

Clinton hears Brown's pain over budget cuts

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getary changes, are facing are actually a microcosm — and a very big microcosm — of what the country is going through, and indeed what people are facing throughout the world.”

One audience member not consoled was San Francisco Superior Court Presiding Judge **Katherine Feinstein**. Brown had casually let it be known that in his revised budget, to be delivered May 14, “we’ll probably cut the courts some more.”

That’s on top of the \$350 million in cuts made in Brown’s initial 2012-13 budget, which have already resulted in a 31 percent reduction in San Francisco Superior Court’s 484-person workforce, in addition to hundreds of other job losses, court closings and long delays in civil court proceedings throughout the state.

“It was a disheartening moment for me,” Feinstein said Friday. “You think the worst is over, then you learn it isn’t.”

But it wasn’t a total surprise, given that Brown’s revenue projections, on which the earlier round of budget cuts were based, have fallen — as the state’s legislative analyst put it recently — “a few billion dollars short.”

Feinstein and other California court officials I talked with Friday said they have no details on the new cuts. “I don’t know what they will mean for us,” said Feinstein. “We’ve already cut, and cut, and cut. There are days when I can’t staff a courtroom.”

“The cuts are reaching the point where the judiciary is the third branch of government in California in name only. I think we’re looking at a constitutional crisis in the state.”



S.F. Superior Court Judge **Katherine Feinstein** faces budget cuts.

Of course, things could get even worse in November should the budgetary changes — i.e., tax increases — on the November ballot not pass muster with voters, as Brown reminded his audience. “Suck it up,” he urged the business leaders, many of whom will likely qualify for the “millionaires tax.”

Public-private: One expense that won’t be dependent on the budget is the trade office Brown intends to open in China in the near future.

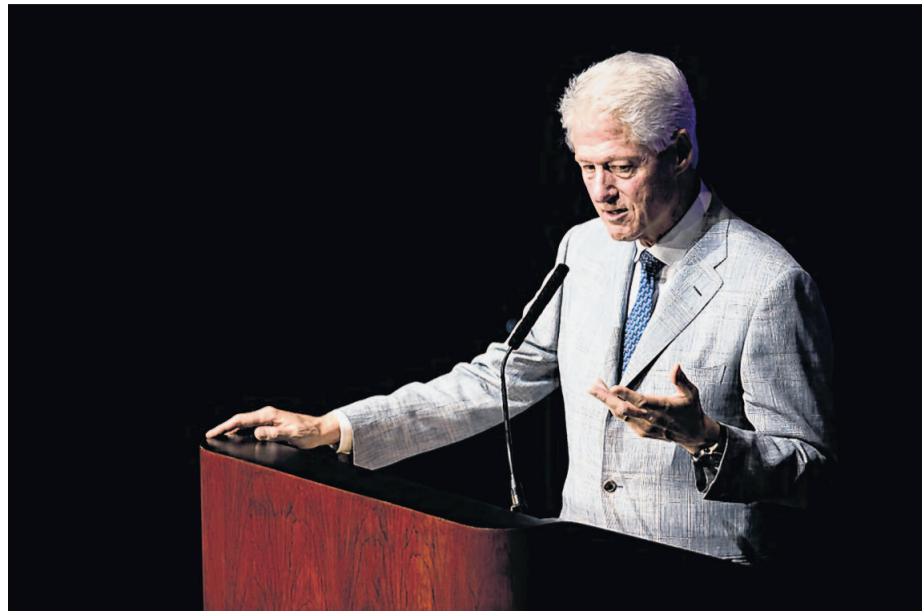
“I think the **Bay Area Council** is paying for it,” he told attendees at the conference, put on by the Bay Area Council.

I had heard that before, including from other public officials during my China trip in March. But the San Francisco public policy organization, which has had an office in Shanghai since 2010, wouldn’t confirm Brown’s assertion.

