Opinion: California has half a budget at best

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

So does California have a new state budget, or not?

It has about a half-a-budget, or perhaps more accurately, a half-baked budget.

The Legislature passed a budget bill last Friday, thus meeting the constitutional deadline and also preserving lawmakers' salaries, along with a handful of minor "trailer bills" to implement its provisions.

However, the budget bill also requires Gov. Jerry Brown's signature, and he has until June 27 to sign or, as he did last year, veto it.

There's also a flock of other trailer bills still pending, including those that involve Brown's dispute with his fellow Democrats in the Legislature over health and welfare services.

The Democrats would spend roughly a billion dollars more on those services than Brown insists he wants, covering the extra spending by slashing the budget's emergency reserve in half and adopting some rosy revenue assumptions.

Whether the intraparty conflict is genuine, or is merely a bit of political theater to portray Brown as being tough with the voting public's bucks, is at least debatable.

Certainly, the governor has been trying mightily to create an image of frugality to persuade voters to pass his sales and income tax hike next November.

Speaking of which, Brown has about three weeks until the deadline for his tax measure to qualify for the ballot and

there’s at least a small doubt that the signature-sampling now under way will be successful.

If it isn’t, all bets are off.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Loop road possibilities need to be studied

Publisher’s note: ***This letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and is reprinted with the author’s permission.***

I sat in at the Lodging Association meeting last Thursday and heard the loop road presentation from Carl Hastings. [sic]

I was not happy with Plan No. 1 or Plan No. 2, so am glad the City Council voted for a third option.

Here’s my two cents for a third option:

1. Being that two-thirds of the traffic on Highway 50 goes right on through the state line without stopping (according to Carl Hastings) [sic] let’s excavate the Highway 50 corridor and put through traffic underground.

2. Leave the existing loop road, businesses and resident homes intact.

3. Close off H50 at Park Avenue where traffic would either turn right for Raley’s, Marriott, Harrah’s, etc. or left toward beach, Harveys, Horizon and Edgewood on the lower loop road.

4. Close traffic off at the loop road by Edgewood and traffic either goes right or left locally onto the existing loop road as above.

5. Casino parking is off the loop road.

6. The western facing traffic tunnel would start between Kingsbury Grade and the loop road intersection on the NV side.

7. The eastern traffic tunnel would start somewhere near the entrance to Tahoe Meadows on the CA side.

8. The existing Harveys to Harrah's pedestrian tunnel would be removed and replaced with pedestrian overpass with shops and gambling space or restaurant over the road. (That would be up to Harrah's.)

9. The traffic tunnel would be one lane either way going underground with a drop off lane in front of each casino for buses, etc.

10. A middle lane for emergencies. Five lanes total underground.

11. Entrance and exit to the tunnel would be one lane down and one lane up.

12. The walking mall would be designed so traffic could go through there in an emergency.

Results:

Fantastic Walking Mall between Park Ave. and Edgewood Loop intersection.

An area that will enhance a future convention center (Hole in the Ground).

As the casinos go out of business (Horizon) can be converted to a Macy's type shopping center possibly or a large entertainment venue.

Increase in value of the “hole in the ground” and encourage someone to finish it.

Reduce air pollution and the stop and go traffic as their would be no lights for submerged through traffic until they got to Kingsbury Grade.

A mall atmosphere would exist that locals would like to go.

It will cost more than the other plans, but a public works project should be done first class.

Nearly every major city in Europe has a grand square that bans cars and is the place for locals and tourists to visit and shop.

Who is going to pay for it? All of us.

Happy trails,

Les Wright, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Timber reform plan needs tweaking

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the June 17, 2012, Sacramento Bee.***

Hammered by a lagging economy and imports of forest products from elsewhere, California’s timber industry is looking for help. It is finding it in the administration of Gov. Jerry Brown, and not just because the governor has been a recipient of campaign funds from Sierra Pacific Industries, the state’s largest single private landowner.

Brown recognizes, as we do, that sawmills and forest products are important to our rural economies, particularly in Northern California.

That doesn’t mean timber companies should get a green light to return to an era of unsustainable logging practices. But last time we checked, California was a major consumer of forest products. If we want wood, we should attempt to grow a reasonable amount of it, under environmental laws that are far more protective than those in other states.

