

1976 VICE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN DEBATE

between

SENATOR WALTER MONDALE

and

SENATOR ROBERT DOLE

ALLEY THEATER

HOUSTON, TEXAS

October 15, 1976

MODERATOR: Jim Hoge
Editor, Chicago Sun Times

PANELISTS: Hal Bruno
Newsweek Magazine

Marilyn Berger
NBC News

Walter Mears
Associated Press

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1 MR. HODGE: Thank you Senator Mondale and
2 thank you Senator Dole for being with us this evening.

3 This debate is taking place before an
4 audience in the Alley Theater in Houston, Texas. It
5 is also being broadcast by radio and television to
6 an audience estimated of some eighty-five million
7 persons in this nation and overseas.

8 As far as we can tell, this is the first formal
9 debate ever held between Vice Presidential candidates.
10 Their views are important not only because they seek
11 the second highest office in the land, but because as
12 potential Vice Presidents, they must be judged on their
13 capacities to serve as President of the United States.

14 For example, of the last five Vice Presidents,
15 three have become President due to death or resignation
16 by a Chief Executive.

17 We begin this debate tonight with opening
18 statements of up to two minutes by each candidate. By
19 the toss of the coin it was determined that Senator
20 Dole would go first.

21 Senator Dole, your opening statement.

22 SENATOR DOLE: Thank you very much.

23 First, I wish to thank the League of Women
24 Voters, and this is a great privilege and honor for me.
25 I want to thank my good friends in Russell, Kansas for

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1 that big long telegram I received today.

2 I think tonight may be sort of a fun evening.
3 It is a very important evening, it is a very historic
4 evening.

5 But I have known my counterpart for sometime,
6 and we have been friends, and we will be friends when
7 this debate is over. And, we will be friends when the
8 election is over, and he will still be in the Senate.

9 And, I think first of all that I should make
10 it very clear that I am most proud to be on the ticket
11 with President Ford.

12 I have known President Ford for sixteen years.
13 Sixteen years, a long time. He has known me for that
14 long. I know him to be a man of compassion and
15 competence, he has that confidence and suggests that
16 leadership that America needs and that you need right
17 now.

18 I don't know much about Governor Carter. I
19 have tried to find out. I know he is very ambitious.
20 I know he wants to be President. He has been running
21 for three years. But, I know he said at least one
22 thing, and he does agree with my opponent, my friend,
23 Walter Mondale, probably one of the most liberal
24 Senators in the United States Senate.

25 And, that is really what this debate is all

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1 about. If by some tragic circumstance, one of us
2 becomes President of the United States, where do we
3 stand on the issues?

4 I would just say in a very summary way that
5 I have a great deal of faith in you, the American
6 people. I am concerned about farmers and housewives
7 and young people and professional people, working men
8 and women. I think we can find our solutions working
9 together.

10 My opponent has a record of voting for every
11 inflationary spending program, except in defense, where
12 he votes for every cut. And, we will explore that as
13 this debate goes on.

14 MR. HODGE: Thank you, Senator Dole.

15 Senator Mondale, your opening statement.

16 SENATOR MONDALE: I believe that most Americans
17 would agree on the problems that this country faces,
18 and which the next administration must solve. They
19 include the need once again for an economy that works.
20 The economy today is in very, very bad shape. The
21 highest unemployment since the Great Depression, fifty
22 percent higher than when Mr. Ford took office. Raging
23 inflammation, with the latest wholesale price indexes
24 once again raising the specter of double digit inflation.
25

1 The purchasing power of the average American
2 has slipped so much that it is now the equivalent of
3 the purchasing power in 1965. It is not getting better;
4 it is getting worse. All of the leading indicators now
5 point downward. And stock investors are now losing
6 confidence, and over fifty billion dollars of value has
7 disappeared from the stock market in less than a month.

8 We need a government that works, and we need
9 a government that cares. And, once again, we have to
10 get back to work on education, on health, on housing, on
11 the environment, on energy. And, we need a foreign policy
12 that once again reflects the values and the beliefs of
13 the American people.

14 This will take leadership, and we need leader-
15 ship too.

16 The Republic administration, the Republican
17 Party has had eight years to solve these problems. All
18 of them have gotten worse. The Republican ticket does
19 not offer new plans for this solution, but is engaged in
20 a frantic effort to defend the past.

21 This nation desperately needs new leadership.
22 The Carter - Mondale ticket would offer a new generation
23 of leadership, dedicated to solving the problems which I
24 have listed. And, that is the basis of our appeal.

