

# Feel the love

Marty Trillhaase The Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Clearwater Paper President and Chief Operating Officer Linda K. Massman. On Oct. 26, her company announced the sale of its Lewiston sawmill operation to Idaho Forest Group, throwing the livelihoods of 250 people into upheaval. Some of them may find jobs at IFG. Some won't.

The next morning, Massman told Wall Street: "The transaction allows us to monetize a non-core asset and forego future capital expenditures associated with the sawmill. More importantly, it protects our (chip and sawdust) supply from the sawmill and allows us to

focus on our core consumer products and pulp and paperboard business."

Feel the love?

Did she mention the years of service from employees who earn quite a bit less than Massman's \$1.5 million compensation? You know, those who got "monetized"?

Did Massman say anything about what her company stands for, what it represents to the workers or what it means to the broader community? Are these "non-core assets"?

Where was the corporate vision about growing a business or building partnerships? Are these the "future capital expenditures associated with the sawmill" that Clearwater Paper intends to "forgo"?

For generations, Lewiston's sawmill has been the economic backbone of the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley. It is more than a balance sheet or an investor statement to be manipulated in the pursuit of enhancing shareholder value.

Or at least you would hope so.

And economic elites such as Massman wonder why the Occupy Wall Street movement resonates with the bottom 99 percent.

CHEERS ... to 2nd District Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho. When an Idaho Republican puts his career on the line for the good of the nation, pay attention. Simpson did just that this week.

Working with Rep. Heath Shuler, D-N.C., Simpson rounded up 100 House members in support of a "grand bargain" to trim \$4 trillion from the federal deficit. That's nearly three times what the congressional "supercommittee" is trying to find by its Nov. 28 deadline.

Each of the 100 signed a letter that says: "To succeed, all options for mandatory and discretionary spending and revenues must be on the table."

It means Simpson and the 40 Republicans signers would consider raising revenues, most likely by eliminating tax loopholes and then lowering tax rates. The 60 Democrats would look at cuts in entitlements. This echoes the Bowles-Simpson commission and the Senate's "Gang of Six," on which Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, served. Crapo is among 36 Senate Republicans and Democrats who signed a similar letter last month.

The country can't cut its way out of debt. New taxes are needed. Even if you eliminated the Department of Defense, the country still would have a \$600 billion deficit.

Nor can it tax its way out. Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid now account for almost \$2.3 trillion of the \$3.6 trillion annual budget.

And you can't leave it on automatic pilot. If the "supercommittee" can't broker a deal, a \$1.2 trillion sequestration - which hits some programs, notably defense, hard while leaving others unscathed - may kick in. Even so, trimming \$120 billion a year from a \$1.3 trillion deficit will do virtually no good. Assuming, of course, that Congress doesn't get weak in the knees and puts the whole business off.

A grand bargain is what it's going to take. If they act boldly, Simpson's gesture assures supercommittee members they have a quarter of the House already at their back.

It also provides cover for many of the wavering House members who privately have expressed support for a big package.

No, this is not 218 members, the number needed to pass any bill. But after 10 months of partisan gridlock, Simpson's maneuver is a break in the clouds.

Credit the engineer behind it because Simpson is so clearly acting against his own narrow self-interest. An Idaho politician who routinely gets challenged from the right wing of his party, he's going up against Grover Norquist and the Tea Party.

Rigid ideology is a safe harbor in Idaho Republican politics, but hiding there won't cure what ails the country. Good for Simpson.

JEERS ... to Rex Rammell, northern Idaho's Never-Ending Story, Chapter 25: Perennial candidate for Legislature, U.S.Senate, Congress and governor sets up shop in Kooskia and starts spouting nonsense on the Web. He does this after suffering twin convictions for elk poaching and jury tampering in his former home of eastern Idaho. Idaho County prosecutors recently drop a misdemeanor battery charge against him, but Fish and Game file four new counts.

Here's Rammell's Halloween message:

"It would appear that I have become Idaho's poster child for government insubordination, a reputation I am proud to accept. There are too many laws and regulations and our

policemen, prosecutors and judges need electric shock collars to remind them that we are not all criminals."

You first, Rex.

JEERS ... to Rep. Phil Hart, R-Athol, northern Idaho's Never-Ending Story, Chapter 26: Politician who craves the power to write laws everyone else must follow while extending his middle finger anytime authority knocks at his door.

Last week, federal prosecutors sought \$550,000 in back taxes and moved to foreclose on Hart's Athol home - which, by the way, was built partially with timber he stole from the state of Idaho endowment lands. Hart contends taxes are unconstitutional - at both the federal and state level.

Here's another reminder of a tax scofflaw GOP House leadership not only tolerates, but safeguards. If Hart insists on being an anarchist, why is he still in the Idaho Legislature? If his own GOP leadership won't boot him out, why are the voters of Kootenai County not ousting him? - M.T.