To help the state’s timber industry, the governor has proposed a multi-part plan – much of which has generated little or no controversy. To help pay for timber harvest plan reviews (and possibly speed up the regulatory process) the governor has proposed a new fee on certain wood products sold in California. This fee, which has the support of the timber industry, could generate up to $30 million yearly, relieving pressure on the general fund.

The proposal would also extend the duration of timber harvest plans approved by the state. Currently, these plans are effective for three years, with two one-year extensions. The governor would extend that to five years, with one two-year extension. He’d also make administrative changes and attempt a pilot project to speed up permit processing times.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Teamwork allowed

Lakeview Commons to succeed

By Deb Vreeland

Does it take a vision or does it start with a vision?

South Lake Tahoe, clearly a jewel in its own right, was feeling lackluster. There was no sense of place. No central gathering area. A lack of community, some said. It's easy to pontificate on making things better – even easier to reflect on the good ole days.

But what wasn't easy at all, *was reaching consensus on what the passion of the people in a particular place would do with a prime piece of public open space and the funding to make it a special place.*



Deb Vreeland's leadership helped get Lakeview Commons through planning and design. Photo/LTN

So with far less fanfare than sheer will, a small group of individuals came together. And they kept coming together. They talked about what had transformed on the North Shore and what things looked like in other places across the country. And what things *could* look like here.

In all honesty, I don't recall the details of who all the "right" people were or where the vision and passion started,

or who is or was the main catalyst for making something happen. But I do know that by the time I came into the picture, there were clearly leaders who had an idea that something needed to happen. And perhaps most critical, they had identified funding sources for making something happen. Regrettably, there were far more naysayers and "this will never happen'" philosophizers than there were visionaries. But that's what helps make Lakeview Commons so much the success it is today.

So here we are: we have funding, we have the city and county partnering on a project, and we have volunteers who are driven to seeing the vision become a reality. I was still, at this point, on the periphery. I had dubious thoughts of my own; but I was impressed with the momentum. There was drive to make something happen, and I was honored to be asked to help see this "thing" become something. My role was to manage the process. This meant seeing that all the parts and pieces came together – on time and on budget. And the overall responsibility was making certain the vision became something you could see and touch.

When the California Tahoe Conservancy organized and orchestrated a design charette, the wheels were in motion. Top design firms sent their best and brightest to South Lake Tahoe with briefcases of colored pencils, reams of blank drawing paper, and lots of creative design power. With real-time input from community members who interacted with the designers, four vastly different design concepts were unveiled in a packed public forum. Wow! The things that could be done with this place were almost incomprehensible.

The conceptual design from Royston, Hanamoto, Alley & Abey of Mill Valley was selected for implementation, and they were contracted to develop the concepts into engineering drawings that could ultimately be funded and built. It is safe to say no one really grasped at this point how the 56 acres of developed land that was begging for improvement would ever be

transformed. And it is also clear, upon reflection, that most of us involved had no idea that something real would be built sooner than anyone expected – and on the beach no less.

Suffice it to say that whoever birthed the idea of a steering committee was – at that moment in time or forever – brilliant. Volunteers who demonstrated their willingness to devote time and energy into making a vision a reality were recruited and put to work. They spent hours reviewing designs, providing input and feedback, and simply being present at an extraordinary number of public meetings, all of which were dipping into their own personal time. After getting to know each of them individually throughout the process, I think it's safe to say that they are rewarded for every minute they spent to see this project become the reality it is today.

At this point in time, we – the steering committee, the RHAA design team, Kathay Lovell, Norma Santiago, Ray Lacey, Peter Eichar, and far too many other individuals who never missed a step of this process – were coming together on a regular basis, driving ourselves by deadlines, and working cohesively to see a plan become a project and then become a place. The dedicated public made their voices heard. They were explicit in what they wanted and what they needed. The designers drafted and redrafted. All the while, cost estimates were refined and nailed down. All of this activity took place over many months, but it never languished. We pushed and sometimes prodded and, over time, the vision crystallized.

With the dedicated support of the California Tahoe Conservancy leaders and the cooperative team work of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and other agency representatives, the budget, the permits, and a plan for construction came together. The plans were approved and a construction bid document was prepared. The planning, permitting and design phase was not complete. A hand off to the construction team was next.

