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News & Comment

The President's Daily News Summary



Leading The News...

Friday, October 1, 1976

DEBATE REACTION SUPPLEMENT

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MIDWESTMICHIGANDebate Sharpened Focus of Presidential Campaign
(Editorial, excerpted, Detroit Sunday News)

Confirmed partisans know, of course, that their candidate won the opening debate between President Ford and Jimmy Carter.

The nation's undecided voters, who hope to be enlightened and persuaded by the presidential debates, are probably more inclined to regard Thursday night's joust as a standoff -- which is not to say that the debate failed to serve a purpose.

Neither candidate committed a major blunder. Neither delivered a stunning blow. Carter seemed stiff and nervous in the beginning and Mr. Ford a bit tired in the end, but for the most part they appeared and spoke well. In short, the first of the series of debates neither won nor lost the election of 1976 for anybody.

To nobody's surprise, Carter's most effective issue was the national economy, particularly the high rate of unemployment. He probably did some damage, too, with his frequent subtle efforts to tie Gerald Ford to Richard Nixon. Mr. Ford clearly had the better of the spending and tax issues and displayed a firmer grasp of federal data and governmental operations.

Mr. Ford looked best and Carter worst in their lively exchange about the Democratic Congress. In fact, Carter ended up in a contradiction that must have left Democrats in Congress shaking their heads.

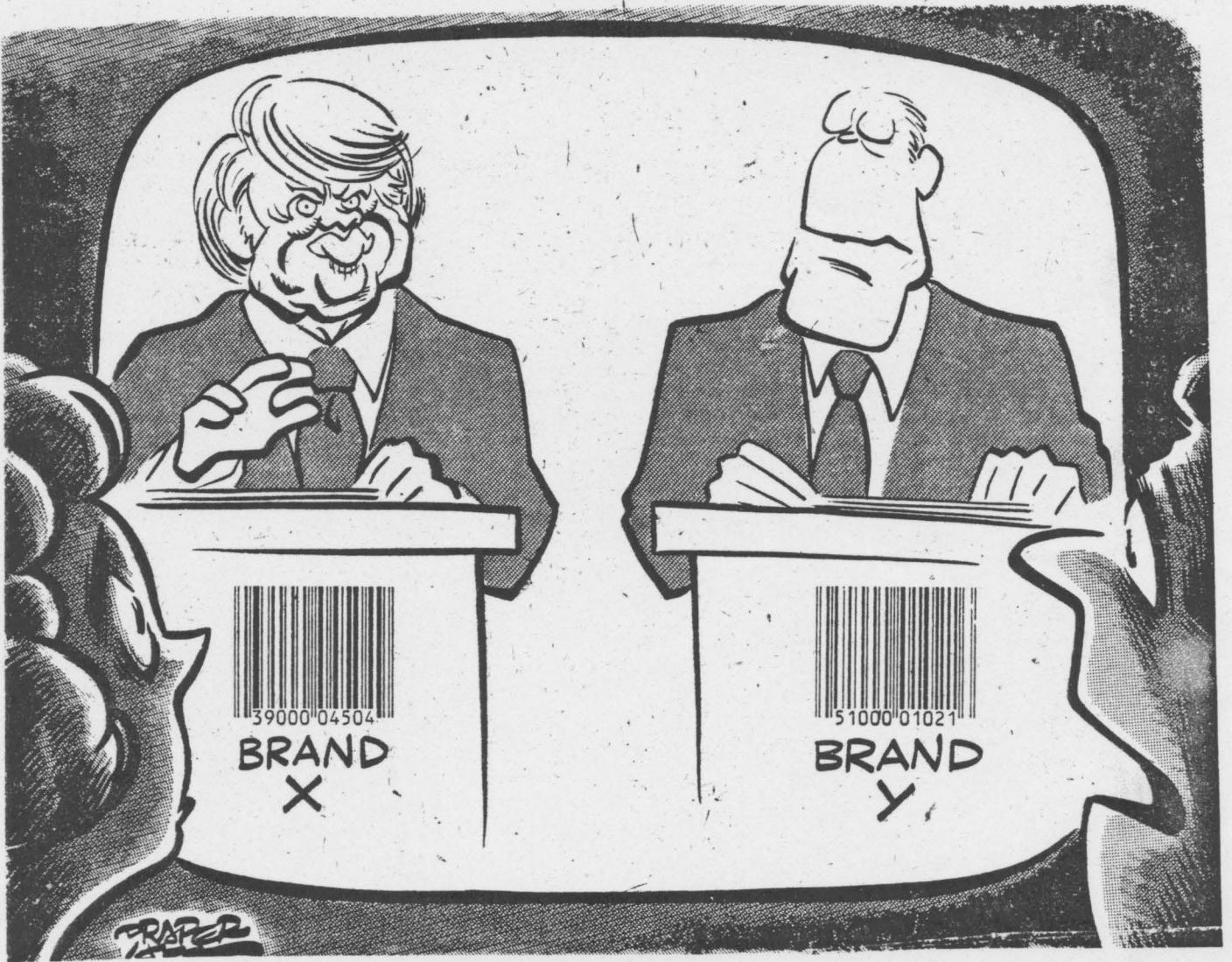
Did the debate tell the voters anything they didn't already know about the candidates? Very little. Yet, it did serve to sharpen the focus upon the candidates' differences.

It confirmed Carter as a promiser in the tradition of the Democratic Party's biggest spenders -- a promiser without any very firm ideas about how the bills will be paid. The debate confirmed Mr. Ford as a conservative moderate who thinks government can make its greatest contribution to American progress by restraining its own appetites for power, regulation and expenditure. We suspect that this point of view has been making some headway among the voters.

In a different way, each man scored well in his closing statement. Carter's rapid summation and warm appeal to American idealism and fellowship were highly effective. Mr. Ford, who seemed at the last minute to be running out of gas, groped for words and repeated himself -- and then with a flash of insight hit the nail squarely on the head.

What is this election about? What big decision must the voters make? It boils down, he said, to a question of "his promises or my performance." That, it seems to us, is a precise drawing of the battlelines of 1976 -- (9/26/76)

'Gee, that's a tough one!'



MICHIGAN

Debate Resolves Little for Voters
 (By Allan Blanchard, excerpted, Detroit News)



Everyone who watched had a winner today but, if the first of the 1976 presidential debates showed anything, it was that the candidates do not offer a clearly defined, unmistakable choice in their view of what the federal government should be to its people.

Rather, where they differed was by degree and in approach to solutions. Also, neither President Ford nor Jimmy Carter put anything before the American public that they have not said in this year-long battle for the presidency.

So, when summed up, the measure of each man's success in the debate last night probably hangs on the perception of the two, as expressed in the words of Ford as the session drew to a close: "I think the real issue in this campaign, that which you must decide on Nov. 2, is whether you should vote for his promises or my performance in two years in the White House."

Those promises and that performance, unfortunately, were portrayed by each of the candidates in a profusion of often contradictory facts and figures. They left even Washington observers, whose job it is to keep track of such things, scratching their heads in an attempt to place the answers and rebuttals in proper perspective.

However, out of the deluge of statistics there did emerge the themes of each man's campaign.

The debate showed both men to be well prepared for the ordeal of public scrutiny. The format caused a lack of spontaneity that might have occurred had the candidates been permitted to directly address each other.

The only sparks occurred when, in moments of brief rebuttal, the men put a personal tone in their remarks. -- (9/24/76)

First Debate Helps Show Some Clear Differences...
 (Editorial, excerpted, Detroit Free Press)

During the first of the great debates for the presidency, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford offered clear-cut choices to the voters, especially on economic issues.

Carter was firm in his belief that the federal government should play a larger role in curbing unemployment. Ford was equally firm in standing against federal spending that might refuel inflation.

We thought Carter had the better of this crucial argument. James P. Gannon of the Wall Street Journal, one of the panelists,

MIDWESTMICHIGAN

framed the issue well when he asked President Ford if it were better for the country to pay out \$17 billion or \$20 billion a year in unemployment compensation, as it has been doing, or put people to work in public service jobs to bring down unemployment and also regain some tax revenues now lost.

Ford stuck with traditional Republican views. The private sector alone can best bolster the economy. Further inflation must be prevented at all costs. Business incentives are needed. Carter's views seemed more responsive to the real dilemma plaguing the country.

His view was more traditionally Democratic, but he offered a scenario by which the country could use federal spending to ease unemployment while also attempting to balance the budget and thus hold down inflation.

In this area, Carter seemed to offer more of a program for moving the country forward, for meeting some of our problems directly. Ford offered less of a program and was more stand pat.

Particularly in terms of the problems of America's great cities, including Detroit, Carter's definitions and proposals seemed to address reality to a greater degree than the President's. In other areas, their disagreements were just as sharply defined. Ford scored some telling points, Carter was equally effective in some of his jabs.

There is a perception that the basis for judging their performance in these debates will be more on their style than on their substance. Perhaps that is true; certainly style and mannerisms can tell a lot about what kind of president voters want or what kind each would be.

The President clearly eradicated any fears that he might fumble or stumble. He was presidential and forceful. As the first polls suggest, that may have helped him somewhat.

What really matters, however, is that they were talking face-to-face about issues. These are keys to the decision voters will make on Nov. 2. The specific nature of the first debate, if carried through the remaining confrontations, may well allow Americans to make their most well-informed judgement in many years. -- (9/25/76)

MICHIGAN

...Voters Came Out on Top
(Editorial, excerpted, Detroit Free Press)

While there were some skeptics, some "sophisticates," who found themselves disenchanted with the format of the Thursday evening presidential debates -- "too formal," some said, or "too rigid" -- nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the debate did offer a rather rare opportunity to the American people.

It brought together both candidates -- face to face -- to talk about the issues, and to present their philosophies of government. The contest took place on a high plain. While each candidate was perceived as winning or losing a round or two, the debate itself never seemed to get sidetracked, and it never seemed to descend to the level of personal attacks or "low blows."

The questions themselves could have been more broad-ranged. The debate was supposed to focus on domestic affairs and the economy; the questions, though, dealt mostly with the economy. No one asked about the candidates' plans for managing the problems of the cities.

The audio failure was farcical, of course. The awkwardness of watching Gov. Carter's lips soundlessly moving, then seeing both candidates standing around with nothing to do -- being careful not to talk to each other -- was an ignominious near-ending to what had until then been a dignified performance by all participants.

What is important is that the differences between the candidates came through clearly. This is going to be an election in which the American people will be able to cast their ballots decidedly for one political philosophy and against another. The League of Women Voters is to be commended for helping to make the comparison easier, as are all of the people both in and out of government who worked to bring about the kinds of campaign financing reforms that have opened up this year's elections and helped make such things as presidential debates more feasible. -- (9/25/76)

MIDWESTMICHIGAN

No Instant Winners in Big Debate
 (Editorial, excerpted, Michigan State Journal)

Technical difficulties, notwithstanding, the first of the great debates between President Ford and Jimmy Carter came off reasonably well on Thursday evening.

But anyone anticipating some dramatic turning point in the Carter-Ford race must have been sorely disappointed, for both candidates generally pursued the same themes they have been using throughout the campaign.

The ultimate in prepared partisan comment had to come from State Sen. David Holmes, (D-Detroit). He issues a press release in Lansing praising Carter's performance in the debates and asserting that Carter had shown himself to be the better qualified candidate. Not surprising in content, but the press release came out four hours before the debate took place. Clairvoyance?

The episode does, however, help demonstrate the absurdity of trying to determine an instant winner in this type of debate. The definitive answer will not come until Nov. 2, and even then the roll played by the debates may still be unclear. Ford and Carter will just have to continue to polish their styles and hope for the best. -- (9/25/76)

The Debate
 (Editorial, excerpted, Rockford Register)

It was the night of the gray men. Neither Jimmy Carter nor Gerald Ford struck any major sparks during their face-to-face confrontation on Thursday night. They both appeared equally adroit in fielding and often side-stepping the questions of the panel of reporters. Both came to the podium with their strategies well-mapped and their arguments well-marshalled. They knew where each other's weaknesses lay and moved quickly to define and exploit those weaknesses.

Whatever else can be said about Ford and his policies, he appeared to be very much in command before the cameras during the debate. The event was critical to both men, but especially so to Carter in that he had to maintain and strengthen his image of leadership and ability. His base of support is so soft that he could not be content to be perceived as being at least as strong as Gerald Ford. He had to be seen as being stronger, much stronger. He was unable to convey this in the debates, and is now probably in serious trouble because of it.

Given the choice between two candidates of apparently equal capabilities, the American people can be expected to stay with the one they already know -- with the man who already holds the office.

-- (9/28/76)

MICHIGANScore Uncertain, But Ford Carried Ball More
(By Don Campbell, excerpted, Mich. State Journal)

Whoever won Thursday night's first presidential debate, President Ford was clearly the more aggressive candidate.

Ford barred no holds in his effort to paint Democrat Jimmy Carter as wishy-washy and loose with the facts, and Carter was forceful in his attempts to portray Ford as "insensitive" and incapable of leadership.

But Ford was much more adamant and more personal in attempting to picture Carter as a big spender, and to hang about his neck the Democratic Party platform and the record of the Democratic Congress.

Carter's most telling points of the night came when he sought to portray Ford as an adherent of the Republican philosophy that has made the tax code a "welfare program for the rich," and when he declared that if he was responsible for the Democratic Congress, as Ford intimated, then Ford was responsible for the Nixon administration, "of which he was a part."

The debate featured a lot of facts and statistics that many viewers might not have understood. The heavy use of statistics simply indicated that both men had done their homework. But there was little new in what they said; for the most part, it was a rehash of the points they've been trying to make on the campaign trail all year.

Who "won" will be a judgment for the American people to make. Ford had set out to present himself as one in sharp command of the facts and figures with which he deals daily. Carter had set out to present himself as one intimately familiar with the economic and other domestic problems of the country.

To a large extent, both succeeded. But Carter seemed to take longer in warming to the task than Ford, and at times appeared to be groping for words in the early going.

It was important for Carter to do well in this first debate because domestic issues are naturally his strong suit. In the next debate, the topic will be foreign and defense policy -- an area where Ford has much more knowledge and experience. -- (9/24/76)

MICHIGANDebate Bores Locals

(Editorial, excerpted, [University of] Michigan Daily)

Despite predictions that Thursday night's much-publicized "Great Debate" between President Ford and Jimmy Carter would sway undecided voters, the event seems to have failed to do so. In Ann Arbor, many viewers called the first of the three televised meetings "boring" and "unimpressive."

