

points of view

Gubernatorial hopeful shows he has vision

MY BRETHREN downtown missed the significance of last week's great tax compromise in the Michigan Legislature.

Their headlines emphasized that Detroit's utility tax authorization had finally been approved.

The other half of the deal was glossed over. In return for the utility tax, Senate majority leader John Engler, the probable Republican gubernatorial candidate, got the Democrats to approve one of his pet projects — a major reduction of the inheritance tax.

In 1985 Engler came to Detroit to make some news.

HE UNVEILED a book-sized study called "Michigan Beyond 2000" by a think tank called the Hudson Institute. Most reporters couldn't be bothered to read even the execu-



Tim Richard

tive summary, let alone the full text. They were after a few good quotes and good-bys.

I sensed that Engler was giving us his long-range blueprint for his tenure as governor.

"Because Michigan's population will be aging over the next 20 years, and because the auto industry is likely to use retirement as one of the main mechanisms for shrinking its workforce, the state has a particularly great interest in enhancing its status as a retirement center," the

Hudson Institute study begins.

"Whether the large numbers of Social Security and pension checks due to auto industry retirees are mailed to addresses in Tucson or Traverse City will have a great impact on the economic health of the state over the next 20 years."

"Tax policies that discourage retirement in the state — for example, inheritance taxes — might also be revised."

Translation: Cut the inheritance tax to Florida levels. RETIREES USED to be a main component in the poverty picture. Today, few retirees are dependent on their kids. Indeed, many are well off.

With money to spend, they can be a source of jobs, an economic underpinning, to northern Michigan towns — if they stay in Michigan.

"Just as the boom in retirement communities in Florida and Arizona led to subsequent growth in retailing, construction, health care and many other service industries, a swelling population of retirees in Traverse City and similar resort communities in Michigan will generate strong service-based economic growth."

The book has an entire chapter on Traverse City. Other towns are feeling the impact, too. My credit union, centered in western Wayne County, established branches in Gaylord, Atlanta, Lewiston and Hillsdale, in the elk country of northern lower Michigan. Now we know why.

REPEALING The inheritance tax alone won't induce retirees to remain here. Roads, recreation facilities, arts grants, senior citizen centers, lighter residential property taxes — all of these are important in attracting older people to stay in Michigan.

Prosperity can be achieved through industry, of course, and should be. But as the Hudson Institute points out, many towns can do extremely well with imported consumer money — note the college towns of Ann Arbor, East Lansing and Kalamazoo.

Engler considers the inheritance tax issue so important that it has the legislative title of Senate Bill 1.

Others don't see it that way. Both House Taxation Chair Lynn Jondahl, D-Okemos, and state Treasurer Robert Bowman have been heard to ob-

ject that SB 1 will cost \$50 million or more such number in lost revenue. That's as far as they see.

Bowman's objection is relevant because he is Gov. James J. Blanchard's economic guru. Blanchard still has to sign SB 1, you know, for it

to become law. As of last week, he hadn't made up his mind.

This Engler fellow has a reputation as a manipulative partisan. He also has vision.

Last week, through their hardball politics, he traded Detroit its utility

tax for a piece of the vision.

Tim Richard is news director of Suburban Communications News Service. SCC is the parent company of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Parents must 'just say no' to alcohol at teen parties

JUST SAY NO.

It's not that simple... or is it?

She didn't say no to an after-prom drinking party at her home. So the president of the Bloomfield Hills Board of Education compromised the alcohol-free stance she helped that district formulate.

She didn't immediately resign her position as president of the board, staying on to preside at graduation. So she compromised another message, that we must pay the consequences of our actions.

Barbara Dolliver, reacting to the controversy surrounding her son's prom party, was pressured to resign as president of the school board, but delayed her resignation until after last weekend's graduation ceremonies where she gave a commencement speech and handed out diplomas.

THERE IS MORE than one version of what led up to and went on at the after-prom party at the Dollivers' house — a scene that has upset and divided the Bloomfield Hills community.

