

# LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Obama's Jobs Panel Needs Some Work

■ By **BILL GUNDERSON**

America is full of job creators – but you won't find them on the president's Jobs Commission, or in his choice for commerce secretary, hometown boy John Bryson.

Bryson is a familiar name to many Angelenos: He is the former chief executive of Edison International and co-founder of one of America's biggest lawsuit mills, the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Not much job creation there. Unless you count hiring lobbyists and antibusiness lawyers as job creation. Which some people do. And that is part of the problem.

Just a few weeks ago, President Obama gave his new job commissioners their marching orders: "We're also putting a little pressure on you guys to figure out how do we make sure that the economy is working for everybody," Obama told the CEOs, labor leaders and investors who make up the group.

"How do we make sure that every child out there who's willing to work hard is going to be able to succeed? How do we make certain that working families across the country are sharing in growing productivity and that we're not simply creating an economy in which one segment of it is doing very well, but the rest of the folks are out there treading water?"

This is not how job creators talk about bringing order out of chaotic and dynamic markets. Rather, this is how community organizers divvy up the spoils of their latest federal grant.

The president said his commission is full of people who are "on the ground right now," creating jobs in a "competitive environment."

Wrong again. What he has really done is appoint the wrong people with bad job-creating records – then hobble them with bad ideas.

Heading the commission is Jeffrey Immelt, chairman of General Electric Co. According to Barron's, "At the end of 2000, GE employed 313,000 people, including 168,000 in the U.S. (54 percent). By the start of 2010, when the company filed its most recent annual report, GE had 304,000 workers, including 134,000 in the U.S. (44 percent)."

Other members' companies fare about the same: In 2006, Intel Corp. employed 95,000. Today, 82,500. Today, Eastman Kodak Co. employs 18,800, down 50 percent from five years ago. Citigroup Inc. received hundreds of billions in bailouts, while laying off 50,000 people.

But let's not forget the two chief executives responsible for what many say is the biggest business disaster in American corporate history, Steve Case, former CEO of AOL Inc., and Gerald Parsons, former CEO of Time Warner Inc., both commission members.

A curious group to create jobs.

Their stock prices are just as bad.

GE, for example, has returned minus 6.6 percent to its investors over the last 10 years. Eastman Kodak has been diving 20 percent a year for 10 years.

These are tough times, no doubt. But some companies are creating jobs and wealth for their shareholders.

### L.A. impact

There are several in Los Angeles, Occidental Petroleum Corp. has increased its work force by 25 percent since 2007. DirecTV of El Segundo went from 10,000 employees in 2006 to 23,000 today.

Down the road in Irvine, I've rated Quality Systems Inc. as one of the Best Stocks Now in the country. Over the last 10 years, it has returned an average of 38 percent per year to its owners. Including 47 percent in

2008, when the market went down 38 percent.

Led by one of America's best chief executives, Steven Plochocki, the company is decreasing the cost of health care by automating records. Over the last five years, the company has gone from 661 to 2,000 employees.

In fact, there are good job creators all over the country. At Tractor Supply Co. in Brentwood, Tenn., Chief Executive Jim Wright is hiring 1,000 people a year to work in his stores, many selling organic farm supplies to city slickers. His stock is returning 41 percent a year in growth and dividends for the last 10 years.

Harold Hamm runs Continental Resources Inc., an oil and gas exploration and production company. Over the last three years, Continental has hired 15,000 people in North Dakota. They are looking for more.

There are lots of others. None on the commission.

I've had several of these CEOs on my radio show recently. They are a modest crew more likely to talk about the "blocking and tackling" necessary for business success, rather than the "making certain ... and sharing" so popular with the stagnation crowd.

They talk about opportunity. Not certainty. Risks and rewards. Not guarantees.

They've had enough of complicated plans from people who do not know what they are doing. Now they just want to be left alone to do what they do best.

Not creating commissions, reports and Rube Goldberg schemes.

Just jobs.

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