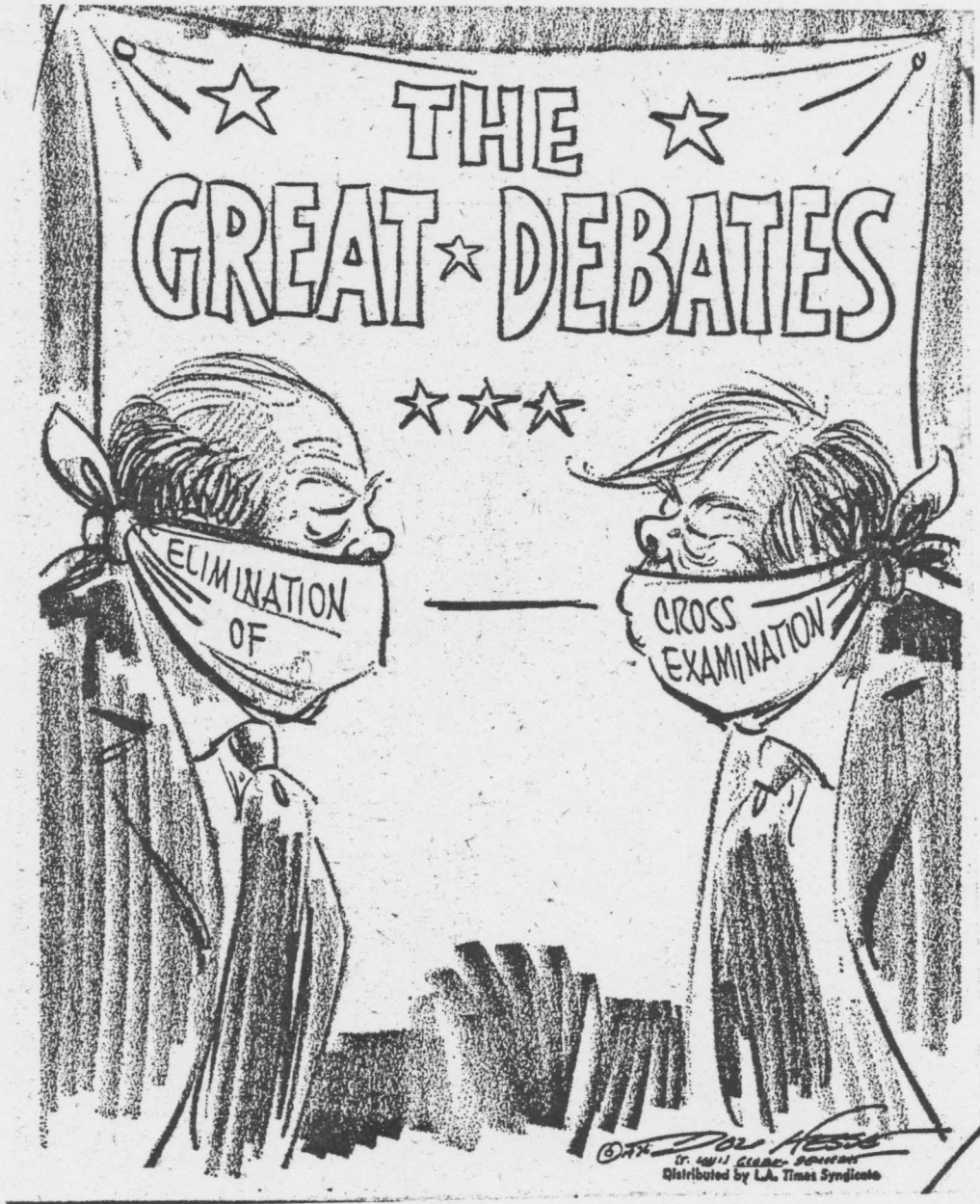
"The whole thing was unexciting, uninspiring and uninformative," said Edie Goldenberg, assistant professor of political science and specialist in media-politics relations. "I went to bed very disappointed."

Though she called the debate a draw, she said Ford was more successful in conveying an image of leadership. "One candidate might have come out of this looking but it didn't happen."

Goldenberg praised Ford's coached speaking, and said that while Carter seemed more nervous, both were bland. "I think a lot of people were looking at the debates to help them make up their minds," she said. "But it was heavy on numbers and just plain confusing."

University president Robben Fleming also said he thought there was no winner. Fleming noted the debates had been well-organized and the candidates seemed prepared, although "both seemed somewhat uptight. I think they could have benefited from some humor."

Ann Arbor councilwoman Carol Jones said, "Although both made things clear, I really feel that Ford was the loser on certain issues. One thing which really stuck in my mind was energy. Carter came out clearly (with proposals) on the issue." She also cited the different policies of the two in respect to the question of amnesty for draft evaders. -- (9/25/76)



OHIOThe Debate - Not Great

(Editorial, excerpted, Youngstown Vindicator)

Little new developed out of the first Ford-Carter debate Thursday night. Except for the historic nature of the event itself, there was little excitement -- some newsmen reported that six persons in the invited audience were awakened by the silence when the sound system failed.

Jimmy Carter appeared slightly nervous at first, but hit his stride in a short time. President Ford did not have an opportunity to equal his Kansas City speech, but succeeded in firm presidential devlivery.

There were only a few surprises. President Ford dug into Jimmy Carter's record on reorganizing the government of Georgia and said Carter's successor had complained that he inherited a "mess." He repeated the theme of Carter's inconsistency. Carter renewed his charge that Ford and the Republicans are more interested in statistics than people -- except just before election. Perhaps his most telling thrust was at the Ford leadership.

Only once did a speaker fail to respond directly to a question. When Frank Reynolds of ABC asked Carter whether he would consider wage and price controls, the candidate said there is "a long way to go" before we shall have inflationary pressures, but he did not commit himself on controls. -- (9/25/76)

Ford, Carter Are No Orators

(By Clingan Jackson, excerpted, Youngstown Vindicator)

President Ford and Jimmy Carter were farther apart in their seats Thursday night than they seemed to be on the issues.

Neither proved himself an orator. Moreover, neither really said anything new, and both used pretty much the same words they have been using in their campaigns and at the national conventions.

The stands taken by the candidates very well showed the patches of votes they are reaching for to win the election, and oth the score the President appeared to be appealing more across the whole spectrum of america. Carter was appealing to the unsatisfied and Ford seemed to be counting on the satisfied. Carter cited the unemployed and Ford the employed, a larger number of americans than ever before.

OHIO

TV Debate Was A Draw
(Editorial, excerpted, The Plain Dealer)

There was no knockout in last night's presidential debate between Jimmy Carter and President Ford.

Some issues were raised, some jabs were landed, but neither man scored a clear-cut victory in the first of three debates.

Both men, as might be expected, seemed tense at the beginning of the debate. Carter especially seemed to relax and become more animated as the debate went on.

As the incumbent, President Ford often was called upon to defend existing policies. Carter had no such liability, but Ford took him to task for Carter's performance as governor of Georgia.

The televised debate gave an estimated 100 million Americans the opportunity to weigh the viewpoints of the candidates and to judge their abilities to think on their feet. Those viewers who expected a fiery exchange were disappointed. Most often the candidates' answers to questions from a panel of newsmen were tedious explanations of fiscal policy and taxation. -- (9/24/76)

Debates Require Work

(Editorial, excerpted, The Plain Dealer)

However, much some might wish otherwise, the debates are not intended as entertainment. They are deadly serious business, and with the presidency of the United States at stake, the caution of both candidates is understandable. Admittedly there were no real verbal fireworks Thursday evening, but mixed in with the dull recitations were nuggets of information valuable to those who must make the final decision Nov. 2.

While urging the audience to work at the debates, we wish also to suggest two improvements in the format for the second and third debates.

The noted political writer Theodore White proposed that the candidates be permitted to begin the debate with an opening statement. We agree. Like White, we believe this would enable both men to develop and propound a unifying theme that was lacking Thursday evening.

It might also help if the candidates had a chance to question each other. That might lead to something more akin to a real debate and less like the semblance of two men standing side by side holding separate news conferences. -- (9/26/76)

OHIO

The party contest aspect of the election was somewhat diminished by the debate, for the viewer saw two men giving an account of their campaigns rather than rising a donkey or an elephant. Many Americans, perhaps, a majority, will go to the polls Nov. 2 not especially conscious of party affiliation but rather trying to determine the better of these two men to lead the nation -- (9/26/76)

Majority In Dispatch Poll View Ford As the Winner

(By Gene Jordan, excerpted, Columbus Dispatch)

A Dispatch poll showed 43 persons believed President Ford won Thursday's night debate, 34 thought Jimmy Carter won and 48 considered it a tie.

In the personal interview portion, 56 of 102 persons questioned said they didn't watch the debate. In the telephone poll, 19 persons indicated they will vote for Ford, 13 favored Carter and 30 said they are undecided.

Among those who said the debate changed their minds on how they will vote, Carter lost three votes. Two persons said they would switch to Ford and one said he had supported Carter but was now undecided. However, Carter broke even, gaining three votes from previously undecided voters.

Ford didn't lose any votes, and gained the two from previous Carter supporters and three from previously undecideds.

In on-the-street interviews, 40 said the debate didn't change their minds concerning who they had decided earlier would receive their votes. One person said he switched from indecision to Carter.

Among those who answered a question of party support, 18 said they were Democrats, 15 said they were Republicans and 13 said they were independents. -- (9/24/76)

The Debates: Round One
(Editorial, excerpted Chicago Daily News)

Who won the opening round in the Great Debate between Gerald Ford and James E. Carter? It's hard to say. Partisans had their answers ready long before the debate began, so it is no surprise to hear the proclamations that "Jerry won" or "Jimmy won."

But for the objective viewers and listeners, a waiting period is still in order. The Thursday night debate was limited to domestic and economic questions and the answers fell into predictable Democratic and Republican patterns. Next come the questions about foreign policy and defense, and from those should emerge more pieces to fill out the picture to be put before the American people on November 2.

Still, the opening debate, marred though it was by a technical failure that brought a 28-minute interruption in the flow of thought, brought out significant differences in the philosophy of the candidates, making it clearer that the choice given the voters is a real one.

There were points of style as well as substance, such as Carter's obvious newness at the outset, which he conquered later on. And there was Ford's obvious effort to appear "presidential" and thus sharpen the contrast between his White House experience and Carter's relative inexperience. But the decision that lies ahead goes beyond matters of style, to the basic tenets embraced by the two contenders.

Carter tried hard to portray Ford as unfeeling, uncaring--about the unemployed, the poor, the self-exiles from the Vietnam War. Ford tried just as hard to portray Carter as the big spender, the outsider lacking in understanding of the intricate problems facing a President.

Ford could and did refute Carter's charge of inaction and lack of leadership by reminding him of specific administration proposals deflected by a Democratic Congress. To this Carter could respond with additional charges of "government by stalemate" and a reminder of Ford's long list of vetoes--vetoes which, by Ford's accounting, saved the taxpayers billions of dollars.

Carter missed some opportunities to lay to rest the charge that he is unclear on the issues, particularly when it came to taxes and the economy. Asked whether he favors an "incomes policy"--meaning wage and price controls--he strayed from the subject without answering. He responded with scorn rather than clarity when Ford returned to the much-discussed and still unexplained question of how a Carter administration would launch new and expensive social social welfare programs and at the same time balance the budget by 1980.

But Ford was left hanging when he tried to reconcile his cutbacks in federal aid, particularly in education, with his proposal to increase funding for national parks.

There were some "cheap shots" on both sides. Ford got off a few in his repeated references to Carter's term as governor of Georgia, as if the contrast between a sitting (though unelected) President and a one-term governor did not speak for itself. Carter approached the edge of demagoguery in dredging up Herbert Hoover, Richard Nixon and Watergate at every opportunity, and in blaming a Republican White House for a "disgraceful" tax structure erected by a Democratic Congress.

But this was, after all, a partisan slugging match, in which the broad, unsupported generality may be deemed more effective than the reasoned specific. How the generalities sway the voters is what remains to be determined, in the coming debates and at the polls. (9/25-26/76)

The Jerry-and-Jimmy Show
(Editorial excerpted Chicago Sun-Times)

A confession: After a night's sleep on the whole situation, we're not ready to declare a winner in the first Ford-Carter debate.

A suggestion: Neither should any of our readers concerned with selecting the best possible President on November 2.

The debates should not be contests. They should be examinations. The voting public should not be led into thinking in terms of a winner and a loser. It should instead be seeking information to help in choosing a winner on election day. There is a difference.

The performance in the Walnut Street Theater Thursday night gave the public as clear a depiction as it has ever gotten in one session of the difference in philosophy between the Republican and Democratic parties. After listening to Jimmy Carter and President Ford expound their views of government's duties, there can be no doubt that voters this year face a meaningful choice.

Left still unresolved is the question of the ability of each man to carry out his intentions. The first debate's biggest shortcoming was its failure to help resolve that. Ford and Carter did not have the opportunity to go at each other in traditional debate style. Both were carefully programmed, and as you watched you could almost see the key words in the questions triggering the prepared responses. There were simultaneous press conferences, not a coherent debate.

As a result, neither had the opportunity to demonstrate his ability to think quickly or analyze carefully. The presentation did show that either was qualified to be President. It failed in giving an indication of which would be better qualified.

It would help, for example, if each candidate were required to make a brief opening statement in the next two debates. That would allow them to phrase the issues in foreign policy, defense and other matters as they saw them. Then some provision should be made for interchange between the two candidates. They should be compelled to question each other, following up on disagreements, making each other amplify on vague points as each feels necessary.

Each still has the opportunity to make a case to the public that will be listened to. The challenge to the league now is to make certain that the case is presented in a way that will help voters make up their minds. (9/25/76)

Ford Wins! -- By Billions
(By Mike Royko, excerpted Chicago Daily News)

My guess is that if anybody helped himself in the first debate, it was President Ford.

Not that he said anything new, or especially bright. But he didn't have to. Merely by not falling down or swallowing his tongue in public, he increases his stature. All he has to do is sound average and many people, out of sheer relief that their President isn't subnormal, consider him outstanding.

Ford also showed that he can think big. Every second sentence contained a few hundred billions of dollars. By the end of the evening, he must have gone through a trillion, at least.

I don't think anybody, especially Ford, could keep track of where all that money was going to, or coming from. I think some of it was being stolen by Congress, and a lot of it was being coveted by Jimmy Carter. I think he said he was going to give us a few billion. Or at least not take it away from us. In any case, when your phone rings, answer it by shouting: "President Ford will make me rich."

So for many viewers, it had to be reassuring to see Ford talk about billions with such confidence and only his normal visual glassiness.

Carter, on the other hand, made what I consider to be a serious tactical error. Because he didn't have millions of dollars, he talked about compassion.

That was a mistake. Compassion was big in the early and mid-1960s. If you looked even slightly downtrodden, you weren't safe from help. These are the hard-eyed 1970s. People still have compassion, but mostly for themselves.

So Carter was on the wrong end of the statistic when he pointed out that 8 percent of the work force is out of work, and they are human beings and that's a lot of people and a lot of misery. He was right. But 92 percent of the work force has a job, and they aren't going to stare at the bedroom ceiling worrying about those who don't.

Ford, in contrast, did a masterful job of keeping his compassion under control, just as he always did when he was a congressman, except when he got teary-eyed about the plight of downtrodden corporations.

Even when Carter brought up Ford's pardon of Nixon, to show that Ford is capable of selective compassion. Ford refused to take credit for being an old softie at heart. He made it clear that the pardon was mainly a way for him to be a more efficient chief executive. He made it sound like he had tossed out some garbage.

So if the debate on domestic issues told us anything, it is that Jerry Ford, the nice guy, is the wrong person to ask for a dime for a cup of coffee.
(9/24/76

The Debate Nobody Won
(By Peter Lisagor and William J. Eaton, excepted, Chicago Daily News)

Nobody could possibly claim that a knockout or even serious damage has been inflicted by either man.

The first of the debates gave viewers no new insights into the positions of President Ford or Jimmy Carter. It did, however, demonstrate that each man had prepared himself fairly and had remembered arguments right down to the last rhetorical detail made in campaign speeches in the last few weeks.

