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Debates Get **PAGE ONE** Tentative Agreement

WASHINGTON (AP) — Negotiators for President Ford and Jimmy Carter have settled tentatively on a series of three nationally televised campaign debates beginning the third week in September, the Democratic presidential nominee said Monday.

However, White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen said, "There's just no agreement," and refused to discuss the status of debate negotiations.

Carter reported tentative plans for three debates, each lasting an hour and 15 minutes.

Aides to the two presidential candidates are to meet again Wednesday with officials of the League of Women voters to discuss debate arrangements.

Jody Powell, Carter's press secretary, would not comment further on the negotiations because he said he wanted "to avoid any risk of jeopardizing the discussions and the eventual debate."

"I've got hopes that we can wrap up the basic things this week," Powell said.

At an initial meeting last Thursday, the two sides reported progress toward an agreement on terms for campaign debates. They said then that they also had agreed there would be no public disclosure of the status of negotiations until a final settlement had been reached.

However, they did disclose that the first discussion had led to the preparation of proposed debate terms which were to be submitted to the two presidential candidates.

A Republican source indicated that the terms Carter outlined were those drawn up for submission to the two campaign camps.

Nessen noted that representatives of both candidates had agreed they would not discuss the debate deliberations in public. "We're going to keep that promise," he said.

The Federal Election Commission voted unanimously Monday to eliminate one potential obstacle to campaign debates by declaring that the League of Women Voters can sponsor them without running afoul of campaign finance laws.

However, the commission forbade the use of corporate or union funds to pay debate bills.

"We can and will hold the debates even if we cannot solicit corporate or union funding," the league said later. "The door is still open for individual contributions and the League of Women Voters Education Fund, which is a charitable trust, can use its own funds."