

FLAWED SURVEY

In March, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an excellent series on the 2000 electorate that compiled some of the best data we've seen. In particular, we would like to cite the *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll that was done on Catholics and Fundamentalists by the polling organization Peter D. Hart and Robert M. Teeter; it appeared on March 9.

There was one problem, however, with the poll. In the box insert that accompanied the story, it cited the category "Society's Acceptance of Homosexuality." It listed 42 percent of all voters answering "Have gone too far," with 36 percent of Catholics and 60 percent of Fundamentalists answering this way. To the answer "Have not gone far enough," 41 percent of all voters agreed, with 47 percent of Catholics and 27 percent of Fundamentalists answering this way.

Referring to this data, the story said "Catholics are more supportive of saying they want to end discrimination against homosexuals than are non-Catholics."

We were confused. Homosexuality refers to the sexual behavior of homosexuals, having nothing to do with discrimination against homosexuals as persons. When we called for clarification we were told that the flaw we picked up was unfortunately true. But as it turns out it wasn't the newspaper that was at fault, it was the polling company.

The actual question as asked of respondents was: "Which better describes your impression about society's acceptance of homosexuality: a) Acceptance has gone too far or b) Has not gone far enough in ending discrimination."

It is easy to see how misleading this all is. For example, it is not at all inconsistent for someone to hold that discrimination against homosexual persons is unwarranted, yet at the same time hold that homosexuality is not something that

society needs to affirm. Unfortunately, this critical distinction is often lost on those who simply package status and behavior as if they are one.

The Catholic Church, it needs to be said, has long recognized the difference and that is why the Catholic League takes umbrage with pundits who try to paint the Church anti-gay.