

points of view

Guv's environmental adviser clears air

JOHN ENGLER IS NOT high on a list of politicians for a number of reasons.

But he inched up slightly after I met up with his new environmental adviser, Chad McIntosh, who had the challenge of addressing the 21st annual meeting of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council last week at the Birmingham Unitarian Church.

That's no easy task for even an experienced politician. EMEAC consistently has been raising our environmental consciences on a variety of issues for more than two decades — not just when a NIMBY incident is upon us.

But McIntosh's low-key manner and direct approach may well have reassured some, would-be critics. "The governor gets more calls on the DNR and the environment than any



Judith Doner Berne

other issues," he confided to the audience.

After six weeks on the job, he acknowledged that Engler's environmental policies are still unformed — including the reputed reorganization of the DNR. Environmental cleanup, speeding up the permit process, setting objective standards and resource management — which has taken a back seat to environmental protection — are getting close scrutiny.

OF COURSE McIntosh should have felt right at home. After all, the 37-year-old, MSU-trained chemical engineer grew up in neighboring Bloomfield Township. And his mom, Fran Boucher, was in the large, attentive audience.

An Andover High School graduate and varsity swimmer, he married his mom's cousin, Sue Parent. They met when they were first and second chair in the French horn section of the Andover band, his mom disclosed.

McIntosh said he was surprised to be selected by the new governor after checking the NO box on the application which asked if he had political experience.

But Engler, to his credit, was looking for knowhow. And McIntosh had wended his way through the state's network of environmental depart-

ments, including the DNR, where he worked in both air quality and hazardous waste, and the Department of Public Health where he was involved with the radioactive waste program. Plus, the law degree which he received Saturday from Cooley Law School probably didn't hurt.

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Asked to describe Engler's commitment to environmental protection, McIntosh said: "He wants to apply hard science to environmental issues. He is interested in efficiency in permitting. His commitment is strong based on hard scientific support."

And he didn't duck the controversial incineration issue, which is enflaming Oakland County.

Emphasizing that he was only speaking for himself, he said: "I personally think that incinerators can be designed properly and run properly. I'm not sure that municipal incinerators are being designed and run properly."

Asked to evaluate his performance before EMEAC, McIntosh said: "I think it went fine. It's kind of a break-the-ice situation, time to come

out and start communicating. People are very tense about what's going to happen with the DNR."

His open approach in a murky environment certainly comes as a breath of fresh air.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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Offbeat quiz tests state facts for trivia buffs

Here's an offbeat Michigan Week quiz for those curious of identifying the robin as the state bird or the trout as the state fish.

QUESTIONS

1. The number of legal abortions performed in Michigan each year is about equal to the population of: (a) Grand Lodge, (b) Howell, (c) Garden City.

2. While Michigan's total population has remained between 9.0 and 9.4 million for the last 20 years, our prison population has: (a) remained level, (b) increased about 50 percent, (c) more than tripled.

3. Place Michigan's actual spending priorities in order: education,

pollution cleanup, welfare.

4. In the proportion of its population receiving AFDC and federal welfare, Michigan's ranking among the states is: (a) in the middle, (b) in the bottom quarter, (c) in the top handful.

5. After manufacturing, Michigan's second-largest industry is: (a) agriculture, (b) tourism, (c) financial services.

6. Michigan's most important agricultural product are: (a) vegetables, (b) fruits, (c) animal products.

7. Between 1980 and 1989, total property tax bills in Michigan: (a) declined because of rebates to industry, (b) rose 25 percent, (c) rose nearly 70 percent.

8. From fiscal 1988 to fiscal 1990, the proportion of Michigan's budget



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going to its highly acclaimed public colleges and universities has: (a) increased somewhat, (b) declined significantly, (c) remained about the same.

9. In the same period, Michigan's spending on transportation (all roads, public transit), as a percentage of total spending, has: (a) increased somewhat, (b) declined significantly, (c) remained about the same.

10. Nationally, Michigan's ranking in per-capita spending on highways is: (a) in the top five, (b) in the bottom five, (c) somewhere in the middle.

11. In the period 1980-86, births to unmarried women in Michigan as a percentage of total births: (a) increased somewhat, (b) declined significantly, (c) remained about the same.

ANSWERS

1. (c) Garden City's population also is about 36,000.

2. (c) There were 9,300 prisoners in 1971, about 30,000 today.

