

Nixon Reversal Over Public TV

New York

President Nixon, reversing a position he took in June, yesterday approved a bill prepared by the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy for the

long-range financing of public broadcasting by the federal government.

The bill was immediately forwarded to Capitol Hill by Clay T. Whitehead, director of the office, who said he foresaw no obstacles to its passage.

Whitehead described the bill as one that provides "a workable scheme" for the future, in that it not only assures funds for the Public Broadcasting System on which to develop and grow but it also protects the system from any "extraneous influence or control" by the government.

The bill would provide for a Public Broadcasting Fund to be established in the Treasury, and to be administered by the Secretary of the Treasury, to which specified sums would be appropriated for each of five fiscal years.

The amounts would graduate year by year from \$70 million for fiscal 1976 to \$100 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1980.

The bill had been submitted to the President in April, but it was not until June that Mr. Nixon responded to it.

On the eve of his visit to the Middle East, the President indicated, in a terse memorandum, that he rejected the bill and that he preferred instead to reduce government support of non-commercial broadcasting.

Sources close to the Office of Telecommunications Policy said that some of Mr. Nixon's aides had persuaded him to reconsider by using the argument that a rejection would have the appearance of political vindictiveness.

Members of the Nixon administration, including Whitehead, had frequently criticized public television for displaying a liberal bias, and it was public television that had made the Senate Watergate hearings available to most of the country during the prime evening viewing hours last summer.

On the other hand, Whitehead said he believed the President approved the bill from the conviction that it was "good and constructive legislation" that would further the general welfare.

United Press