What took somewhere on the order of four plus years to

conceive, create, convince and construct was finally a reality and no longer a vision. A true example of dedication, collaboration and a willingness to believe is now resting majestically on the South Shore of Lake Tahoe – for everyone to enjoy.

Revel in it!

Deb Vreeland was project manager through the planning phase of Lakeview Commons. Prior commitments will keep her from today's 2pm dedication.

Opinion: Time to act to keep California parks open

By Michael Brune and Kathryn Phillips

Are you a native of California? Neither are we. In fact, about one in five Californians were born in a different state. Across the United States, millions of people grow up seeing pictures of California's stunning redwoods, mountains, deserts and beautiful beaches – and dream of visiting them some day. Some of us are lucky enough to become Californians who can explore these wonders through California's parks. How long will that remain the case?

This summer, when the Brune family goes camping in Mendocino's Hendy Woods State Park, we'll be thankful that this pocket of old-growth California redwoods has earned a reprieve, along with roughly half of the 70 parks originally marked for closure July 1. It'll be bittersweet, though, because the

crisis that faces California's state parks remains unsolved. Although Hendy Woods will stay open – for now – many parks are virtually certain to close, and those that remain open will continue struggling to operate under severe budget constraints.

Our state parks provide both recreation and a network of amazing ecological diamonds where we can find respite in nature, view wildlife and rejuvenate from the pressures of city living. Last Memorial Day, Californians made 10,000 camping reservations. That's a lot of s'mores.

Michael Brune is the executive director of the Sierra Club. Kathryn Phillips is director of Sierra Club California.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Legalized online gaming would be good for California

By Richard Bronson

I love to look into the past to find clues to the present and the future. It is amazing how you can connect the dots of history and visualize the road ahead. You can see clues in the rearview mirror that are shaping the world of the Internet and online gaming, the most exciting new technology industry in the world today.

Interestingly, I am seeing more of these bread crumbs dusted along the highways and byways of California, where the prospective gold rush of this new industry is a sleeping

giant, ready for its awakening moment of impact.

It was in San Francisco in the 1840s and 1850s that California's gaming legacy was born – during the boomtown days of the mad dash for rare nuggets in the Sierra Nevada. Card rooms and poker parlors dotted the avenues and you could wager on everything from jumping frogs to arm-wrassling on any corner. Now, more than 150 years later, there are as many types of legalized and regulated gambling in California as in any place in America or the world.

Richard "Skip" Bronson is chairman of U.S. Digital Gaming.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Generation Entitlement has more lessons to learn

By Ruben Navarrette Jr.

I submit that most of us have a commencement address tucked away, containing some choice words of wisdom that we'd love to share with high school or college graduates if we ever had the chance.

This year, David McCullough Jr. – an English teacher at Wellesley High School in Massachusetts and the son of the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David McCullough – was given that chance. And he didn't waste an ounce of it. In fact, he turned in an A-plus performance that has talk radio and the

Internet buzzing.



Ruben
Navarrette
Jr.

Commencement speakers usually tell graduates what they want to hear – how great they are, that the world is waiting for them with open arms, that they can accomplish anything in life they set their minds to. McCullough provided the Wellesley graduates a valuable service by telling them what they needed to hear – namely, "You're not special."

It's a simple message. But it's an essential one. That's because, as McCullough told the graduates, too many of them have been "pampered, cosseted, doted upon, helmeted, bubble-wrapped" and otherwise protected from the cold, cruel world for too long.

The message must have been difficult to hear for those parents in the bleachers who did the pampering. They did their children no favors by teaching the little darlings that the world revolves around them.

These are the kids who, as infants 18 years ago, prompted us to drive carefully because the little yellow sign in the rear window of the family minivan warned us that there was a "Baby on Board." These are the students whose self-esteem, we feared, would suffer if teachers graded their papers with a red marker. And these are the young athletes who were all assured a trophy just for showing up.

It doesn't matter if the world doesn't see them as special. What matters is that they see themselves this way. Move over,

Generation X. This is “Generation E,” and the “E” stands for “entitlement.” And, for many, what they feel entitled to is our undivided attention and constant adoration.

Generation E might not be anything special. But McCullough’s speech certainly was, and it was because of lines such as: “Dream big. Work hard. Think for yourself. Love everything you love, everyone you love, with all your might.” And this: “Climb the mountain not to plant your flag, but to embrace the challenge, enjoy the air and behold the view. Climb it so you can see the world, not so the world can see you.”

