

Gramm.. campaigning on the issues

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John Sharp, A&M student body president in 1971-72, is campaign coordinator, which involves setting fund-raising events and organizing county campaign chairmen. Sharp, who declined an earlier offer to work for the Bentsen presidential campaign, was a budget examiner for the Legislative Budget Board two-and-a-half years before resigning in December to work for Gramm.

Organizing Gramm's media efforts is Phil Nicolaidis, a Yale graduate. Nicolaidis ran the media campaign for conservative U. S. Sen. James Buckley, R-N.Y., in a race The New York Times called "the upset of the century." Nicolaidis also aided Republican Hank Grover in his surprisingly close race against favored Democrat Briscoe in 1972.

Dennis Goehring, president of the A&M, is the campaign treasurer.

For Gramm's campaign, Nicolaidis has organized a media blitz that has saturated the state with press releases and "Gramm-grams." The son of a disabled veteran, Gramm was born and raised in Georgia, attended Georgia Military Academy, and entered the University of Georgia in 1961. Less than six years later he received a Ph.D. in economics.

"I certainly don't look like a movie star and I'm not very dramatic," he said in a state capitol reporter. "I have been campaigning on the issues," he continued, "and convince people I am sincere and know what I am talking about."

In 1967 Gramm joined A&M's economics department and has audited every course offered by the department.

"My goal was to be a good economist. I made that," Gramm says. "My next goal was to be a full professor. I made that."

Gramm was not interested in trying to advance up the academic ladder but instead tried his hand as a part-time economic consultant, which, he says, earns him more than his salary as a full professor. As the energy crisis began making

headlines, Gramm ventured away from the university more often to make speeches. He said he was encouraged by a following, mostly in the business community, which liked to hear what he had to say, and by his peers, who were impressed with his oratory abilities.

One A&M economics professor said, "He missed his calling. He would have made millions as a faith healer."

University and economics department press releases gave Gramm more access to media coverage. In January of last year a past president of the Association of Former Students and an independent oilman, Joe H. Moore, gave the association \$5,000 to establish the "Free Enterprise Study Fund," which was to aid Gramm's speechmaking efforts. (The fund paid for secretarial help and for the salary of an economics student who wrote press releases and prepared a mailing list.)

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His speechmaking snowballed to the point where he had to take a leave-of-absence from teaching in the spring. On one September day he appeared on a television program in Corpus Christi and addressed groups in Fort Worth and Albuquerque. Later that day he attended a convention in Anaheim, Calif. where he spoke on the same program with President Gerald Ford. He later boasted that he received an ovation which was twice as long as the President's.

Gramm has had two articles published in The Wall Street Journal which attracted hundreds of letters and kept the phones ringing in his and President Jack K. Williams' offices.

Last year he helped found an Austin citizen's lobby, Common Sense Inc., which is somewhat the conservative answer to the national Common Cause lobby group. Gramm has since taken a leave-of-absence as a board member of Common Sense to run for the Senate.

But it's in Washington, D.C., not Austin, where our currency is being created with printing presses, and, according to Gramm, our economic woes originate. Gramm had his eyes on Olin E. Teague's seat in 1973 when it appeared that the College Station Congressman might step down to become head of the Veterans Administration, and later, when Teague's health deteriorated and his retirement seemed imminent.

But Gramm didn't want to oppose Teague, who has been the 6th District's representative since 1946. In January 1974, Gramm attended hearings and evaluated energy bills for Teague, who he got to know personally and admire as a politician.

With typical immodesty, Gramm explained why he chose to oppose Senator Bentsen.

"There are two reasons. First, I understand the issues; he doesn't. Secondly, I have solutions; he doesn't."

Gramm contends that by trying to project a "middle of the road" image to bolster his presidential aspira-

tions, Bentsen has "made a lot of enemies" and "has alienated the people who put him into office."

Gramm says that his own philosophy makes him an enemy of big business, even though he supports the oil depletion allowance and

wants fewer governmental controls over the business sector.

"To say I have the support of big oil is ludicrous. I have the support from the engineers and geologists, but not from the fat cats in the board room," Gramm said.

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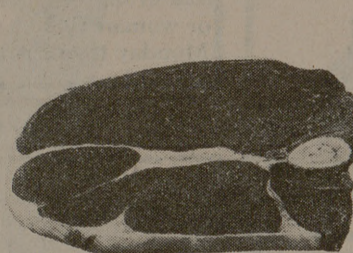
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