“We’ve been talking with the governor’s office, and will provide as much support and assistance as we can to promote California trade opportunities,” said **Rufus Jeffris**, the council’s spokesman. “But we can’t comment on that.”

Running in place? The title of Thursday’s conference, at the California Theater in downtown San Jose, was “The next human leap” — a look at “new discoveries and innovation that will again transform our world.”

There was some of that, from **George Halvorson**, CEO of **Kaiser Permanente**, who spoke of an “industrial revolution in health care” in-



John Sebastian Russo / Special to The Chronicle

Former President **Bill Clinton** says the dilemmas Californians face are a microcosm of what the country and the world are going through.



Paul Sakuma / Associated Press

LinkedIn CEO **Jeff Weiner** makes an appeal for an immediate crash program of vocational training.

cluding self-administered EKGs in the comfort of your kitchen and diagnoses via the Internet.

“The entire infrastructure of health care can now be delivered electronically,” he said.

Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn, talked about “adaptive learning,” perhaps best exemplified by the **Khan Academy** and its 3,100 Web-based short lectures, exercises and assessment tests, which students can do at home, leaving them to work with teachers in

more analytical and creative pursuits in the classroom. The Los Altos School District has begun a pilot program incorporating the **Khan Academy** into its K-8 curriculum.

But Weiner and others were more concerned with what is not happening — like the 3.5 million jobs going unfilled, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in April, many of them having fallen into what is called a skills gap.

“The pace of technology is outstripping

the capacity of the workforce,” said Weiner, who appealed for an immediate crash program of vocational training, and less emphasis on four-year college, including the online kind.

Condoleezza Rice, former U.S. secretary of state, now a professor of political economy at the **Hoover Institution**, was mostly concerned with the incapacity of K-12 public education, which she called “maybe our greatest national security threat.”

Predictions: Clinton said we’re faced with three key challenges — the “profound inequality” of access to education, jobs and health care; the potential instability of political and financial systems; and the unsustainable model of energy production and consumption.

Given that we’re living in “the most interdependent age in history,” Clinton said, the job is to use that interdependence and build “creative networks of cooperation. We’ve got to find a way to bring politics and policy making closer together.”

Yes, yes, but more importantly, how is the

presidential race shaping up?

“It ought to be pretty close, because they both are smart, both are articulate, and the economy is, at best for most people, in an ambiguous situation.”

“But both of them have to remember this election is not about them, it’s about millions of Americans, scared to death, full of anxiety, hurting, think they’ll never be able to send their kids to college.”

He thinks Obama “should run on his record, and talk about what he’s going to do in the next four years. The most important thing he should say is, do you really want us to go back to the policies that got us into trouble in the first place?”

Romney, on the other hand, “has the advantage that people don’t feel like everything’s right.”

“If I were **Mitt Romney**, I would say, look, what we’re doing is not working fast enough. I would say the Democrats have tried to do too much change. We’ve got to simplify this. Then I would try to convince people, sooner or later, that there is something, somewhere that he can say ‘no’ to his right wing, or he can’t win the election.”

“So it will probably be a pretty close race. But I predict, because of the difficulties created for (Romney) by his political base, that Obama will win by five or six points.”

▶ A videotape of the conference is posted at www.youtube.com/bayareacouncil.

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No horsing around for Napa custom boot maker

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their corns, calluses and misshapen toes, holds a certain cordovan-client privilege.

Courtney is not alone in the custom boot-making field. Across the country there are artists and craftspeople keeping the tradition alive.

The true history of the cowboy boot is unclear. But Jennifer June, one of the nation’s leading authorities on cowboy boots and the author of “Cowboy Boots: The Art & Sole,” said they were probably the offspring of Civil War military boots.

“They’ve become as recognizably American as the American flag,” said June, who lives in Oakland. “They’re so closely associated with the American West that they’re iconic.”

Grew up sewing

For Courtney, the talent to create her own boots has roots in her 4-H days, growing up in Wisconsin dairy country.