They may have, as some experts believe, firmed up soft or wavering support. But it would be hard to imagine, on the basis of any thing either man said Thursday night in Philadelphia, a rush to register by voters who have been apathetic or indifferent toward both candidates until now.

Carter's low-key performance took on a sharp cutting edge when he criticized Ford for lack of leadership and called recent administration proposals a public relations stunt.

What viewers saw and heard was an almost classic rendering of Republican and Democratic dogma. Ford espoused reduced government spending, encouragement of the private sector to create jobs through tax incentives, and the use of vetoes to check what he called congressional excesses.

Economic questions to both men were almost too arcane for most viewers. And neither man, surprisingly, was asked about recent developments involving their personal judgment, taste and decorum.

The Georgia Democrat was, at times, faintly patronizing. He came through as confident, self-assured, even talky, saying at one point that "if I am elected — and I intend to be" he would implement his program for reorganizing the federal establishment. Ford was his usual earnest, unexciting, sober, cautious self, trying no polemical tricks. — (9/24/76)

ILLINOISTo Daley, Carter Won on Jobs Issue

(By Harry Golden Jr., excerpted, Chicago Sun-Times)

Mayor Daley said Friday that Jimmy Carter scored heavily in the first presidential campaign debate "on the questions that concern people" -- jobs most of all.

But former Gov. Richard B. Ogilvie, President Ford's Illinois campaign manager, said he thought Ford won. "I have no doubt about it for myself, but from what I have been hearing this morning from Independents and Democrats who haven't made up their minds, the President was a clear victor."

At a Cith Hall press conference, Daley said, "Jimmy Carter came on very strong on jobs, inflation, on leadership, on reorganization of government, on taxes, on energy -- on the fact that energy programs should be in one department.

The mayor acknowledged, however, "In fairness, the President in the first part of the debate showed knowledge of government."

Pressed to name the winner, Daley said: "Our viewpoint -- my viewpoint -- would be Carter."

But Daley indicated he didn't think the debate was conclusive and cited again a University of Michigan study that found that the voters who control a national election do not make up their minds until the final 15 days of the campaign.

Gov. Walker did not hesitate in proclaiming Carter the debate victor. "I see this morning that the great debate over who won the debate is still raging. I believe Jimmy Carter won."

Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.) was ecstatic, an aide said, over Ford's performance. "Percy called an aide at 1 a.m. to gloat," the spokesman for the senator said.

Ogilvie claimed victory for Ford on the basis that "the President was in clear command of his facts and he was very calm. I thought Carter was pretty nervous for the first portion and talked very generally and said somethings that don't stand close inspection. Ford just nailed him good and solid. -- (9/25/76)

ILLINOISPolitical Leaders Uncertain About Impact on the Voters
(By Edward S. Gilbreth, excerpted, Chicago Daily News)

Illinois Democratic leaders, as expected, awarded Jimmy Carter victory in the first Ford-Carter debate, while Republicans, just as predictably, said they though President Ford was the winner.

Most were unwilling to assess the debate's impact on Illinois, although a telephone poll commissioned by Ald. Roman C. Pucinski (41st) in his Northwest Side ward showed Ford picking up the support of two out of three undecided voters on the basis of the debate.

There was criticism of the performances of both candidates from a surprising source -- Prof. John Bartlow Martin of Northwestern University, a key speech writer for every Democratic presidential candidate from 1952 to 1972.

If the election were held tomorrow, Martin said after watching the debate, "I'd stay home." Martin called the debate a "bore," but Sec. of State Michael J. Howlett, Democratic candidate for governor, disagreed. "It was a lively debate," Howlett said. "It clearly showed that Jimmy Carter has the ability to govern the nation and bodes well a clean Democratic sweep in November... I will welcome his assistance in providing the return of more federal tax dollars to Illinois when I am governor."

Howlett's Republican opponent, James R. Thompson, missed the debate, while campaigning Downstate. He had planned to catch the last portion of it on radio during a drive from Logan County to Springfield, but the drive coincided with the 28-minute breakdown in sound from the debate platform.

Sen. Charles Percy said that of the 11 questions asked both candidates, he thought Carter outscored Ford on two, one dealing with energy and the other with amnesty for draft resisters. "But Ford was the clear winner in eight of the questions and it was a tie on the other," Percy said.

Percy disclosed that his son Roger, a partner in a new market reserach firm on the West Coast, helped conduct an experiment by the University of Washington measuring the emotional responses of 100 persons watching the debate while wired electrically.

Percy said his son reported that Ford achieved the highest positive resopnse in attacking the Democratic Congress and his biggest negative response when discussing the Nixon pardon and amnesty. Carter his his peak during his summation, Percy said.

Sen. Adlai E. Stevenson (D-Ill.) said, "Gov. Carter knew the facts and offered a vision of the future. I thought he was more presidential than the President, but it is a format which offers little chance to understand the issues or the men."

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Gov. Dan Walker, a Democrat, said Carter "showed the same understanding, intelligence and compassion that got him nominated. I think you have to conclude that Jimmy Carter won Round 1 on merit." -- (9/24/76)

MISSOURI

The Not-So-Great Debate
(Editorial, excerpted, St. Louis Globe-Democrat)

The first of the long-awaited Great Debates between President Ford and Jimmy Carter simply wasn't all that great. Most objective observers agree President Ford was the winner on points, but the sterile staging caused any hopes for a fireworks display to fizzle.

Forensically it was not a debate at all, but a two-headed press conference. Americans would get much greater insight into the two men if they met head-on, asking each other sharp questions without being filtered by a panel of pseudo-reporters.

On style and substance, Ford carried the evening. Debate experts, including those who conceded a political leaning to Carter, expressed disappointment in the Georgian's performance. Carter did little to dispel the complaints of critics who say he does not give specific answers to questions.

At the outset Carter was reminded he had made jobs his No. 1 priority, and had pledged a drastic reduction in unemployment. He was asked, "Can you say now, Governor, in specific terms, what your first step would be next January, if you are elected, to achieve that?"

In a three-minute monologue, Carter went on in non-specifics to restate the problem instead of giving reasonable solutions.

Ford, in contrast, as the debate experts agreed, was in command of himself. He gave straightforward, direct answers to questions in a generally effective manner. He was able to give the lie to some of Carter's criticisms.

When Carter sought to paint his opponent as the most veto-happy President in history, Ford was able to answer that Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, two of Carter's idols, vetoed legislation at a greater rate than he has. And Ford deftly said that Carter, while Governor of Georgia, vetoed more bills yearly than Ford has as President. Ford got extra mileage out of reminding Carter that Congress has upheld 42 of his 56 vetoes and that the taxpayers have been saved \$9 billion, which isn't peanuts.

Carter was whistling Dixie when he complained about tax laws being "welfare for the rich," because Ford was able to counter with the obvious truth that the Democrats who control Congress have written the tax laws for the last 22 years.

Carter was ineffective in his summary, though he did not appear to be rattled by the long delay preceding it. Ford, having the advantage of speaking last, was earnest in saying the voters had a choice in voting for Carter's promises of more

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spending and more inflation, or Ford's performance for the last two years.

Based on what the two had to offer as economic prescriptions, the choice of clear heads should be Ford. -- (9/25/76)

Carter Given Boost

(By Thomas W. Ottenad, excerpted, St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

Political professionals tend to believe that Jimmy Carter gained a slight but not decisive edge from his debate last night with President Ford.

In their judgment, the main effect was that Carter might have halted, at least for the time being, the political slide that his campaign had been experiencing for the last week. Carter benefited also, these experts say, because economic issues formed the focus of much of the first debate.

Although there tended to be partisan differences among the experts interviewed by the Post-Dispatch, Democrats and Republicans agreed that both candidates handled themselves reasonably well, accomplished some of their objectives and that neither succeeded in knocking the other out.

Ford, it appeared, failed to attack Carter in any sustained or effective way on the point on which the former Georgia governor is most vulnerable -- his reputed ambiguity on issues.

Carter, on the other hand, appeared more successful in striking at the President's weakest point -- the perception that he is a weak and indecisive leader. The Democrat used his answers to questions to make this charge several times in the nationally televised encounter.

The first of the three debates in which the two men will meet had been billed in advance as so significant that it might decide the presidential election. But none of the political and other expert sources questioned by the Post-Dispatch believed that it would have that decisive an effect. They expressed doubt that the debate would swing many undecided voters to either candidate, but thought that it reinforce voters' predispositions toward one or the other candidate.

In political arithmetic, this in itself constitutes a plus for Carter. Because Democrats far outnumber Republicans, if Carter merely managed to hold his own supporters in his encounter with Ford, he had to emerge from the debate in a better position than his opponent. -- (9/24/76)

MISSOURI

Tight Race for President May Soon Get a Lot Tighter
(By Thomas W. Ottenad, excerpted, St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

The presidential race has tightened up and soon may get a lot closer. Politicians in various parts of the country -- along with polling data -- indicates that although Jimmy Carter is still ahead, his position has weakened, and President Ford has picked up momentum. And one pollster says Ford will have the lead by Oct. 15.

What will develop as the eight-week campaign reaches the midwat point a week from now appears to depend on several factors. They include the fallout from Thursday's debate, the eventual impact of potentially costly errors by Carter and significant improvement in the President's position and performance.

The next few days may show whether the opening debate has resulted in any spurt of enthusiasm for either nominee, both of whom have won only lukewarm support so far.

Two key questions remain unanswered about the effect of the debate: Did Carter's performance reassure his followers, and how many viewers turned off the program after the first 30 or 45 minutes.

Both are important. Carter needed to quiet new doubts that had developed as a result of his recent errors. The New Hampshire Democratic leader who felt the tide has been running against the Southerner expressed the feeling that Carter had shown "an inner quality" in the television appearance that would help to dispel doubts.

Hamilton Jordan, too, was optimistic. "I think it (the debate) has put the Playboy interview and other things behind us. It makes some of those things seem pretty trivial."

The question about the size of the television audience after the opening half of the debate could be highly important for Ford. Those who turned off their television sets early may well have taken away a highly favorable impression of Ford and a poorer one of Carter, who appeared nervous and unsure of himself at first. If a large share of the audience stopped watching by mid-point, the President may have gained a bonus that was not measured in early political evaluations of the debate.

As the new stage of the campaign opens, Ford starts with high momentum after having been far behind. Carter, slumping after his initial fast start, now has a chance to regain speed.

Most observers say that Ford's performance in the debate has dispelled some of the doubts about his presidential competence. Carter, too, is regarded as having performed reasonably well, but it's still not clear whether recent doubts about his judgement or character have been put aside permanently or only temporarily. — (9/25/76)

MISSOURIThe Debate's Winner So Far: The U.S. Public
(Editorial, excerpted, Kansas City Times)

Only in America could there have been an event quite like this one and the American people clearly were the winners of the first Ford-Carter debate. As entertainment it was so-so, even bad theater in its occasional awkwardness and especially the 27-minute breakdown caused by a sound system failure. But the public was doing its civics-class homework in preparation for the payoff voting in November. That made worthwhile this high point of the 1976 presidential campaign thus far.

What the television audience saw were two intelligent men who earned the nominations of their parties for the nation's highest office. Ronald Reagan and Hubert Humphrey might have put on a sprightlier contest but oratorical stylishness is not essential to the presidency. Neither President Ford nor Gov. Carter is a brilliant speaker but each is adept at getting his points across.

Little they said on this occasion was surprising or new, other than Ford's statement that he probably would sign the tax reform bill despite his misgivings about some of its provisions. Carter's discussion of jobs, governmental reorganization and the economy did not provide all the details his critics have been asking for, but his comments cannot fairly be described as vague. In general it can be said that both candidates were well-armed with facts in defense of their party's platform and their chief political positions.

Regardless of immediate changes in the polls, it cannot be said with conviction or authority that either candidate was the clear-cut winner of the first round. But the American people are a little farther along than they were on their all-important task of getting ready to choose the next President. -- (9/25/76)

Fred G. Luber, chairman of the board of Super Steel Products in Milwaukee, and the only man wearing a Ford button said Ford appeared to have the edge for two reasons: the prestige of his office and his concise answers. "But I'm not sure the American people are going to feel that way, " he added. (9/24/76)

Reactions Here As Expected
(excerpted, Milwaukee Sentinel)

Thousands of Milwaukeeans watching the debate on television in their homes Thursday night had their own reactions to the event, but the feelings of political figures broke predictably along partisan lines.

Viewing of the debates was not particularly intense in a sampling of a dozen Milwaukee taverns, where rock music, card playing and bar conversation competed successfully with the debates for patron's attention.

The reaction from political officials:

*Ody Fish, GOP national committeeman and a member of Ford's national campaign steering committee: "The president was clearly more accurate in his projections and evaluations on the economy and taxes. There were some rather unusual and inaccurate observations by Gov. Carter on the number of vetoes by the President on the projection that the economy might produce a \$60 billion surplus by 1980."

*Democratic Lt. Gov. Martin Schreiber: "The most important impression the public got was Gov. Carter's compassion and Ford's inability to explain the Nixon pardon. The lack of correlation between Ford's record and his campaign promises was evident. He had a mumbo-jumbo approach to the economy."

*Herbert H. Kohl, State Democratic Party Chairman: "Both men were well informed and addressed the issues. I don't think there was a winner in the sense there was in 1960. Both did a good job and I think the public was the winner."

*Mayor Maier, chairman of the National Conference of Democratic Mayors: "I was glad that Gov. Carter made a direct reference to the underlying problem of the cities - unemployment and underemployment. President Ford referred only obliquely to a program for the cities - one in which he made cuts - economic development for the cities. When President Ford first requested a debate I felt Mr. Ford would be like a groundhog gnawing at the tail of a tiger and the debate confirmed my belief. It was a decisive plus for Jimmy Carter because for the first time 80 million Americans were able to judge first hand Gov. Carter's grasp of the issues facing America. (9/24/76)



'Well, I'm Ready — Where's Governor Carter?'



Largely A Draw
(Editorial, excerpted, Milwaukee Journal)

Sometimes illuminating, sometimes murky, sometimes sharply partisan, the first presidential debate was pretty much of a standoff.

Both candidates were under immense pressure. Jimmy Carter, bent on proving himself the competent challenger, had a stronger ending than beginning. Gerald Ford, aiming to show presidential command, seemed to have a stronger start than finish. Along the way, both came across as serious, knowledgeable and well drilled.

They had several enlightening exchanges, but also lapsed into simplicity. They accused each other of distortion, sought to inflict damage with slyly selected statistics, got tangled in a few contradictions and left some important questions - such as job creation - and tax cutting only partly answered.

Although each scored his share of points, both often strained to exaggerate differences and to paint each other as bumbling as well as wrong. Ford spent some time running against the Democratic controlled Congress, while Carter took aim at Republican presidential ghosts.

In sum, the first debate had few peaks and quite a number of ragged edges - including an astonishing failure in the television sound system. When over, it was hard to believe that this debate would be the crucial point in the presidential campaign. Although pollsters may find otherwise, the evening seemed to lack that kind of decisive kick .. (9/24/76)

Ford Won: Businessman
(excerpted, Milwaukee Sentinel)

"Just write Ford win," demanded Russell L. Thill, president of Thill, Inc., an Oshkosh (Wis.) manufacturing company Thursday night.

"You're talking to a Reagan Republican," he said to a reporter. "But Ford was straightforward and honest. He won the first debate."

