

opinion/editorial

Economy is the issue that affects voters the most

A year ago, before the hostages were taken, before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and poised troops on the Polish border, and before Iraq and Iran began their war, the main issue of the 1980 presidential election appeared, with great certainty, to be the economy.

Edward Kennedy initiated and conducted his campaign on the basis of his concern for the economy, and in the early stages it looked like Jimmy Carter might be dumped by his own party in favor of a Democrat with Democratic ideas about inflation, employment and taxes.

Ronald Reagan attacked Carter's economic record, justifiably during the primary campaign, at the Repub-

lican convention and in television ads. Around the time of the conventions, a tax cut frenzy swept through Washington, with Reagan and the Republicans pushing the Kemp-Roth tax cut and the administration countering with a more moderate proposal.

But somewhere along the line the economy became a constant, rather than an issue. Of course there is some rhetoric about inflation and tax cuts, but our financial state of affairs cannot reasonably be called the major issue of the race.

Political observers must give credit to the Carter campaign on this count: The president's economic rec-

ord is sad, to say the least. The cost of living has skyrocketed during his term, right along with interest rates and Carter's own "misery index," so gleefully used against the president by Gerald Ford during his GOP convention speech.

But voters cannot give credit to Carter for slipping the economic state of affairs under the rug. We are the ones who have to live with it now and for the next four years. By this successful campaign tactic, Carter has done a disservice to the public.

Why? Because he has not discussed how he would make the next four years any different than the last four. Maybe this is why he did not

want to debate; he would have been forced to discuss that.

Also, Carter's light treatment of the issue, which, realistically is more important than any other domestic concern, has enabled Reagan to slip by without speaking more specifically of his economic goals than rhetoric about a balanced budget and an unrealistic tax cut bound to fuel inflation.

Granted, the international crises present have diverted Carter's attention. But the fact is, unless the campaign takes a drastic turn in the next three weeks, Americans will go to the polls not knowing what either candidate will do, in realistic terms, to help solve their personal crises.

To keep Reagan out blacks need to vote

To hear it from some of his black supporters-by-default, Jimmy Carter has but a single attribute to commend him for a second term in office: he's not Ronald Reagan.

Black political sophisticates can talk to you for as long as you care to listen about the weaknesses and shortcomings, the incompetencies and betrayals, of Jimmy Carter.

But ask them about alternatives, and what you get is not analysis but catechesis.

You cannot vote for John Anderson, since a vote for Anderson is a vote against Carter, which makes it ("mea culpa") a vote for Ronald Reagan.

William raspberry

You cannot even stay home. Any vote withheld out of disgust with Carter is, naturally, a vote for Reagan.

If a vote for Anderson or a vote not cast is a vote for Reagan ("mea maxima culpa") must count as two votes for Reagan.

Ask the catechizers why even an indirect vote for Reagan should constitute moral sin, and you might get anything from unintelligible mutterings to incredulous raised eyebrows. What you aren't likely to get is anything that makes sense.

Quickly, lest you be misled, let me say that I am as worried about the implications of a Reagan presidency as the next man. Given the shallowness of Reagan's experience, his innocence of how Washington works, and the balefulness of some of his most ardent supporters, I'd say there is a very good chance that a Reagan administration would be a terrible thing, especially for blacks. Perhaps nearly as terrible as the Carter administration has been.

If there is a good chance that a Reagan presidency would be worse for blacks on race-specific issues and judicial nominations, isn't there at least an equal chance that it would be better for blacks on economic issues?

It's hard to imagine how a Reagan administration could be worse than the present one on such matters as unemployment and inflation, two issues which, while not directly involving race, certainly are of critical importance to black families.

Given that blacks have no candidate they can embrace with any degree of warmth, might this not be an ideal time for message-sending?

The same people who worry that any deviation from Democratic orthodoxy constitutes racial suicide will complain that the "Republicans ignore us and the Democrats take us for granted."

But why shouldn't the Democrats take the black electorate for granted if the black leadership can urge Carter's re-election on the sole ground that he isn't Reagan? And why shouldn't the Republicans ignore a black electorate that would rally behind the Democratic incumbent even while logging his manifold sins and deceptions?

The disaster for black Americans, in the long term, would be for Reagan to win the presidency while Carter gamers, say, 95 percent of the black vote. The lesson for Republicans would be that the black vote is both unobtainable and unnecessary.

But if Reagan and Anderson manage to attract, say 20 percent of the black vote—no matter who wins the election—it would change the campaign tactics of both major parties for years to come.

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Fundamentalists threaten women's choices

The Bible doesn't have to be interpreted so that women are reduced to child-bearing machines. But because the fundamentalists' surge to the forefront of political lobbying, women may once again be reduced to such powerless victims. This time the issue is a woman's right to choose something as personal as the right to have control over her own body.

Robert headrick

Twenty million Americans call themselves "born again" and 30 million are strict Bible believers. The 1980 Gallup poll showed that 18 percent of the population said abortion should be "illegal under all circumstances."

R. Benjamin Garrison, a minister and the chairperson for the Nebraska Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, said his organization believes a woman should not be forced by law to carry a pregnancy to term. His own writings stress the damaging effects of religion's meddling with laws.

Garrison's humane outlook came from personal experience. It came from the realities of counseling a 46-year-old woman with four children who didn't want the fifth she was carrying, and from the pregnant 20-year-old who already had two children who were less than 20 months old and had depended on her husband's vasectomy for birth control.

It is an unfortunate fact that birth control is imperfect and often dangerous. Aware of this fact, the fundamentalist's refusal to see abortion as a final form of contraception in an imperfect world implies that sex is for procreation only and to be practiced when conditions are conducive to raising offspring.

More than this, the fundamentalist and right-to-life groups dictate as fact that a fetus is a person at conception. Non-Christians disagree, but so does the majority of Christian teaching.

The Catholic Church's principle theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, taught that "ensoulment occurs several weeks after conception." Abortion was allowed under Catholic doctrine until 1869.

The United Methodist Church's official statement is that "abortion is an issue of responsibility—responsibility not only to the fetus and the potential child but to the woman and her existing family."

The statement of the Lutheran Church in America says, "on the basis of the evangelical ethic, a woman or couple may decide responsibly to seek an abortion."

In all, 26 national religious organizations agree that secular laws should not be based on religious beliefs.

When Ronald Reagan spoke to fundamentalist in Dallas, he opposed this view and said the First Amendment was written "to protect those values (religious ones) from government tyranny." This is a gross twisting and an abnegation of the historical perspective and purpose of the amendment.

The First Amendment was written to allow citizens to apply their own moral interpretations to their lives, protecting their beliefs from any group's domination.

Throughout European history power vacillated between church and state for centuries. During the Middle Ages the lives of the majority were regulated by the stringent laws of the church. The power structure was pervasive, intolerant and all-male. A woman was viewed by the church in a lesser light than her male counterpart. There

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