

**RECOLLECTIONS OF LEADING WORLD FIGURES BY DAISAKU IKEDA
UNFAZED BY AUTHORITY: J. FORBES MUNRO, CLERK OF SENATE OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW, SCOTLAND**

THE voice tells much of the person within. The voice of Dr. J. Forbes Munro, professor in economic history and Clerk of Senate of the University of Glasgow, resounded with vibrant clarity through the time-honored Scottish institution's Bute Hall. He was delivering his nominating speech on the occasion of my receipt of an honorary doctorate at the University of Glasgow on June 15, 1994 (photo at left). It was a grand and dignified ceremony. Seated in the traditional black stone chair reserved for the recipients of honorary doctorates, I sensed the firmness of Dr. Munro's convictions in the timbre of his voice.

In 1990, four years earlier, Dr. Munro had visited Soka University and the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, and also given a lecture in Kansai [for the Culture Lecture Series sponsored by the Soka Gakkai newspaper, *Seikyo Shimbun*]. He remarked to those who had come to see him off at the airport just before his departure from Japan that the Soka Gakkai members he had met in Kansai were wonderful people devoted to the cause of peace. Why, he wanted to know, didn't the Soka Gakkai protest the false and inaccurate reports and attacks that it was constantly subjected to? He declared that he would take action to make the truth known based on what he had seen.

I share this incident with you because I want to demonstrate Dr. Munro's integrity and sense of righteousness and justice. He is acutely intelligent, decisive and abhors dishonesty. He is a man of courage and principle who refuses to be fazed by position or authority.

Scotland, Dr. Munro's native land, is renowned for its frequent rain. Yet when the rain lifts, it gives way to truly lovely rainbows—so much so that the Scots even call their country “the land of rainbows.”

The beautiful Highlands where Dr. Munro was born bring to mind a poem by Robert Burns (1759–1796), the beloved national poet of Scotland of whom the professor is also a great admirer:

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands
a-chasing the deer;
.....

The birthplace of valour, the country of worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.
("Highlands")

Dr. Munro grew up surrounded by mountains and lochs [lakes]. He also spent large parts of his childhood with his maternal grandparents, who lived in Northern Scotland. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—during the years when Japan began its drive to modernization following the Meiji Restoration in 1868—many Japanese sailors made port calls at the Shetland Islands which lie north of the Scottish mainland. His grandmother was also acquainted with some of the visiting Japanese.

As an undergraduate at Edinburgh University, Dr. Munro planned to enter into a career in commerce and industry. However, his encounter with the brilliant scholar and teacher of

African modern history, Dr. George Shepperson, changed the whole direction of his life. His teacher introduced him to exciting new horizons and vistas. Stimulated by the practical relevance of Dr. Shepperson's lectures on Africa, at the age of twenty-four he found himself doing academic research in the newly independent Kenya. He also studied with Dr. Philip Curtin (who later became head of the American Academy of History) and Dr. Jan Vansina at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the United States. Dr. Munro attributes his academic achievements to the fine teachers with whom he had the privilege of studying. In every realm of human endeavor, he agrees, the relationship between teacher and student, mentor and disciple is key to achieving greatness.

After the conferment ceremony, an officer of the university, ceremonial staff in hand, led the way out of the hall to the solemn strains of a pipe organ. I and the other recipients followed him in a slow and stately procession.

FOUNDED in 1451, the University of Glasgow became a leading center of scientific research in the eighteenth century and contributed greatly to the Industrial Revolution, which transformed our world. It was also a benefactor to Japan's modernization. Many professors and teachers from the University of Glasgow came to Japan, including Dr. Henry Dyer who helped set up an institute for the study of engineering and industrial sciences.

This school was known as Kobu Daigakko (College of Engineering) and was later incorporated into the Tokyo Imperial University, forerunner of today's prestigious University of Tokyo. From these teachers of the University of Glasgow, Japanese students learned the satisfaction of studying practical subjects and experienced the joy of scientific experimentation. This served to strengthen Japan's respect and appreciation for professions that entailed such practical creativity and craftsmanship.

A society that values people who produce things through their own labor, those who actually build and create things with their own hands, is a healthy society. A nation that makes much of showy but essentially shallow and meaningless endeavors is, on the other hand, in peril.

The Scots embraced the spirit that a person's position, authority or popularity is not important. Rather, what matters is that you use your own eyes, brain, hands and the sweat of your brow. This practical and earthy Scottish spirit opened the door for the establishment of the mighty British Empire.

JAMES Watt (1736–1819), the Scot who invented the steam engine that served as the central impetus behind the Industrial Revolution, was also a person who put his own hands and ingenuity to work. Adam Smith (1723–1790), the "father of modern economics," who studied and later lectured at the University of Glasgow, helped the young James Watt secure employment at the Scottish university, contributing in no small way to the blossoming of his talent and the fruition of his hard work and effort.

THE University of Glasgow's greatest treasure was and still is its open-mindedness to acknowledge and support that which is good, transcending prejudices of class and social background. It is also the spirit that emanates from Dr. Munro. How this spirit enriches a society! How it energizes and improves and enlivens! The present feeling of stagnation and suffocation in Japan is surely caused by a lack of just this spirit.

The poet Robert Burns was once taken to task by a young nobleman for greeting a

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farmer as they walked along the road. But Burns exclaimed:

Why, you fantastic gomerl, it was not the great coat, the scone bonnet, and the saunders-boot hose that I spoke to, but the man that was in them; and the man, sir, for true worth, would weigh down you and me, and ten more such, any day.

As in his poem “Scotland,” he was praising the “virtuous populace” and criticizing “luxury’s contagion”; he called out to the people to rise up, drive away their oppressors and “stand, a wall of fire, around their much-lov’d isle.”

In the lyrics to the well-loved Scottish song “Scots, Wha Hae,” Burns writes:
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty’s in every blow!—

This passionate blood would seem to pulse in Dr. Munro’s veins as well.

The northern winds were strong on the day of the ceremony, chill on the skin of the visitor. But Dr. Munro’s kindness and hospitality warmed me more than anything else possibly could.

WHEN I arrived in Glasgow, I was told that such clear skies are rare at that time of year. The legendary Loch Lomond glittered like diamonds, reflecting the cloudless blue sky.

The inexpressible beauty of the land drenched in light; the warm, open hearts of the people; the goodwill and friendship of Dr. Munro—Scotland will remain for me forever a land of shimmering light.□

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