Mondale’s chances slim

After his first debate with President Ronald Reagan, it appeared that Democratic candidate Walter Mondale might have begun riding a wave that would lift him to victory over his favored adversary. Such speculation is now, behind in 46 states, and with Democratic party officials almost admitting defeat, Mondale’s presidential hopes are doubtful.

Lack of personal magnetism has not helped Mondale. While Reagan’s wrinkled Hollywood charm turns some off, it endears him to many and allows his occasional factual slips to be forgiven. Mondale, on the other hand, attracts few with lifeless speeches delivered in a broken voice. Recent controversy has improved, but not to the extent needed to electorates the way Reagan has. Despite its clear effect on the campaign, however, it is hard to believe Reagan’s charisma is the only reason he is over ten points ahead in the polls.

The issues count in this campaign. But rather than cut, and the electorate is divided on them. Analysts agree that until 55 percent of the electorate is for Reagan, with 40 percent for Mondale and very few undecided. But perhaps nothing has affected Mondale more adversely than his pledge to raise taxes. During the Democratic Convention, the pledge was a dramatic issue — the newly-crowned candidate, fresh from victory in the primaries, speaking of Reagan’s “secret plan” to raise taxes while he crowed “He won’t tell you, I just did.”

Of course, Mondale’s goal in a tax increase wouldn’t be to further burden Americans with more expenses, inflation, unemployment, and just plain less money to go around; it would be to reduce the high federal government budget debt, which is new equivalent to a stack of $1,000 bills, 107 miles high. Yet to most voters, the concept of such a gigantic national debt is about as abstract as general relativity. Compared to the other economic issues, especially for voters who remember the painful inflation of the Carter-Mondale era, the national debt pays. Walter Mondale’s emphasis on the debt hurts him, and his proposal for a solution to it digs his Election Day grave.

With the economy as his biggest asset, Reagan’s biggest liability for many is his policy on national defense and arms control. Of course, neither candidate plans to stop the manufacture of nuclear weapons; Mondale’s nuclear freeze could never be satisfactorily verified under his guidelines. But Mondale supporters perceive Reagan as desiring an offensive weapons arms race despite his support for the wholly defensive “Star Wars” technology.

The Star Wars system, planned by Mondale throughout the campaign, would be an invaluable protection against nuclear weapons, not only those originating from the Soviet Union, but also from terrorist countries like Libya, were they to obtain atomic missiles.

column/Andrew Bein

A week before Election Day, Mondale has not succeeded in convincing most Americans that he stands for what they believe in, while Ronald Reagan has. That’s the reason the president will win a second term on November 6.