Modale debate performance stresses strength, knowledge

professor of political sci- Mondale's Senate record. ence. The profession was, and doubtless still is, infested with worked on the Senate staff, where persons who were happy only I watched Mondale and kindred when counting things. Some persons practiced "content analysis," whereby they would read, say, the military systems that today the works of Lenin and count the number of times and the spirit in which he used the word "imperialism." Then they would come to the thunderous conclusion that Lenin talked a lot about imperialism and did not approve of it.



George

Applying that scalpel of scholarship to Walter Mondale's debate performance reveals - are you sitting down? - that he likes the questioners' time from the 90 minutes, and divide by two: Mondale probably spoke for 40 mincrammed at least (I may have missed some) 39 uses of the words "strength" and "strong" and 21 uses of the words "knowledge" and "know."

Early on he said: "Strength requires knowledge." In his closing freeze" that is the centerpiece of lin considers its essential security statement he referred to strength his campaign. He implied that interests. Someday someone and knowledge 14 times. He "we have an arms race under should ask him about this. understands this about com- way" because Reagan is President, 91984, Washington Post Writers Group municating to the masses: Keep the message simple ("Coke is it!") and repeat it relentlessly.

But the remarkable discipline he brought to the debate was not sufficient to solve his problem. He reached age 56 and the October of his longed-for campaign with problems that were too numerous and too intractable to solve.

Ronald Reagan went to Kansas City — the scene of his heartbreaking but toughening near miss at the Republican convention eight years earlier - with the support of more than onefifth of registered Democrats. These include a high proportion of conservative, blue-collar Democrats who helped elect him. Mondale had to try to pry a lot of them loose by convincing them that he is personally strong, that he understands national strength, and that Reagan lacks the knowledge to make his instincts and values safe and effective. But Mondale's checkered past caught

Letter

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n my disgracefully check- up with him - mildly, because an interpretation of postwar his-

When I quit being a professor I spirits having fun - and it was jolly fun for them — voting against are the sinews of America's strength. The Mondale who was senator from Minnesota was the Mondale who reportedly resisted Jimmy Carter's conversion when Soviet behavior convinced even Carter of the need for rearma-

And that was the Mondale on display from January through June this year, competing with Gary Hart to see who could seem most indiscriminately ardent for arms-control agreements and most reluctant to contemplate the use of force. As Mondale says, he has a long record in public life. It is too long to erase, even with strength and knowledge. Subtract 39 incantations of the words "strong" and "strength."

answers and statements in this tal change in the Soviet system, utes. Into those minutes he year's debates, but he botched nothing as badly (and nothing as insecurity for the Soviet elite? important) as Mondale did when asked by two questioners to ex- recently has said about restoring plain what would be frozen and "full independence" to Eastern under the "mutual and verifiable compatible with what the Krem-

ered past I was, briefly, a Reagan referred only briefly to tory too perverse to merit confutation.

In Kansas City, yet again, he said, in effect, "we have a runaway arms race" because Reagan will not agree with the Russians. Mondale could have said "strength" 1,000,039 times and his clear message still would have been one identified by Jeane Kirkpatrick in Dallas, in the best speech of this campaign: Democrats always blame America first.

Reagan, for his part, said "we seek no (military) superiority," thereby repudiating, again, an important part of his 1980 platform. And he said of the Soviets, "We're not going to change their system." This recurring theme of his administration (last week Secretary of State Shultz said. "We mean no threat to the security of the Soviet Union") raises this question: Why are we participating in the "Helsinki process," given that compliance with the Helsinki agreements on human Reagan made a hash of some rights would require fundamenand would mean fundamental

And if Reagan means what he how verification would work European nations, his aim is in-

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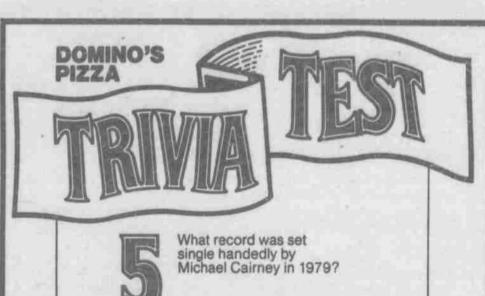
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