

# DAILY NEWS

30¢

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1982

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## Monkeying with the Prez

By DON NELSEN

A BONZO CHRISTMAS CAROL. "A Mutation of the Dickens classic" by John Q. Simmons and Joel Perry. With Margaret Emory, Rob Festinger, Catherine Greitzer, Caitlin Hicks, Elizabeth Keyishian, Michael Mitchell, Stuart Rider, Timothy Wagner, Dennis Wit. Lighting and set design by John Conway. Directed by Simmons at the Raft Theater, 432 W. 42d St.



Is Ronald Reagan really the miserly dimwit portrayed in "A Bonzo Christmas Carol?" A man who can't remember the name of any Founding Father and who gets his history of China from

a pop-up cartoon book? If he is, we needn't worry about the economy; it and we will not be here for very long.

"Bonzo" is the "biography" of Ronald Reagan grafted onto "A Christmas Carol." While much of it is downright silly, playwrights John Q. Simmons and Joel Perry have woven the tales together cleverly. To many, of course, there are parallels, and the appearance of Richard Nixon as the Marley-like warning spirit, weighed down with tapes instead of cashboxes,

is a particularly humorous irony.

The characters—a Tiny Tim with radiation sickness, Ron Jr., Nancy Jane Wyman—are necessarily burlesques and meant to be. Until just before the redemptive finish, Stuart Rider portrays Reagan as a beatific numbskull moving innocently through national and international affairs, puppeting inane simplicities. He captures Reagan's voice pretty well, too.

Most of the other actors play multiple roles, but Timothy Wagner as press secretary, photographer, G.O.P. functionary and especially Nixon is an

authoritative player who rarely stretches the cartoon too far. If you don't like Nancy Reagan, you will glow over Caitlin Hicks' portrait. Catherine Greitzer offers a skillful contrast as Betty Scratchit and a smug environmental chief named Anne Gorsuckkk.

In the end, Reagan orders a 50% cut in defense spending, fires Interior Secretary James Watt and broadcasts a promise of jobs and housing to the American people. That this "Bonzo" is a fantasy of the most hallucinatory kind should be quite apparent by now.