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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 4, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: DON PENNY  
FROM: JAMES E. CONNOR  
SUBJECT: Reactions/First Debate

Attached material was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation "Interesting".

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney  
Attachments  
Max Friedersdorf memos dated September 24, 1976

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

September 24, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

THROUGH: JACK MARSH 

FROM: MAX FRIEDEDORF 

Attached are some Senatorial reactions to last night's debate.

The House is in recess today and Republican leaders were difficult to reach Friday morning, but we expect House comments later in the day.

September 24, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

MAX FRIEDERSDORF

FROM:

25.9.

JOE JENCKES

SUBJECT:

The First Debate -- Senate Reactions

Following are the reactions of selected Senators to the President's performance during the First Ford/Carter Debate (September 23, 1976). These reactions were received between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. this morning.

GRIFFIN

1. "The President's closing statement was not a "ten strike." It should have been. It tended to be generally rambling and not well organized which was unfortunate in light of the advance notice of this golden opportunity."
2. "Generally, the President was ahead throughout the debate -- particularly in the first 20 minutes which is most important. That is when the President won the debate."
3. "In preparing for the next debate, carefully make a list of telling points that should be made regardless of what the questions are. The questions asked tend to be general and broad enough to allow a lot of flexibility so long as the question is answered."
4. "Either candidate would have scored a lot of points last night if he had injected just a little humor somewhere in the proceedings -- particularly after the sound breakdown. Both were stiff and unreal in reacting to this situation."
5. "DON'T let down or be too confident about the next debate. Carter will work harder and will be better organized. The President will be expected to do better on defense and foreign policy -- that offers great opportunity for Carter to pull an upset."

H. SCOTT "The President had a definite edge. I thought Carter misquoted his record as Governor and the President scored points on Carter regarding Carter's veto record. Carter made mistake in referring to the depression of the '40's."

The Senator also stated that he did not believe that the President made the best use of time in his closing. Could have been prepared in advance. Should have been more forceful. The Senator feels that Carter beat the President on the closing. The President had no "specific vision of future."

BAKER "The President won on points. No knock-out for either side. The general format favors the President. The President's closing statement was not as good as other parts of debate."

CURTIS "It's clear that the President won the debate. I'm glad that it wasn't a real debate because in true debate the participants get involved in minutiae. The format being used allows the President to say what he wants to the American people."

STEVENS The Senator watched the debate with his children who are of college age. They felt the President had the edge. His daughter said she "liked" the President.

The Senator felt the President came over with a Father image. In addition, the Senator believes that the President should not always be positioned on the right-hand side of the screen. The left side is more dominant. We read and look from left to right.

The Senator felt that the President was superior on substance. He also suggested that the President look at the camera instead of the questioner and that the President not wear a vest in one of the future debates. Believes that too many statistics were used by both participants last night. Said Carter's sentences were too long and rambling.

GOLDWATER

"The President was a clear winner. The President did a wonderful job. I think the President made Carter look irresponsible and totally lacking in a knowledge of government. The President should have lambasted Carter a little more. It is essential that the President continue to put the heat on the failures of Congress."

THE WHITE HOUSE  
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Don Penney

"Interesting."

You will see by

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN. . . .

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House Reactions/First Debate

Attached are reactions from both Republicans and Democrats in the House to last night's debate.



Bob Michel - Thought the President did very well. The Peoria paper called 74 people in a survey -- 54 responded. Sixteen people thought the President won the debate - 12 people thought Carter won - and 26 people felt it was a draw. Michel says this survey indicates that there is still a big undecided vote out in this neck of the woods. Michel was glad to see that the President finally got some national press on his program for tax reductions, holding the line on government spending, and the use of the veto. People talking to Michel said they were with the President on these points and there was no need for the President to apologize for his position on tax reductions, government spending, and the use of the veto. Said Carter rambled at first and picked up momentum in his summation. Overall he was very happy and pleased with the President's performance.

