

Nikken Fires Top Lawyer
By JEFF FARR, Associate Editor
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The Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office on Oct. 6 fired Yoshihiro Konagai, Nikken's lead attorney in the temple's libel suit against the Soka Gakkai in Japan, according to the *Kaikaku Jiho* (Reformation Times), a newspaper published by reformist priests. Temple members on the Internet have admitted Konagai left but not that he was fired, saying it's only natural in such a lengthy case that a lawyer might have to leave.

Mr. Konagai has been the lead attorney in the case since it was initiated in 1993, and his dismissal comes at a crucial moment in the trial, a few weeks before Nikken's Dec. 22 court-ordered testimony. (He will be cross-examined Feb. 2, 1998.) The Tokyo District Court ordered Nikken to appear so he can answer questions regarding contradictory statements he has made about his actions in Seattle the night of March 19-20, 1963.

According to the reformist priests' newspaper, Nichijun Fujimoto, general administrator of the Administrative Office, and Kotoku Obayashi, Overseas Bureau chief, informed Mr. Konagai of Nikken's decision.

Although the priesthood gave no explanation for the decision, SGI leaders have pointed out that the parting with Konagai came just a week after the court on Sept. 29 ordered Nikken to testify — a decision Konagai had tried to avoid through various legal maneuvers this year.

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