

Rangel: Reagan ignored the poor

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Delivering his last State of the Union Message to the nation last week, President Ronald Reagan said he preferred to leave "the proud recitation of the accomplishments of my administration" to history, but none of the comments given on his address had anything for which he could really be proud.

Except maybe Congressman Charles Rangel's comment that Mr. Reagan doubtless spent "all of his professional life preparing for the script of being President of the United States, so that as I watched him you could not even suspect he was reading his speech."

Rangel said he was "hurt and disappointed that the President could talk about rising jobs and incomes without recognizing that the poor have grown in number as have the rich and that never since the Great Depression has there been such a broad spread between those who have and those who have not.. "

Chairman of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, Rangel agreed with the President on the merited tribute to his wife for her role in the war against drugs.

"But if it had not been for Nancy Reagan, the President would have no one in his Administration supporting the war on drugs." He had just returned from his Committee's trip to Burma and Thailand where they found "bumper crops of opium poppies, and our people say much more opium heroin will be coming to the U.S. this year."

Reagan boasted about the reduction in cocaine and marijuana abuse while ignoring the increase in the deadly AIDS disease due to an increase in intravenous injections contaminating our prisons and



CHARLES RANGEL

maternity wards," Rangel lamented.

He was also disappointed with Reagan for talking "about the quality of life before life and anti-abortion" while he failed "to talk about improving the quality of life after birth."

The Harlem Congressman thought it "more serious" that "my district has higher infant mortality rates than most developing countries and all industrialized nations; not to mention the homeless and hopeless."

President Reagan views "the nation as excluding the poor and those not as fortunate as Reagan," Rangel concluded.

The address was "a typical Ronald Reagan distortion of the truth," said Major Owens. The President emphasized the facts and statistics that made him look good. He ignored the fact that he is the cause of the great deficit in the budget and continues to call for a balanced budget.

"The President clearly will not face up to the fact that the future of the country looks very uncertain as a result of his eight years in office," Owens continued.

"In economics, education, drugs, whichever way you look, we are facing considerable crisis
(Continued on Page 49)

Rangel:

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(Continued from Page 3)

as he leaves office. This is one Congressman who will be glad when he is gone." the Brooklyn member stated.

Congressman Floyd Flake of Queens was also "disappointed" with the Reagan message. "The President pointed out that we had problems but did not offer any solutions. I was hoping he would talk about how we can solve the homeless problem," said Flake.

The Reagan "program to solve the drug problem is to say no to drugs. What about those people already on drugs? Rehabilitation programs seem to be in order.

"Mr. Reagan's presentation was extremely depressing because he sounded like he had never visited the 11th Congressional District or the City of New York where jobs and education are still a priority. He seems not to understand that," Flake ended.

Members of the 21st Century PAC, a non-partisan Black national political action committee, also listened to and analyzed the implications of the Reagan message for the Black community.

Toni Darney Schmiegelow, chairman of the N.Y. State chapter said "the President's optimistic characterization of the State of the Union ignore his administration's illegal actions in the Iran- Contra affair.

"For Black Americans, the Iran-Contra affair has serious implications because we look to the President to set the proper moral and legal tone in this country.

"The lack of morality of this administration is a contributory factor to the increased incidence of racism in this country. Racism has become more overt under his leadership and he has yet to condemn it," the New York PAC chair said.