

## KIND OF BLUE ABOUT BROWN

The meeting ran late. Hungry and desperate, the Chancellor and Chairman of the Board of Trustees raided the CSU discretionary fund for burrito money. They jumped onto the CSU limo, which looked like a hospital gurney powered by an out-board motor, and pattered to Taco Loco, where they threw down four el gordo specials.

They hurried back to the limo, before anyone could record the crime. But it was too late.

A dented 1973 Dodge Dart pulled up; “When Will I Be Loved?” crackled from the radio, across the night. A man who looked like Luther in a JC Penney suit jumped out of the car, quoting Montaigne in the Tibetan translation.

“Jerry Brown,” the Chancellor gasped!

“Yes, it is he,” he said. “For this scandal—burrito-gate—you shall pay. I shall attend all board meetings!”

Brown pulled a rapier out of the back seat. Before one could say, “Rose Bird,” he had slashed “Prop 30” across their jackets.

He then jumped back into the Dart and, and while his left foot pedaled against the asphalt, coasted down Signal Hill.

Brown indeed has left his mark on the CSU. He has played us twice recently as he tries to cram the state budget in a pre-bubble, 97 billion dollar box. We are easy marks because we believe literally his rhetoric about helping educators to identify local problems and then devise local solutions.

We ignore the larger context for his remarks. Pat Brown assumed growth would fund reform; Jerry assumes reform must fund growth. This is personal, a matter of legacy. Father Pat was a reformer in an era of plenty. Son Jerry wants to be known as a reformer in an era of scarcity. He wants to redefine the assumptions about funding change in liberalism.

CSU said that we need more funding to reform and grow. Jerry Brown heard that we were navel-gazing schmucks who did not understand productivity.

What we did not understand was him. Increased productivity, he believes, must squeeze out of current funds amounts equal to the grants of ‘60s and ‘70s liberalism. He will not be moved off this core belief.

Jerry Brown is a clever governor who sees politics as an extension of warfare. He threatens and bullies, feints and lures, and baits and switches. Take Prop 30. He rallied unions by threatening

cuts and won over students by rolling back fees. But then he averted his eyes as 30 triumphed, but universities still lowered enrollment to blunt remaining budget reductions. Students got less access, employees less work, and Brown a budget victory.

Or see the budget proposal for '13-14. He feints that enrollment targets are up to us, but he clearly is bullying us to increase capacity—and productivity—through more online offerings. He baits with an added 125 million dollars but switches on the net that is available. He does not fund mandatory increases; and he would have the CSU absorb the pension and capital cost caused by growing operational expense for more capacity. He has launched a siege to force productivity.

There is a chance we can do passably in Brownifornia, but we cannot do so by invoking past compacts, talking like Luddites, and claiming that major new ventures require external funds. Instead, we must accept productivity as the game at hand. But we must be sure that Brown's baseline data about us are right, because his budget is laced with errors about fees, persistence, remediation, faculty workforce and workload, and accelerators of cost. Then, we mutually must accept a set of productivity outcomes, for example, from the Delta Project, linked to levels of funding. Brown's principle of "subsidiarity" then applies. Stipulated progress toward an outcome exempts the CSU from state prescription about how to achieve it.

Brownifornia gets productivity. Brown gets closer to his legacy. The CSU . . . gets back the CSU.

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