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Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 82, Folder 3, Election, 1980.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Staff Advisory Committee
Meeting of November 10, 1980
in Bert Gold's home

Summary

Present

Hyman Bookbinder
Eugene DuBow
Bertram H. Gold
Milton Himmelfarb
Selma Hirsh
Sonya Kaufer
Haskell Lazere
Yehuda Roserman

Marilyn Rothman
Seymour Samet
Philip Shamis
Phyllis Sherman
Ira Silverman
Marc Tanenbaum
William Trosten
Morton Yarmon

Morris Abram
Theodore Ellenoff

Absent

Abe Karlikow
Irving Levine

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ELECTION FOR AJC CONCERNS

Hy Bookbinder: Much more significant than the election of Reagan and the new administration is the overall victory of conservative forces in the Congress. We have lost important friends and allies, especially in the Senate. Key chairmanships in the Senate will now be held by Senators who are quite likely to be antagonistic to goals of the Jewish community and its traditional allies. For example, Thurmond becomes Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The statistics on the Jewish vote are by no means complete and the information we have up to now comes primarily from the TV network polls. CBS said that 45% of the Jewish vote went to Carter, 39% to Reagan, 14% to Anderson. ABC gave Carter 42%, Reagan 35%, Anderson 21%. NBC gave Carter 41%, Reagan 39%, Anderson 20%. The average of these figures, which are not too far apart, is 43% Carter, 38% Reagan, 18% Anderson. The official Republican estimate, which we are willing to accept, is 45, 45, 10. This was not a homogenized Jewish vote and it was also an uneven vote. It was dependent on how different segments of the Jewish community were touched by the various issues.

The Teichner poll in California claims that 71% of the Jews there voted for Reagan -- probably a bit higher than actual situation. If the poll excluded Beverly Hills, this was a largely lower-middle-class vote. Dade County (Miami) press put the Jewish vote at 60% for Reagan. The Michigan GOP said that the Jewish vote there was 56%. Obviously, if the figures are accurate, it means that in other parts of the country there

was considerably less than the 45% which is the presumed national average. This would sustain the view that there was a great unevenness in the Jewish vote. An examination of the results in New York would seem to indicate that in those districts where there was a heavy religious -- Hasidic or other component -- and in the lower-middle-class areas, the Republican vote was higher than it has been previously and even higher than it was for Eisenhower.

Whatever conclusions you draw from these figures, and whether you think it was an anti-Carter vote or a vote for the right, this was (leaving aside Anderson) the closest election in terms of the Jewish vote that we have ever seen. Therefore to think of the Jewish community as essentially Democratic, at least this year, would not be accurate. We are now a bipartisan community.

There are some other statistics that are interesting -- the Senatorial vote in New York, for example. The Jewish vote of 72% for Holtzman, 21% for Javits and 7% for D'Amato should show us that one cannot make a blanket statement about the Jewish community becoming more conservative.

How does the Jewish defection from the Democratic party compare with the voting of others in this election? According to one TV poll, in 1976 Carter got 65% of the Jewish vote. (We have used the figure 75%.) Using their poll information, one can make certain comparisons. A comparison of the figures for 1976 and 1980 shows the following:

<u>Population Segment</u>	<u>Democratic Vote</u> <u>1976</u>	<u>Democratic Vote</u> <u>1980</u>
Liberal	71%	57%
Moderates	51	42
Independents	43	30
Liberal-Independent	64	50
College educated	45	35

Using these statistics, one can say that the change in the Jewish vote from 65% to 45% or lower (depending on whose figures you use) is a more significant change than the change in other groups. Therefore, one has to conclude that the reason for the defection from the Democrats by Jews must have had at least in part a specific Jewish dimension. One has to assume that at least among some Jews and in some areas Jews voted more "Jewishly" than they have in the past and most likely on the Israel issue.