This is what I would have added to McCullough’s speech: “Success is easy to handle. But if you’re lucky, as you go through life, you’re going to fail. Maybe a lot. After all, if you get everything you want, it’s a good sign that you’re not setting your goals high enough and you need new ones. You’ll get knocked down. Maybe often. Everyone does. It’s how you respond to the defeats and setbacks — whether you can persevere and press on — that will shape your character and determine your destiny.”

This generation doesn’t need any more coddling. What it needs is straight talk and a reality check. And, in at least one high school, students got both thanks to an English teacher who did his homework.

Ruben Navarrette Jr. is a columnist with the Washington Post Writers Group.

TRPA: Angora creates personal

and professional challenges

By Joanne Marchetta

I was working at the kitchen table in the middle of a languid Sunday afternoon in June when I heard Nancy call to me, “Hey, come look at this.” We climbed to our second floor and both took a look from our upper deck. We could see a small white wisp of smoke far off in the distance toward Angora Ridge, and remarked to one another, “Hmm, that looks like a fire.” I recall the memory fleeting across my consciousness of the eerie experience of the Oakland Hills fire from years back when I lived in the Bay Area. And I immediately came back to the present and became aware of the day’s weather in Tahoe – unusually high winds and hot.



Angora Fire --
5 years later

“Not good,” I thought to myself. I felt my stomach pinch with uneasiness, but I went back inside hoping for the best despite an edge of disquiet. Only five minutes later, just as I settled back into my task, I again heard Nancy call, “You really need to come outside and look at this.”

This time I heard the concern and emphasis in her voice and it left me a little startled. I hurried outside.

As we climbed up on the boulders across the street from our house, that white wisp in the distance we saw only minutes ago had transformed into a now pervasive, ominous black cloud

hanging low over distant neighborhoods and Angora Creek drainage. As we stood there, other neighbors too began to gather at the top of the boulders to gain a vantage point. We looked at one another and chattered nervously.

One remarked, “I’ve lived here 20 years; this is serious.”

Another climbed down hurriedly off the boulders and jogged toward the fire station only three doors down on the corner. Minutes later, she returned saying, “Yes, it’s been reported and they’re on it. It’s under control.” We could take no real comfort from the report because of the dissonance of the scene we were living.

Now as we watched, we could make out bright red flames through the black smoke. It was clearly a fire and it was spreading fast. It was obviously in the tree canopy and the wind was whipping the speed of the spread. The neighbors looked at one another a last time and agreed, “We need to get out of here now.”



One of Joanne Marchetta's first priorities was to make sure her dog Zin got out of the fire safely. Photo/Joy Strotz

As we scrambled off the boulders, I took one last look that said it all. From that high vantage, we could no longer see through the wall of black smoke, but we could see the orange red flames of the crown fire on Clear View Circle only a block and a half away. The fire was headed straight toward us and was nearly on us.

It had been less than 20 minutes since we first saw the small white wisp in the distance.

We scrambled off the boulders and sprinted to the house. Now my heart was racing. We threw open the door, looked at one another with that twinge of adrenaline charged panic and succinctly agreed, “Get the dog and the fire box.” Beyond that, I recall grabbing one arm-full of clothes out of the downstairs bedroom closet, another arm-full from the chest of drawers and scrambled into the garage. I threw what I had grabbed into the back seat of the car. As I had passed by the kitchen window, I could see that the roof of the house behind ours had caught fire and recall yelling, “We need to get out now, the house behind us is burning!”

Nancy made sure the dog was safely secured in the car. Then we each stood for a brief moment in the garage with one car parked behind the other. Nancy said, “Should we take one car.” I said “No, we need to take both; I think it will be all that we have left after this.”

We quickly arranged to meet at the Raley’s parking lot to regroup. And as we pulled away from the house, we joined a procession of cars headed toward the Y, moving slowly but moving steadily away.

Only minutes later we rendezvoused at the Y shopping center, feeling bewildered and anxious. Noticeable were the burning and charred embers floating on the winds of that afternoon, and the smoke stinging our eyes and airways. We spoke briefly to neighbors again to trade cell phone numbers to make sure we

could reach one another.

I said, “We need to get out of the basin, it’s still spreading.”

