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Reagan fans gather to watch debate

By Paul Ertelt
Of the Emerald

The Reagan-Bush supporters who were gathered at the Sigma Nu fraternity Sunday night ignored Edwin Newman's admonitions and applauded loudly for their favorite candidate.

Approximately 50 people showed up at the fraternity to watch the televised presidential debate. Though their opinion was admittedly biased, most later agreed that President Ronald Reagan won "hands down."

"I was a little concerned," admitted Ron Munion, campus director of Students for Reagan-Bush '84. He conceded that Walter Mondale was the victor in the first televised confrontation, but after the debate said "the Gipper is back."

"Mondale had some good points (in the last debate), but Reagan showed the style he showed with Carter in 1980."

"Mondale held his own," said Steffanie Jones, a senior in economics. "I don't think he did a bad job, but I'm not as im-

pressed as I was with the last debate."

But for anyone who has been following the campaign, the debate offered little that was new concerning the candidates' positions on the issues, Jones said.

Jones said the economy is the most important issue and said she supports the president because of his economic policies. The nuclear arms race is another important issue, she said.

"I don't think (Reagan's) administration has posed any more of a threat to the Russians than any other administration," Jones said. "I don't think we've made much progress in the arms race (under Reagan), but I don't think he has made things any worse."

Jones also said she sees no signs of the gender gap, the oft-debated idea that men voters support Reagan more than women voters.

"Most women I know do support Reagan," she said. "I don't really see any evidence of the Democrats supporting women's rights any more than Reagan. He's offering more opportunities (for women) because of his economic policies."

Not all of those watching the debate at the fraternity were members of the Reagan camp. One woman, who said she was only looking for a place to watch the debate, sported a Mondale-Ferraro button.

The woman, who wished to remain anonymous, said she was visiting Eugene from Ann Arbor, Mich. She said she was surprised that there were so many college-age people supporting Reagan.

Reagan is the "least compassionate" of presidents, the



Jerry Sybers, a Sigma Nu pledge and young Reagan fan, delivers a pep talk at the fraternity before the debate. Says Sybers, "People are beginning to take the Republicans seriously."

Photo by Michael Clapp



Ron Munion

woman said, and found it "scary" that young people supported him.

However, most college students who criticize Reagan do so out of ignorance, and have not "really studied the issues," said Lori Armstrong, a junior majoring in journalism.

Reagan often "steps out of line and comes up with new ideas," but those ideas are often considered "shocking" before they are studied closely, Armstrong said.

Reagan's plan for developing a space-based defense system is one of those new ideas that should be considered, she said. That plan, often referred to as the "Star Wars" defense, was one area where the candidates

differed in the debate. Reagan contended that a system designed to destroy enemy nuclear missiles would prevent a nuclear attack and be more humane than a policy of nuclear retribution. Mondale said he supported the idea in theory, but said the plan is not practical and would be too expensive. He also opposes sharing the technology with the Soviet Union.

Though Sigma Nu hosted the Reagan-Bush gathering, not all house members support Reagan, said Jerry Sybers, a Sigma Nu pledge and senior majoring in finance and political science.

"Sigma Nu really represents a cross section of the University,"

Sybers said. "There is one member who is an avowed communist."

But the majority of the fraternity's members are Republicans, he said. Sybers sees a "new movement of conservatism" throughout the nation, especially among the young.

"People are beginning to take the Republicans seriously," he said. On the other hand, "stagflation, passivity in international relations, and high unemployment" discredited the Democrats, he said.

Doug Green, state director for Students for Reagan-Bush '84, declared Sunday's debate the death knell for Mondale's presidential aspirations.

Accusations fly during presidential debate

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Walter Mondale said Sunday night that President Reagan is an out-of-touch leader whose foreign policy has "humiliated" the United States. Reagan retorted in the climactic campaign debate that Mondale has a "record of weakness... that is second to none" on national defense.

Mondale's goal throughout the 90 minutes was to ignite a late surge to victory, and in his closing argument, he asked viewers to imagine the United States under nuclear attack:

"Pick a president that you know will know — if that tragic moment ever comes — what he must know. Because there will be no time for staffing, committees or advisers. A president must know right then."

Reagan, bidding to protect a substantial lead in the polls, had the final words and said, "I want more than anything else to try to complete the new beginning that we charted four years ago."

"It may come as a surprise to Mr. Mondale, but I am in charge," Reagan had replied tartly after his Democratic opponent assailed his policies on arms control, Lebanon, Central America and elsewhere.

"I will keep us strong," was Mondale's reply after Reagan listed a series of weapons that he said his presidential opponent had once opposed. He said that as a result of the president's policies in Central America, "we have been humiliated and our opponents are stronger."

There was no obvious gaffe by either man during the televised debate coming 16 days before the election, with Reagan holding leads calculated at 10 to 25 percentage points in the public opinion polls. Mondale gained points in those polls on the basis of his performance in their first debate two weeks ago in Louisville, Ky., and he walked onto the stage in Kansas City with the same goal in mind.

The Democratic challenger made no claim of victory at a campaign rally afterwards, but said the evening demonstrated that he, not Reagan, would be a "real commander in chief who would take charge."

"Tonight, despite all the embarrassment of that covert action in Nicaragua, which has strengthened our enemies, I think I heard the president, the commander in chief, blame somebody else,"

he said. "Tonight, despite all the tragedy in Lebanon, I think I heard the president, the commander in chief, blame it on somebody else."

The debate began and ended with a handshake at center stage, but in between the gestures of courtesy, Reagan and Mondale traded sharply worded charges of weakness.

Reagan said that is Mondale's record. Mondale said Reagan is ignorant of some essentials needed for leadership, and "Strength requires knowledge."

Midway through, Reagan was asked directly if he feels he is too old to handle a nuclear crisis.

"Not at all," he said. In the type of humorous follow-up he often uses to defuse the age issue, the 73-year-old Reagan also said he would not make age a campaign issue. "I am not going to exploit... my opponent's youth and inexperience," he said.

Mondale agreed that age should not be an issue in the campaign. But he turned the question, like almost every other asked of him, to an attack on Reagan's leadership, his ability to "command."

"A president has to lead his government or it won't be done," he said after

assailing Reagan's policies in Lebanon and on arms control. "Good intentions I grant, but it takes more than that," Mondale said. "You must be tough and smart."

The president had a little trouble with his summation. He began with a question that misstated his own argument, "Do you want to see America return to the policies of weakness of the past four years..." That was apparently intended to be a reference to the preceding four years, when Mondale was vice president under Jimmy Carter.

In response to the opening question of the second debate, Mondale referred to recent disclosures of a CIA manual as "this recent embarrassment in Nicaragua, where we are giving instructions to hired assassins." Reagan renounced the document, produced by the Central Intelligence Agency, and said if an investigation turns up the culprit, "We will deal with that situation, and they will be removed."

Mondale said such tactics as those discussed in the CIA manual served to "strengthen our opponents" in Central America.