

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SINGAPORE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH A NEW WORLD OF SOFT POWER

SGI President Ikeda explains how the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesburo Makiguchi, fought for 'a world in which the "soft power" of culture, spirituality and character inspires a mutual striving toward humanistic excellence and achievement.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech on receiving an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the University of Sydney, Australia, at the university's overseas graduation ceremony held at the Oriental Hotel in Singapore, Nov. 24.

Congratulations to those who have graduated today. What a wonderful graduation ceremony! I have seen many graduation ceremonies around the world, but never have I been as moved as at today's ceremony.

I was touched by the way Chancellor Dame Leonie Kramer took time to speak with each of you and give you a warm send-off on this fresh departure. It was like poetry, like a work of art, embodying the indivisible bonds of teacher and student that are the heart and essence of learning. I will never forget the picture of intellect and youthful vigor painted by you, today's graduates.

The University of Sydney's coat of arms is wonderful. It incorporates the symbol of the Southern Cross, sparkling with the brilliant romance of our shared dreams. Today's graduates are stars of hope, the first to appear brightly in the unbounded skies of the 21st century.

In the center of the coat of arms is the open book of Oxford, symbolic of world citizens whose intellects integrate the southern and the northern hemispheres as well as East and West. The coat of arms also incorporates the royal lion of Cambridge. Singapore is, of course, the Lion City.

Today's graduates are lions, who will courageously lead the way in opening a new millennium in human history. I offer my heartfelt prayers that your lives, dedicated to the pursuit of a noble mission, will be crowned with infinite glory and success.

The University of Sydney has played a leading role in creating global peace.

I extend my sincere felicitations on this auspicious graduation ceremony in Singapore, which commemorates the 150th anniversary of the founding of the University of Sydney. And I particularly wish to congratulate the graduates—youthful leaders of the 21st century—who have worked so hard toward this day and also their families, who have encouraged and supported them in their academic endeavors.

It is a profoundly humbling privilege to receive the degree of Doctor of Letters from the University of Sydney. The coat of arms of your university carries the motto "Although the constellations change, the mind is universal." Engraving these inspiring words in my heart, I accept the honor of becoming associated with your esteemed university in this way.

Further, I take this great honor as the occasion to renew my personal determination to work for global peace in the new century. I am profoundly honored and most grateful.

Among the books in my study, I have a volume of Australian poetry. It was, in fact, translated and edited by a Japanese woman who studied and engaged in research at the

University of Sydney. Chancellor Kramer wrote a most heartwarming foreword to this book, in which she expresses her delight and highly praises the efforts of this international student. Such generosity touched me as illustrative of the character of Chancellor Kramer, of her profound commitment to the cause of education and literature.

The collection of poems includes one composed by James McAuley, a graduate of the University of Sydney, extolling the rich harvest of life's later years:

*Life is full of returns;
It isn't true that one never
Profits, never learns:
Something is gathered in,
Worth the lifting and stacking*

Looking back over the history of the University of Sydney, it is impossible not to be moved and impressed by a sense of the extraordinary “returns,” the fullness of the “harvest” of a humanistic educational endeavor that has given us so many gifted world citizens in the century and a half since you first commenced classes, in 1852, with a mere 30 students.

Australia today is a multicultural society—one that brings together people from a remarkable range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The University of Sydney has played a leading role in creating a vibrant model of a peaceful global society based on a consistent respect for diversity.

I firmly believe that in the new century you will continue to exercise inspiring leadership in the Pacific region, offering proof that the virtues of wisdom, tolerance and dialogue can facilitate the creative fusion and integration of the civilizations of East and West.

Our lives are intimately linked with innumerable people throughout the world.

The father of the philosophy of Soka education, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, put his life on the line in his uncompromising struggles against the militarist regime of Japan. Needless to say, it was the forces of this same regime that invaded and brought untold suffering to the people of Australia and Singapore. Fifty-six years ago, in November 1944, Makiguchi died in prison as the result of his resistance.

In his 1903 work, *The Geo-geography of Human Life*, Makiguchi cites the fact that his favorite woolen jacket is a product of Australia. With such simple and concrete examples, he sought to illustrate the intimate links between our lives and the lives of innumerable people throughout the world, and how much we are supported by others' efforts and endeavors.

At a time when the ideology of imperialism was at its height, Makiguchi urged an awakening to the realities of global interdependence. He advocated a philosophy of altruistic contribution, setting forth a vision of creative coexistence and mutual prosperity that embraced all of humankind.

He also maintained that humanity must move beyond reliance on what we would now term “hard power”—the use of military, political or economic might to dominate others. Instead, he advocated that humanity must aspire toward a world in which the “soft power” of culture, spirituality and character inspires a mutual striving toward humanistic excellence and achievement.

It is thus my belief that one hallmark of an excellent student is a sustained, continuing love for one's alma mater and a cherished commitment to one's fellow students and alumni.

Today, I have the immense privilege of becoming an alumnus of your proud university. Graduates, will you permit me to join your ranks? Would those of you who generously consent please raise your hands?

Embracing the highest pride at having joined today the distinguished ranks of the alumni of the University of Sydney, I pledge to help further contribute to the esteem and the flourishing of our alma mater in the new century.

One philosopher left these words of wisdom to young people: "Being unwilling to learn is a shame." I have tried to follow these strict words as my motto since my youth. I share these words with you on the occasion of your departure into the next phase of your lives.

Thank you very much.