25 MR. HODGE: Thank you, Gentlemen.

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1 The subject matter of tonight's debate, like
2 that of the first two Presidential Debates, covers
3 domestic and economic policies and foreign and defense
4 issues.

5 The questioners tonight are Hal Bruno, Chief
6 Political Correspondent of Newsweek Magazine, Marilyn
7 Berger, White House Correspondent of NBS News, and
8 Walter Mears, Special Correspondent for the Associated
9 Press.

10 Questions will be alternated between the two
11 candidates. After the question is asked, the, the
12 candidate will have up to two and a half minutes to
13 respond. His opponent will then have two and a half
14 minutes to reply to that. The first candidate may then
15 reply to those remarks for up to one minute.

16 I should mention at this point that I will
17 intervene if the candidate is not addressing the question
18 which has been posed to him.

19 At the conclusion of the questioning, each
20 candidate will be allowed up to three minutes for a
21 closing remark.

22 Senator Mondale and Senator Dole do not have
23 prepared notes or comments with them this evening.
24 However, they may make notes and refer to them during
25 the debates.

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1 We now begin with questions on domestic and
2 economic policies. The first question goes to Senator
3 Dole, was was determined by the coin toss.

4 Mr. Bruno, you have the first question.

5 MR. BRUNO: Senator Dole, Presidential
6 candidates always promise that the Vice President will
7 play an important role, but it seldom turns out that
8 way and they usually wind up as stand-by equipment,
9 which is the way Vice Presiden Rockefeller once
10 described the job.

11 What is your view of this office that you are
12 seeking? Has President Ford told you what your role
13 might be, and what would you like it to be?

14 SENATOR DOLE: Well, as I said as I have
15 traveled around the country, and mostly in jest, as
16 to why you are running for Vice President, that, well,
17 it is indoor work and no heavy lifting. But, I have
18 also thought very seriously about it. President Ford has
19 discussed it with me.

20 It is a great opportunity, it is a great
21 responsibility. I can't stand here tonight in Houston,
22 Texas, and say that come January when I will be sworn
23 in as Vice President, that I am going to do anything in
24 the first hundred days, or even the second hundred days.
25 But, I have discussed with President Ford. He has

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1 indicated two responsibilities that he is going to
2 designate. One would be having some role in increasing
3 our agricultural exports, because we believe -- we
4 believe together, that the future of American
5 agriculture lies in its exports.

6 Also, because of my long association with
7 families who had sons or husbands that are missing in
8 action or prisoners of war, he indicated to me last
9 week that I would have a role as his representative
10 to try to get some accounting for the missing in action
11 in Southeast Asia.

12 But, beyond that, our Constitutional duty is
13 to preside over the Senate and vote in case of ties.
14 We also serve on the National Security Council,
15 Domestic Council, and whatever other assignments we
16 may have from time to time.

17 I think probably one important aspect that
18 we ought to talk about, and that is our vision for
19 America. I believe the people viewing tonight, people
20 who are watching us tonight, may well determine the
21 role I play as Vice President.

22 I believe that we are going forward in
23 America under the leadership of President Ford. And,
24 I believe there will be more and more challenges,
25 positive challenges to those of us who hold high office,

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1 to serve the American people, and that is really what
2 it is all about, whether we are Vice President, on the
3 City Council, a member of the Legislature or whatever.
4 Our obligation is to the people. We must have faith
5 in the American people. And, I have that faith.

6 But, I think the opponents have more faith
7 in bigger government, more control, and more interference
8 in every day life.

9 MR. HOGE: Senator Mondale, your response.

10 SENATOR MONDALE: The problems that our country
11 faces are so great that a very strong role is required
12 of the Vice President and of all Federal officials. I
13 have discussed this matter extensively with Governor
14 Carter.

15 And, as Vice President, I would have such a
16 substantial role in both domestic and foreign policies.
17 I would work with the President for example in this long
18 overdue effort to basically restructure and reorganize
19 the Federal government.

20 Today, it is a mess. There is no one in charge.
21 There is great waste, great duplication. And, the time
22 has come for a long overdue reorganization. That would
23 be one of the first tasks that I would have working with
24 the new President.

25 There would be a whole range of duties that

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1 I would have, working with the President, and on problems
2 of economic growth. We have got to get people back to
3 work. Attacking inflation, and finally getting a policy
4 to keep the dollar worth a dollar. And, the other
5 problems that we face here at home.

