

# Why Discussing Those Whitehead Speeches

By John Carmody

Clay T. Whitehead went to Capitol Hill yesterday to explain what Sen. John Pastore (D-R.I.) called "some of those speeches" the White House telecommunications aide has been making lately attacking TV network news and what he considers other, media shortcomings.

Whitehead, 34, is the man who criticized "ideological plugging" and "elitist gossip" in TV network news last Dec. 18 in a speech in Indianapolis.

With a little help from his Republican friends, the director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy yesterday came away with something close to his original stand after about 90 minutes of intense grilling, although Pastore insisted Whitehead "retrigged a little bit."

The attack on the networks was accompanied by some suggestions for changes in Federal Communications Commission regulations governing license renewal for the nation's TV affiliates of those networks.

Moreover, Whitehead stressed in the headline-making speech that local broadcasters had a responsibility for network as well as local news that went out over each station.

The OTP director has spent considerable time explaining his position more precisely since the speech—TV, magazine and newspaper interviews. Yesterday's session, billed as a briefing on OTP activities, focussed on Whitehead's recent statements.

Before Pastore's Commerce Subcommittee on Communications Whitehead: • Claimed "In all honesty,

I'd say the same thing again only I'd bore my audience with a longer explanation," referring to his December speech.

• Admitted that he had employed "strong and colorful language" in the Dec. 18 speech that "did not serve a very useful purpose" but was used "to receive attention."

• Refused twice to name any examples of either "plugging" or "elitist gossip" claiming at one juncture that his "personal views were immaterial" and at another, that the "couldn't come up with one."

Pastore didn't combine his complaints to the "strong arm" of the White House which he said was implicit in the Whitehead speeches.

The Rhode Islander chided the OTP director for frequent references to "bureaucrats in Washing-

ton" and for suggesting in a recent magazine interview that the TV networks have "overpowered" Congress and "frozen the growth of cable (TV)."

"I think the FCC has slowed the growth," Whitehead admitted after the latter complaint.

The two men seemed to reach agreement that "John Doe" has no place to go to complain about network programming under present federal regulations. But when Pastore chided Whitehead for "getting people excited" over the issue, Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) stepped in and took over the questioning.

Baker led Whitehead through a question and answer period about the Indianapolis speech that elicited agreement from Whitehead that "there was no

change proposed" in current FCC regulations to pressure the networks in that address.

Whitehead also repeated recent assertions that neither his office nor the White House has the power to regulate broadcast licenses and that it remained in the hands of the congressionally controlled FCC.

Pastore on several occasions told Whitehead his Indianapolis speech ("I've read it four times," he told the OTP director) had "frightened . . . scared the devil out of . . ." the broadcast industry. "You know the repercussions were serious," he said at one point.

"Your testimony today is a lot different than the connotations of the speech I read," Pastore said as the hearing drew to a close. "You retrigged a little bit."