

Salant Disputes White House on Cronkite Interviews

By LES BROWN

The White House allegation that Walter Cronkite, news anchorman for the Columbia Broadcasting System, showed partiality to newsmakers who were unfriendly to the Administration has been rebutted in a background memorandum by Richard S. Salant, president of C.B.S. News.

Mr. Salant pointed out, among other things, that H. R. Halde- man and John D. Erlichman, when they were senior aides to President Nixon, had been invited to appear on the "C.B.S. Evening News" for special interviews by Mr. Cronkite but that they always declined.

The President himself has a standing invitation, renewed from time to time, to be inter-

viewed on the C.B.S. newscast by Mr. Cronkite, but he has never accepted it, Mr. Salant said.

The memo, dated Nov. 7, was written two days after the disclosure in the The New York Times of the existence of a carefully compiled list in the White House of alleged journalistic sins against President Nixon.

The White House case against Mr. Cronkite was that over the last few years he had interviewed only three persons on the newscast — John W. Dean 3d, Daniel Ellsberg and Archibald Cox — and all of them on occasions when they were hostile to the President.

That there were only three interviews was disputed in Mr.

Salant's memorandum, which noted that since 1970 Mr. Cronkite had exclusive interviews with nine other newsmakers, including, most recently, Leon Jaworski, upon his nomination by the President as special prosecutor to succeed Mr. Cox. Others included such heads of state as President Pompidou, Anwar el-Sadat, Mrs. Golda Meir, President Tito and Chancellor Willy Brandt.

Mr. Salant said also that the specific journalistic circumstances of the interviews with Dean and Messrs. Ellsberg and Cox had to be taken into account. They were "the chief actors in extraordinary running news stores" at the time, and in each case the appearance with Mr. Cronkite was the first

exclusive broadcast interview "after they burst into the news," he said.

N.B.C. Sharply Revises Prime Time Schedule

In a substantial revision of its prime time program schedule, the National Broadcasting Company is canceling four regular series and two occasional series in mid-January, and in addition will shift a number of other shows to new time periods.

For all the deletions, however, the revised schedule will introduce only two new programs, one of them another two-hour showcase for movies. The other, still in negotiations, is to be a one-hour television variety hour to replace "NBC Follies" on Thursday nights at 10 o'clock. Reliable sources say it will be in a country and Western music motif. One such program had a tryout on the network during the summer and realized encouraging ratings.

The series being terminated are "Diana" and "Needles and Pins," both situation comedies; "Love Story," an anthology, and "N.B.C. Follies," which stars Sammy Davis Jr.

Also canceled are two occasional series rotating with two others as the "Wednesday Mystery Movie." Those are "Tenafly" and "Farraday & Co." Remaining are "Banacek" and "The Snoop Sisters," which alone will constitute the "Mystery Movie" when it moves to Tuesday nights on Jan. 15.