

NIXON DENOUNCED ON TV HOSTILITY

House's Macdonald Attacks His Attitude Toward Press

Representative Torbert H. Macdonald, not renowned as a defender of the television networks in his role as chairman of the House Subcommittee on Communications and Power, denounced the Nixon Administration's treatment of the electronic press and said that the Congress was the insulation between a hostile executive branch and the news media.

In an address to the National Press Club in Washington yesterday, he said:

"If I have a single message to send to the bosses of all the television and radio newsmen in the country, network and station alike, it's this: 'There's nothing the executive branch can do to or for you.'"

'Circumstantial Chronology'

The Massachusetts Democrat added his voice to those on Capitol Hill calling for the abolishment of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy.

That office is headed by Clay T. Whitehead, whose rhetoric on network news contained such phrases as "ideological plugola" and "elitist gossip," which many believed at the time were intended to turn local stations against their networks.

Citing it as "circumstantial chronology," Mr. Macdonald

noted that the Telecommunications Office was created on Feb. 29, 1970, when—as memorandums that have surfaced now show—Presidential aides were working hard on media strategy. It was also four months after former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's televised attack on the press from Des Moines, Iowa.

Mr. Macdonald said that after it was created, the White House office never entered into any discussion of communications policy with Congress, as had been promised, but it "certainly did enable the executive branch to speak with a harsher voice."

He said of Mr. Whitehead, "He will be a different man when the fiscal 1974 budget goes into effect, for approximately half the amount of money he'd asked for from the Congress."

Connecticut's two Senators, Lowell P. Weicker Jr., a Republican, and Abraham Ribicoff, a Democrat, last week introduced a bill to dissolve the Office of Telecommunications Policy and turn its functions over to the Federal Communications Commission, an arm of the Congress.

"If such a bill should become law, the Nixon Administration may have learned one more lesson: the instruments of Government are not to be used for political purposes," Mr. Macdonald said.