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UNDERESTIMATING REAGAN

During Inauguration weekend, newspapers carried a number of editorials and analysis columns bemoaning how press and politicians have consistently underestimated Ronald Reagan. This underestimation was bipartisan. The miscalculators included California Governor Edmund G. (Pat) Brown and State Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh, all Reagan's Republican primary opponents, President Gerald R. Ford, and President Jimmy Carter.

The underestimators also included Speaker Tip O'Neill when he dealt with Reagan's first-term tax cuts and other legislative proposals. They included the reporters who found themselves smirking at Reagan's alleged gaps in knowledge of details.

In commenting on Reagan's carrying of 49 of the 50 states and unprecedented high level of popular support, the liberal commentators have finally realized that they, too, underestimated Reagan.

But underestimation isn't the entire explanation. The real problem with the liberals is that they don't understand Reagan at all; he speaks a different language. Those who seek to understand Reagan's immense success should study his Second Inaugural Address.

It is a tenet of liberal ideology that political success must be built on "tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect." Reagan has proved that this isn't true -- or at least is no longer true. His formula is different: stand tall for moral principles and patriotism, keep government on essentials such as providing for the common defense, and encourage the work ethic in an environment of freedom.

Those who have tried to dissect Reagan's Inaugural Address by comparing its specifics with liberal or conservative goals have missed the point. The President's appeal is that he is leading us toward faith in America and confidence in ourselves to build our own lives. He sounds the trumpet for "the spirit of enterprise" to build prosperity, while forbidding government to "abuse the trust of working men and women by spending their earnings on a futile chase after the spiraling demands of a bloated federal establishment."

Pro-lifers have staged a March for Life every year since Roe v. Wade in 1973,

gathering on the Ellipse in front of the White House and marching in cold, rain or snow to the U.S. Capitol to demonstrate their opposition to abortion. In most of those years, the impressive crowds of 50,000 or more who came on long bus rides from all over the country were given the silent treatment by the media.

The 1985 March for Life was different. For the first time, the marchers were addressed by the President, and the media accurately reported the crowd at 71,500.

Yet, typical of the network coverage was CBS, which quoted a half-sentence from Reagan and then devoted the rest of the segment to telling us that he is on the losing side of this issue because the CBS poll shows that only a small percentage of Americans oppose abortion "in all cases."

The media are talking to themselves, while Ronald Reagan has heard the voice from the grassroots and articulated their beliefs. He correctly stated that the "momentum" is with those working for the life of the baby, rather than with those working for death in the mother's womb.

Those who have seen the new film produced by Dr. Bernard Nathanson called "The Silent Scream" know that there is no longer any doubt which side will win the abortion battle. Any decent American who sees this movie of an actual abortion, and watches the 12-week baby fighting for his life to escape the cruel instruments of death inserted into the mother's womb, will conclude that this killing must stop.

Dr. Nathanson is not trying to "impose his religion" on anyone; he doesn't have any religion. He is simply a doctor trying to care for what medical textbooks call "the second patient." He also points out how abortion has become a half-billion-dollar-a-year business with probable ties to the Mob.

On the morning of President Ronald Reagan's Second Inauguration, that aging liberal Joseph Rauh was interviewed on morning network television. Asked to explain the chances for a liberal/Democratic comeback in the near future, he confessed that their principal handicap is that today's liberals "are plagued with self-doubt."

Rauh hit the nail on the head; the liberals have lost their sense of self-identity and their policies are self-evident failures. Ronald Reagan and his policies are winners because he speaks to the hearts and hopes of decent, hard-working Americans with noble ideals and eternal values.