There is another statistic which is interesting. Even while there was this trend away from liberals and liberalism, which some think was sweeping the country, the next House of Representatives will have five more Jews than the previous House, four of them Democrats. A number of these Jews were elected in areas which are almost completely non-Jewish. Their Jewishness evidently did not make a difference in their elections. The only Jewish incumbent who lost was Wolff. There are now 27 Jews in the House -- a percentage of 6%. While there is some cause for good feeling,

at least with respect to the fact that Jews continue to be elected to public office, there is also cause for concern. The campaign against Church was conducted in an atmosphere of virulent right-wing reaction, including anti-Semitism.

According to exit poll reports, there seemed to be a significant increase in Jewish voter interest in defense (which was something that we had already begun to sense). Jews were also affected by what they perceived to be the foreign policy disarray of the Carter Administration and they were concerned about the economy.

However, Jews are still not very Republican. They may be somewhat more conservative than they have been, but only 8% are registered Republicans. And Jews still vote more. They cast 5% of the total vote, although less than 3% of the population.

Mr. Bookbinder then listed some of the Jews who are expected to be prominent in the Republican party as well as some of those who are expected to be consultants or appointed to key positions. In the first category were: Ted Cummings, Max Fisher, Al Spiegel, Gordon Zacks, Rita Hauser and Max Raab. In the second category were: Kissinger, Burns, Rostow and several academics.

Mr. Bookbinder then went on to say that Reagan's performance on Israel cannot be as good as his campaign promises. "No president's actual record can be as good as his campaign rhetoric." As you will recall in his B'nai B'rith speech, Reagan seemed to be deprecating the Camp David process and particularly its ambiguities. These very ambiguities were the most positive aspects of the process, from our point of view. Recognizing that this may have been campaign rhetoric, it still remains to be seen how he will handle the negotiations. Reagan has to be made to understand that the Camp David accord is the only thing on the track.

At Reagan's press conference on Thursday, he referred to the PLO as a "terrorist organization," but it is not clear whether he knew precisely the implications of what he was saying. To officially label the PLO a "terrorist organization" sets into motion a number of legal actions. For example, no terrorist organization is permitted to have an information service in this country.

Mr. Bookbinder then listed those areas that Reagan can be expected to deal with in the very near term which will have implications for our concerns.

1. The Iran-Iraq War and its relationship to Israel's future,
2. Foreign aid to Israel.
3. The Budget -- since Reagan has pledged to cut taxes and raise defense spending, it will be necessary for him to reduce the budget, presumably by cutting social programs. How this will be done -- which programs will be cut -- remains to be seen. The community relations implications are obvious.

4. Mutual defense and security.

Even if the Moral Majority and other right wing religious and political groups did not have as much impact on the election as they say they did, there is no question but that they did have impact. If, for example, Falwell actually registered the four million new voters that he said he did, this is mind-boggling. What influence the Moral Majority types will have on the administration is not clear. In his press conference, Reagan seemed to put these groups in a proper perspective and his transition team seems to be moderate. Again, however, even if the Moral Majority does not play a major direct role in the administration, they can clearly have a chilling effect on Congress. For example, the Christian Voice's index uses such tests as how did the Congressperson vote on Taiwan, school busing, SALT, legal aid to homosexuals, etc. Obviously, not all of these are "moral issues." Members of Congress cannot help but be influenced in their voting by the knowledge that such tests will be used by the various rightist groups in the period ahead.

While Mr. Bookbinder expected the size of the "pro-Israel" vote to be pretty much as it has been in the past, on domestic issues there is great cause for alarm. Senator Baker, a reasonable and thoughtful leader, has not always been "reliable" on Israel. Charles Percy, as the new head of the Foreign Relations Committee, may pose some problems, but should not be opposed by us at this time. The Thurmond chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee, however, will pose enormous problems. He is proposing constitutional amendments on a wide range of issues on which we have opposite views to his. Hatfield, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, has no love for foreign aid for Israel, and may want to make cuts in social programs. Ordinarily, we would not be concerned about the Agriculture Committee, which Helms will now head, but there are some social issues involved here that we should be aware of. For example, there will likely be cutbacks in food stamps which may cause intergroup relations problems (not to forget the large number of elderly Jews living on food stamps).