Dolliver said a keg of beer and bottles of champagne were brought to the party without her knowledge by friends of her son, T.J., a 17-year-old Lahser High School senior who gave the party.

"When I realized alcohol (had been brought in) I'll be honest with you. I didn't know what to do. I am a parent first and a school board president second."

Others say Dolliver knew there would be liquor, but chose that as a better solution than to have her son and his friends party at a hotel.

The Bloomfield Hills schools supported a Birmingham/Bloomfield Families in Action effort this year to discourage prom parties. But Dolliver, a member of the Families in Action group, said it was common knowledge that the hotel parties were happening anyway.

"No matter how we preach, some of our children may feel it is their time to party. I uphold the law," she said.

NO, I'M SURE you wanted to Barbara, but you didn't. You aren't alone in that situation, but if with rank comes privilege, it also comes with added responsibility.

Some parents allowed their children to go to the party at their home because of who you are and your public stance against young people drinking. You are not only the school board president, but a member of Families in Action. You helped launch the district's alcohol and drug counseling program and organize alcohol-free graduation parties. These parents were deceived.



Judith Doner Berne

STILL, GRADUATING seniors aren't babies and they also must receive consequences for their conduct.

Dolliver's son and his friends are certainly to blame. They shouldn't get away with a slap on the wrist, or even worse an apology from Bloomfield Hills city commissioner Don Carlson for putting them on the spot.

Why didn't they care that by bringing alcohol into the Dolliver home, they not only broke the law but flouted what she said she stood for?

We have a long way to go in learning the place of alcohol in our lives. Its glorification as the way to party doesn't give any notice to the families and lives it destroys.

What happened in Bloomfield Hills can serve as a lesson to us all. As parents we must just say no.

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

Averages often useless

Q: Our board of education rated our superintendent a 4.2 on his annual evaluation. Five is the highest rating or excellent, four is good. He does an excellent job and I believe this rating is too low. It should be higher. I can't figure out why he did not get a higher rating.

A: On your board, you have what is called a "single issue member." The member is a former board candidate who spoke eloquently of the educational needs of our children during the campaign but really had a hidden agenda.

An example of a hidden agenda could be the former junior football league coach who wants astro-turf on the high school football field. Or the candidate who wants to fire the football coach, a principal or even the superintendent.

And it would be wonderful to have astro-turf but other cost items such as buses to get kids to school sometimes over shadow dreams.

One single issue board member usually gets absorbed by the logic and experience of the other six members. This is the beauty in having a seven-person board. It keeps a check and balance on not only their own members but on school administrators, such as I was who, at times, come up with ideas that sound good but need a second look.

On the other hand, if a single issue



Doc Doyle

board member is successful in recruiting and has elected others with his/her single agenda, there could be astro-turf on the football field and a backlash from the public that no one needs.

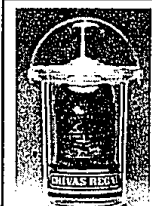
In any case, your superintendent received a rating you believe is too low. You indicate that there is a single issue trustee on your board of education — a member no one else agrees with.

Let's assume six members rated your superintendent an average of 4.5 — a very good grade. The single issue member wants to get rid of the superintendent, has a personal vendetta, and rates him/her 2.5. The average reported is 4.2.

That's why averages are to useless in the interpretation of most data.

Dr. James Doyle is a former assistant superintendent in the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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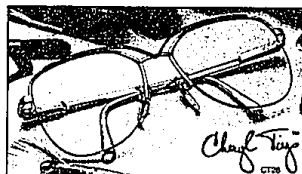
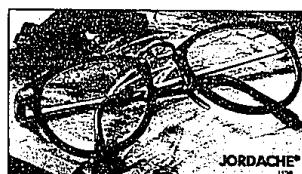
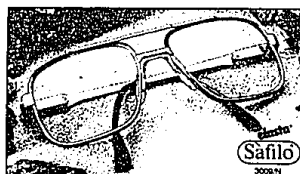
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