Barber Conable - Thought debate went all right, but not thrilled by either performance. The President came off better than Carter. The President did well not to press harder on the issues than he did because the issues are with the President and he thought the President's general posture on the issues was a good one. Thought the President's summation was poor and cliché. Carter comes across as too glib and does not come across as well as the President. Suggests that the President work on his summation more. Says the President emerged as Gerald Ford and that is the right way to do it and not be somebody that he is not. He thought the President's statistical countering was good but somewhat dull. Says it appears that the general public and newspaper reaction is that the President clearly won. Says if Gerald Ford continues to be Gerald Ford he will continue to close the gap and can win this election with the issues in the President's favor.

Sam Devine - President should look at the camera and not at the person asking the question when he responds - direct his eyes at the camera. Says President lacks the killer instinct and missed three or four opportunities to really give it to Carter. For example, when Carter said that the tax structure is a mess, full of loopholes for the wealthy and rich people of this country - the President should have hit Carter for taking full advantage of these loopholes in his own personal income tax returns. Felt the President

took one hour and ten minutes to hit the Democratic-controlled Congress which wrote the tax laws and created other economic problems.

Guy Vander Jagt - Felt he was not the proper person to respond because of his bias and prejudice toward the President. Incensed that Carter does not know what he is talking about regarding taxes and tax structure. Felt the President totally overpowered Carter on the tax issue but feels that his reaction is not shared by others. Says all Carter has done on the tax issue is learn a few words and that's all. Talked to people back in his district and they felt the President did well.

Al Quie - Felt President was clearly the winner in the first part of the debate and this was good first impression. Felt that the viewing public got the impression that the President knew his job and where he was going and where he wanted to go. Said Carter at first was ill at ease, rambled, and didn't know where he was going. Quie says that then Carter picked up steam as the debate went on. Quie felt the President should have hit the Democrat-controlled Congress much earlier, specifically on the energy question. Felt that the President did not show enough sympathy for the poor and unemployed. President should have stated what he had done and his programs for the poor and unemployed and how the Democrat-controlled Congress has thwarted his efforts. Feels the President should take a lot more credit than he does on education issues. Says President did OK and that Carter started out fuzzy and is going to have to stay on that track.

John Murtha - President should look more at the camera and not the panel asking the questions. He felt the President showed confidence, mastery of the issues, and displayed leadership with confidence. He felt the cut-off or technical difficulties was very bad and made everything uncomfortable. The President in the debate established himself as able to run the government but he didn't think the debate changed any minds. He felt that the debate showed that Carter has a problem with the issues and that the President is doing the best job under some difficult circumstances. He felt the President had the edge and destroyed Carter's credibility when he spoke of the increase in jobs in state government when Carter was governor of Georgia. He felt

Carter was more sincere in his closing statement and more interested in people. He felt an important point from the debate was that the President did not have to defend himself on a whole range of issues and Carter will have a difficult time explaining how he is going to cut defense spending in his district. Murtha feels that this was the toughest one of the debates since it involved the economy and domestic issues. He says from here on out it's downhill for Carter because he does not think he will be able to match the President on foreign policy. Murtha said that Carter looked at the camera and his final statement was very good.

Rep. Bill Armstrong - Thought that the debate went reasonably well. Strong point in the President's favor was that Carter came out clearly as the candidate advocating big spending, big programs and more big government. He felt the President's image was that of a leader trying to reduce the size of Government and reduce taxes.

He felt the President missed an opportunity early in the debates to come out swinging against the Congress. By the time this issue was raised, he felt that most of the audience had tuned out the debate.

Because of the recent publicity in PLAYBOY, he felt that Carter went into the debate as the underdog. He feels, therefore, that the debate helped Carter too as he was able to hold his own.

Rep. Marjorie Holt - Carter did better than she had hoped he would. However, the President clearly came out more forcefully and more as a leader. She would have liked to have seen the President hit harder on the issues - be more on the offensive.

Rep. John Wydler - The President won! Carter was not clear on any issues. He never answered any of the difficult questions. The President came across as a leader who knew what he wanted to say and said it. He was very pleased that the President made a statement that he would sign the tax bill.

