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REAGAN'S SECOND TERM

It is amusing the way that media predictions and commentary about Ronald Reagan have been so consistently wrong. The candidate they ridiculed as a Hollywood actor is well on his way to becoming our most influential President of the 20th century.

"He can't run for a second term," we were told a year ago; "he's too old." Then, television showed Reagan to be more physically fit than Walter Mondale, and certainly more physically fit and younger than his adversaries in the Kremlin.

"If he is re-elected, he will be a laid-back, lame duck, caretaker President who will let things slide," we were told in the wake of his November landslide. But his State of the Union message is the most innovative, creative, forward-looking, and ambitious Presidential address in modern times.

"The Republican Platform adopted at the Republican National Convention in Dallas '84 was a right-wing aberration that will be quickly forgotten," we were told last August. Contrarywise, all the major elements in that Platform were incorporated into Reagan's State of the Union message as his policies to lead our nation in the next four years.

The President is calling for tax reform and simplification that will not be a tax increase in disguise. He is calling for a flatter tax with a top rate of no more than 35%, a significant increase in the personal exemption, and incentives for capital formation.

The entire tenor of Reagan's speech is geared toward stimulating the work ethic which built this nation, rather than toward domestic social spending. The President looks upon government as an institution to keep the internal and external peace and to preserve competition, rather than as an Uncle Softie who can be called on to solve our problems and dole out benefit goodies.

Reagan even dared to say, "Work is good in and of itself; it enables us to create and contribute no matter how seemingly humble our jobs." In the 1980s, after two generations have been taught that it is demeaning to demand work in return for government benefits,

that's a remarkable approach to life and the economy.

The change in our national direction brought about by Ronald Reagan is summarized by this sentence from his State of the Union address: "Every dollar the Federal Government does not take from us, every decision it does not make for us, will make our economy stronger, our lives more abundant, our future more free." The Reagan change is evident in the fact that the liberals are not proposing any new social programs.

The other innovative section of Reagan's State of the Union address is his so-called Star Wars plan, his proposal for a space-based defensive system to shoot down enemy missiles. The commentators who said it was "far out sci fi," and that Reagan could not or would not stick with the plan himself, were wrong again.

In his State of the Union message, Reagan enthusiastically endorsed a "Let's get started" approach. He refuted the critics who cry that it will "bring war to the heavens," and showed that it is "the most hopeful possibility of the nuclear age" because "it would save millions of lives, indeed humanity itself."

Finally, the President showed that he hasn't been cowed by his critics even about his support for the anti-Communist Freedom Fighters in Central America. He's just as hardline as ever in opposing Communism.

Central America is crucial to our security. Our economic lifeline runs through the sea channels of the Caribbean; three-fourths of our imported oil and half of our exports and imports pass through those waters.

Nicaragua is building its armed forces beyond reasonable levels and threatening its democratically-elected neighbors in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica. With the help of men and materiel from Cuba, Bulgaria, Libya, the PLO, and Vietnam, the Sandinistas have engaged in a consistent pattern of subversion.

A Communist Central America would mean 100 million people subject to religious persecution, economic disruption, massive food shortages, and military build-ups. It would mean that about 10 million people (10% of the population) would become refugees and walk north to freedom in the United States.

With the vigor of a young man, Ronald Reagan has accepted the hard challenges that confront our nation. That's the mark of a real leader.