Not sure exactly where we could go, we knew we couldn’t stay stationary and again headed east on 50 trying to put distance between us and the fire. We stopped briefly at a point familiar at least to me, the TRPA parking lot, and regrouped again. Even at that distance, embers swirled in the air around us, carried miles from where we had last seen the fire. From there, we called friends in Gardnerville, asking if we could head their way. “Of course,” they said. “We are in Placerville and headed home now.”

They knew nothing at that point of the day’s event except they could see smoke even in Placerville, so they knew there was fire somewhere. We hung up the phone and dropped down Kingsbury out of the basin.

That evening, looking from the valley back toward the 10,000 foot mountains of the Lake Tahoe Basin, black smoke poured relentlessly out above the peaks into the upper atmosphere. We talked with our friends, but I don’t really recall anything we discussed. We were glued to local TV news reports. All I recall is the image of a certain TV clip replaying again and again that showed our back yard on fire, the dead and down logs in the back of the lot were burning. We couldn’t see the house in the blackness of the background of the video footage, but every time it played, I kept straining to try to see through to the image of the house. It lent no answers.

I haven’t owned or watched TV in 20 years for exactly this reason – it disassociates truth from experience. I didn’t know what to think, and ended up thinking the worst based on the TV clips, but honestly I could barely think a lucid thought at all. I felt numb and appreciative that we had good friends to be with in that moment.

I spoke briefly at about 9pm with Norma Santiago, El Dorado County supervisor and one of my TRPA board members. She knew I lived in the county, and was kind enough to call to find out my house number and location. She said she would let me know if she found out anything definite. In the middle of the night, my cell phone rang.

“Your house is standing.”

I made her repeat it, both the house number and the result. Again she said, “The best information we have is that your house is standing.”

I thanked her and cried just to release pure anxiety.

We stayed at MontBleu for 10 days afterward: with the dog in our hotel room, living out of the trunk of the car where we had flung the random belongings we grabbed without even a moment to think, and wearing the eclectic mix of clothes we had grabbed in the flurry to flee.

We were lucky. We were among those able to return to a house intact. We had defensible space, and that may have helped to save us from devastation. Even so, the fire seemed capricious. The winds had been so fierce and squirrely and the fire moved so fast, it was hard to say why one and not another house burned. The house with the cedar shake roof just across Lake Tahoe Boulevard withstood the siege while almost all of the houses farther up Boulder Mountain burned. It turned out that the fire claimed only two houses on our street – both on the corner and directly across from the Lake Valley Fire Station – nothing but cinders left of them. The fire melted the siding off a third house and then moved on.

The experience left me with an indelible truth. We are blessed to live in a forest and to call it home. With that privilege comes a special responsibility to live lightly, responsibly, and as special stewards of this magical and spectacularly beautiful place we are so fortunate to call home and haven.

I thank the firefighters for risking their lives to protect us and I thank the community for coming together afterward to help those who lost so much. I am proud to call Tahoe my home and my reverence for the place and the people has only grown since the humbling experience of nature's indomitable force that we were so powerless to reckon on that night of June 24, 2007.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and was chief counsel for TRPA at the time of the Angora Fire.

Opinion: If only we had Walter Cronkite today

By Tina Brown, Newsweek

What a lucky dog Walter Cronkite was. You really could be the Voice of God in an era when all America was called to worship at 7 o'clock every night at a temple called the evening news and there was an oracular ring to every scripted utterance. Cronkite was a construct of national authority. Because TV news had an unchallenged monopoly on America's attention span, he controlled not just the message of the news but also the message of himself as Uncle Walter, the man America could trust. That reassuring probity was all the more treasured because his rise coincided with the country's descent into the swamp of Vietnam, a war with which his reputation for honesty became intricately interwoven.

Yet after reading Douglas Brinkley's superb new biography, Cronkite, media critic Howard Kurtz, *Newsweek's* Washington

bureau chief, decides that today he might well be writing that Cronkite should be kicked off the air. Uncle Walter committed all manner of journalistic infractions, from taking freebie trips to manipulating a softball taped interview to make himself look combative. He even caroused with strippers.

