

# Presidential Debates Debatable

WASHINGTON (AP) — What is the status of the Great Debates? Jimmy Carter says plans for the televised confrontations are almost set, but a spokesman for President Ford says no agreement is in sight.

Even before the Federal Election Commission gave approval Monday to sponsorship of the debates by the League of Women Voters, Carter announced that negotiators for both sides had reached a tentative agreement on the form the sessions will take.

The Democratic presidential nominee said the negotiators had agreed to match the candidates in a series of three debates, each lasting an hour and 15 minutes, beginning the third week in September.

But Ford's spokesman, Ron Nessen, denied there was any agreement on the debates. "There's just no agreement," he said.

Nessen refused to discuss Ford's view of the negotiations, saying representatives of both nominees had agreed to keep the talks secret.

Meanwhile, Carter told AFLCIO leaders here today that the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board should be under closer presidential control. Carter said the president should have the right to fire the board chairman, who now serves a 14-year term and can only be removed for wrongdoing.

He told the union leaders a Carter administration would give the nation firm economic control, free from "wild, rollercoaster dips of the last eight years."

AFL-CIO President George Meany, who called the union leaders to Washington to discuss campaign strategy, said Ford runs a government "by veto, by stalemate, by inaction, by deceit and by pardon."

Ford spent Monday in Washington where he met with his Cabinet and heard glowing reports on the state of the nation and the economy.

Carter spent the day beating the campaign carpet for votes, speaking of his dedication to Israel before Jewish leaders, about voter registration to black leaders and rapping dishonesty in the Medicaid program and resulting inadequate care given to the elderly.

In Atlanta, Carter said the nation has not had a president in the foreign policy area because Henry A. Kissinger "is, in effect, both the secretary of state and the president at the same time."

In a speech to a group of Jewish community leaders from throughout the country, Carter said he is committed to the right of Israel "to exist as a Jewish state permanently and in peace."

And, he said, "as a Christian myself, I think the recreation of the state of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy."

Later, Carter accused Ford and resigned President Richard M. Nixon of ignoring charges of illegality in the Medicaid system.

Commenting on a report by Senate investigators, who said they found widespread abuses by health service providers and Medicaid recipients in a 10-city study, Carter said Medicaid's record of fraud and poor care is "a

terrible example of federal bureaucratic indifference."

The Senate investigators said they found that as much as half of the \$15 billion spent annually on Medicaid is wasted.

Then, in a talk before the Voter Education Project, Inc., which has registered millions of blacks in the South, Carter vowed to end red tape that keeps some potential voters from the polls.

Carter said he would work for passage of a law that would automatically register all Americans as they reach their 18th birthdays. He admitted that a bill to allow Americans to register by postcard for federal elections faces too much opposition in Congress to pass this year.

On the debates, Carter said he prefers a format sought by the League of Women Voters, allowing questioning on a wide

variety of subjects. Ford has wanted questions limited in each debate to a specific issue.

"If President Ford can go in, briefed on just one narrow subject with a whole sheaf of documents and memorized statements, I think that would remove a great deal of the debate aspect," Carter said.

Despite the election commission approval of the league's sponsorship of the debates, there are several potential problems still stalling the confrontation. Two other presidential candidates, former Georgia Gov. Lester Maddox and former Sen. Eugene McCarthy, are threatening court action if they aren't included in the debates.

Another problem is one of financing. The FEC decided that league sponsorship of the debates would not violate campaign financing laws, but continued on page 2



# Debate

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ruled out direct contributions to the league from corporations and labor unions to help pay for the debates.

Carter's running mate, Sen. Walter F. Mondale, campaigned Monday in San Francisco, where he criticized the Nixon and Ford administrations for their policies on arms sales. Mondale said Nixon and Ford have tried to turn America, "once proud to call itself the arsenal of democracy ... into just an arsenal."

He said, "The whole world is losing the race to control the instruments of war."

And Mondale said he fears that Ford, trying to make campaign points, might try to clinch some kind of last-minute arms agreement with the Soviets that "will not properly protect our security interests." He said, "While we all pray for a successful agreement, I hope President Ford would not rush into a hasty agreement."

Mondale said he and Carter are committed to controlling the spread of nuclear and conventional arms, saying the Ford administration record in "pushing arms sales is scandalous. It has been a practical failure and a moral failure."

Ford's running mate, Sen. Robert J. Dole of Kansas, campaigned Monday in Maryland, where he toured the state fair at Timonium.

Noting that an upcoming campaign tour will take him into the South, considered Carter's home territory, Dole said, "My trip will demonstrate once and for all that we are not writing off any states."