In the past, we have relied on the Senate to be sympathetic on foreign policy issues, especially Middle East, when the administration was not. Concerned Senators and their skillful aides were always ready for support and action. Now we will have to hope for White House leadership on some of these issues. One of the best things that may come from Reagan's having been elected President is that he may be able to deal with the right wing forces in a way that a Democrat could not have been able to.

A major concern may be the post-election stirrings of the black community. These may result in some sharp intergroup tensions because the Blacks feel left out as a result of the election.

As for labor, the Senate Labor Committee will now be headed by Hatch who was one of labor's targets. Much will depend on the labor secretary that Reagan appoints.

Among those who are likely to have key spots in the Reagan administration are Schultz, Simon and Haig. In Mr. Bookbinder's personal view, which he said is shared by many in Washington, Schultz is an honorable and decent man who has been a fine professional in the federal service. One could argue that as a result of his Bechtel connection, he would have been at least exposed to a pro-Arab point of view, but it would not be appropriate for us to oppose his selection on this ground alone. If in fact this could be a test, then presumably no Jew could be appointed because of his or her obvious interest in Israel.

Milton Himmelfarb: Mr. Himmelfarb said that he agreed essentially with Mr. Bookbinder and that his remarks would be somewhat of an exaggeration of his point of view to sharpen and flesh out any difference that may exist between them.

Mr. Himmelfarb said that he would argue that the 1980 election was like 1972 and that there was a continuity in the Jewish vote. If you take 1976 as a normal year, most Jews voted for Carter, and more non-prosperous Jews voted for Carter than prosperous ones. In 1980 we find the reverse. The more prosperous Jews did not vote for Reagan. This is the same situation that prevailed in 1972 where the more prosperous Jews did not vote for Nixon. In 1972 we saw an uncharacteristic abstention from presidential voting which either consisted of them physically staying home or going to the polls and not pulling the presidential lever. The same situation seems to have occurred in 1980. So, in terms of the falloff, 1980 resembled 1972. It did not resemble 1976. When voters are drawn to the point where they cannot easily make a decision, they often abstain.

Now, when you get to the non-presidential elections, Jews continue to vote overwhelmingly liberal. This was evident in the Holtzman campaign. It was in fact the Jews who elected Holtzman in the primary over Myerson.

Mr. Himmelfarb said that he was confused by the influence of Israel in the vote. In 1972 the Israelis seemed to give the signal to vote for Nixon and in fact 35% of the Jews did so. In 1980 if the Israelis gave a signal it was definitely a pro-Carter signal. And this time the Jews ignored it. Their failure to respond in 1980 may now also shed doubt on what they did in 1972. Mr. Himmelfarb said that he thought the Reagan vote wasn't so much based on Israel as it was a kind of Orthodox, lower-middle-class, ethno-cultural revulsion at Carter, including Israel but not only relating to Israel. The Holtzman and Myerson vote also seems to bear this out. If Israel were the prime consideration then why didn't Jews vote for Myerson in the primary over Holtzman whose record on defense is very bad. He said that he had a tentative hypothesis to explain this. Jews tend to defend their liberalism by compartmentalizing their vote. They profess great Israel concern and then vote for Holtzman. Of course, there are also different Jewish communities.

It is also true that Jews have been able to ignore the Republican label when they thought they were voting for someone "kosher." Javits is

of course the primary example of this. A liberal Republican therefore was OK for Jews. They didn't mind the Republican label. The issue for them really was between the liberal and the non-liberal candidate regardless of party label. Mr. Himmelfarb said that AJC will be undertaking an analysis of the vote and Mr. Bookbinder suggested that special attention be given to the exit polls so that we might get at the way Jews voted on some of the issues.

Marc Tanenbaum: There is no question that the electronic evangelical media preachers and the New Right are making exaggerated claims about their victory for their own political purposes. It is therefore very important that we get some data from our communities on this. While Brademas discounted their importance in his defeat, saying that there were many factors involved, others such as McGovern and Birch Bayh, are going to launch a campaign in opposition to these forces which they feel are a fundamental threat to American democracy.

