

- [Print This](#)
- [Email This](#)

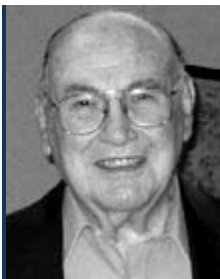
Robots at work

- **January 22nd, 2010**
- (11) comments

Marty Trillhaase



Ken Roberts...



Slideshow This article has a slideshow. [Click to view.](#)
[Image #2](#) [Image #3](#) [Image #4](#)

JEERS ... to the Idaho Legislature's Joint Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee. First, it's gone one better on Gov. C. L. (Butch) Otter by predicting an economic decline - not stagnation or even a modest recovery but actual decline - during the budget year that begins July 1.

What that means is your schools, universities and health care programs are going to be cut even deeper than necessary.

In forecasting Idaho's economy would not move one inch forward during the next budget year, Otter rejected the professional advice of his own chief economist, the state Tax Commission, the Associated Taxpayers of Idaho and university economists. He also ignored a Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia estimate that Idaho's economy has been growing modestly for the last three months, the first Micron Technology profit in years and emerging health in other sectors.

But the House committee resorted to pure gloom and doom. Thirteen Republicans backed the most pessimistic scenario possible, courtesy of Rep. Ken Roberts, R-Donnelly.

It means slicing \$69 million more from the current budget and finding \$59 million more in cuts than Otter called for.

If things are that bad, why doesn't the state go after tax cheats? That's worth \$65 million.

Or why not make irrigators or business pay for the full cost of the government services they receive? That would free up another \$20 million or more.

If that kind of rigid intellect is your thing, don't hire people. Just buy some robots.

CHEERS ... to former Idaho Secretary of State Pete T. Cenarrusa. The grand old man of the Idaho Grand Old Party didn't mince words. Appearing on Idaho Public Television last week, Cenarrusa said Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter's plan to abolish the state Parks and Recreation Department would be a mistake.

Cenarrusa served in the 1965 Idaho Legislature that created the department in the first place, a precursor to Averell and Roland Harriman donating their 1,110-acre ranch outside Island Park to the state.

Now that Otter has proposed folding parks and recreation into the state Department of Lands, there's concern that Harriman State Park could revert to private ownership.

Asked how he felt about the plan, Cenarrusa said the state should retain the current system.

JEERS ... to Idaho House and Senate Democrats. To great fanfare, the Democrats caucuses opened up to the public a decade ago. It was meant to contrast with the majority Republicans, who locked the doors behind them when they hold strategy sessions.

Democrats are still in the minority, but they've picked up some House seats. With a little added clout comes the desire to conceal. This week, Democrats decided they'd play by the GOP's rules.

"If Coach Pete had opened his playbook to TCU before the Fiesta Bowl, the fake punt would have led to disaster, not victory," says Senate Assistant Minority Leader Elliot Werk of Boise.

OK, does that mean we're supposed to attend football games where the teams play in private and then hand you a scorecard - with the ticket price - after the fact?

CHEERS ... to state Rep. Liz Chavez, D-Lewiston. She's been named the 2010 Patricia Kempthorne Award recipient for her work to bring attention to fetal alcohol syndrome.

Idaho's former first lady courageously advanced the cause of mental illness by frankly addressing her own struggles with depression.

In that same spirit, Chavez drew upon her experience as the adoptive parent of a boy with FAS.

"We tried to hold our family together, but we lost him in 1993," Chavez told the Tribune's William Spence.

With her husband Jerry, Chavez authored a book about the syndrome, began educating people about the hazards of drinking during pregnancy and conducted workshops for judges, attorneys and others.

Often, that's how this country moves forward. Individuals who live through hardships such as mental illness or developmental disabilities share their grief with strangers and become agents of change. Whether their work leads to improved special education programs, drug rehabilitation or mental health efforts, people such as Chavez benefit people they'll never meet.

CHEERS ... to Washington state Rep. Chris Hurst, D-Enumclaw. While holding hearings into the slaying of four Lakewood police officers Monday, Hurst signaled he would not resort to a legislative gimmick.

So he wants to know why Maurice Clemmons, the man accused of shooting the four officers in a coffee shop, was free on bail in the first place. Clemmons, who was facing child rape charges at the time, was killed by police officers two days later.

"This is not a time for us to have a knee-jerk response and simply pass a lot of bills if they won't actually help," Hurst said. "The intent is to move pieces of legislation that will actually make a difference."

JEERS ... to the three Idaho lawmakers who pandered to Tea Party activists Monday.

First there was Rep. Steve Hartgen, R-Twin Falls. "These people aren't protesters," he said. "They are American citizens."

So are left-wing protesters or anti-war demonstrators not American citizens? Seems a strange interpretation of the First Amendment from a fellow who once ran a newspaper.

Then there's Rep. Steven Thayn, R-Emmett. He intended the Platform for Prosperity to read his letter, but the Associated Press decided everybody should know Thayn doesn't think too highly of Abraham Lincoln. He wrote of efforts to "alter and repair some of the damage done during the Lincoln years and shortly after the Civil War."

What could that be? Winning the Civil War?

And finally, there's Rep. Phil Hart, R-Hayden. He railed against the Federal Reserve system as "offensive to scripture." A fellow who refused to pay his taxes for seven years - but who now draws legislative pay, health insurance, per diem expenses, life insurance and retirement