

January 16, 2010

An open letter to The Directors of Zen Studies Society.
From : Zogen

Dear Directors of The Zen Studies Society,

There has been a noticeable increase in comments on still-secret deliberations of the Board of Directors of Zen Studies Society. Reported comments, from a concerned maha-Sangha, and a lack of constructive action or proposals, suggest that the Board continues to be "stuck" in its tragically ambivalent & timid position. Meanwhile, public comment & outcry continue to grow & spread. The "price" to ZSS reputation & impact on its future continue to mount. The Board, however, ignores this discrepancy, in a sense of urgency, & drifts further & further away from growing consensus among Teachers & practitioners. One can easily imagine the hurt & anger of those whose life & practice of Dharma had been affected by Eido Shimano Roshi's conduct & complacency of ZSS Board of Directors.

The following are some of the immediate risks facing the Board, and the former & current Abbot of ZSS:

1) Legal liabilities -

- Individual or group appeal, for relief & redress, to NYS Court system. This will be a public filing (no minors were ever involved) & that will extend the reach of this growing scandal. Because of jurisdictional requirements, Dai Bosatsu Zendo' neighbors in Sullivan County, NY will become part of the audience. Most likely, damages will be sought & may be levied on ZSS.

- A similar, in content, Complaint may be filed within NYC Court system.

This will result in the same consequences as above. ZSS resources are inadequate to confront even one, let alone two, legal challenges.

- Responders to these claims will be named in public documents & will include Eido Shimano Roshi & members of ZSS Board of Directors (past & present). Even an attempted filing will generate another wave of unfavorable publicity.

- A Complaint (non-criminal) may be filed with the Office of Secretary of State of the State of New York, Internal Revenue Service & Probate Court (all bequests to ZSS can be examined in the light of this Complaint). This Complaint will challenge the former Abbot & the Board on their failure to carry out their fiduciary responsibility to founders & former supporters.

- All such initiatives will bring about one, or another, form of injunction & will interfere with ZSS activities. In particular, Eido Shimano Roshi's "retirement package" will be blocked or revoked & will

be examined by relevant authorities. These, quite likely & possible consequences will further jeopardize (morally, legally & financially) Zen Studies Society & its future.

2) Other looming liabilities -

- Some of the Board members are ordained Teachers & Dharma heirs. Can we imagine that this scandal will leave their personal reputations & teaching authority intact? What will be the reaction of their students to their protracted inaction?

- Major Japanese newspapers & TV and cable networks have representative offices in NYC & Washington, DC. Many Japanese practitioners follow our Buddhist blogs & foreign Rinzai community is monitoring our torment & turmoil. Should we risk facing ostracism not only in the US but abroad too? Should we risk compromising these connections, which are quite tenuous to begin with (former Abbot controlled them entirely for his own benefit)?

- And, finally, what is the rate of "attrition", how many potential & former Sangha members have we lost already, because of this conduct of the Board of Directors of ZSS?

Please consider this "risk assessment" as a plea to a considered discussion & a determined action.

Gassho,

Zogen