

Mondale Raps Ford View of Watergate

Milwaukee

Walter Mondale said yesterday that Gerald Ford's record both before and after assuming the presidency showed "he did not truly understand the lessons of Watergate" and suggested if Mr. Ford had had his way, Richard Nixon still would be president.

The Democratic vice presidential candidate addressed the Wisconsin Education Association where Mr. Ford had been in the morning.

He used the forum to deliver his toughest condemnation yet of Mr. Ford's response to Watergate and Mr. Ford's defense-to-the-end of Mr. Nixon.

"Mr. Ford's record prior to assuming the presidency and the record of his administration demonstrates that he did not truly understand the lessons of Watergate," Mondale said.

Stressing that he believes neither Mr. Ford nor GOP vice presidential candidate Robert Dole were involved in any aspect of Watergate, Mondale told the crowd, "The question is, whether Mr. Ford and his running mate truly saw and understood the Watergate crisis for what it was — the worst political scandal in American history — and whether they responded to it with the leadership that placed respect for the law above politics."

As shortcomings, Mondale cited Mr. Ford's action as House minority leader in 1972 to lead the fight to prevent the first investigation of the Watergate break-in until after the 1972 election, "Thus enabling Mr. Nixon to be re-elected without the American people knowing the full story of official lawlessness carried out by that administration."

Dole, he said, introduced the resolution to close the doors of the Senate Watergate committee to public viewing, and both Mr. Ford and Dole defended Mr. Nixon after the "Saturday night massacre" in October, 1972. 1973

"Both Mr. Ford and Mr. Dole defended Mr. Nixon, and if they'd had their way about it, I'm convinced that Mr. Nixon would still be the President of the United States," Mondale said.

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