

U.S. Students Join Peace Awareness Survey
By JEFF FARR, Associate Editor
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If young people have no knowledge of the horrors of war, it's likely that war will continue to happen. With this in mind, the Soka Gakkai student division's Peace Committee has been conducting a peace awareness survey every three years since 1985. Since the further we get from World War II, the fewer the people who remember its brutality, the Peace Committee is recording students' changing attitudes toward war and peace and making the results available to the media and academia.

This year's survey, the fifth in the series, marked the first time it was also conducted outside Japan. Forty SGI-USA student division members from around the country asked their classmates to fill out the survey questionnaires, eventually collecting answers from 500 students at 109 schools. The Peace Committee compared these results with those from 3,000 students at 60 universities in Japan. In the Aug. 15 issues of Japanese English-language newspapers like the *International Herald Tribune*, the SGI published the results in quarter-page advertisements with the headline "Remembering for the Future."

A unique feature of the survey is that in assessing students' attitudes about peace issues it asks many questions about how they perceive society and the future role they want to play in it. Questions on students' extracurricular activities and goals dig at the core values that ultimately inform their views on international issues, says Valerie Thomas, SGI-USA student division chief.

Ryuhei Hatsuse, a professor of international relations at Kobe University, commented on disturbing aspects of the results for the Peace Committee's webpage (sgi.org/peace_edu). Hatsuse focuses on how the results show that Japanese youth, although opposed to war, are less willing to work for peace than American youth. Only 5.1 percent of Japanese students said they have participated in peace activities, while 43.9 percent of American students said they have.

Dr. Hatsuse feels this apathy toward peace activities is related to Japanese students' preoccupation with hobbies and entertainment once they enter college. While 64.5 percent of U.S. students said their main concentration is their studies, only 18.1 percent of Japanese students said the same — they ranked having fun above studying.

At the same time, the results revealed that a larger number of U.S. students are willing to resort to violence than their Japanese counterparts. The percentage of students who believe, for instance, that there are "conditions in which we cannot avoid war" was much higher in the States (36.3 percent) than in Japan (19.4 percent).

Also, more U.S. students (9.7 percent) are willing to use nuclear weapons in an "unavoidable" situation than Japanese students (5.6 percent). More U.S. students also believe there will be a global nuclear war someday (U.S. 12 percent—Japan 8.4 percent).

When Yuko Olson, a student division member at the University of Minnesota, had classmates fill out the survey, she got the impression that people weren't optimistic about peace. "All the students replied that there are situations where they can't avoid war, which is sad," she said. "Also, I found they have a strong belief in nuclear weapons. However, regarding the role of the United Nations and the support for non governmental organization, they answered very positively and showed some motivation."

The complete survey results are available at the Peace Committee's webpage, which also features past survey results and World War II testimonials collected by the Soka Gakkai's Antiwar Publication Committee. The survey will next be conducted in 2000.

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