

About three quarters of the voters among the Northern California Bulletin readers planned to vote for Walter Mondale, the Democratic Party candidate for President, according to a random sample of 751 during the week before the election. Church-state separation and world peace seemed to be the dominant issues in the selection.

The actual figures were 77 per cent for Mondale and 23 per cent for Reagan. That was about 10 per cent higher than the national Jewish voting percentage for Mondale, according to most national surveys. But the 1980 pro-Carter vote of this random sample had also been 10 per cent higher than the national Jewish voting. The Bay Area Jewish community tends to be that much more Democratic voting, both because of its economic and educational character, and because it is part of a preponderantly Democratic region.

The New York Times/CBS "exit" poll reported that 66 per cent of the Jews across the nation voted for Mondale. That is normally considered the most reliable of the polls, and another prestigious poll, the Marris Institute, also reported a 66 per cent Jewish vote for Mondale. The ABC poll reported a 69 per cent Jewish vote for Mondale. The American Jewish Congress did exit polls across the country at heavily Jewish precincts and reported a 70 per cent Jewish vote for Mondale. As part of that national survey, the local office of the American Jewish Congress polled 84 Jews as they left a voting station in Laurel Heights and found a 70 per cent Mondale vote.

There was skepticism expressed about these poll results, especially by members of the Jewish Republican Coalition, who questioned whether certain densely Jewish sections in New York City and Los Angeles were adequately represented. The Jewish Community Relations Council of New York City did its own post-election poll and, by last Sunday, had estimated a 60 per cent Mondale vote.

The Northern California Bulletin poll was mounted not so much to get the presidential voting preferences, but to find the issues which were on the minds of the local Jewish community during the election period. This poll was prepared by a former consultant at the University of California Survey Research Center and mailed to a random sample of Bulletin subscribers, which includes all Jewish Community Federation members, in the West Bay and East Bay. There was a 25 per cent response, a total of 751, which represented the largest number of Jews surveyed on this subject in the nation -- more than twice the number of Jews included in the New York Times/CBS national survey.

Asked which of eight issues would "make the most important difference to me, in choosing between the two candidates," half of the respondents named "achieving peace in the world," and about a quarter named "keeping church and state separate." In both cases, by a 9 to 1 ratio, these Bay Area Jews felt that Mondale would do a better job on these two issues.

These were the two factors which seemed to make the biggest difference in the choice of Mondale over Reagan. "Supporting Israel" and "helping the economy" were also of high interest to these Bay Area Jews, but they did not rate the two candidates to be that much different on those two issues.

There was further corroboration about the importance of the church-state issue to these Jews, during an election period in which the subject of religion was a heated one. Nine out of ten Jews agreed that "Jerry Falwell is too influential in the Republican Party," and two out of three Jews felt that "there is a real danger that the U.S. is becoming Christianized." This coincided with the findings of the national American Jewish Congress survey, in which about three quarters of the respondent Jews said that Reagan's stand on religion was a major consideration for them.

A majority of the Bay Area Jews also agreed that "Jesse Jackson is too influential in the Democratic Party," but many apparently felt that Mondale could handle that situation, since only about 4 per cent named anti-semitism as a major issue in making their choice -- as against the 29 per cent who named church-state as a major issue in making their choice.

The initial results of this Bulletin survey raises many questions for further analysis. For example, about three quarters of these Bay Area Jews expressed the belief that Reagan would do a good job "in maintaining a strong American defense," more than thought that Mondale would do a good job on that issue. Yet only a third of those thought that Reagan would do a good job in achieving peace; and a small percentage more of them thought that Mondale would do a better job in supporting Israel. The computers are now working out various correlations, to see what specific connections there may be among the different answers; and also to correlate the answers according to age, sex, synagogue attendance and residence in the several regions of the Bay Area. It is hoped that the results will be useful in examining the future public affairs agenda of the Jewish community.