful ambassador. Ukraine celebrates the 10th anniversary of its independence on Aug. 24—the same day as the anniversary of my joining the Soka Gakkai. In tribute to the deep friendship between the ambassador and myself, I want to share the words of some distinguished writers linked to Ukraine.

The Ukraine-born author Nikolay Vasilyevich Gogol, whose novel *Taras Bulba* I studied under President Toda, wrote, “Be living souls, not dead souls.” Those who strive to realize the great ideal of kosen-rufu, the most true and just of all causes, are indeed living souls.

Gogol also stated, “It is a certain truth that he who has been most sorely tried by life, constantly bearing the yoke of unhappiness, will be the happiest of men.” How true is this for us who embrace the Mystic Law of changing poison into medicine and lessening one’s karmic retribution! Because of this, we fear nothing.

Elsewhere, Gogol refers to an axiom of human nature “that makes a proud, strong man weak and helpless in adversity and a weakling swell to become a giant in the depths of his difficulties.” The members of the Soka Gakkai, which was once dismissed as “a gathering of the sick and poor,” have demonstrated countless magnificent examples of human revolution—of fundamentally transforming their lives from within.

Gogol further wrote, “Only a profoundly good soul has the power of fresh, clear laughter.” That is why the SGI, a gathering of truly good-hearted people, is so cheerful, so filled with joyous laughter.

Anton Chekhov, who spent the last years of his life in Ukraine, declared, “Indifference is paralysis of the soul, premature death.” It is the mission of our youth to save many young people from this death of the spirit.

The Daishonin wrote to one of his disciples, the lay nun Nichigon: “Whether or not your prayer is answered will depend on your faith; [if it is not] I will in no way be to blame.

“When water is clear, the moon is reflected. When the wind blows, the trees shake. Our minds are like the water. Faith that is weak is like muddy water, while faith that is brave is like clear water. Understand that the trees are like principles, and the wind that shakes them is like the recitation of the sutra [the *Lotus Sutra*]” (WND, 1079).

There is no power stronger than faith.

Advancing with the conviction that faith equals health and faith equals daily life, please wisely create an exemplary home life.

Let us also resolutely encourage, train and wholeheartedly foster the youth, who are our successors. Let us together pledge to solidly construct new strongholds of capable people dedicated to kosen-rufu in each region, always maintaining a spirit of mutual respect and advancing together in harmonious unity.