

New White House Mood Seen

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Ford to Meet With Black Caucus

By Mary Russell

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President Ford phoned the chairman of the 16-member Congressional Black Caucus yesterday to request a meeting. Chairman Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) announced yesterday.

"The new President's invitation to me and the other members of the Congressional Black Caucus is indicative of the seriousness of his intention to open his administration to the advice and counsel of those of us who represent people whose views and needs were ignored by the Nixon administration," Rangel said.

Rangel said Mr. Ford told him White House staff chief Alexander M. Haig Jr. would be calling in the next few days to set up the meeting "within the next two weeks."

As a result of the call, Rangel said the Black Caucus members would attend last night's address to a joint session of Congress by Mr. Ford, though they had unofficially boycotted such caucus members' frustration in their attempts to meet with Mr. Nixon and disillusionment with what they felt was his neglect of the needs of blacks.

Shortly after the caucus

of black House members was formed in 1970, they requested a meeting with President Nixon. The request was ignored for almost a year, until caucus members publicly complained; a meeting was finally held on March 25, 1971.

"The meeting was 'cordial', but it soon became clear, with cutbacks in OEO and budget cuts of programs that would help blacks, Mr. Nixon was going to do the opposite of what Black Caucus members suggested," an aide to Rangel said yesterday. The 1971 meeting was the only one caucus members ever had with Mr. Nixon, he said.

"Although there was no official boycott, many of us felt there was no particular reason to attend President Nixon's speeches because our concerns were ignored. Today, because of President Ford's call, we feel differently, and tonight we will be present to listen with great interest to his address," Rangel said.

Rangel said Mr. Ford, who called him at the Cannon Building yesterday morning, began by thanking Rangel for a telegram he had sent congratulating the new President for promising

"candor and openness and reaching out to all segments of society."

Rangel said Mr. Ford was also appreciative of remarks made by Rep. Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.) asking blacks to give him a chance.

Mr. Ford then suggested the meeting. "No one had asked him for the meeting. He took the initiative," an aide to Rangel said. "In fact, he wanted to do it this week, and it was Rangel who said 'Oh, it doesn't have to be that soon.' Then Ford said, 'Well, certainly by next week!'"