Kenneth A. Cook, chairman of the board of Ken Cook Co. in Milwaukee agreed. "I have a deep conviction," he said. "You can't con the American people."

Their comments were among those voiced after the first presidential debate was televised into a meeting of the state's leading business and industrial leaders in Stevens Point.

Paul Hasset, president of the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce Organization agreed that Ford did "very well."

Other participants at the three day meeting weren't so sure that Ford was a clear winner. "Confirms everything you already believed, right?" one industrialist said.

Was McCarthy Winner of Ford-Carter Debate?
(excerpted, Des Moines Register, by James Flansburg)

If you're looking for a winner in the first Ford-Carter debate, try Gene McCarthy.

Nothing that Jimmy Carter or Jerry Ford said appeared to take votes away from McCarthy in his independent quest for the presidency, and that could be awfully important come Nov. 2.

The debate showed some surface differences between Carter and Ford, but, more importantly, it also showed they are remarkably alike. That opens the door for a McCarthy success.

McCarthy doesn't expect to win this fall. But he does hope to get on the 1980 federal campaign matching-money gravy train by winning 5 per cent of the vote this year. Some polls show him at 6 to 8 per cent. It seems doubtful that he'll hold that strongly because he is more poorly organized this year than he was in 1968 or 1972, if that can be possible.

But the performances of Ford and Carter Thursday night forced consideration of the possibility. Wooden, slicked programmed monotones that generate neither love nor hate. And, like it or not, the love-hate factor is a basic part of American politics.

A case can be made that the McCarthy effort can hurt either Ford or Carter, but the strongest case is that it would hurt Carter. Carter is aware of the McCarthy peril and so in one respect Carter was the winner in Thursday night's debate. His election strategy is simply to call Democrats to arms. If they respond and go to the polls, he wins because there are so many more Democrats than Republicans in the country.

Ford's task is to take the great middle of the undecided voters and some of the Democrats. But in the main Thursday night, the President's language seemed designed to attract the Republicans he already has in the bag.

But there still seemed to be a great sameness in it all, which could only benefit McCarthy. (9/25/76)



THEY BOTH PASSED

Americans will not go to the polls in November to elect a television personality or a member of a debating society, so how well Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter "performed" Thursday night is irrelevant. The chief value of presidential debates, in our judgment, is the opportunity they provide for large numbers of Americans to hear the candidates explain their stands on issues.

How well did Ford and Carter do in getting across to voters how they would deal with the country's domestic problems? Members of

The Register's editorial page staff scored the candidates on nine issues raised during Thursday's debate. The scoring is based on how clearly and fully each candidate told where he stands; it does not reflect agreement or disagreement with the stand.

Each of 10 staff members rated each candidate's response to each question on a scale of one to five, with one signifying the equivalent of an "A." Following are the composite scores translated into letter grades.

	CARTER	FORD
Jobs	C+	C
Balanced budget	C	C
Amnesty	C	C
Govt. reorganization	B	B
Funding new programs	C+	D+
Energy	A	C
Morality in government	B-	D+
Federal Reserve Board	C+	C
Taxes	B	C+
AVERAGE	B- (2.56)	C+ (2.87)

MIDWESTMINNESOTA

The First Presidential Debate
(Editorial, excerpted, Minneapolis Tribune)

Millions of Americans Thursday night witnessed an extraordinary event. The first of three Carter-Ford debates not only put the presidential election campaign back onto the high road of examining serious issues, after a detour into peripheral matters; it also gave voters an invaluable opportunity to compare the candidates in a setting devoid of the usual hoopla of campaign appearances.

The comparison benefited both President Ford and Jimmy Carter, showing each to have a good grasp of domestic problems facing the country and ideas about how to solve them. At least as important, American voters benefited by observing how the candidates responded in considerable detail to well-thought-out questions, and how they differed.

Those who find a 90-minute debate too long to sustain interest should not the number of subjects omitted for lack of time. Environment, agriculture, health, abortion and civil rights are some that either were not discussed or mentioned only in passing. The omissions should prompt voters to watch carefully what the candidates say about those matters in the coming weeks.

Those who still have doubts about the candidates' views on taxes, jobs, energy and federal spending -- the main topics discussed Thursday night -- now have a good opportunity to resolve them. They have watched and heard Carter and Ford discuss those issues. Full or partial transcriptions of their responses have appeared in the newspapers. There will be more said as the campaign continues. In short, Americans this fall should have an excellent opportunity to base their votes for president on a clear understanding of the candidates' attributes and positions -- thanks in large part to the League of Women Voters' television debates. -- (9-26-76)

The First Debate
(Editorial, excerpted, Minneapolis Star)

The first of the great 1976 presidential debates produced neither a clear winner nor a clear loser. Both candidates generally handled themselves well and showed an impressive grasp of complex issues in an extremely difficult test.

But the debate was successful in highlighting the differences between the two men and their philosophies. No one can legitimately make the claim, so often heard in political races, that there

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isn't a dime's worth of difference between the two men.

Both candidates got something out of the match. Carter had been in a slump, it seemed, and was losing much of the respect he gained in a remarkable primary campaign. His debate performance should have assured his partisans and some of the undecided that he is a person of substance. Ford, frequently dogged by unflattering remarks about his intelligence, should have convinced viewers he is quite capable of playing in the big leagues.

Beyond that, we thought Carter made telling points on jobs, on energy, on the pardon and on the question of Ford's leadership as governor, on the size of the budget and government and on the fact that Democrats have written the tax laws Carter so vehemently attacks.

In sum, it was a useful exchange. The voters were well served. -- (9/24/76)

A Good Debate

(Editorial, excerpted, Atlanta Journal)

It's easier to say that neither Gerald Ford nor Jimmy Carter lost. Neither man hurt himself by the image he projected or by the answers he gave to questions.

There were not major blunders and there did not appear to be any major surprises either. The differences between them, probably were clarified for those who tune in on politics only for the most publicized confrontations.

Jimmy Carter clearly established himself as a person capable of holding his own in the big leagues. This must dispell any lingering notions that he is a country bumbkin from the provincial South. His campaign should be back on the track after a period in which it appeared to be sagging.

Gerald Ford kept his cool and counterattacked vigorously. This should dispel any lingering illusion that he is a mere headbumper from the Middle America.

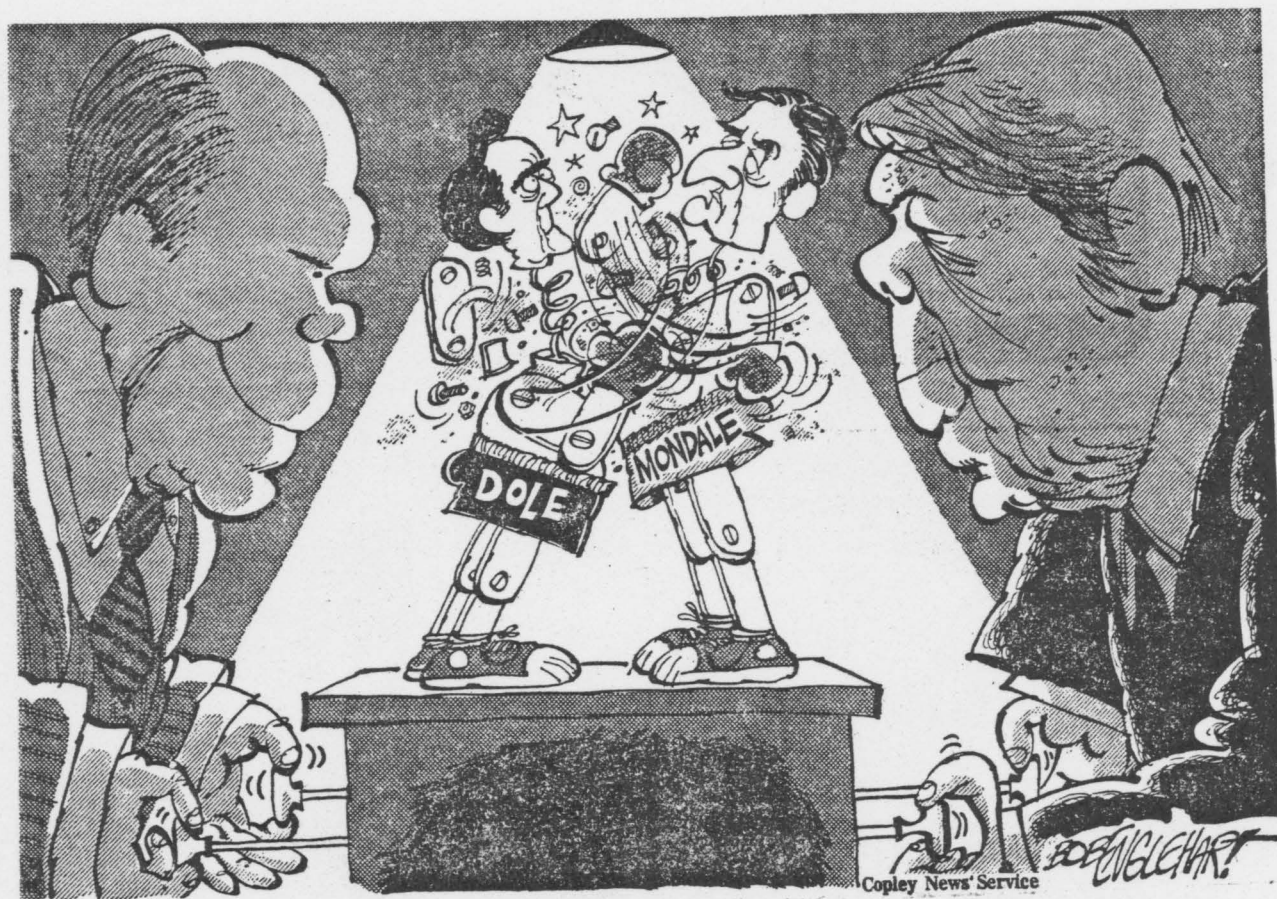
The contestants defined their positions ably and clarified the issues. The difference in emphasis between Ford and Carter now seems sharp enough for the public to make up its mind which course it wants to follow. The first of the 1976 debates did hinge on substantial issues and the public will not be making up its mind on the basis of accidents of makeup, lighting or verbal trickery. (9/24/76)

Who Won?(Editorial, excerpted, Atlanta Journal
and Constitution)

Watching the debate we had no doubts about who won. The voters did. On the issues. And on the duel of images, millions had the chance to judge which man appears to be the stronger and more capable leader. But it was clear immediately after the candidates went off the air that our impressions were like those of millions of viewers. If the candidate said what we wanted to hear, he won; if he said what we didn't want to hear, he lost; and if neither said much of anything it was a tossup.

President Ford certainly did not come across as the stumbling dummy some have said he is. His command of facts and figures was impressive. So was his knowledge of Carter's weaknesses. The President fought a good fight.

But we also think Carter did exceptionally well in his first and perhaps most important of the debates. He seemed more concerned with the problems of people. Carter didn't have John Kennedy's aggressive, forceful delivery, or his wit, but he did have Kennedy's quickness of mind and depth of knowledge. Those qualities should take over the rest of the campaign spell the difference in whose message gets across most clearly to the American people. (9/25/76)



Charleston, S.C., News and Courier, 9/10/76

Jimmy Carter Should've Stood in Bed

(by Bill Shipp, excerpted Atlanta Journal and Constitution)

It was not a good time for the Libra from Plains. The week began with headlines revealing his inner most thoughts about sex... then there was the great debate that capped the whole thing off. The people who write horoscopes clearly indicated that Carter's week was going to be a bit bumpy.

On the day of the debate, Libras were told by some newspaper astrologers, "Key now is organization. Leave no loose ends..." Seer Jeanne Dixon, who usually reads Republican horoscopes best wrote: "...present yourself in the best possible light without distorting the facts."

Wonder what the stars have in store for Jimmy next week. Probably something better. Carter seems to be a more likeable fellow after a run of hard luck that leaves him in the position of underdog. When Carter is willing and well ahead of the game he strikes a lot of folks as a first class sap, no matter what his stars may say. (9/25/76)

TennesseeFirst Debate: People Won

It is impossible at this time to say who "won" the first debate in the sense of attracting more voters to his cause. The answer will emerge only after extensive public opinion polling in the next two weeks.

In the meantime, however, it is safe to say the American people won for the face to face confrontation helped give the public a clearer idea of the candidates and the policies they would take to the White House.

With so much at stake, it would have been too much to expect the candidates to be intellectually honest at all times. Both used the standard politician's tricks of misleading statistics, partial misquotation and damaging innuendo proving of course that there were two ambitious humans and no saints on the platform (9/24/76)

Was There a Winner?

(Editorial, excerpted, Memphis Commercial Appeal)

Perhaps too much was expected of this match. It was not even a true debate. Instead it was a sort of extended Sunday morning television interview program. Neither candidate offered anything new. But with the viewing and listening audience as large as it was, surely there were many who were getting a broad view of the candidates for the first time.

What happened Thursday night was part of a process of evaluating the two major candidates. It will continue for the next five weeks, with the same candidates returning in the same format to discuss other issues and perhaps to create different impressions in the minds of the citizens. (9/25/76)

Points Aside, Mr. Carter May Have Won the Most
(Editorial , excerpted, Nashville Tennessean)

Who won on points seems to be up to the individuals who watched. President Ford demonstrated the obvious value of rehearsal, but he was better at the beginning than the end. For Jimmy Carter, the reverse was true. He started off slowly, but he was hitting full power when the electronics failed.

Although Mr. Ford tried to dwell on the idea that his opponent was vague the fact is that Carter was as forthright on the issues and plans as the President.

Mr. Ford didn't stumble on the podium or knock his notes off, but he was wooden and throughout he maintained a white-knuckle grip on the lectern. He displayed nervousness over the issue of the Nixon pardon but he managed to act "presidential" most of the time. Mr. Carter stumbled a few times early on, but he displayed a grasp of issues and detail impressive enough for most.

The important factor may not be who won , but who won the most from it. That may be Carter, whose campaign has seemed to wander off into extraneous controversy recently. What he needed was to bring the campaign and himself back into focus and to put Mr. Ford on the defensive. He seems to have accomplished that in the opening debate. If he can maintain that focus in those that follow, the debates will be materially helpful to him. (9/25/76)

How You Can Win the Debate
(editorial, excerpted, Chattanooga News-Free Press)

It was a dignified confrontation of two able presidential candidates dealing familiarly with issues of great importance to the American people

Challenger Jimmy Carter began somewhat nervously, which is not to his discredit. President Ford was at his best as a calm,, collected, firmly in control , experienced President who had the facts and figures at his fingertips.

Supporters of both have claimed victory. But the real winners are as they should be, the American people who had the issues of an important presidential campaign called to their attention. There was little said by either to change the opinions of their opponents. If you bought

the Carter promises in the first place, Mr. Ford did not give much reason for change. If you thought Mr. Ford was more solid in the first place, Mr. Carter presented nothing to sway you. But if you had entered the debate hall without prejudice, without personal or philosophical favoritism, you would have to conclude that Mr. Carter's promises are not supported by his claims that his offerings of what he will "give" just do not match his estimates of cost.

Mr. Carter is clearly intelligent, informed and overpromising. Mr. Ford is clearly intelligent, informed and trying to curb taxation and government. (9/24/76)

Debate Even in Student Poll
(Excerpted, Nashville Tennessean)

Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford fared about evenly with Nashvillians who watched the debates and a large number of viewers could pick no winner, according to a survey by high school students.