6 One of the specific suggestions that we
7 are considering now is that I would head up a Task
8 Force to deal with the federal aspects of crime in
9 America. Today the federal function in law enforcement
10 is in disarray. The drug enforcement administration is
11 totally demoralized. The F. B. I. is also under great
12 difficulty. We need to have a coordinated, effective,
13 national attack on organized and hard crime, those
14 crimes prohibited by Federal law. We need to finally
15 get a national effort that really makes sense, to stop
16 the importation of these death-dealing imported illegal
17 drugs. We need to have a new look at official lawless-
18 ness at the Federal level, because we have seen too
19 many instances where people in high public office have
20 violate the law themselves. And, one of the things that
21 we are considering is establishing an inter-departmental
22 agency under the chairmanship of the Vice-President, to
23 finally at long last put some strength behind a national
24 effort to deal with these terrible problems in American
25 lives.

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1 And, may I close by saying that one of the
2 reasons that I believe I am going to be the Vice
3 Presiden, and one of the reasons that my opponent
4 mentioned, that is, that the present President imposed
5 an imbargo on farm exports four times in three years.
6 And, they want a change.

7 MR. HOGE: Senator Dole, do you have a further
8 comment?

9 SENATOR DOLE: Well, I just say to my good
10 friend, I am happy that you are going to be responsible
11 for reorganization. I hope you don't pattern it after
12 Governor Carter's efforts in Georgia. They added more
13 bureaucrats to government in Georgia, the cost of
14 government went up his Human Resources Committee, or
15 whatever it is called, it was called an organizational
16 nightmare by Governor Busbee, his successor.

17 I understand from Bobby Smith, who is
18 supposed to be the Ag expert in the Carter campaign,
19 that you can do away with the Department of Agriculture.
20 That is in essence what he says. You are going to put
21 it together with a lot of other things, and I know that
22 the farmers who may be viewing will be pleased to know
23 that.

24 I think you will also be pleased to know that
25 Senator Mondale sponsors export licensing proposals in

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1 the Congress, which would make it necessary for farmers
2 to get an export license before they could ship their
3 goods overseas. And, under his proposal, which is
4 still pending -- thank goodness, it hasn't passed, we
5 would all be in difficulties, you wouldn't be able to
6 ship anything now.

7 MR. HOGE: Ms. Berger, your question to
8 Senator Mondale.

9 MS. BERGER: Senator Mondale, the polls
10 indicate that less than half of those eligible will
11 vote in this coming election. And, although both you
12 and Senator Dole have both touched on very important
13 issues that are before the country, many Americans feel
14 that they are being short changed by a campaign that
15 has descended into a name calling contest.

16 For example, Governor Carter has said that
17 President Ford has been brainwashed. President Ford
18 says that Carter is slandering America. It is the
19 tone of the campaign that worries America.

20 Does it worry you, Senator Mondale?

21 SENATOR MONDALE: There are many things that
22 I think have contributed to this phenomenon that I find
23 very, very discouraging. That is the great numbers of
24 Americans who do not plan to participate in the
25 electoral process which is so crucial to a sound and

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1 effective nation. We can't solve our problem unless
2 everyone helps.

3 There have been so many things that have dis-
4 spirited the American people, that have fed frustration
5 and despair. We have gone through the worst war in the
6 American history, that has divided this country perhaps
7 as much as it has ever been divided. We then went
8 through the worst political scandal in American history,
9 with the highest officers in government being found
10 guilty, or at least charged with guilt, in very serious
11 crime.

12 We then saw evidence that even our own
13 Intelligence Agencies, and law enforcement agencies,
14 charged to enforce the law, has themselves violated the
15 law.

16 And, then, we have seen a government that is
17 unable to deal with the real problems that the American
18 people face. People need jobs. It is a tragedy every
19 time that an able bodied American is denied the opportunity
20 to make -- to work. There are now eight million
21 Americans who can't find work.

22 It is a tragedy when Americans work and find
23 the value of their dollar disappearing. It is a tragedy
24 when children can't get educated, when healthcare wipes
25 them out, when senior citizens find that their pension

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1 and the credit that they are entitled to, through
2 Social Security and Medicaid is being taken from them.
3 These things have all contributed to a growing feeling
4 in America, that government does not respond to solve
5 people's problems, the government lives by one standard
6 and expects Americans to live by another. And, because
7 of that we have this large feeling in America, reflected
8 in those surveys, that was suggested in your question,
9 that has contributed to this feeling that involvement
10 in politics does not count.

11 And, if there is one hope that Governor
12 Carter and I have, if there is one objective that is
13 central above all, is that we can restore the faith in
14 the American people, by simply telling the truth,
15 obeying the law, seeing problems as they really are,
16 attacking the real questions, the real problems that
17 affect America. And, then I think we will see the
18 restoration of public trust.

