THE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION, PART IV:

ISSUES IN THE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

Taxes and the shape of the economy are the paramount issue concerns in the minds of New Jersey residents, according to the results of a survey conducted in late July by the Eagleton Institute of Rutgers University. The Poll also found that:

--People feel that Raymond Bateman would be more likely than Brendan Byrne to do what they want done about the issues they feel to be important.

--Bateman is seen as the candidate more likely to help the state's economy to grow.

--The candidates are judged evenly on questions of which is better able to protect the environment and which is better able to keep state government free from corruption.

--New Jerseyans are evenly split when forced to choose between maintaining strict environmental laws or relaxing those laws to attract jobs and industry to New Jersey.

Eagleton asked a statewide survey of 1004 New Jerseyans, "If you were a candidate for Governor, what would be the two or three most important issues you would talk about?" Slightly over half of those interviewed mentioned taxes (52 percent) or problems of the economy (51 percent) on either their first or second responses to the question. Unemployment is seen as the most serious economic problem, mentioned by 35 percent. An April, 1977 Eagleton Poll found 56 percent citing taxes and 55 percent citing economic conditions as the most important issues in the Gubernatorial race.

-more-

Attention Radio Stations:
Audio is available on 8/23/77 at 8:00 a.m. from 201-545-6193(Rutgers Feature Phone)
In addition to taxes and the economy, other issues mentioned include social problems such as welfare, health care and problems of the elderly—mentioned by 19 percent, environmental or energy related problems (17 percent) and the issue of New Jersey's educational system (16 percent). Another 10 percent each mention urban difficulties such as housing and urban decay, government performance, including corruption and the size of state government, and crime.

The Eagleton survey also asked those who identified an issue (95 percent of those interviewed) which of the candidates for governor "would be most likely to do what you want done" about the problem area mentioned. Thirty-one percent say the Republican candidate, Raymond Bateman is more likely to solve the problem in the way they want, while 20 percent choose Democrat Brendan Byrne. Another 27 percent feel there would be no difference between the two major-party candidates, while 3 percent name another candidate and 20 percent offer no opinion.

Partisan differences are strongly evident. Of Republicans, 57 percent feel Bateman is more likely to do what they want done, while only 5 percent lean to Byrne. Thirty-five percent of the Democrats feel Byrne is more likely to deal with their problem in a favorable manner, while 14 percent prefer Bateman. Fourteen percent of the Independents feel Byrne would be the better problem solver while 36 percent opt for Bateman and 29 percent feel there would be no difference.

Garden State residents are evenly split on the question of environmental protection versus industrial growth. When asked to choose between "maintaining strict anti-pollution laws or relaxing those laws to create new jobs," 46 percent select each alternative. Slightly more Republicans than Democrats, and more blacks than
whites choose jobs over the environment. Sixty percent of those with less than a high school education or with annual family incomes under $10,000 believe environmental laws should be relaxed to attract industry, compared to about 40 percent of those with more than a high school education or those earning over $20,000 a year.

In rating the two main Gubernatorial candidates on the environment versus industry question, 20 percent think that Bateman would choose to maintain strict pollution laws while 34 percent feel he would relax laws to attract jobs. Almost half--46 percent--are unable to affix a position to Bateman. By comparison, 32 percent feel Byrne would maintain strict environmental laws and 31 percent believe he would choose to relax pollution laws to attract industry and jobs. Thirty-five percent are undecided.

"The large proportion of 'don't knows' is probably due to the dominance of the tax issue," commented Cliff Zukin, associate director of the Poll. "There hasn't been room for any other issue to emerge in the campaign." Zukin also noted, "There is a good deal of projection going on. Partisans taking one side of the environment--industry controversy feel their candidate is also on that side."

Bateman is seen by 44 percent as the candidate most likely to help the state's economy to grow, compared to 31 percent who feel Byrne would do a better job of fostering economic growth. Twenty-two percent are undecided. A majority of Democrats and Republicans each feel their party's candidate would be a better manager of economic growth. Bateman holds a commanding 51 to 21 percent lead among Independents on this question.

-more-
State residents come to no clear opinion on which of the two major-party candidates would do a better job of "cleaning up and protecting the environment," or "keeping the government free from corruption." Thirty-four percent say Byrne and 33 percent say Bateman would take better care of the environment. Thirty-one percent feel Byrne would do a better job of keeping government corruption-free, while 28 percent believe Bateman would be more effective. In addition, 18 percent say that neither would keep corruption out of government or that they would do the same, and 23 percent express no opinion. Democrats and Republicans again strongly favor their party's standardbearers. Independents favor Bateman, 37 percent to 27 percent, on the environmental question and are evenly split in their opinions of which candidate will better keep corruption out of government.

The Eagleton Poll is conducted regularly throughout the year by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. The latest Poll was conducted between July 18 and July 29, when a scientifically selected random sample of 1004 adults, 18 years and older were interviewed by telephone.

-30-

Copyright, The Eagleton Institute, 1977