FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

RELEASE: MAY 10, 1985

MAKING MISTAKES IN POLITICS

Much of modern politics has become a process of taking public opinion polls and then structuring your campaign to appeal to the perceived attitudes of your constituents. Surely Walter Mondale knows this; he has spent his whole life in politics.

So, how could he and his advisers, including experienced pollsters, so misjudge the American public as (a) to pledge to raise taxes and (b) to select Geraldine Ferraro? Yet, in a recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, he showed that he still doesn't understand that the country has moved conservative and abandoned the failed liberal policies and coalitions of the past.

Some leading conservatives raised funds to defeat Senator Charles Percy in the 1984 election because, they said, that would make Jesse Helms chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He was the next senior Republican on that prestigious committee.

Those conservatives knew perfectly well that Helms had made a public campaign promise not to take this chairmanship; he had pledged to remain as chairman of the Agriculture Committee (which is important to his state of North Carolina). But the anti-Percy conservatives convinced themselves that they could pour on enough pressure to induce Helms to change his mind.

How could they have been so wrong? It was obvious to anyone with eyes to see that Jesse Helms is a man of his word; he would never renege on a campaign promise. Those who argued otherwise badly misread the man.

People for the American Way has some of the smartest TV promoters in the country. Its founding chairman, Norman Lear, has made a fortune with many successful TV series featuring characters such as Archie Bunker.

PAW brags that it spent $1 million on a media campaign in the fall of 1984 to "help shape the 1984 political debate on the separation of church and state." PAW did succeed in shaping it -- but that "shaping" redounded to the benefit of Ronald Reagan and conservative candidates, which was not at all what PAW had planned.

Starting right after the Republican National Convention in Dallas, PAW became the principal group "taking ultrafundamentalists to task for attempting to inject religious imperatives into partisan politics." The ads were a thinly disguised attack on the involvement of fundamentalists and Christians in politics and tried to make "religion" a major issue in the 1984 Presidential election.

PAW's campaign included the first "issue advocacy TV spots ever broadcast on national network television." PAW pinpointed these one-, two-, and five-minute TV spots for maximum effectiveness starting September 24, 1984 on the ABC network, plus 50 local media markets nationwide.

PAW's newspaper ads were really rather funny. They showed a stone tablet (just brought down from the mountain by PAW's own "Moses"?) which purported to be "The Constitution, Chapter 1, Verse: 1." It read, in old-style lettering, "Thou shalt not mix Church & State."

PAW's ads purported to show that fundamentalist Christians threaten our constitutional liberties which flow from the wisdom of Washington, Jefferson and Madison. That's false, of course; the Founding Fathers believed in God, prayer in public and in schools, and that, as Washington said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

People for the American Way won the applause of the New York Times and the Washington Post. The liberal media joined in and tried to make "religion" an issue, even criticizing Reagan for speaking at a big Prayer Breakfast in Dallas.

But PAW's campaign backfired. The ads simply motivated the fundamentalists to get out the vote for Ronald Reagan. Every time an ad appeared attacking the fundamentalist preachers, Americans with fundamental beliefs (whether or not they agreed with the particular preacher being caricatured), felt personally assaulted and determined to vote against those who were attacking their church and their participation in politics. In fact, one of the so-called "rightwingers" who was caricatured in the PAW TV spots says that his friends thought HE was running the ads to help Reagan!

PAW's advertising campaign making "religion" an issue was one of the reasons why the bottom dropped out of Mondale's campaign in October 1984. Poor Walter Mondale. With friends like People for the American Way, he really didn't need any enemies.