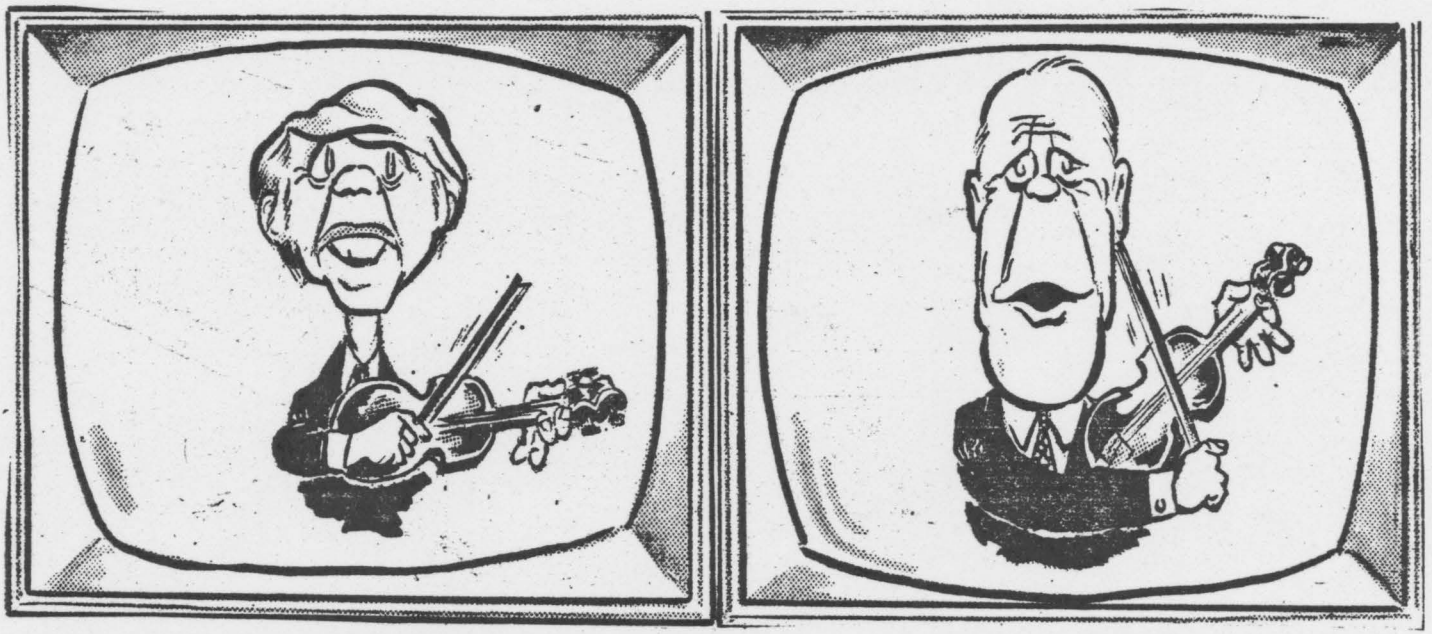
Politically perhaps the most important finding of the student's survey is that no persons identifying themselves as Republicans thought Carter won the debate. More than one-fourth of the Democrats gave Ford the edge.

The 19 students interviewed 172 persons at a variety of downtown Nashville locations Friday. The persons interviewed included 112 men and 60 women and 74 persons who identified themselves as Democrats 20 Republicans and 78 as not aligned with either party.

Asked to pick a winner in the debate, 61 persons chose Carter 60 picked Ford and 51 called the debate even. When divided according to party identification, the Democrats split with 37 calling Carter the winner, 20 for Ford and 17 saying it was even. But among Republicans 16 picked Ford and only four persons called the debate even. None saw Carter as the winner. With persons identifying themselves as independents, Ford was viewed as the winner by 19 persons, while 14 gave Carter the edge and 14 saw no winner. A number of persons declined to give any indication of their political leanings.

Ford was shown doing equally well among men and women, getting a favorable response from one-third of each group. Carter got a favorable response from about 40 per cent of the females interviewed but from only about 30 per cent of the males.

Among black and white voters, Carter got a favorable response from almost half the blacks and interviewed and about one third of the whites. Ford was given the edge by about one fourth the blacks and almost 40 per cent of the whites. (9/26/76)



The Atlanta Constitution, 9/25/76



"YES, DEAR, THOSE TWO CLOWNS DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD 'PRESIDENTIAL'....
NO, DEAR, NO ONE COULD LOOK PRESIDENTIAL LIKE YOU COULD LOOK PRESIDENTIAL!"

The Charlotte Observer, 9/22/76

More Than A Draw
(Editorial, excerpted, Birmingham News)

During the portion of the debate before technical difficulties, President Ford certainly had the advantage in poise and confidence. After the interruption, however, Carter managed to deliver this summation with the same relaxed, confident manner he has sustained throughout the campaign. Mr. Ford's summation was about on par with the early party of the debate.

The Roper Poll supports the view from this quarter that the debates were more than a draw. --(9/24/76)

The Great Debates-I
(Editorial, excerpted, Montgomery Advertiser)

Very few votes were changed as a result of the debates, both men made their points in their divergent philosophies and neither man suffered any real defeats or setbacks.

It is difficult to say which one of them won. Ford may have come out of it with a slight edge, he was more aggressive, but this was offset by Carter's opportunity to get the national exposure he needed.

The President sought to portray Carter as a spendthrift upstart. Carter accused Ford of economic mismanagement, weak leadership and callous disregard for the plight of the unemployed. Both failed.

On the whole, it was a pretty dull show with contestants throwing dollar figures and percentages at each other. We predicted that Carter would tear up Ford, but he certainly didn't. Early in the debate, he seemed stiff and tentative while Ford was relaxed and confident. But, when he unwound, Carter did much better.

Our guess is that their respective poll standings remained virtually unchanged.--(9/25/76)



'O.K., let's debate!'



The (Sort of) Great Debate
(Editorial, excerpted, The New Orleans
Times-Picayune)

We might take this first debate as a kind of preliminary bout, a basic presentation and a feeling-out of the format that put the candidates on their best and most serious behavior.

The Dole-Mondale debate may satisfy the public appetite for rhetorical blood. But the final meeting, we may expect, will produce more flashing personal performances that may aid the voters in judging the character element that looms so large in this year's election. --(9/25/76)

Who Was The Winner?
(Editorial, excerpted, Shreveport, LA. Journal)

Both men won. Carter proved that he has a lot of information in his head and he can pull names, dates, statistics out at will and he can use them to illuminate his opinions on the issues.

The President proved that he can stand before a microphone for 90 minutes and hold his own. He didn't falter or lack for recall information and he expressed his views with clarity.

To us, it seems that Mr. Ford had the edge. He came across as a man of present and as a man of the future. In our opinion, Gov. Carter was looking backward to the days of the Depression and dwelling on social problems, many of which are no longer with us. He was too bent, we thought, on pressing for governmental solutions rather than solutions in the private sector. This seems to us to be a turn around from his position in the primaries. Before he was nominated, Mr. Carter constantly told us Washington was bad and the federal government was too big. Now he comes forth with proposals for more government programs. This is no time to shackle the private sector with more government and the expense that more government entails.

We thought Mr. Ford scored in his attacks on the Congress. Congress, especially in an election year, is prone to come with all sorts of vote-catching programs. We thought Mr. Ford got a point or two in stating that a president belonging to one party can act as a check-and-balance on a Congress dominated by another party. It may be that the American people have come to that conclusion themselves.--(9-27-76)

What Light Did The Debate Cast on Our National Opinions?
(Editorial, excerpted, Louisville, Ky. Courier-Journal)

A nation went on jury duty Thursday evening, committed to a fair examination, with the help of the candidates, of the national issues these presidential debates are supposed to illuminate.

In the few rare moments when Thursday's clash provided legitimate insight, the debate was more a reminder that the nation faces long-deferred decisions about priorities and goals and less of the test of President Ford's and Jimmy Carter's popularity than "Who won?" suggests.

There is a deeper question the debate should have been able to answer, but didn't: What illumination did President Ford and Carter offer a nation thinking not only about its candidates, but also about its future? --(9/25/76)

Who Won? The First Debate Was A Draw
(Editorial, excerpted, The Charlotte Observer)

Put us down as undecided, a status we share with the big chunk of the electorate which will decide the election. The 90-minute session turned out to be more revealing than we had anticipated.

The possibility that one of the other candidate might perform badly was not fulfilled. Mr. Ford scored often. Noting Mr. Carter's complaint about his use of the presidential veto, Ford observed that Carter used his veto power freely as governor of Georgia.

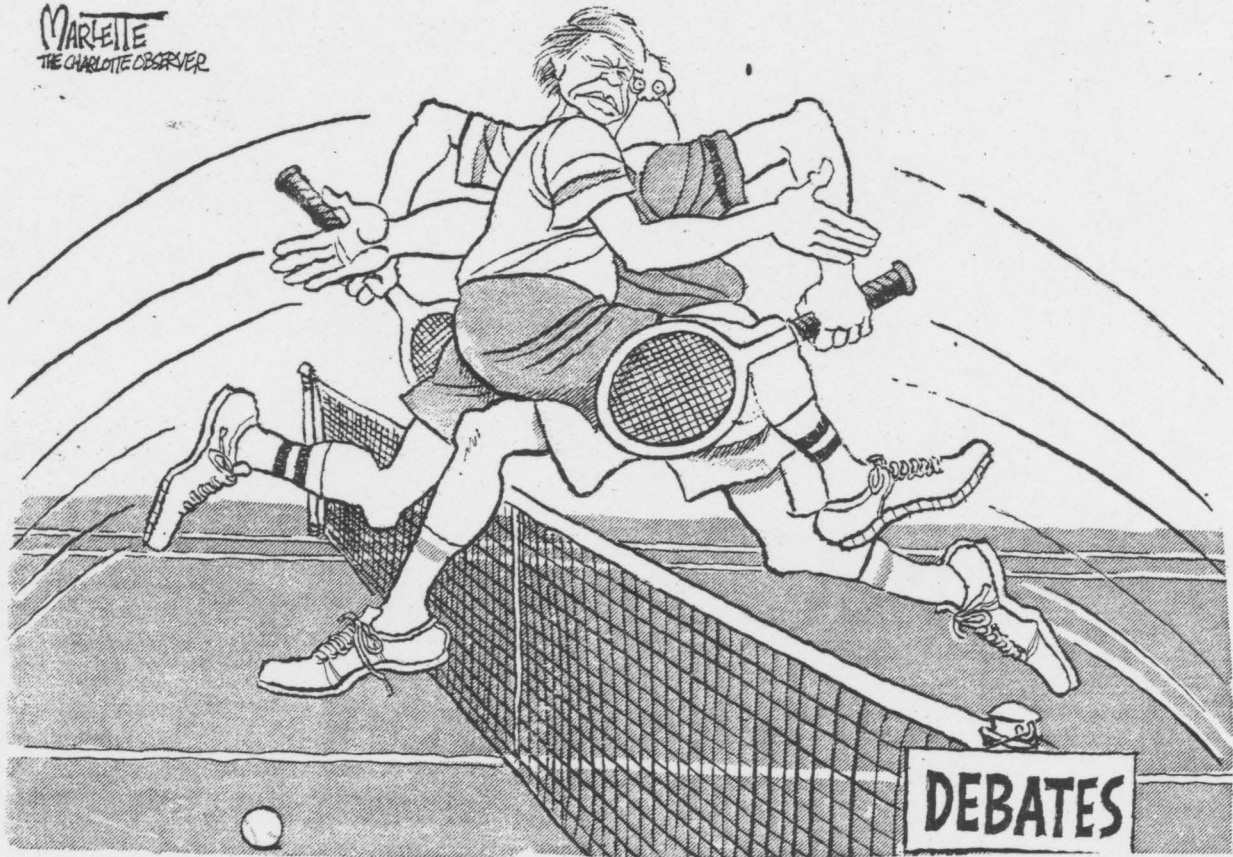
We have to say the debate did nothing to give a considerable boost to either campaign. Carter supporters wanted their man to appear solid, knowledgeable and sensitive to human needs and the way government could serve them. Ford supporters wanted their man to "look presidential," to demonstrate his grasp of the responsibilities of the office and to chide Mr. Carter for fuzziness on the issues. Neither group seems dissatisfied with the result.

The first debate served more to confirm what was already known about each man than to alter public opinion of either.--(9/26/76)

DEBATES



MARLETTE
THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER



The First Debate
(Editorial, excerpted, Richmond Times-Dispatch)

The day before his debate with President Ford, Jimmy Carter spent some time, a news story reported, "curled up on a couch, reading a comic book with Amy." His press secretary quoted Mr. Carter as saying "that might be just as good preparation for the debate as anything."

Mr. Carter's performance in the debate showed the effects of his "preparation." He was, to put it charitably, unimpressive. In this first confrontation, concentrating on domestic issues, Carter was supposed to have had a slight advantage, according to many experts, and had been expected to keep Mr. Ford on the defensive much of the time. Nervous Ford supporters feared that their man might not make it through the debate without faltering embarrassingly, encouraging the belief that he really is the blunderersome of his critics have attempted to portray him to be.

But that is not the way it went. Far more articulate and confident than Mr. Carter, the President came out ahead. This is the opinion of a panel of debate coaches assembled by AP to judge the results, it is the prevailing view of those people interviewed by the Roper poll and it is our own conclusion.

While Carter clearly scored some points, he was on the defensive more often than Mr. Ford. Mr. Ford was clearly the victor in this first debate. His performance should accelerate his rise in the public opinion polls and imbue his campaign with new confidence and vigor.--(9/25/76)



The Debate
(Editorial Excerpted)
Boston Sunday Globe



The first Ford-Carter debate was dismally dull. The candidates, their ideas and their rhetoric have already been overexposed, and the debate added nothing new.

Tactically both sides won partial victories. Ford was "presidential"--tall, robust, calm and commonsensical. He didn't stumble over words or get wound up in convoluted phrases as he so often does at press conferences. But he also reminded us too often that he is pledged to the Republican policies of the last eight years, which have produced the worst and longest recession in four decades.

Carter scored occasionally, on unemployment and the Nixon pardon, without seeming ruthless or disrespectful toward the President. He reminded us, after the kookery of the Playboy interview, that he has a sound and sober grasp of issues. But he was nervous and uncomfortable, much less smooth and sharp than we remembered him from the primaries. He did not even hit hard with his rebuttal of President Ford, who misquoted Carter on income taxes. And he all but acknowledged during and after the debate that the trend had been turning against him.

By that next debate Carter will probably be back in command of his campaign. It seems incredible that Gerald Ford, should have pulled virtually even in the race. Yet Carter has lost the drive and direction that won him all those primaries, and he may have to come from behind.

--September 26, 1976

Aggressive Ford On Top
(By Robert Healy, Excerpted, Boston Globe)

President Ford hoped to project an image of being presidential and in command. He did. And he aggressively destroyed some of Jimmy Carter's best arguments, specifically that Carter had been an effective Governor of Georgia, had saved money in the state government there through reorganization, and would do the same with the Federal government as President. So, if there was a winner, it was Ford.



In the end the President accomplished what he had intended to in these debates. He did not stumble. He looked good. He was decisive. He controled the debate from beginning to end, simply because Carter did not advance anything new.

