

## British elites jump on Wilson bandwagon

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Kathy Klenetsky

Several weeks after the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, Lord William Rees-Mogg, the London *Times* editor-in-chief turned weekly columnist, who has been the leading "Clinton-basher" among Britain's Club of the Isles aristocracy, conducted a fact-finding tour of the United States. Upon his return to England, he penned a column, sadly noting that the Conservative Revolution's favorite candidate for the 1996 Republican Party Presidential nomination, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, was "unelectable." Gramm's problem, he lamented, "is that people do not like him. His colleagues do not like him in the Senate, and voters do not like him on television . . . he sounds and looks like a curmudgeon."

Within days of Lord Rees-Mogg's pronouncement, the American airwaves were jammed with stories about Senator Gramm's investments in pornographic films, his efforts to win early release for a convicted drug felon, and other sleazy actions way out of line for someone courting the votes of the Christian Right.

While there is no evidence linking the Rees-Mogg assessment to Phil Gramm's run-in with the American news media, the timing is noteworthy. The trashing of Gramm, furthermore, created an early vacuum within the ranks of GOP frontrunners, with Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (Kansas), no favorite of the Mont Pelerin Society crowd within the party and in London, suddenly looking more and more like a breakaway winner in the GOP 1996 primaries.

Lord Rees-Mogg, the publisher, along with Oxford grad James Dale Davidson, of the American populist newsletter *Strategic Investment*, did, however, make his own choice known for the GOP nod. And it wasn't Bob Dole, whose bellicose confrontation in January with British Prime Minister John Major over the Bosnia conflict placed him right behind Bill Clinton on London's hate list.

In the same May 4, 1995 London *Times* column in which

he pronounced Gramm's Presidential bid "dead on arrival," His Lordship waxed eloquent over California Gov. Pete Wilson. "If [Gramm's] lack of personal appeal rules him out, and I have found not a single Republican who warms to him as an individual, the race will be between Mr. Clinton and Mr. Wilson. . . . Many Republicans would probably prefer a more ideological and less pragmatic candidate. But he has some key assets: He has been a strong governor, he is an open market conservative, a successful campaigner, an able man, and he does not come from Washington. The odds look as good as a Presidential candidate ever enjoys at this stage. Mr. Wilson probably now has a better than even chance of beating Mr. Dole for the nomination. If nominated, Mr. Wilson has a better than even chance of beating Mr. Clinton in 1996."

Lord Rees-Mogg was not just speaking as a distant admirer. On May 1, he was present at the Willard Hotel in Washington for a Wilson campaign fundraiser, and was personally most impressed with the governor's wife, Gayle Edlund Wilson.

A month later, on June 5, the Hollinger Corp.'s *Daily Telegraph* ran its own glowing endorsement of Wilson for President in a two-thirds page piece by Washington bureau chief Stephen Robinson. Robinson described Wilson as the candidate whose views most closely mirror those of the American people, and labeled his 1994 gubernatorial election victory one of the great come-from-behind victories in history.

### Bush-leaguers jump in

By the time Rees-Mogg completed his fact-finding jaunt and pronounced Wilson the Club of the Isles' "favorite son" candidate to defeat Clinton, the Wilson campaign organization had already been buttressed by the arrival of a small

army of veterans of the George Bush apparatus.

These included Craig Fuller, who served as chief of staff to Bush when he was vice president, and now functions as manager of Wilson's campaign; Robert Mosbacher, secretary of commerce during Bush's Presidency, and now a partner with Bush and Bush's secretary of state, James Baker, in a Houston-based business; Richard Bond, former deputy chief of staff during Bush's vice presidency; Stuart K. Spencer, the veteran professional political consultant who oversaw Bush's 1992 reelection campaign; and James Lake, a consultant to Bush's 1992 campaign.

Wilson's campaign has recruited Massachusetts Gov. William Weld as its finance chairman. The scion of an old New York family that earned its fortune as Tory junior partners of the British in the China opium trade, Weld was thrust into national political prominence in 1986, when, with then-Vice President Bush's backing, he was promoted from U.S. Attorney in Boston to Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division. His credentials: He instigated and oversaw the railroad prosecution of Lyndon LaRouche.

