

WISCONSIN

GOVERNOR DODGING QUESTIONS, DOYLE SAYS

Thompson's actions called 'childish'

At issue is letter written by DNR chief telling of being pressured

By RICHARD P. JONES of the Journal Sentinel staff

Madison — Attorney General Jim Doyle said Friday that Gov. Tommy Thompson acted like a "schoolyard bully" when he attacked his critics instead of answering questions about demands the governor reportedly made of the state's top environmental officer.

In a March letter to Doyle,

state Natural Resources Secretary George Meyer said Thompson pressured him to contribute to his campaign and to let him review any environmental complaints before they were referred to Doyle for prosecution.

The Republican governor accused Doyle, a Democrat, of a last-minute, partisan ploy to defeat the governor's bid for new authority to name the natural resources and agriculture secretaries. Now, those appointments are made by part-time citizen boards.

Doyle "encouraged George to write a letter, and then held

onto the letter until three days before the Legislature takes up the budget bill, and he does it just to try and scuttle the budget," Thompson said.

"It's childish, it's partisan and it's beneath what an attorney should be doing, any attorney, especially the attorney general," Thompson said.

But Doyle said Thompson was trying to shift the focus.

"His behavior is that of a schoolyard bully who has been caught doing something, and now hopes he can land a punch on somebody else," Doyle said.

"The best defense is a good offense."

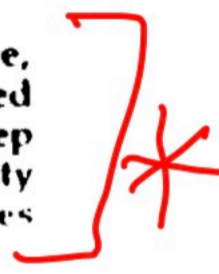
Doyle said that he received an unsolicited memo from Meyer about a conversation Meyer had with the governor. It was a public document that Doyle had to release when a reporter for the Journal Sentinel requested it under the state open records law, Doyle said.

"If this had been some big political conspiracy, I would have run out with this memo as soon as I received it," Doyle said. "Obviously, (Thompson) would love to deflect this and call it political on my part."

Doyle said Thompson never denied what Meyer said in the letter, and a Meyer statement Thursday also did not refute the original claim.

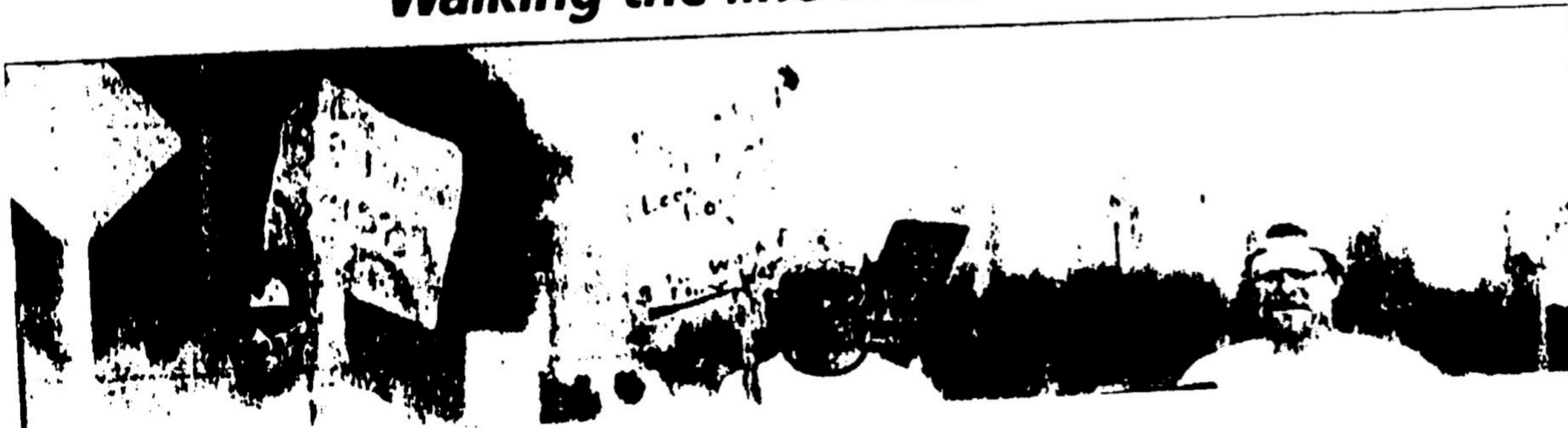
During his news conference, Thompson three times declined to say whether he would keep Meyer, if he gets the authority to appoint the natural resources secretary.

Thompson aide Kevin Keane dismissed Doyle's comments Friday, saying Meyer misunderstood a conversation with the governor at the time Meyer wrote Doyle.



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Walking the line in Marshfield



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