He got the broad message across that things were getting better in the nation, we were at peace, that the economy was improving, and he had brought the nation from the brink of disaster after the Nixon resignation. Carter did not pin the Nixon disaster on Ford. And Ford effectively brought to the surface Carter's basic weakness--his vagueness on issues. --September 24, 1976 ✓

Hub Reaction Mixed on Debate
(By Alexander Hawes Jr., Excerpted, Boston Globe)

The first debate between Ford and Carter brought mixed reviews from a random sample of greater Boston resident, although a majority of those telephoned thought the President fared better last night.

Typical of the reaction were the comments of a resident who said, "I would say it was pretty much what I expected. I think Carter makes a good appearance and talks well (but) he ducked and dodged some questions as he's done throughout the campaign. I thought the President didn't look brilliant, but he was steady."

Some of Carter's support seemed still to be soft. Those who favored Ford did so because he was "aggressive," "specific," and he "had his feet on the ground." -- September 24, 1976

....and Globe Journalists Appraise It
(By Mike Barnicle and David B. Wilson, Excerpted, Boston Globe)

Almost anything would have been more exciting and more informative than the confrontation between Ford and Carter.

It was unfortunate that the sound cable didn't break five minutes after the start instead of 80 minutes. It would have saved us from an endless assault of statistics, percentages and the assurance that things would be terrific with either guy in the Oval Office come next January.

It was close. Neither man emerged a clear winner. Neither committed a fatal blunder.

The Carter television technique was clearly superior. While Carter addressed the television audience via the camera, establishing eye contact, Ford tended to reply directly to questioners.

The President was confident and forthright, and his mastery of statistics was impressive. His adversary did not, perhaps cannot, deal with the awesome fact that only one of the contestants is the President.

Ford, the lawyer, was the more skillful debater. But, Carter may have been the more attractive personality.
-- September 24, 1976

Ford, Carter Missed Debate Opportunities
(By John Hall, Excerpted, Boston Herald Advertiser)

It wasn't a debate. It wasn't even a discussion. You can hear a better argument on any Saturday morning in any courthouse square in Indiana. What President Ford and Jimmy Carter gave to the nation Thursday night was a series of disjointed two-and-three-minute campaign speeches.

The Hearst Newspapers assembled a panel of college and high school debate coaches to monitor the event and try to determine a winner by standard debate scoring procedures. By a 4 to 1 vote, they gave the debate to Ford. But their most significant and unanimous conclusion was that it was a dismal performance by both men--a chain of missed opportunities to spot the opponent's weaknesses and puncture them. Ford and Carter did not seem to be alert to each other most of the time, let alone try to exploit each other's misstatements.

It is not enough to blame it on the format for the debates. There was plenty of opportunity for rejoinder. The candidates simply chose not to engage each other--either deliberately for political reasons or because their mental processes do not work in the direction. The latter possibility is the most disturbing of all.

Ford and Carter were like automatic rotary files that flip through the cards when a certain button is pushed and disgorge the appropriate recipe--"budgetary receipts, effect of 3 percent unemployment on." They became captives of the facts rather than masters of them. They were so busy flipping the mental cards they didn't seem to listen to each other.

"Both speakers had a number of opportunities in their two-minute reply to really nail down their opponents at a level that could have really been very meaningful to them," said Professor Herbert James of Dartmouth. "I was amazed that in so many instances neither Ford nor Carter really used that opportunity in a way that would effectively refute their opponents."

At times they seemed almost to be afraid of each other and afraid of themselves. It could well be that the much-maligned American voter will be watching the two debates next month to see if either candidate dares to break his chains. --September 26, 1976



The Boston Globe 9/25/76

How academics rate debate

Bernadette MacPherson, an associate professor of speech and communication at Emerson College, teaches courses in body language and nonverbal communication.

The whole field of nonverbal communication, where we might look at as many as eight to 10 various aspects of communicating, was not available in this particular TV format. In this format, there were only three aspects available for observation and analysis. And because of these limitations I'd have to call it a draw.

The three we had were facial response, to a small degree; gesture; and "paralanguage," which is how each candidate uses his voice. I would say that, in all three instances, Carter was the weaker during the first three questions.

There was appreciable blinking of the eyes, a weight shifting from one leg to another and an obvious dryness in the throat, which manifested itself in the quality of his voice:

After that, it was anyone's guess, as far as nonverbal communication "cues," as to who was the more confident.

However, if one is to really ascertain the weakness and strengths of the two candidates, the format needs to be changed so that a more extemporaneous manner in presentation is followed.

The candidates should be free to question each other more fully and directly.

Walter Dean Burnham is professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an authority on American political history.

I think the debate shows that both men did quite well. It was vastly superior to the Kennedy-Nixon debate, because both men last night stuck closely to the issues and they were dealing with basic differences in their philosophy as Democrat or Republican. I think the people could get a very clear impression of those differences from last night.

As to which person won it, I'm personally inclined to give Carter the edge. Ford seemed a little wooden and became tired toward the end, while Carter seemed to warm up.

Carter's two strongest points were on the energy question — and his knowledge of that subject was considerable — and on the unemployment question.

Carter made the point, which a lot of Republicans are sensitive about debating, that a lot of human beings are being hurt. He offered a sense of compassion and the possibility of doing better. Carter also went to work on the leadership issue, arguing that a President could get along with Congress and that Ford was practicing the politics of stalemate. Ford was ahead on the taxation business, and both were good at counterpunching.

If I were scoring, I'd give seven rounds to Carter, four or five to Ford, and the rest a draw.

Edwin Diamond, a senior lecturer in political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, heads the New Study Group at MIT which analyzes press coverage of politics.

There is no way to escape the boxing metaphor. Ford and Carter have obviously trained for the meeting. Overall, they were cautious, circling, shadowboxing. Each did have an offensive strategy; but each used it sparingly.

Ford's big move came first. He attacked Carter directly in his first response, accusing him of being unspecific. But then, cautiously, Ford drew back and didn't become aggressive again until well into the meeting. Carter's big weapon — also used sparingly — was, curiously enough, his smile. He was grim and unsmiling through the early questions. The smile became a visual signal of his disdain for Ford's statements.

But if this was a fight, even metaphorically, the question was who won. I would pick Carter by a narrow margin as he scored on such targets as unemployment, tax policy and the Republican insensitivity to the "common people." But in the tradition of championship fights when a challenger edges the incumbent, they usually call it a draw. Carter, I think, looked good to Democratic voters and Ford looked Presidential.

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L.I. Poll Shows Debate Edge For Ford
(By Bernie Bookbinder, excerpted, L.I. Newsday)

President Ford won last week's debate with Jimmy Carter, according to a survey of potential Long Island voters, but it is questionable whether that has helped Ford's campaign here.

That tentative conclusion is based on interviews with about one-third of a panel of 1,675 Nassau and Suffolk residents whose reactions to the presidential race are being studied by the LI Poll.

Ford's success in the debate seems conclusive from virtually every standpoint, according to Prof. Stephen Cole, a sociologist from the State University at Stony Brook who analyzed the data. For example, to the question, "In general, which candidate did the best?" 20 percent said Ford, 28 percent said both did about the same and 6 percent were undecided.

When these opinions were broken down by whether the respondents had favored Carter, Ford or had been undecided prior to the debate, this assessment was confirmed. Among people who had supported Carter prior to the debate, that is, who said that they preferred him when originally interviewed in early Sept.-41 percent felt that Carter, 18 percent said that Ford had been undecided prior to the debate, this assessment was confirmed. Among people who had supported Carter prior to the debate, that is who said that they preferred him when originally interviewed in early September, 41 per cent felt that Carter had won, 18 per cent said that Ford had won, 33 per cent said that both had done the same and 7 per cent were undecided.

Among those people who had supported Ford prior to the debate, 73 per cent said that Ford had won, 6 per cent said that Carter had won and 19 per cent said that both had done the same and 1 per cent undecided. Most significantly, among those who had been undecided before the debate, 7 per cent said that Carter had done better, 44 per cent said that Ford had done better, 34 per cent said that both had done about the same and 15 per cent said that they were uncertain.

To further clarify these judgments, the Long Islanders were asked to compare the debate with what had been expected of him. The net result was another indication of Ford's strength: while 29 per cent of the respondents said Carter had done worse than they had expect, only 7 per cent said Ford had done worse; and while only 19 per cent said Carter had done better than t-ey expected, fully 40 per cent said that Ford had done better than anticipated.

Still further evidence emerged when the panelists were questioned more specifically about the debate: Ford got substantially higher ratings in terms of knowing more about the issues and inspiring greater confidence. (9/27/76)

Debate Narrows Campaign Gap
(editorial, excerpted, Buffalo Evening News)

So the first of the historic Ford-Carter debates is over and both of the candidates looked impressive. Neither blundered in any crucial sense. But on that balance we think it is pretty clear that the net effect of the debate is to narrow the race, to mkae it closer today than it lookec yesterday.

New YorkNORTHEAST

Both candidates and questioners were well-prepared. The debate was dignified, serious and closely focused on important issues. Nobody lost his cool and President Ford and Mr. Carter developed in their answers clear differences of approach that offer voters significant alternatives.

If the President won a slight edge in this debate- and we share the view of initial polls and some debate experts that he did - it was due to his command of facts and his effective use of them in his sharp, concise rebuttals.
(9/24/76)

A Worthwhile Encounter
(Editorial, Excerpted, The Evening Bulletin)

While neither Mr. Ford nor Mr. Carter advanced new programs or ideas in last night's debate, what did emerge were clearly defined campaign themes. Each theme draws heavily on the strength of the American people and on the national heritage.

For Mr. Carter it was an emphasis on the hopes of the American people and their right to a unified Federal Government they can trust to serve them fully and well. For President Ford it was an emphasis on checks and balances in government and on the self reliance of the individual.

There are important differences here. And, if developed fully in the remaining meetings and in the campaign itself, these differences should help the American people make the right decision on November 2. For what it brought to a presidential campaign that has been generally inconclusive and even confusing, the encounter in Philadelphia last night was indeed worthwhile.-- September 24, 1976

Democrats Disappointed in Carter

(By John J. Farmer and Joseph R. Daughen, Excerpted,
Philadelphia Evening Bulletin)

Democrats, generally, were disappointed by Jimmy Carter. Republicans were pleasantly surprised by President Ford.

That was the initial reaction disclosed in a national spot survey of 30 persons of various political persuasion and occupations by The Bulletin immediately after last night's debate.

Republicans unanimously thought Mr. Ford the winner, and all indicated their intention to vote for him was unchanged. Democrats' opinion were more varied. Some

said Mr. Ford had won. Others complained that Carter was "not forceful enough." And only a few said the Georgian had won.

The debate changed few votes among those questioned, but those who said they were swayed were invariably Democrats made more uneasy by Carter. Most Democrats, however, indicated they would not desert Carter.

Some said the Ford-Carter confrontation left them dissatisfied with both.

Among the Democrats expressing concern about Carter, many cited their uneasiness over his record as governor of Georgia and the President's exploitation of it.

--September 24, 1976

First Debate: Not Conclusive, but Useful, Nonetheless
(Editorial, Excerpted, Providence Journal Bulletin)

Whatever may have come out of Thursday night's debate between President Ford and Jimmy Carter, it most certainly was not the watershed event that the Lincoln-Douglas debates were in 1860 or the Kennedy-Nixon debates exactly 100 years later. The format was restrictive, the candidates wooden, and the overall impact uninspiring.

Mr. Ford's success in maintaining a "presidential" appearance, and in showing an ability to field hard questions and a capacity for skillfull ripostes to Mr. Carter's thrusts could only help him overcome the image of being a not too smart bumbler.

But if Thursday's debate did not set the viewing public on fire, it did accomplish some worthwhile things. For the first time in the campaign it gave the public a chance to see and hear both candidates elaborate on their philosophical and pratical approaches to key national issues. Their comments on diverse questions illuminated real differences and thus real choices for the voters.

If President Ford was able to reverse his poor image, the debate may also have helped Jimmy Carter shuck some of the criticism he has been receiving for being "fuzzy" or for "flip-flopping" on issues, or for too blandly asking the public to "trust me." He was particularly strong and lucid in sketching out a national energy policy and assigning priorities to energy sources, putting coal ahead of oil and calling for stronger federal support of solar development, while consigning nuclear power to a last-resort position.

With three debates yet to go, it is to be hoped that the League of Women Voters will give some thought to a format more in line with usual debating procedures. And if Thursday's format is retained, it would be helpful if each candidate were given a few minutes to present an opening statement from which the reporters would formulate their questions. On balance however, the debate was a plus, not only for the candidates but for the voting public. -- 9/25/76

MAINE

NORTHEAST

No Knockout
(Editorial, Excerpted, Maine Sunday Telegram)

Neither Ford or Carter emerged as the decisive winner of the first debate.

It is unlikely that many voters saw their fundamental conceptions of the two men materially altered. Governor Carter's views of the government he hopes to lead continue to be hazy and imprecise; President Ford remains the unexciting chairman of the board of a lackluster administration.

Carter may have succeeded in arresting his recent decline in the polls. President Ford, on the other hand, exhibited a considerable knowledge of the intricacies of government and on that basis he may have gained a slight edge. But viewers who anticipated that the first debate would produce a clear victor were disappointed. -- 9/26/76

Candidates Show Unexpected Firmness on Issues
(Editorial by Arthur Wiese, excerpted, Houston Post)

The jokesters on Capitol Hill have been spreading the story recently that Jerry Ford and Jimmy Carter are really twins -- twins appropriately enough named "Hobble" and Wobble".

A lot of the sting was removed from that punch line Thursday night by both men's performances in the first presidential debate.

Ford, the "Hobble" of this dynamic duo, seemed to toss his crutches away. He seemed stronger, firmer, more presidential than many of the 100 million Americans watching him on television may have believed he could.

Carter, the "Wobble" was steadier, less evasive and more specific than his critics probably expected.

Who won? Any answer to that question reveals the inevitable prejudices of the respondent.

As far as the issues are concerned, it seemed a draw from this corner -- particularly in the crucial first 30 minutes of the debate.

The incumbent, presiding over the highest unemployment rate since World War II, nevertheless clearly bested Carter on that question. He also seemed to have the upper hand in the exchanges on inflation and how to achieve a balanced budget.

But Carter was an aggressive success with his blunt attacks on the tax system. On the matter of reorganizing the federal government, the Democratic nominee likewise appeared to take it, despite a good rejoinder from Ford about how state spending and employment soared in Georgia while Carter was governor.

On the other big topic of discussion, each man probably cancelled out the other's advantage, with Carter making strong points about the Nixon pardon but the President coming out ahead on the controversial amnesty dispute.

While the result on the issues may have been a draw, the matter of images wasn't.

If style was the determining factor Thursday night, it seemed as though Ford was the winner, however narrowly.

A lot of that edge was the result of the all-important first impression

the candidates made in the debate's opening minutes.

Carter started off abysmally. He seemed nervous and extremely ill at ease. His adam's apple bobbed up and down like an automobile piston. He stammered, he gulped and he stared straight ahead at the camera with a frozen expression. Even his tie was askew.

By contrast, Ford -- carefully dressed in his trademark vest to give him a lawyer-like "presence" on the tube -- seemed calmer and more self-assured.

Marshall McLuhan divides the kinds of images people make on television into two broad categories -- "cool" and "hot".

