

POINTS OF VIEW

Let's give Engler credit when he deserves some

I have a bias that isn't universally popular in Michigan. I think the state should do good things for kids who study, work hard, take the tests and pass them. It's the opposite of the "something for nothing" mentality.

And so I was doubly delighted when Gov. John Engler came up with a plan for up to \$3,000 in Michigan Merit Award Scholarships for any kid who passed the seventh grade MEAP tests (\$500) and the 11th grade MEAP tests (\$2,500).

(The House amended the plan, in HB 4686, to award scholarships to kids who didn't pass MEAP but scored in the top 25 percent on a national, standard, college admissions test.)

Money would come from the state's \$8 billion settlement with the wicked tobacco companies. The scholarships wouldn't come from the pockets of taxpayers or the bread of the poor.

College tuition, adjusted for inflation, has quintupled since the Pleistocene epoch, when I clawed my way through university. So I see a certain measure of economic justice in Engler's Merit program.

And Engler absolutely did the right thing in giving kids an incentive to take the MEAP tests, which are more intelligent, relying on problem solving and comparisons, than the grant tests they inflicted when I was in high school.

The Senate passed it 33-5 on June 9 and the House concurred 75-27 on June 10. The only areas reps voting no were Bob Gosselin, R-Troy, Ruth Ann Jamnick, D-Ypsilanti, Tom Kelly, D-Wayne, and Lynne Martinez, D-Lansing. They did so for the wrong reasons.

Said Gosselin, who is taking over the old Dave Jaye-Margaret O'Connor role of voting against everything: "The state is now imposing the curriculum" through a "government-sponsored" test.

Actually, that's what the state should have been doing since 1837 when Michigan led the nation in guaranteeing a free public education and establishing a department that would set knowledge and teacher standards.

Jamnick of Ypsi: "The MEAP test is fairly controversial as to its validity as a measure of a student's knowledge; the MEAP is not a test taken by all Michigan students; and

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TIM RICHARD

these dollars resulted from health care issues."

Well, MEAP is controversial only among those who don't want good, tough tests of what students actually know. As Phil Power has pointed out, for decades we have been awarding kids diplomas for sitting thousands of hours in classrooms, not for what they know. And if some public school students skip the MEAP tests, it's their choice; and if private schools don't administer MEAP tests, it's because they're afraid their pupils can't measure up.

Martinez, a devotee of welfare, said the money "should be dedicated to health care and tobacco prevention programs."

She isn't satisfied that Michigan already spends billions of its own taxes and federal aid on Medicaid, aid to families with dependent children, medical assistance, disability assistance, food stamps, child support collection work, housing assistance, family planning counseling, foster family care, transitional programs for youths exiting foster care, refugee services, Native American services and migrant services. She represents the bloc that won't be satisfied until all \$30 billion of state revenues go into welfare.

From the foregoing, it's clear Engler took a lot of heat from both the right and left wings of state politics. That is a rarity for a governor whose hidden agenda has been helpful to the religious right and the Mackinac Center. But let us give him credit where it is due.

Tim Richard is a freelance writer who is retired from this newspaper.

Detroit should settle for only the very best

Detroit's renaissance was visible Saturday night.

On a sultry evening, when backyard barbecues, water sports on suburban lakes and the Detroit River, and air-conditioned movies would seem more likely activities, crowds could be seen on the roof-top bar of Second City, known in summer as The Deck.

People were queued up to get into the restored State Theatre. Top coming attractions blazed on the restored Fox Theatre's marquee.

I didn't see them, but reports say plenty of people turned out on the newly-opened temporary headquarters of the MGM Grand Casino.

None of these were our destination.

My husband and I, along with three other couples, attended a show at the re-located Gem/Century Building where two theaters and a restaurant have been re-created within adjacent historic buildings. So I know the second of the two Saturday night performances at the Century's theater was all but sold out.

As we parked in the convenient backyard lot, we could see the framework and tiers of seats of the new Tigers stadium sketched against the orange and pink hues of the sun setting in a still-blue sky.

Then we walked along a bricked garden path onto a terrace and up the steps of the Century Club to see *Forbidden Hollywood*, a peppy, well-done spoof of Hollywood stars and films.

We'd been to the Gem Theatre several times. The theater, originally built in 1927, was restored to its original Spanish Revival-style before re-opening in 1991. But the Century Club, built in 1903, is only recently restored, turned into a restaurant, bar and cabaret-style theater.

It, like the Gem, is a jewel. All thanks to developer Chuck Forbes, who was able to salvage three of four historic buildings that were in the line of fire of the new Tigers and Lions stadiums and move them to safety. The third building, the 1936 Elwood Bar and Grill, is currently being restored and is expected to open next spring. Their preservation, unlike new casinos and stadiums, gives us a tangible link to Detroit's past.

Although Forbes couldn't save the 160,000 square-foot Albert Kahn-designed YWCA, he made a deal to remove furnishings and architectural items and relocate them. The Century Club and the Gem Theatre are perfect backdrops.

The Century's warm wood paneling and plaid carpeting preserve the clubby atmosphere of yesteryear, while open to all. But its most astounding features are what were plucked from the "Y."

GUEST COLUMNIST



JUDITH DONER BERNE

Pewabic tile from its Olympic-sized swimming pool is now inlaid in the bar fronts at the Century and on the water fountains of the Gem. The glorious stained glass panels, created by Charles J. Connick of Boston for its chapel, are inserted at the peak of the staircase as you ascend to the upstairs theater and bar. And over 100 pieces of furniture donated to the "Y" by its original members have been refinished

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and grace both facilities.

Landed glass doors and woodwork along with three fireplaces were also rescued and appropriately used. One fireplace is a focal point of the restaurant, which features what looks to be a very interesting menu and jazz three nights a week. An architectural balustrade from the top of the "Y" was relocated to the front yard of the Gem/Century, where it serves as its limestone pillared fence.

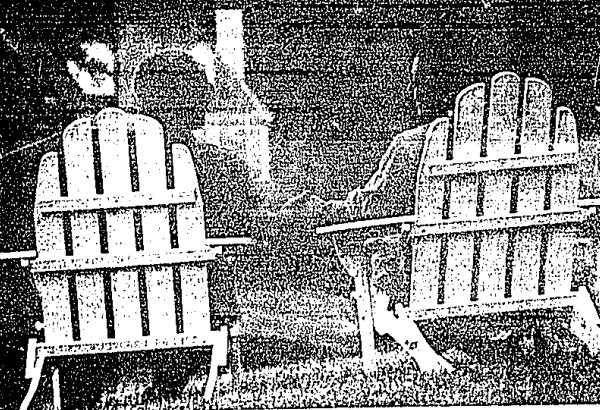
The Gem and Century are tiny venues compared with others on the city's agenda. But they give us a big glimpse of our past and offer quality fare.

As we fashion a new Detroit as the long-gone centerpiece for our suburbs, they remind us that once upon a time even the downtown YWCA was first-class.

Detroit's march toward reasserting its place as a world-class city can't settle for anything less.

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