3. Welfare 29 percent, education 28, pollution cleanup 1-2 percent.

4. (c) At about 8.5 percent, Michigan

ranked behind only the District of Columbia, Mississippi, Louisiana and California. (Michigan's general assistance aid for adults supports 1.3 percent but wasn't included in the reference book. Nearly 10 percent of our population is on welfare.)

5. (a) Agriculture — in which employment grew 39 percent in 10 years as manufacturing fell 13 percent.

6. (c) Animal products. Dairy products, beef, hogs and poultry produce more than half of farm revenue.

7. (c) Property taxes rose from \$4.4 billion to \$7.4 billion.

8. (c) State spending on higher education has declined from 10.9 percent of the budget to 8.3 percent.

9. (b) Transportation — declined from 16 to 8.8 percent of the total.

10. (b) Michigan ranked 45th.

11. (a) Births to unmarried women increased from 16.2 to 19.3 percent.

SCORING

A few questions were politically neutral. But in general, you did better if you viewed Michigan as a state with high taxes, a decreasing regard for education, a disastrous breakdown of family life and crumbling roads.

Sources: "Michigan in Brief: 1990-91 Issues Handbook" by Public Sector Consultants; 1991 World Almanac; 1989 Statistical Abstract of the U.S.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events.

Keep the system

Tenure protects teachers' rights while improving education

Q: As a parent I am amazed that one high school teacher my child had has tenure. All the kids say he is a joke! It makes me wonder how he got hired let alone was given tenure. I say education should get rid of tenure. Do you agree?

A: No, I don't agree schools should get rid of tenure. I do believe a teacher should be fired if a well-documented case shows that person is damaging kids physically, verbally or is an unprepared, uncaring, lousy teacher. But, even then, winning a tenure case is extremely difficult if not almost impossible.

Indeed, the time, energy and money spent on trying to win a tenure case to fire a teacher often is self-defeating. I've known a case in the late '50s where a teacher, in my opinion, should have been fired — and was fired through the tenure hearings process.

He had the case reviewed through the court system and eventually walked off with \$250,000. That \$250,000 is worth about a half million today.

The decision, by administration, often is, "Is it worth the potential



Doc Doyle

high dollar cost to the taxpayers?" Should we "hide" that high school teacher in the middle school and use the \$250,000 for instructional materials. Terrible to say, but a reality.

HOWEVER, THE problem really lies in the initial hiring and the probationary period. I've personally known of some personnel directors (years ago) who would hire a teacher over the phone — no interviews, no background check — just a lazy man's way of getting the job done.

This seldom if ever happens today,

especially when there are 4,000 applications to fill in some of our school district personnel offices.

The second problem is the probationary period. The building principal and central office administration have up to three years to evaluate a candidate before tenure.

If a weak, mediocre teacher was given tenure after three years of observation, the question becomes, "Where was the administration during the teacher's probation period?"

Still, some might say, "We miss the good 'ole days when the administration ran the schools, when there was no tenure." Let's briefly look at those days.

TEACHERS HAD a one-year contract written on a half a page. It stated your name, your salary and how many months you would teach and the (many) reasons for which you could be fired. It was signed by

the superintendent and the president of the board.

The "unwritten language" is what got teachers fired prior to tenure. Taken for granted was that teachers didn't go to local bars; instead, they went 25 miles out of town for a drink. There was no smoking in public or in the schools — you were to go to your room at home and pull the curtains shut. Only women were to teach in the elementary schools, and they were paid less than men.

In some school districts if a husband were teaching, the wife need not apply because she would be taking money away from the legitimate "bread winners" — the men. And men must wear a hat and boots in the winter to be a role model for children.

In many school districts, prior to teacher contract and tenure, each teacher negotiated his/her own contract renewal and salary increase

with the superintendent. If he liked you, you might get \$50. If he didn't — no raise. And, in some cases, you couldn't resign until you or the district found your replacement. If a superintendent didn't like your style, you were done!

If money got tight, in some districts, they released those teachers who were not politically tied into the community, who were making too much money, and hired in new young teachers at a lower cost. I could go on and on with stories before tenure which made the scene in the late '50s.

A tenure case, today, is costly.

eats up considerable administration time and even when a case is obvious, it may or probably will be lost. Nevertheless, totally incompetent teachers should have tenure cases made to terminate their employment.

Tenure was long and hard to come by and is really the only protection a teacher has. Let's not go into a time warp and do away with tenure. Let's select and evaluate probationary teachers more carefully.

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator/university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm.



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