“We were dirt-floor poor,” she said. “If I wanted nice stuff, I had to make it.”

So she took up sewing and became a good

enough seamstress that she could design and make her own outfits. In the 1980s, when she was living in Texas, she saw lots of bright, bold and creative cowboy boots she wanted to buy. As a successful insurance-claims adjuster, she could afford them. But the problem was the smallest size was a 6. She’s a 4½ or 5. And stuffing Styrofoam or newspaper in her boot toes got old.

That’s how she got the notion of making her own.

“I have an insatiable desire for bling,” she said. “And I have 100 ideas in my head that I can’t get out.”

Learning the craft

She needed a teacher, and after doing a little research found Jack Rowin, a grizzled old cowboy living in Manton (Tehama County). Rowin has been making boots for decades and is keeping the craft alive by training newcomers.

“He’s well known among California boot makers because I think he’s laid hands on all of them,” June said.

The deal with Rowin



Siana Hristova / The Chronicle

With feet too small for off-the-rack boots in Texas, Terri Courtney got the idea to make her own.

was Courtney would buy a pair of boots from him in exchange for mentoring. She stayed in his rustic bunkhouse every free weekend she had. Rowin, known for his sturdy, straightforward boots, isn’t so much into fancy, Courtney said.

“He’d probably think these were gaudy,” she said, showing off the first pair of boots — Las Vegas-themed numbers with stitched playing cards, horseshoes and rhinestones — she made on her own.

To learn the flashy stuff, she studied with Carl Chappell, a third-generation cowboy boot maker in St. Jo, Texas. Then she was off and running. She got some good equipment, a few clients and decided that selling \$4,500 boots — the average price for a pair with exotic leather or intricate design and

involved stitch work — out of her garage wasn’t going to cut it.

She and her husband, a professional photographer, built an 1,800-square-foot studio, which is larger than their house. Courtney filled it with eight industrial machines, wooden foot forms of every shape and size, and walls of every kind of leather imaginable. A special chair was built for clients to get their feet measured. And a floor-to-ceiling shelf displays the boots she’s made for herself and her husband. After waiting two years for a pair of boots, clients don’t let the finished products linger in her shop for long.

While the price seems steep, June said it’s about right for California.

“You can still get a custom pair of boots for \$900,” she said. “But those boot makers are in

the weeds of Arizona and West Texas. You’ll spend \$900 in gas just getting there.”

Footwear is art

“It’s good to think of it as art,” June said. “How much does art cost?”

For Andy Schweiger, the winemaker for his family’s Schweiger Vineyards in the Napa Valley, it’s a great way to advertise.

“I’m not a cowboy person,” he said. “I’m a jazz musician.”

So Courtney put his wine logo on the front of his boots and a gold tenor saxophone on the back. He’s been getting attention ever since. At a wine event in Florida, organizers thought the boots were so cool they threatened to auction them off. When he wore them to a black-tie to-do in Dallas, even the Texans were impressed, he

said.

Despite the price, Courtney isn’t making enough to quit her day job. She’s still working insurance claims, and making the boots in the evenings and on weekends.

“It’s a lifestyle,” she said, adding that she’s able to make two pairs of boots a month. “I don’t want to be a factory or have to hire a line of boot makers.”

Now, she spends a lot of time talking to her clients, getting a feel for what they want and what they’ll wear. Sometimes the two aren’t synonymous. Courtney will often do a fitter boot — a mock up of the finished product — to make sure everyone is on the same page and the sizing is right.

“Nothing is worse than getting a pair of boots done and having to do them over again,” she said.

Sometimes she’ll hold open studios with other local artists — two are planned for Sept. 22-23 and Sept 29-30 — so people who have never worn a cowboy boot can see what she’s all about.

“I can’t get enough of the feeling you get when someone stops you and wants to talk about your boots,” she said, modeling a pair of cherry red saltwater crocodile and white goat-hide boots with inlaid birds and flowers. “I love it.”

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