

Rep. Gray, Baron of House Budget Committee, Carries Important Big Stick

Black firm grew 154% last year

By CONSTANCE MITCHELL

On a recent Sunday morning, Rep. William H. Gray III, chairman of the House Budget Committee, speaks in the emptiness of a Philadelphia television studio. "Trent and I are going to work out this budget on your show this morning, right, Trent?" he says jocularly to Rep. Trent Lott (R-Miss.), the House minority whip, and panel members of "Face the Nation" in Washington.

Half an hour later, the Rev. William H. Gray III, senior minister of Philadelphia's Bright Hope Baptist Church, telephones a church trustee from his Cadillac Seville.

"Where are they in the service?" he asks. "Have them sing another selection if I'm not there for the announcements."

Within minutes, the Rev. Gray, wearing black robes, is standing in the pulpit. He is

not a Bible thumper, though his voice soars over the "amens" sprinkled around the congregation. It is Mother's Day so he expands on an image from Proverbs that a virtuous woman is like a merchant's ship:

"... Mothers are entrusted with a special cargo... Mother had to go through the storms for us. When I look back and I think about that, I wonder how they got home."

Afterward, Gray dashes to catch a plane for Dallas.

"Okay, 'bye Bill," Andrea Gray, his wife, says matter-of-factly, positioning herself at the door of his office in the church to wave him off. She is left with two family cars and three children, one of whom is sitting at his father's desk, ringing a miniature Liberty Bell.

"I'm the mother ship," she laughs.

"I was elected to Congress," Gray says with a smile. "I was called to preach. One I do because people allow me to do it. The other I have to do."

Bill Gray, the 43-year-old



Rep. William Gray

minister and politician, is this season's congressional star, say members on both sides of the political aisle.

Last week the House, by a 258-170 vote, passed its version of a deficit-reduction package, the climax of months of strategy and accommodation by its prime mover, Bill Gray.

"He's talked to all the committee chairmen," says Martin Frost (D-Texas), referring to authorizing committees who didn't want programs cut. "I don't think all those committee chairmen have been happy with what's been considered, but they appreciate that he's come out and talked to them and tried to accommodate them to the extent possible."

The budget made the headlines, but Gray also saw the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985 that he introduced go to the full House, and helped get HUD aid for residents of the Philadelphia neighborhood in his district that was gutted by a massive fire after a controversial police bombing. (Gray toured the site last weekend with other members of the Pennsylvania delegation and saw Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode briefly. Gray said that before the police acted to evict members of the radical MOVE sect, Goode "called to advise me they were going to take action... because the situation

had gotten out of hand.")

But he will not comment on what happened. "I don't make judgments based on media accounts," Gray said this week. "I haven't talked to enough people involved in the situation — leadership or community people — because of what I'm doing here on the budget..."

In Washington, Gray has been hailed as a consensus maker among liberals and conservatives.

"It's maybe his professional training as a minister," says Rep. Mike Lowry (D-Wash). "He's a great judge of knowing how far he can push his members. He never gets mad."

Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) calls him "one of the brightest stars of the Democratic Party" and praises him as "someone who doesn't fuzzle the issues."

Being the black, liberal congressman from Pennsylvania's 80 percent black 2nd Congressional District has intensified the spotlight. When speculation rose that the committee might freeze Social Security cost-of-living increases, some members said Gray was the *only* person who could get away with cutting domestic programs. Lynn Martin (R-Ill.), a member of the Budget Committee, puts it this way: "If Jim Jones (D-Okla.), Gray's predecessor as Budget chairman) tried to limit urban programs, he's being a southern Democrat. If I did it, I'm being the heartless Republican. If Bill Gray does it, it's because it has to be done fiscally."

One night, Bill Gray remembers driving his car through the garage of the Rayburn building. In the passenger seat was Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio). As they entered, the guard flagged them, and Gray pointed to his members' tag without stopping. On the way out, the guard was blocking the exit, his hand on his gun holster.

Joshua Smith, founder and chief executive of Maxima Corp., never intended the Bethesda, Md.-based information processing company to be just a mom and pop operation. But, he says, "I would have preferred to grow a little more controllably — maybe 50 percent a year."

Maxima grew 154 percent last year, making it one of the fastest-growing private companies in the USA, according to *Inc.* magazine. Last week Maxima ranked 38th on *Black Enterprise* magazine's list of the nation's largest black-owned businesses.

At a time when 80 percent of all small businesses fail before their fifth year, Maxima's sales have soared from \$200,000 in 1979 — the year it was founded — to more than \$22 million in 1984. Employment has grown from five in one office to 365 in 13 offices.

Smith, 44, had no formal business training when he founded the company.

Aided by a \$100,000 Small Business Administration development loan and SBA's controversial set-aside program, which allows minority-owned companies to win government contracts without competitive bidding, Maxima has pushed its way into the tightknit club of government contractors. Last year, Maxima ranked as one of the Energy Department's 100 prime contractors. Last year, too, Martin Marietta Corp. paid \$1 million to own 18 percent of Maxima.

Although Maxima has had little trouble gaining respect in an industry dominated by the likes of Lockheed Corp.

Donaldson dropping D.C. Democratic Post

Ivanhoe Donaldson, a former top aide to Mayor Marion Barry, probably will step down next month as chairman of the D.C. Democratic State Committee after serving one term, according to sources.

Donaldson, an executive with the E.F. Hutton Co. and

and TRW Inc., critics say the company's true test will come when it must compete for government contracts on its own next year. The company loses its favorable status because of a rule limiting participation to seven years.

Smith bristles at the notion that participation has been a major factor in his company's success. The program gave the company entree, he says, "But it did not bring us the contracts



Joshua Smith

"... We get work because we're good at what we do, not because of SBA."

As proof, he points to the 10-year, \$30 million contract he was awarded last year to operate the Naval Civilian Personnel Data System computer center in Oak Ridge, Tenn. That contract, which will accommodate 350,000 naval employees in 150 offices worldwide will continue long after Maxima leaves the SBA program.

"We're growing so fast that soon we will be competing for larger jobs with mainstream companies," Smith says. "In that sense, the party is just starting."

the chief architect, has indicated to friends that he may give up the post to devote more time to his business affairs and tend to his legal problems. He is the target of a far-ranging federal grand jury investigation into his past government and business activities.



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