Of course ours is not an age of icons: we are too cynical and irreverent now—and just plain nasty—to leave people on a pedestal for too long. So the larger question is what use Cronkite made of his cloak of immunity from apparent human weakness. The answer is that he used it judiciously. Nobody who saw his broadcasts will ever forget that evening in 1968, when back in New York after weeks in the jungles of Vietnam, he shed his ostensibly neutral role to deliver the verdict to the nation that, for all the propaganda, the war was unwinnable. He could no longer accept watching Americans fight and die for a lost cause because politicians would not admit the obvious. That wasn't humbug. That was brave.

Perhaps we could have done with Cronkite when TV networks allowed themselves to be bullied by the Bush administration into jingoistic coverage of the invasion of Iraq and Fox was calling out dissenters as unpatriotic. One likes to think he would have told it straight and, more important, people would have believed him—if only because there was no one else to listen to. Today, attention is so fractured, there is no commanding voice capable of making a distracted American public focus on the consequences of another unwinnable war. Thanks to media absenteeism and an all-volunteer Army, there is a heart-breaking disconnect between the men and women who sacrifice so much and the oblivious rest of us who don't.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Thatcher predicted single European currency wouldn’t work

By Cal Thomas

One of many things left out of the film “The Iron Lady” was Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s warnings on the effects a single currency would have on the economies of European nations. Thatcher’s premonitions place her among the great political prophets of all time.

On the single currency, Peter Oborne, a columnist for the *London Daily Telegraph*, writes, “Mrs. Thatcher foresaw with painful clarity the devastation it was bound to cause. Her autobiography records how she warned John Major, her euro-friendly chancellor of the exchequer, that the single currency could not accommodate both industrial powerhouses such as Germany and smaller countries such as Greece.” Thatcher predicted the currency would harm poorer countries because it would “devastate their inefficient economies.”

The idea of a European Union modeled on the United States was unlikely to succeed from the beginning because, unlike American states, European countries lack a common bond. There are different languages, different histories (Colorado, for example, never invaded Nebraska) and different religions, including for six decades, atheism imposed by communist dictators in Eastern Europe.



Cal Thomas

How can a European “E Pluribus Unum” be forged out of that?

BBC reporter Laurence Knight stated the obvious when he summed up Spain’s financial disaster by noting its citizens during the relatively brief “good times” of the 1990s spent much more on housing and other material goods than they could afford. Sound familiar? Living within one’s means was a lesson forgotten by individuals and governments, whose main preoccupation – in Europe and America – has been giving people what they want in hopes they’ll re-elect the politicians who dispensed the goodies. That formula has contributed to an unemployment rate in Spain approaching 25 percent. Spain last weekend was approved for a bailout of up to $125 billion from the eurozone, the fourth country to ask for a loan since Europe’s debt crisis began.

Knight wrote last month, “Unfortunately for Spain, it shares a currency with Germany. That means Spain can no longer simply devalue the peseta – something that would automatically make its workers cheaper and more competitive in the world. There is no peseta to devalue.”

As columnist William Rees-Mogg wrote last Friday intThe *Times*, “So far as British opinion goes, Europe is seen as a cost to be borne rather than a loyalty to be cherished.”

After all this, the “conservative” British government, still ignoring Thatcher’s warnings, is proposing a referendum that, if approved by voters, would move Britain closer to the European Union. The *Daily Telegraph* reported, “EU leaders are discussing moves toward more integrated financial, fiscal and even political systems among the 17 countries that use the euro.”

Are they mad? Why would Britain want to associate itself with governments and economies (and people) that have behaved so

irresponsibly? During the Cold War, Britain did not try to integrate its economy with that of the Soviet Union. In Europe, union has not brought unity, nor can it. Does Britain want to share more of the continent's misery, or should it try instead to point its people and the eurozone states to real change with freer and more empowered individuals, not government, leading the way?

Again, Margaret Thatcher was right when she said, "A democratic Europe of nation states could be a force for liberty, enterprise and open trade. But, if creating a United States of Europe overrides these goals, the new Europe will be one of subsidy and protection."

Most profoundly, Thatcher warned, "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels."

That is precisely the seductive siren call the "conservative" British government now hears. It is a call, that, if answered "yes" by voters will wreck Britain's struggling economy and potentially cause it to go down the drain along with most of the other economies on the continent.

Today's politicians can't pretend they were not warned.

Cal Thomas is co-author (with Bob Beckel) of the book "Common Ground: How to Stop the Partisan War That is Destroying America".