The Democratic nominee quickly overcame his initial problems and made a combative comeback. But perhaps it was too combative considering the polls which show most Americans identify Ford as a decent and good man if sometimes a bumbling leader.

The format of a debate almost always favors the challenger, who can attack and criticize the status quo, over the challenged, who usually is forced to defend it.

A question exists, however, over who was the challenger Thursday night. Carter certainly would seem to have been since he was facing an incumbent. But on the other hand Carter is the election front-runner at the moment so he obviously had the most to lose.

Jimmy Carter is also more of an unknown quantity to the voters than Ford. In that situation Carter benefits and looks like presidential timber just by holding his own with the incumbent, which he certainly did.

Perhaps the most important question about the debate is not one that was asked by the reporters. Instead it is whether such confrontations as these are really any way to choose a president?

--September 24, 1976



The Washington Post , 9/23/76



'If ya ask me, the audio difficulty set in long before the sound went off'

The Houston Chronicle , 9/26/76

Unfortunately, Big Debate Was Dull
(Editorial, excerpted, Houston Chronicle)

The opening debate between President Ford and Governor Jimmy Carter was, unfortunately, dull.

The reason it was dull was because so many restrictions were imposed by the format of the debate.

The result was a debate that resembled a carefully staged play. The questioners were unable to get into topics of current interest such as the Playboy interview given by Carter or the assistance provided by U. S. Steel to Ford on his vacations.

The most unfortunate result of the way the program was structured is that viewers may have been lulled to the point they lost interest in the economic positions taken and may be discouraged from tuning in for subsequent debates.

In the Chronicle's view, the debate did make apparent the deep differences between the two candidates on how to handle the national economy.

The positions expounded by both candidates were not new ones, and were cautiously stated, perhaps even deliberately understated. The effect was entirely low-key, save for a rare barb or two.

While neither man can claim a great victory in the debates, the Chronicle does believe that in the area of taxes Ford made the more convincing impression and was more sure of himself. Perhaps the President's best point of the night was that the tax system Carter criticized was written by a Democratic Congress.

It is interesting that four of the five members of a panel of college debate coaches gave President Ford an edge in the debate, and did so on the basis of Ford's superiority on the tax questions.

It is unlikely that Governor Carter changed any minds from the impression given in a weekend interview that he would increase the taxes for half of the people, if not more than half. During the debate, Carter was unable to clarify just where the money would come from for promised programs.

The average viewer was probably disappointed in the debate, and a good segment probably didn't wait out the audio interruption to hear the final remarks.

--September 26, 1976

No Clear Victor Emerges in
First Round of Debates

(Editorial by Norman Baxter, excerpted, Houston Chronicle)

There was tension, some conflict and a few harsh words in the debate between President Ford and Jimmy Carter, but no clear advantage for either candidate.

Since neither man overwhelmed the other it appears that President Ford, still trailing Carter in the polls, was the loser because he gained no advantage in the debate.

To defeat Carter the President must broaden his base of support. Ford must follow the example of his predecessor, Richard Nixon, and get the votes of independents and some Democrats to win the election. There was little in his statements at the debate that did not mirror his conservative Republican philosophy.

The opening question was on unemployment and addressed to Carter who appeared to be nervous. The Democrat said he would use research and development, housing programs, joint federal-private work programs in the central cities.

In rebuttal Ford accused Carter of not being specific. But as the debate neared the end it was Carter who became aggressive after the President attacked the Democratic majority in Congress and implied that Carter should be held partly responsible for any congressional excesses.

The President's most obvious effort to win voters of almost all ideological persuasions was in reiterating his proposal for more tax cuts.
--September 24, 1976

At Least, Carter Didn't Blow It

(Editorial by Norman Baxter, excerpted, Houston Chronicle)

Jimmy Carter didn't blow it in the first presidential debate and that is probably the most joy that his supporters can get from the encounter.

Lately he has been making one solid mistake a week and before the confrontation with President Ford the challenger's quota of goofs for last week had already been filled.

One of Carter's goals in the debate was to regain tax reform as his issue. By the time a clarification was made, that it was the rich and



... And now some comments from the man on the street!



businesses which would be Carter's target. Republicans had pummeled Carter.

But Carter, who should have used the national forum of the debate to straighten out his tax stand, never did score in this area and used one of the weakest defenses of all when he accused the President of misquoting but did not back this up with specifics.

When the two opponents did go into specifics during the debate they fell back on statistics. You needed a computer to sift through their answers.

For the most part, the format of the debate worked well, although it was more of a shared press conference than a debate.

There wasn't much in the debate to hold attention or excite or linger in the mind for use in the following day's conversation.

The content was not new. The answers and positions are the same ones that the candidates have had for months of campaigning. The unasked questions (about Carter's interviews and Ford's entertainment by U. S. Steel) might have stirred things up a little but it is doubtful that the answers would have shed much light.

It did not seem justified, but Ford was the more jubilant after the debate. He contended that the momentum is now with his campaign.

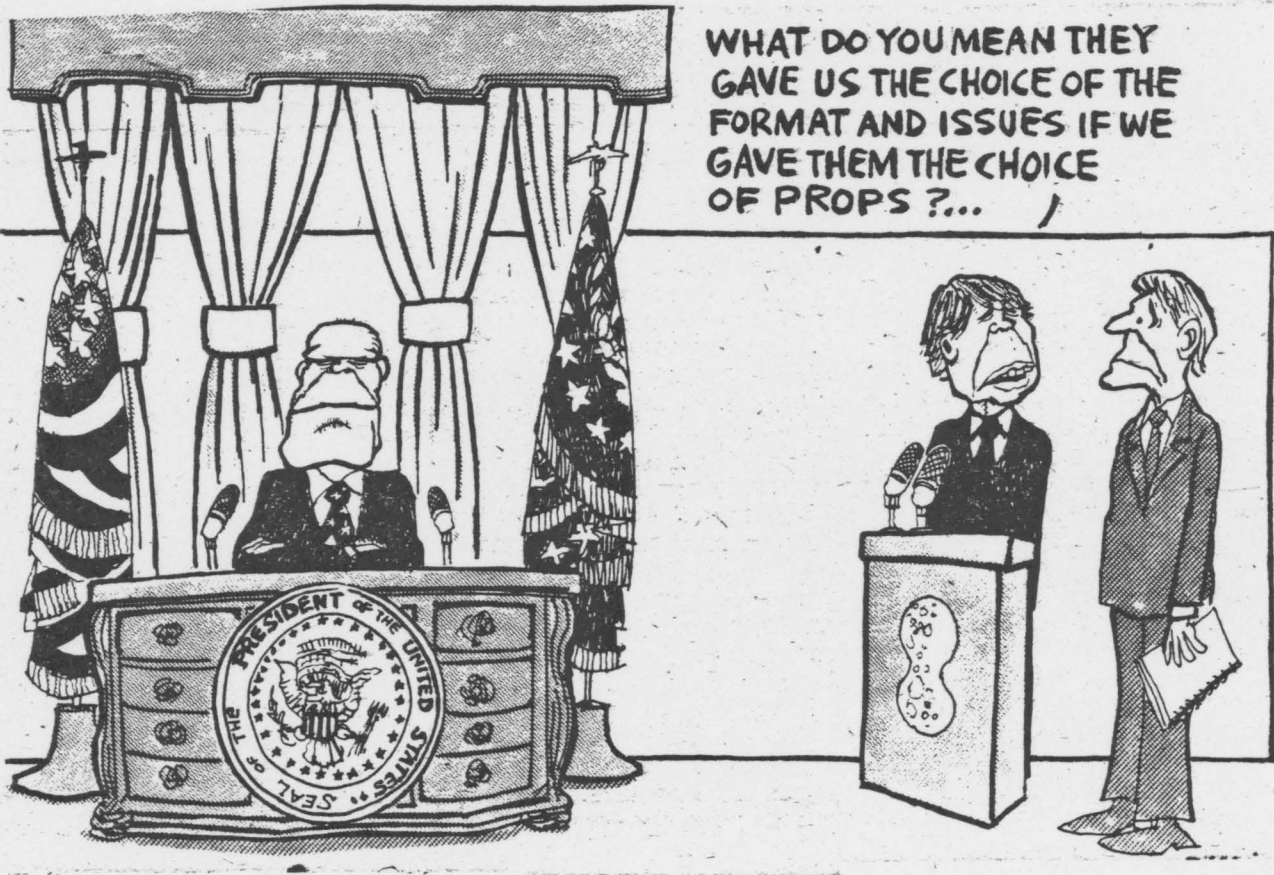
The polls do indicate that the wide lead that Carter held after the Democratic convention is shrinking; that the presidential contest will be far closer in November than it appeared to be in July.

The changing margins in the polls were expected. Historically a candidate has a surge in popularity or acceptance after the nationally televised conventions.

Ford continues to gain. It's not his momentum though, but the benefits he gets from the erosion of Carter's campaign. The Democrat has not been able to get in gear since he was nominated.

There's been a lot of travel and media events by Carter but they don't seem to be proucing results. Reports of campaign difficulties in some of the vote-rich states, California, Texas, Illinois and New York, are becoming frequent.

Even at their best, the debates cannot take the place of traditional campaign effort. If they continue in a similar way to the first, the public will be the principal beneficiary rather than the candidates, since the debates give millions an easy way to inspect and assess the two major candidates
--September 26, 1976



Ford, Carter Trade Barbs Over Political Skeletons
(Editorial by Margaret Mayer, Excerpted, Dallas Times Herald)

The season opener in the 1976 presidential debates will be remembered as the Democratic Congress-Watergate tradeoff.

Jimmy Carter's idea of playing one embarrassment off against another was the only new development in the presidential contest as he and President Ford sweated through their first direct confrontation.

Viewers who tuned out and turned in to bed early - to dream of growth rates chasing deficits - missed the excitement.

Carter pushed social programs supported by a tax system that takes from the rich and gives to the poor and tried to make Ford look like a flunky for Richard Nixon.

Ford stolidly maintained it wouldn't work - that all the fat cats with their tax shelters couldn't satisfy the gluttony of those programs. And, meanwhile, inflation and unemployment would gobble up the middle income wage earners.

Ford was getting up a pretty good head of steam. The whole thing, he said, was the fault of the Democratic Congress, a big bunch of spendthrifts. Ford said if Carter didn't like the tax structure, he had the Democratic Congress to thank. After all, they had been writing the tax bills for the last 22 years.

That did it for Carter. "If he insists I take responsibility for the Democratic Congress, of which I was not a part, then it's only fair he take responsibility for the Nixon administration, of which he was a part," said Carter with a smile.

It wasn't exactly a mind-blowing idea, but it must have caused at least a ripple because something caused a failure in the audio transmission a few minutes later.

When the candidates got back on the air for the final kill, their only ammunition was what they have been saying for the past two years.

Carter, evidently forgetting about having traded off Congress a half hour earlier, said it was time "to have a president and Congress that can work together in mutual respect."

He tossed out the buzz words - Vietnam, Cambodia, CIA and Watergate - for the viewers to chew on for a late night snack.

Ford played Lincoln for his windup with admonitions that: "A president should never promise more than he can deliver and de-

liver everything he has promised."

"Mary Hartmann, Mary Hartmann" it wasn't. But good solid stuff it was - mostly - for those who perservered. -- 9/24/76

Opinion in Dallas: 'Nobody Won'
(Article by John Bloom, Greg Graze, Excerpted,
Dallas Times Herald)

The straw poll may not be very scientific, but it proved accurate at several places around Dallas where people gathered to watch the first Ford-Carter debate. Neither candidate won, according to a sampling of 40 people, but several voters changed their position to uncommitted after the debate had run its course.

Only one person, Mike Moran, said the debate caused him to switch candidates, "I was for Carter," he said. "Now I think Ford. I believe Carter may be too truthful. I just don't think Carter could sit down at the peace table and talk to some of our enemies."

Opinions weren't quite so strong at other places around town. At the Railhead Restaurant in North Dallas those who did watch agreed that Ford's performance was better than expected, and although no one's opinion was changed, several Carter supporters said they are now sliding toward uncommitted.

At Boaz Hall, a dormitory on the campus of Southern Methodist University, 31 students squeezed around a television set in the lobby and watched what they considered a Ford victory. The vote was Ford 27, Carter 4.

State Senator Oscar Mauzy said, "I admit I'm partisan, but I really think this totally exploded the concept that Carter is fuzzy on the issues. Carter was very specific on tax reform and President Ford was terribly fuzzy."

"I was disappointed in the demagoguery engaged in by Mr. Carter," said Tom Unis, the Dallas attorney who heads the Dallas County Texans for Ford. "He is the same kind of demagogue against the Republicans we've been using (in Texas) for 50 years, which I don't think befits a man of his position and the office he is trying to seek."

U.S. Senator Lloyd Bentsen termed the debate "inconclusive" as far as settling the presidential race. -- 9/24/76



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John Berry

"The way I see it, the debate was a toss up — Ford's makeup was excellent, and Carter's hairdo was very sharp!"



Our Classic Choice
(Editorial, Excerpted, Dallas Times Herald)

Those voters who hoped that the first Ford-Carter debate would clear the uncertainty from their minds and move them finally into one camp or the other must be disappointed.

For while the confrontation displayed more of the candidates- particularly Mr. Carter- than most of us have been able to see in a single glance, it revealed no new warts or blemishes, unveiled no traits of mind or character that we had not seen before.

Standing before us was a classic Democrat and a classic Republican, each of whom seemed to have a solid grasp of the domestic issues facing the country, each of whom prescribed solutions well within the orthodoxy of their political creeds.

Mr. Carter proposed- as he has consistently- a modern-day version of the New Deal. He wants more government manipulation of certain aspects of the economy.

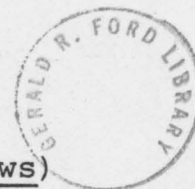
President Ford, on the other hand, proposed stimulation of the private sector of the economy by tax-incentives to business which, in theory at least, would lead to industrial expansion and growth of the job market.

This issues leads inexorably to two others- government spending and taxation. And again the candidates replied along classic lines.

These are the "bread and butter" issues, and the candidates articulated them concisely and specifically. They are important to this campaign, for they force the voters to decide whether they are among the "haves," who are more likely to favor Mr. Ford, or the "have-nots," who might find Mr. Carter's plans tempting.

The voters must also decide whether it is better for the country to have a single party in control of both the Capitol and the White House. Or are we better off with the present adversary relationship between the President and the Congress?

These are traditional American choices, and millions of Americans- perhaps a third of the electorate- have not yet made them. The Magic Something that so may awaited to help us make it did not appear in Round One. -- 9/25/76



One for the Negative
(Editorial, Excerpted, Dallas Morning News)

Debate propositions ordinarily are couched in terms of innovation and change. Therefore the proposition debated Thursday night would have gone something like this: Resolved, that Gerald Ford should be ejected from the White House on Nov. 2 and Jimmy Carter installed therein.

Carter spoke for the affirmative side, Ford for the negative. Judgments in such matters are always subjective, but in our own judgment the negative side carried the day.

This is to say nothing of Carter's fundamental claims to the White House. It is to say merely that, in the specific setting of the Walnut Street Theater, Ford repelled the contention that it is time for a change in White House occupants. Carter scored occasional points, overall, however, he failed to persuade.

This is because of two telling thrusts by Ford and a dissatisfying response by Carter on a point important to him.