19 MR. HOGE: Senator Dole, your response.

20 SENATOR DOLE: Well, I think it is a very
21 good question. It goes back to the party institution.
22 Maybe it is an indictment in that sense of those of us
23 who seek office. It goes back to my basic premise,
24 and that is faith in the people. It just seems to me
25 that some of those who lust for power are not really

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1 concerned about the people. They say they are concerned
2 about the people, and they talk about the people. They
3 never give us their position.

4 And, so, I think many Americans are sort of
5 turned off. And, they were turned off by the war in
6 Southeast Asia, they were turned off by Watergate. I
7 will say that word first. They were turned off by
8 Watergate.

9 But, we are looking ahead. They were probably
10 turned off by what they saw in the U. S. House of
11 Representatives. They have been turned off by a lot
12 of things they have seen in politics. But, I think
13 they have been turned off too by promises and promises,
14 and bigger and bigger spending programs and more and
15 more inflation.

16 They are looking for leadership. They yearn
17 for leadership. And, they have found that leadership
18 in President Ford.

19 Governor Carter talks about tax reform, he
20 talks about taxing the rich, he talks about nearly
21 everyone. He says Former President Johnson lied and
22 cheated and distorted the facts. I think that turned
23 a lot of people off. He was quick to apologize to Mrs.
24 Johnson. He insulted Governor Wallace, but he was
25 quick to apologize to Governor Wallace. Someone in the

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1 family insulted Billy Graham, but they were quick to
2 apologize to Billy Graham.

3 I think it is time we stopped apologizing
4 and talked -- I mean started talking to you, the
5 American people. We need your help. We want to restore
6 faith in the system. And, I think we can.

7 Lets not promise what we can't deliver. Lets
8 be honest with you, the voter, with you, the taxpayer,
9 trying to talk about education, more this, more that,
10 more that. That there are eighty-eight million people
11 working Americans. They are going to pay the taxes.
12 The highest number ever working in America. Some
13 forty percent of the population, the highest in the
14 history, working now in America.

15 We are concerned about the 7.8 percent un-
16 employed. We will be concerned until that is reduced
17 to four percent or three percent or wherever. But,
18 we can't lose sight of the number one enemy. And, the
19 number one enemy is inflation. And, I think the
20 American people are coming around, they are beginning
21 to understand that President Ford says what he means
22 and does what he says.

23 MR. HOGE: Senator Mondale.

24 SENATOR MONDALE: Well, who really has faith
25 in the people, the candidate like Governor Carter, who

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1 campaigns to the people, is out every day meeting and
2 talking with the people, holds news conferences and
3 answers questions of the news media as he has every
4 day for twenty-four months, or a President who is in
5 the White House, not through election but through
6 appointment, who has held only two preannounced news
7 conferences since February.

8 Who trusts the people more, Governor Carter
9 and Senator Mondale, who have disclosed our income tax
10 returns so the American people can look at our private
11 financial affairs and determine how we have conducted
12 our affairs, or President Ford and Senator Dole who
13 refuse to let the American people see their tax returns.

14 Who trusts the people? A candidate like
15 Governor Carter who tells the truth, or a President like
16 Mr. Ford who last week told the American people that
17 he had fought the Arab boycott and sought legislation
18 and sanctions against it, when the poll records show he
19 had proceeded in just the opposite direction.

20 MR. HOGE: Thank you.

21 Mr. Mears, your question for Senator Dole.

22 MR. MEARS: Senator Dole, during your current
23 campaign, you sometimes expressed concern about a
24 negative image of the Republican Party. You are quoted
25 as having said last spring, that we are in the unfortunate

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1 position of having a President vetoing bills and
2 getting on the wrong side of people issues. He has
3 vetoed the Education Bill, the Jobs Bill, you name it.

4 Are you still concerned about the risks that
5 Republicans would be perceived as opposed to what you
6 call veto -- people issues, and do you think that
7 President Ford has exercised the veto too frequently?

8 SENATOR DOLE: Well, I might say at the
9 outset, I haven't always agreed with President Ford,
10 and I have voted to override on occasions, but not
11 every time as my counterpart has.

12 I think President Ford, and hindsight is
13 very good particularly when you are on the ticket.
14 And my hindsight is the President has been very
15 courageous. And, there is a difference.

16 You know, we look at our States, and we look
17 at the bills and we decide to sustain or override. The
18 President, and particularly this President, who has
19 the courage, President Ford, looks at the nation, he
20 looks at all of the American people, and he makes that
21 judgment, should I sign, can I sign, or must I veto
22 this bill. And, so he has vetoed 62 bills. I think
23 the 62nd happened today.

