

MONDALE SAYS FORD HAS FAILED TO HEED WATERGATE LESSONS

Describes Nixon Pardon as Mockery
of the Nation's Belief That No
Official Stands Above Law

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KANSAS CITY, Mo., Oct. 5—Senator Walter F. Mondale charged the Ford Administration today with "a fundamental failure to heed the lessons of Watergate," starting with the pardon of former President Richard M. Nixon and continuing in its present approach to government.

Although explicitly dissociating President Ford from any responsibility for what he called "the abuses of the Nixon years," the Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate said:

"To the bitter end, Mr. Ford strongly defended Mr. Nixon, long after it was obvious to many members of his own party, as well as most of the American people, that the Administration was obstructing justice."

'No Sovereign Above Law'

And in his harshest criticism, Senator Mondale said that by pardoning Mr. Nixon, Mr. Ford "made a mockery of the notion that in America, there is no sovereign who stands above the law."

The speech to students at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Law School contained the strongest terms yet used about Watergate in the campaign. Mr. Mondale, who said he had been working on the speech for a long time, said it was his own conception.

A copy of the speech was sent yesterday to the Atlanta headquarters of Jimmy Carter, who heads the Democrat ticket. But Senator Mondale added that he had sought comment only on specific proposals for legislation.

Perception of Wrongs

In viewing the scandals of the Nixon Administration, Mr. Mondale said in the speech, what matters is to perceive what went wrong and to understand "Did Mr. Ford and his running mate see it? And how did they respond?"

What followed was a list of statements and actions by Mr. Ford and his running mate, Senator Robert J. Dole, beginning with Mr. Ford's opposition to a House Banking Committee investigation of the Watergate break-in and Mr. Ford's

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and Mr. Dole's defense of President Nixon's dismissal of Archibald Cox as the Watergate special prosecutor in the so-called "Saturday night massacre."

He recalled also that Mr. Ford had called the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment proceedings a "travesty," adding: "To the man who was about to become the President of the United States, the man who now campaigns as if he was the one who cleaned up Watergate," such persons as Mr. Cox; the House Judiciary committee chairman, Peter J. Rodino, and Judge John J. Sirica "were wrong — and Nixon was right."

Mr. Mondale said that he understood Mr. Ford's "delicate position" at the time but asserted that the ability to put loyalty to principle above party or censure is "the most essential strength of national leadership." What he called "this weakness of leadership" in Mr. Ford became "all too clear," Mr. Mondale said, as soon as Mr. Ford became President.

The Tapes and Pardon

First, Mr. Mondale said, Mr. Ford agreed to allow Mr. Nixon to take White House tapes and documents with him to San Clemente, Calif. But it was for Mr. Ford's "next major act" that Mr. Mondale reserved his harshest words.

"No act more perpetuated Nixon's own dangerous doctrine that a President is somehow above the law," Mr. Mondale said. "Few would have objected to a Nixon pardon after a judicial process—if in fact Mr. Nixon was indicted. But the Ford pardon snuffed out that process and made a mockery of the notion that in America, there is no sovereign who stands above the law."

At this point, Mr. Mondale departed from his prepared text, in itself a rarity for him that testified to his own evaluation of his speech's significance. He speculated whether or not the framers of the Constitution would have granted the President the full pardon powers he possesses if the 25th Amendment, "enabling

the President to pick his successor," had been in existence.

Mr. Mondale said he felt the speech was one of he had to make, and that he could not talk about official lawlessness and disregard for "the sanctity of the law" without mentioning Watergate and the Nixon pardon.

He is aware, Mr. Mondale said, that Mr. Carter has avoided mentioning both subjects and has even indicated that he does not think the pardon a suitable campaign topic.

Examples of 'Insensitivity'

In his speech Mr. Mondale continued by saying that since the Nixon pardon, the Ford Administration has "shown its insensitivity to the clear lessons of the past." He cited Administration opposition to "Congressional action on Watergate reform legislation," such as the appointment of a "truly independent special prosecutor"; its opposition to "a legislative charter" for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency and its inaction on possible removal from "key jobs" of unnamed persons who, he alleged, had been "involved in the many illegal activities."

Neither Mr. Mondale nor his aides would supply the names of any specific officials they felt ought to be removed.

In addition, Mr. Mondale said, the Administration "tried to persuade our committee [House Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, of which Mr. Mondale is a member] to cover up and conceal any references to C.I.A. plots to assassinate foreign leaders."

In sum, Mr. Mondale described the Ford Administration as having "a record of commitment to the status quo."

"Our country cannot survive," Mr. Mondale said at one point, "if public officials reserve the right to bend the Constitution, to violate the law." "This is not yesterday's issue," he added. "It did not disappear with Richard Nixon, and in 1976, there is no more crucial question facing our nation than whether government will once more respect and obey the law."

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