He felt that the hardest question that the President had to respond to was the question on the pardon. He would like to suggest in the future the President emphasize the difference between granting a blanket pardon and a pardon granted on an individual basis on merit. He should explain how he agonized over the Nixon pardon and how it too was judged on its merits and in retrospect history has shown that he was correct.

Rep. Silvio Conte - He felt that the President should have been more aggressive. On the subject of tax loopholes, he said that the President should have brought out the fact that Carter took advantage of those loopholes.

Congressman Conte said that the President let Carter get away with using the time to talk politics, making statements which were irrelevant to the questions. He said he didn't think the debate made that much difference.

Jim Quillen - Believes that the President did a tremendous job and came out far ahead of Carter in the debate.

Al Cederberg - Noted that he viewed the debate with Mrs. Ford in the White House and that he talked to the President following the event last night. Suggests that the President should be more aggressive and "rougher" on Carter. Stated the issue of the debate was clear -- Carter waffling around the Democratic platform, in essence calling for increased taxes along with increased federal expenditures -- the President projecting his programs which would reduce taxes and reduce federal spending.

Jack Edwards - Thought Carter and the President did a good job of putting the Democratic and Republican philosophies of government in perspective. Believes the President should have emphasized more that it is Congress who has failed in allowing a tax reduction/spending ceiling and an overall energy policy. Noted that he believed Carter did a better job of working into his answers political rhetorical comments. Stated that overall public contacts made to him expressed a very good feeling with the President's appearance.

Bill Whitehurst - Felt that until the conclusion the President definitely had the upper hand in the debate. Commended the President for exposing Governor Carter's record in Georgia. On balance, feels the President came across better, however, suggests that he become more aggressive in his delivery and attacks on Carter.

Clarence Brown - Believes the President did a good job, but the debate seemed dull and there was no real audience-holding power. Thinks many errors of fact were made by Carter as he addressed economic issues. Therefore, Bud suggests that the minority staff of the Joint Economic Committee review the transcript of the debate and issue a press release pointing out the errors in fact as advocated by Carter. Overall, it was his feeling the President came out on the positive side.

Bill Young - Saw the debate as being a "draw" between Carter and the President. It appeared that Carter was more relaxed and confident, but the President walked all over Carter on substance. Because the economy is the President's most vulnerable issue and Carter was not able to win this debate, believes the President is sitting in a very favorable position for the remainder of the debates as well as the campaign.

Joe Waggoner - Was returning to Louisiana while the debate was being aired on TV and therefore was only able to hear about 45 minutes of the debate on radio. What he heard definitely was in the President's favor. It was his opinion that Carter manifested the fact that he doesn't have a grasp of our tax laws, the importance of a free enterprise system, and our current economic situation. Suggests that in forthcoming debates the President may want to follow Carter's answers by simply stating "Governor Carter didn't answer the question" and then proceed to give specific details as to why. Again, thought the President handled himself very well but stated that in listening to the debate on radio the President's speech often seemed broken.

Sonny Montgomery - The President was forceful and in charge. Believes that in the next several days Ford will be described as being the clear winner. However, the President's closing statement was not as good as Carter's. However, Carter gave his standard political speech used daily on the campaign trail.

Rep. Albert Johnson - Thought the President did very well. Was impressed with the debates and was quite enthusiastic with the way he thought the President got through to the people tagging the Democrats as big spenders.

As far as criticism goes, he felt the President could have been more forceful in his closing remarks. He was very pleased with the AP poll that came out last night after the debate.

Rep. Harold Runnels - Thought the President did real well but please stop looking at questioners and look at the camera.

Encourages the President to keep hitting Carter on the Georgia issues - increased employees, increases in bonded indebtedness, increases in budget, etc.

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The Senator also stated that he did not believe that the President made the best use of time in his closing. Could have been prepared in advance. Should have been more forceful. The Senator feels that Carter beat the President on the closing. The President had no "specific vision of future."

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