

Western Demos React to Ford--but Just Barely

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Participants in the Western States Democratic Conference here generally took a "so what?" attitude to President Nixon's nomination of Congressman Gerald Ford for vice president last night.

The weekend conference, which drew Democrats from 13 states for a work session on how to win next year, was overshadowed by the vice presidential selection guessing game throughout the day.

One of the guest speakers here, U.S. Senator Walter Mondale (Dem-Minn.), said immediately after Mr. Nixon's announcement:

"I am inclined to vote for him . . . based on what I know about his work.

"However, while I think the Congress should act swiftly, we must also act thoroughly — and we must have full and complete hearings on the nomination."

UNENTHUSIASTIC

Mondale, however, was less than sanguine about the appointment.

"I do not believe he (Ford) offers a new, strong, creative personality on the national scene."

State Democratic Chairman John Burton said the possibility of Ford's becoming a presidential candidate in 1976 cannot be overlooked.

"By the time of the primaries he'll be a household word — or at least a garage-hold word," Burton said.

'DIVISIVE'

Mondale, when asked if he were pleased that Mr. Nixon had not chosen former trea-

sury secretary John Connally, replied with a grin, "I certainly am."

Earlier yesterday Mondale had told a press conference that were Connally to be chosen it would be "divisive and controversial" and he could very well not be confirmed.

There appeared to be little active opposition to the President's appointment by the Democratic activists here. While many of them conceded the possibility of Ford's becoming a presidential candidate, very few considered it a probability.

Burton said he was happy about the nomination in at least one respect: "It puts a strong dent in Ronald Reagan's insatiable drive to become president of this country."

WALDIE

Congressman Jerome Waldie of Contra Costa county gave the President's choice lukewarm endorsement: "Jerry Ford is a decent man and he'll make an adequate caretaker if approved by the Congress. I won't take my vote lightly and I hope the other members won't either."

The conference concludes here today with appearances by U.S. Senators Birch Bayh of Indiana, Henry Jackson of Washington, and John V. Tunney of California.