24 And, I say that is courageous act, repeated
25 62 times, because most of that legislation sounded

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1 good, some of it was good, some of it we just couldn't
2 have unless we are going to fuel the fires of inflation.

3 I don't suggest that every veto, I must agree
4 with. But, I also suggest that I am a Republican. I
5 am proud to be a Republican. We will sometimes proceed
6 as I said before, as the anti-people party, because we
7 are not for more spending. We are not for more
8 government. We are for strong defense. We are for
9 peace in the world. Those aren't very attractive to
10 some people. They want to know how much we are going
11 to spend for this and how much we are going to spend
12 for that.

13 Well, Senator Mondale could tell them that
14 because he votes for every piece of spending legislation
15 comes down the pike, unless it is in the area of
16 defense, and then he votes for every budget cut. I
17 think he has voted to cut the budget, in addition to
18 what has already been cut in the Congress, some sixteen
19 billion dollars, against the B-1 Bomber. This means
20 a lot of jobs. Against the C-5-A, against the Trident
21 Submarine. And, the list goes on and on and on and on.

22 I believe the American people want us to be
23 responsible. We have got to make the tough decisions.
24 It is one thing to be in the office of the President or
25 Senate of the United States and vote for every spending

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1 program, never concern ourselves with inflation or the
2 total cost.

3 But, I would only close by saying that I hope
4 that you will remember, we are in a Democratic Congress,
5 we have had one for twenty-two straight years. And
6 so when anyone stands up to debate this Republican
7 Senator, and tries to dump all of the responsibility
8 on a Republican President by the name of Gerald Ford,
9 I just ask that question, where have you been for
10 twenty-two years.

11 MR. HOGE: Senator Mondale, your response.

12 SENATOR MONDALE: Perhaps the most pronounced
13 difference that separates the Democratic and Republican
14 candidates is reflected in the question that was just
15 asked. There is practically no difference between the
16 two parties in terms of how much they would spend. The
17 Senate Budget Committee estimated that the Republican
18 Platform cost fifty billion dollars, the Democratic
19 Platform cost forty billion dollars.

20 The difference between the Democratic
21 Congressional Budget, which I supported, and the
22 President's Budget was only three billion dollars in
23 deficit, and if you remove the gimmickry in the
24 President's Budget, it was exactly the same.

25 The difference is in how we spend those

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1 resources. And, I am unashamed of my support for
2 programs to put people back to work. I am unashamed
3 of my support for programs to build housing so the
4 families of this country can live in decent housing.
5 I am unashamed of supporting education programs that
6 give our kids a decent education. I am unashamed of
7 supporting health programs that give people who get
8 ill a chance to have decent health without being totally
9 wiped out. And, I am unashamed of supporting programs
10 such as Medicare. My opponent voted against Medicare.
11 Can you imagine voting against programs, as did the
12 President, that would provide health for senior citizens
13 after they are past their earning years, so that they
14 could have decent health care without being wiped out.

15 Now, where is it the Republicans want to
16 spend their money. Well, I will tell you. First of
17 all, this year they are spending fifty-five billion
18 dollars in the cost of the recession that they created.
19 We didn't get in this recession, we had full employment
20 when they took over. Mr. Ford, in just two years, has
21 increased unemployment by two and a half million
22 Americans. They haven't solved inflation. And, instead
23 of trying to deal with the problem of unemployment,
24 instead of that, they propose a twenty billion dollar
25 tax cut for wealthy corporations, despite the fact that

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1 just yesterday a newspaper carried a story that ten
2 major corporations made massive amounts of money and
3 didn't owe a dime in Federal taxes. Ford Motor
4 Corporation earned eight hundred million dollars and
5 didn't owe a dime to the Federal government. In fact,
6 got a hundred and eighty million dollars back.

7 So, between those tax cuts and between the
8 massive costs of unemployment, they spend much more
9 than we would. But, what do they get for it? We want
10 to see money spent to help problems that people really
11 face in their lives.

12 MR. HOGE: Senator Dole.

13 SENATOR DOLE: Well, we are all for those
14 programs, but we just don't believe in excesses. I
15 think in retrospect the elder care program that I voted
16 for instead of Medicare is probably a better program,
17 because Medicare, everybody gets the benefit, whether
18 you are in need or not, once you reach age 65. Now
19 they are having a lot of problems in Medicare.

20 I am glad you mentioned Ford Motor Company
21 not paying taxes. Again, the Democrats controlled the
22 Committee. I am on the Committee. Senator Mondale
23 is on the Finance Committee. Henry Ford happens to be
24 supporting Governor Carter. Maybe that is why. Governor
25 Carter did have a little meeting with him at the 21

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