Bush himself has not yet endorsed a Republican candidate, but he was an outspoken supporter of Wilson's gubernatorial bid last year. Sources close to Bush report that he is angling to be the Republican Party's self-annointed "king-maker," and he has dreams of parlaying a Wilson victory in 1996 into a spot on the 2000 GOP Presidential ticket for his son George Bush, Jr., the current governor of Texas.

Even Henry Kissinger, recently knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his decades of slavish loyalty to the House of Windsor and the Club of the Isles, has been sighted on the West Coast attempting to whip up support for a Wilson candidacy.

In keeping with this vote of confidence from the Thatcherites and the Bush-leaguers, over the past year, Wilson has sought to transform himself from a "moderate" Republican who championed homosexual and abortion rights and embraced environmentalism, while opposing California's anti-property tax Proposition 13, to a demagogic advocate of the main tenets of the Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich's "Contract on America."

That metamorphosis began during Wilson's 1994 gubernatorial reelection effort, when he turned a 20-point deficit into a win at the polls, largely by jumping on the anti-immigration bandwagon. Wilson became a champion of Proposition 187, voted up by California voters last November, that prohibits illegal immigrants from receiving any social services, including medical care and schooling, except in emergency situations.

Since then, Wilson has repeatedly cited Prop 187 as an example of the Confederacy-inspired "states' rights" approach he has enthusiastically embraced.

Shortly after his reelection, Wilson gave a speech in Washington, D.C., at the Heritage Foundation, one of the bastions of the Conservative Revolution, in which he asserted

that the success of the racist Prop 187 proves that California is a "sovereign state," and "not a colony of the federal government."

### Gramm's X-rated campaign

It is no secret that some of President Clinton's campaign advisers had been quietly hoping that Phil Gramm would sweep the GOP Presidential nomination in 1996. While the *Los Angeles Times* dubbed Pete Wilson, a notoriously dry public speaker, "robo-pol," Lyndon LaRouche had labeled Gramm "Forrest Gump's evil twin." Many Democratic pollsters believed that Gramm would pose the least serious challenge to the President's reelection.

Gramm's early fall did not come in reaction to the fact that he was peddling an extreme brand of Conservative Revolution austerity that would make Hitler's Economics Minister Hjalmar Schacht smile in his grave. Gramm was caught in a porno scandal at a particularly embarrassing moment: the day he appeared side-by-side with Christian Coalition head Ralph Reed to embrace that organization's "Contract with the American Family."

The story broke in the June 5, 1995 issue of the *New Republic*, under the byline of John B. Judis. It seems that in 1974, Gramm had poured \$15,000 into a pornographic movie about the Nixon White House, called *White House Madness*. Through his brother-in-law, Gramm was introduced to the work of director Mark Lester, who had already earned a reputation for his 1971 pornographic spoof on Nixon, *Tricia's Wedding*, which starred a San Francisco troupe of gay female impersonators called the Coquettes.

Lester later made a pornographic film, *Truck Stop Women*, that so titillated Gramm that he sent off, unsolicited, a \$15,000 check to back the film's distribution. The film was already oversubscribed, but Gramm was promised a piece of the action in Lester's next film, *Beauty Queens*. Gramm, according to his former brother-in-law, read the script and loved the film; however, Lester shelved the project in favor of a sequel about Nixon. Again, Gramm plowed through the script, gave his blessing, even though the movie was likely to be slapped with an X rating by the industry rating board, and placed his money on the project. Already planning to run for public office, Gramm arranged to have his investment in *White House Madness* conduited through the wife of a fellow faculty member at Texas A&M.

After the entire international media jumped on the original *New Republic* story, *New Yorker* writer Sidney Blumenthal obtained a copy of the Nixon movie into which Gramm sank his \$15,000. It included a sexually explicit scene in the Oval Office.

In a Presidential election campaign in which Bob Dole has already made an issue out of Hollywood's corrupting influence on America's younger generation, Phil Gramm was obviously the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.