The real crunch is going to come now in the local communities. The ultra-conservative political right, joining with the Christian right, have spent millions of dollars in trying to elect their own state legislators and they have been very successful up to now. It should be the role of our chapters to watch the local scene carefully and to make contact with state legislators and others who might be our allies. The new right will use the state legislatures to lay the base for taking over governorships and later national races.

Jews will face a serious dilemma with respect to the fundamentalist groups. Their pro-Israel stance must be contrasted to their stance on many domestic issues on which we would be very much opposed to them. And in fact the Jews may be alone on many of these issues. The Conference of Catholic Bishops for example has not wanted to take on the Moral Majority because of their shared opposition to abortion.

Bert Gold suggested that we have to find more people like Pat Roberts, for example, who do not follow the ultra-conservative line.

In response to a question on the way the Jewish vote will be looked upon in future elections, Mr. Bookbinder said that it was very important for us to stress that, while we are pleased by some of Reagan's utterances with respect to Israel policy, we also have very deep concerns about domestic issues. We will be watching the Administration closely to see how they respond on these issues. The Republicans are of course pleased with the increased Jewish vote for their party and would like to enroll more Jews as Republicans.

Bert Gold said that we must establish relationships with the new Republican members of Congress and their aides and we have to develop strategies for dealing with certain of the issues which are going to be

in the forefront, such as abortion, school prayer, tax credits for private school education, etc.

Mr. Bookbinder said that in addition to the moral-hit-list, we have to know that there are going to be problems realting to social programs and we are going to be hit with these very quickly. Senator Baker at a press conference recently was asked how we are going to balance the budget and increase defense spending. His answer was that we are going to have to cut some social programs. Mr. Bookbinder pointed out that while there are certainly some social programs that could be modified and changed, the fact is that major cuts in social programs are going to add to the youth unemployment problems and social welfare problems.

Seymour Samet said that the majority of those voting for Reagan are presumably of the view that we should expect less from government and should let the private sector do more. This would seem to suggest that groups like AJC now have a responsibility to examine their own views and programs with respect to the country's social problems. Does this in fact give us a new strength and a new responsibility as members of the private sector?

The black community seems now to be ready, as it has not been for some time, to again work in coalition. They are reaching out to us. How do we respond? We are again going to see a push for electoral college reform. How do we respond to that? There are a number of intergroup relations related problems with which we will have to deal. We will likely see an increasing push for the elimination of quotas. This is an issue that we have recently been soft pedaling. How do we respond? There is also the question of abortion, which will be a sharper concern for our women's committee, for example. This is an issue that previously has not had prominence in the AJC. Should we continue to soft pedal it? There are questions with respect to prayer in the schools, etc.

Morris Abram: Mr. Abram said that he too felt it was time to rebuild our coalitions. We have to remind ourselves and the Administration that 40% of the Jews were silent in this election. We must also let Reagan know when the Administration does some things which we feel are good so that we can be in a position to pressure in areas where we have concerns. Mr. Abram pointed out that the principal black organizational leadership is going to have to make accommodations with the Reagan Administration. What we are seeing is that past patterns are now in disarray and those will have to be put in order so that we can again move ahead.

It was decided that, as Selma Hirsh suggested, each of the program department heads would prepare a written memorandum on the program implications for their departments in light of the elections. This would be the basis for discussion at the December 15 Board of Governors meeting.

Theodore Ellenoff: Mr. Ellenoff said that he hoped that the Jewish community would not be out front in the battle against the Moral Majority

forces. This he said is a position that perhaps some of the mainline Protestants would like us to take. He asked whether other Jewish organizations are going to stand back for a while so that we can assess this phenomenon before taking direct action.

Bert Gold: It was Mr. Gold's view that most of the national organizations will attempt to work out some kind of relationships. He thought a distinction should be made between the national organizations and the local CRC groups which he thought might respond more from gut feelings.

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