

Editorial

More sanity needed

The defeat of the Balanced Budget Amendment—even by only one vote—constitutes an important victory for national mental health. But the war, so to speak, is by no means over. Not only has the fetish of a balanced budget not been exorcised, but the amendment itself can be put on the table again, at any time Senator Dole decides.

The amendment would deprive the United States of one of the crucial instruments of sovereignty—its ability to call upon national credit—and for this reason it is without doubt unconstitutional. But a Congress which rejected the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution (which protects against illegal search and seizure) when it was offered as an amendment to discredit the excesses of the new crime bill, cannot be expected to be any more careful of the Constitution in this instance. Should it pass the Senate at some future date, and be signed by the President, it will go down in history as the Unbalanced Mind Amendment.

Which brings us to the question of Phil Gramm's presidential campaign, which is being orchestrated around his drive to impose the lunatic fiscal irresponsibility otherwise packaged in the so-called Contract with America. Gramm has yet to learn poor Ollie North's lesson, that the American population has not yet gone so far down the road to perdition that it will stomach an overt attack on Social Security benefits; nor are voters stupid enough to accept the verbal assurances, which the Republicans refuse to put into writing, that they have no intention of raiding the fund.

Gramm exudes malice. But there is also a carnival sideshow quality to his presidential candidacy. Lyndon LaRouche has described his posturing on the platform as "a goose in heat." Others have remarked on how much he resembles Lady Thatcher. One wag was heard to say, "Oliver North was a drug runner, but Phil Gramm is a dope!"

Because he is such an unappealing character, it would be an easy trap for a more serious candidate to feel that Gramm would make an ideal opponent in the next election. This is, however, a great mistake, akin to that made by Germans who believed that Hitler

would so discredit himself that he was not a serious threat, no matter what the crudely vicious insanities he peddled before he came to power.

The Conservative Revolution is as fascist in its ideology as the agendas pushed by Hitler and Mussolini. There is precisely the same stench of populist rage against the poor, the weak, and perhaps not Jews, but certainly Mexicans and African-Americans, as we saw among Hitler's radical supporters. How else can we understand the willingness of Gramm and his followers to starve hapless children whose parents might be too poor, or even incompetent, to adequately provide for them!

Gramm has actually played an evil role in American politics. In 1981, he co-authored the unworkable Gramm-Rudman Act. The final result of this artificial cap on government spending was that the federal debt doubled, and state finances were bankrupted by hundreds of billions of dollars in unfunded mandates.

In 1982, then Vice President George Bush wrote a preface to a book of philosophical garbage written by Gramm. Today, not so surprisingly, Texas Gov. George W. Bush is out there vigorously campaigning for his father's protégé. While Henry Kissinger has come out endorsing William Weld for President, Weld's statement that he will not be running in 1996 has led some to speculate on that hair-raising horror, a Gramm-Weld ticket with the backing of the Bushes and Henry Kissinger.

Already more and more Americans are waking up to the monstrosity of the "new conservatives" whom they elected. They are beginning to recognize that the Balanced Budget Amendment is no quick fix for their economic problems and their fears over the future, and that it is no more acceptable a solution than Auschwitz. As the enormity of the financial crisis becomes too large to pass off as a series of random episodes, more and more Americans will be forced to look for serious solutions to socio-economic calamity. Then it will certainly be "Goodbye Phil," as it was "Goodbye Ollie." But perhaps by then it will be too late to right the situation except at a terrible cost.