The first Ford thrust came when Ford challenged Carter's claim to have reorganized effectively the Georgia state government. The President noted that under Carter, the state budget actually increased 50 per cent; state unemployment likewise went up. Doubt thus was cast on his ability to shake up Washington, as so many times he has promised to do.

The second thrust came in response to Carter's contention that tax loopholes supposedly benefiting the wealthy should be closed. Such loopholes, Carter plainly implied, help mostly Republicans. Beg pardon, said Ford; the loopholes were written by Democratic Congresses. To compound the injury done him, Carter lamely replied that if he was responsible for the work of the Democratic Congresses, Ford was responsible for Watergate. It was not only a cheap shot but a non sequitur.

Otherwise, the match was relatively even. Ford, who had been rather diffident at the outset, grew more animated as the affair proceeded and spoke much more dynamically than Carter. On the other hand, Carter's long suit is quiet confidence, and this he displayed to good advantage. Carter's closing statement seemed more effective than Ford's.

The format of the debates was rather constraining and ought to be changed before the series resumes. The two candidates never spoke to each other; they conversed through mediators. Far more interesting would it be in future for them to ask each other questions- or at least to respond directly to each other's points without prompting from a panelist. -- 9/25/76

Presidential Debate Needs More Spark
(Editorial by Richard Morehead, Excerpted, Dallas Morning News)

The next presidential "debate" needs a better format or it is destined to attract a smaller audience. The general feeling is that the performance was dull, even boring.

To persons who follow politics, what the two men said was hardly new- except for Ford's indication that he will sign the tax reform bill.

The next debate should permit the candidates to address questions to each other. After a panel reporter asks a question, and the candidate replies, it would be livelier to permit a question from his adversary rather than a followup from the panelist. The candidate first addressed should be given brief rebuttal time.

Several viewers thought the candidates were "stiff." Both seemed uneasy in the beginning, and Carter appeared to loosen up more than Ford as the program progressed.

Carter was graded best on appearance (possibly in his smile), while Ford kept his eyes downcast in the early part of the program rather than eyeing the television audience.

The candidates managed to convey to those who do not follow politics closely that the main issue is expansion of government programs (Carter) versus concern for the taxpayers (Ford).

Ford's best line was the summary on whether the voters will choosed Carter's promises or Ford's performance record.-- 9/25/76

The Great Debate: Just a Big Fizzle
(Article by Kent Biffle, Excerpted Dallas Morning News)

The results are in. Nothing much happened. Dr. James T. Kitchens of Texas Christian University and the 14 students in his political communications course analyzed the presidential debaters' styles and conducted a survey.

The conclusion: Carter supporters didn't think Ford won; Ford supporters didn't think Carter won.

In a sampling, undecided voters tended to score the first debate a victory for Ford, however. Immediately following the debate, students phoned 140 people at random from the Fort Worth phone book.

TEXASWEST

A projection of the 115 who responded indicated 32.15 per cent for Carter; 30.35 per cent for Ford; and 37.5 per cent undecided.

Ninety-seven per cent of the Carter fans watched the debate; 82 per cent of the Ford supporters watched it; and 57 per cent of the undecided voters bothered to look in.

About 46 per cent of the undecided voters were undecided about who won the debate. The others felt Ford won- two-to-one.

-- 9/26/76

Score Seven Rounds for Ford,
Three for Carter, Three Even
(Editorial by Robert Pattridge, excerpted, Denver Post)

Have no illusions, that wasn't Abe Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas debating Thursday night. As in the Lincoln-Douglas debates, it was Jimmy Carter -- "The Little Giant" -- taking on an opponent of Lincoln's physical stature -- Gerald Ford. Neither damaged their chances Nov. 2 at the polls. Neither was in the Lincoln-Douglas debate class.

Neither turned much of a lasting phrase in the great debate tradition of thorough, skillful language demonstrated by Lincoln nor the adroit, ready tactician that was Douglas.

But while the critics pick away, Coloradans should remember Mr. Ford and Mr. Carter deported themselves well in the heat and glare of lights and failure of the sound system.

When you cut through the baloney the debate on 13 rounds went 7 for Mr. Ford, 3 for Mr. Carter and 3 even. The Georgian started weak, came on stronger and copped the summation somewhat narrowly.

Mr. Carter won, besides the summary, the pardon question as well as how to pay for new programs. Energy, unemployment and intelligence agencies questions were even. Mr. Ford took the balance with his incumbent knowledge.

There is a lingering sense the erudite questions from news persons detracted from a head-on confrontation. Neither Mr. Ford nor Mr. Carter exhibited a knockout punch. They didn't sever any jugular veins.

The mass of memorized economic figures recited by the debaters is beyond the grasp of most of us.

Lacking the bitterness of the Lincoln-Douglas meetings, the first Ford-Carter debate whets the voter appetite.

All in all it was a grim debate. Two ex-Navy men in their blue suits. Both likeable human beings. Both well prepared. Like Lincoln and Douglas, both from humble backgrounds where great Americans originate.

Both were reluctant to smile, laugh or relax. Perhaps that too reflects the uncertain mood of American voters as they evaluate what was not the most earth shaking debate in our history.

--September 26, 1976

Both Candidates Score; Future Debates Crucial
(Editorial, excerpted, Denver Post)

The first of the nationally-televised presidential debates between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter is now history, but the results are far from conclusive. One thing is clear: The debate confirmed the two candidates are in a close, tight race which will probably go to the wire.

Both men scored debating points, and were well primed for the pressure-packed confrontation before millions of Americans. They provided no surprises in philosophical differences and in restating previously-presented views on key domestic issues.

But there was no breakthrough -- no clear-cut winner in the debate. Carter did not score a knockout blow nor did Ford.

If an advantage was gained, it was probably Ford's. He looked and sounded more forceful and "presidential" than he has in the past; and, since the President had been the underdog in the opinion polls, that must be considered a definite "plus" for his campaign.

Those who thought Ford would be dealt a severe political blow by the initial debate clearly were proved wrong by his performance. If anything, the debate confirmed that the presidential contest is turning out to be closer than the early public opinion samplings indicated.

Carter, who was expected to do well, sounded tentative at first, but came on stronger as the debate progressed, and he was more effective than Ford in the final summations.

The format was far too stilted. Each debater responded virtually in a vacuum to the excellent, incisive questions of the reporters.

It was apparent that both candidates were ultra-cautious, afraid of being caught off-guard with the sound suddenly switching on again. Under the circumstances, it was difficult for the public to get anything but a "programmed" view of the candidates. Perhaps the two men will loosen up in the remaining debates, and thereby project more clearly their images as national leaders.

Valuable as they undoubtedly are, the verdict is still out on whether the debates will turn out to be the watershed of the 1976 presidential campaign.

--September 26, 1976

Revamp the Debate Format
(Editorial, excerpted, Denver Post)

The big loser in Thursday night's TV debate was neither President Ford nor Governor Carter.

The big loser was the League of Women Voters, which promoted the event. What isn't excusable and understandable is the putrid and arrogant performance by the League and candidate representatives who set up the debate and made the arrangements.

The Thursday night performance was remindful of an old TV show -- the \$64,000 question -- which put contestants in isolation booths while they participated in a trivia quiz and were suitably rewarded for their answers.

The staging of the debate could hardly have been more effective in placing the participants in a setting which destroyed TV's ability to communicate in personal, intimate and revealing ways.

Because it was so depersonalized, the relevancy of the complex, important issues at hand was no doubt lost to many viewers.

Get rid of the panel of questioners. Let the debates be held in a place where each TV network can set up its own equipment, use its own personnel, and cover the event in its own way. Eliminate the pooling arrangement, so that a technical breakdown won't cause a total interruption such as that Thursday night. Give the audience the option of turning to another channel.

And let there be sights and sounds which provide variety, and a sense of the drama involved, instead of the severely limited range of sensual stimuli -- dominated by deadly "talking heads" -- which characterized Thursday night's telecast.

If they are to be called debates, let them conform in at least some measure to the traditional form of genuine give-and-take confrontation, instead of a carefully managed and restricted recitation of facts and figures which ebb and flow in the precisely measured rhythm of an ocean swell.

Let there be barbs and quips, an oral jousting with thrust and parry, involving opponents who are in a setting designed to enhance rather than encumber and stultify their efforts to make points with the public.

Eliminate the stiff formality and set up a situation which provides some semblance of an adversary relationship. Offer an opportunity for some verbal fireworks.

We're not asking for circuses instead of bread -- we think we ought to have both.

--September 26, 1976

Who Won? Each Side Stakes Claim
(Excerpted, Daily Oklahoman)

Republicans said President Ford won. Democrats tended to think Jimmy Carter won.

That was the predictable reaction of Oklahoma lawmakers to the Ford-Carter debate Thursday night.

And with one exception, they thought the panel of questioners was pretty good.

Said GOP Sen. Dewey Bartlett, "The best thing that happened to Carter was when the sound blew."

He said, "The President clearly won."

Said Democratic Rep. Ted Risenhoover, "The breakdown of the TV transmission was typical of the lack of communication between Ford and the people."

Republican Sen. Henry Bellmon said Carter's objective was to prove a need to change presidents, "and I believe he failed to do so."

Democratic Rep. Tom Steed said no one won or lost, "but I think the long-range effect of the debate will be in Carter's favor...He re-established himself as a well-informed man."

Rep. Glenn English, Democrat, said the debate didn't bring out wide differences between the two candidates. And, he said, he was "extremely disappointed" that they did not talk about agriculture or about deregulation of natural gas or decontrol of oil.

Bartlett said that although the President won the first round, it was not a knockout blow in the campaign.

"I think we will see a wild-swinging Carter in the next debate."

He said the President "hit hard -- about as hard as a president should hit."

Bellmon said he would give them both good scores as debaters, so far as their understanding of the issues is concerned.

"It seemed to me that Ford scored heavily twice: when Carter was trying to blame the mess in Washington on the president when Congress wrote the laws, and on the federal reserve question -- Carter wanted it politicized."

OKLAHOMAWEST

He said Carter "seemed a little smug, whereas Ford came on as solemn and earnest."

Steed said that Ford "adroitly tried to avoid his handicap -- an administration cursed with high unemployment and inflation."

"His diversionary tactics were good."

Steed said the debate will not change many minds, but that "Carter reinforced the confidence his voters have in him more than Ford."

He said that "Ford may have gone a little too far in antagonizing Congress."

Risenhoover said that Carter "displayed a sensitivity to the problems of this country and the problems of the ordinary, everyday American."

He contended that Carter was more relaxed, "because he had nothing to defend -- Ford had a poor administration to defend."

--September 24, 1976

The Not So Great Debate
(Editorial, Excerpted, Daily Oklahoman)

Victimized by a 28-minute audio blackout, President Ford and Jimmy Carter may have put as many Americans to sleep as they convinced in the first of their nationally televised verbal confrontations.

But on the positive side, the first Ford-Carter clash did serve an informative and constructive purpose by further exposing the sharp distinctions between the two candidates on economic policy.

Carter's populist demagoguery was never more evident than in his repetition of the theme that our tax system is a "disgrace" and that it amounts to a "welfare system for the rich."

That is political bunkum of a rather tawdry sort, and the suspicion grows that more than a few American voters will recognize it as such.

True, our federal tax code is riddled with disincentives for savings and investment but that law was put there by the Democrats who have controlled congress for all but four of the last 44 years. And that is a fact Jimmy Carter cannot deny. -- 9/27/76



Coaching is Urged for Debaters
(Excerpted, Rocky Mountain News)

Jimmy Carter sometimes sounded as though he were parroting the words of some "Harvey Hack" speechwriter.

President Ford's closing statement was embarrassingly weak.

Both men were seriously deficient of animation -- occasionally seeming "as lifeless as wax dummies."

Those were some of the critical observations of Thursday night's presidential debate by a Denver expert, Frank Sferra, who said both contenders could stand a lot of coaching before their next encounter October 6.

Sferra, one of six board members of the National Forensic League, judged the contest a "disappointing tossup."

He said he thinks voters would get a more revealing look at the candidates if they were under more pressure and were required to speak directly to each other.

Sferra said he would rate the debate a tossup because Carter started weakly and made a strong comeback while the President appeared to fade towards the end.

What advice would Sferra give the candidates if he were coaching them for their next meeting?

"I'd tell Carter to get rid of the statistics," (particularly on taxation), Sferra said. "He went on too long. I'd tell him not to make it sound like something your speechwriters and your Harvey Hacks wrote."

Sferra said he would direct the President to punch up his next closing statement and try to sound a little more as though he were speaking off the cuff.

While critical of the format, Sferra praised both men for recognizing and using some of its peculiarities to good advantage.

"They really used the hatchet work on the response," he said. "If these people (the candidates' advisers) have any brains at all, the first statement will become more and more innocuous in future debates and the response will become more and more of a hatchet job." -- 9/24/76

This was effective, he explained, because the respondent was able to make a strong last impression on a particular question while his opponent had no opportunity to defend the initial answer.

"Cheap shot! Cheap shot!" Sferra yelled when Carter executed a neat so-called hatchet job by following a reference to Ford with the statement, "Nixon was a strong leader, at least."

He said neither man's voice was particularly advantageous for debating, but that "I found Carter easier to listen to."

Although the President is a "more impressive looking man" than Carter in terms of size, Sferra said camera angles tended to nullify that factor -- which often is considered a valuable advantage in debate.

Another way in which both men demonstrated their appreciation for the unusual format, Sferra said, was by not treating it like a real debate.

"They spoke to the audience. They both avoided Nixon's mistake -- debating."

Sferra said that if he could make a single change to make the next debate better for the candidates and their audience alike, it would be to shorten the program from 1-1/2 hours to one hour.

Asked what he thought was the best feature of the debate, he said, "I thought the questions were the best part. They were superbly good. I thought the answers were incredibly evasive or shallow."

--September 24, 1976

Partisans Believe Their Man Won Bout
(Excerpted, Rocky Mountain News)

A key worker for Jimmy Carter said he'd never seen President Ford "that clever."

The comment following Thursday night's debate came from Mark Hogan, the former lieutenant governor who is now chairman of the Colorado executive committee for the Carter campaign.

While Hogan was pleased with the Democratic candidate's overall performance, he said, "I thought Ford was very facile."

He was well prepared, according to Hogan.

Hogan's remark was atypical.

Most post-debate opinion sampled by the News split along party lines. Democrats thought Carter won and Republicans gave the victory to Ford.

To Keith Brown, Ford's Colorado campaign chairman, Carter was straight out of "Li'l Abner."

All the Ford supporters were impressed by Carter's slow start and the President's assertiveness. On both appearance and content, their man was a clear winner, the verdict went.

A clearly partisan crowd of 20 Carter campaign workers gathered at their headquarters on E. Colfax Avenue to watch their favorite.

The cheers soon began, however, when they felt their man was scoring some points on tax reform.

"He's killing him," one campaign worker said after Carter attacked Ford on unemployment.

Perhaps the biggest cheers of the night came when Carter said that if Ford insisted on holding him responsible for the Democratic-controlled Congress, then Ford should be considered part of the Nixon administration.

On the whole, Carter's workers seemed buoyed by his performance, unanimous and sincere in their feeling he'd carried the debate.

Similar divergence of opinion was found among advertising men, economists and pollsters specializing in politics, though most agreed that the contest between the President and the Georgia peanut farmer was informative and will help some people decide how to vote on Nov. 2.

--September 24, 1976