

Energy Nominee Set to Withdraw

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Andrew E. Gibson, President Ford's choice to be federal energy administrator, has decided after a series of meetings with White House officials to ask the President to withdraw his name.

However, Gibson will maintain that he is innocent of any wrongdoing in accepting a severance agreement with Interstate Oil Transport Co. of Philadelphia to pay him \$88,000 a year for 10 years.

The announcement of Gibson's request and the President's decision to withdraw his name is expected shortly, possibly today.

Four persons, including a former governor, are known to be under consideration for the post, but a final decision apparently had not been made last night.

Gibson is expected to be offered another appointment in the Ford administration if the FBI clears his name, administration officials said. He vigorously maintained in discussions with presidential aides that the termination agreement with Interstate did not constitute a conflict of interest.

A former maritime administrator and assistant secretary



ANDREW E. GIBSON
... to deny wrongdoing

of commerce, Gibson was named by the President on Oct. 29 to succeed John C. Sawhill, whose resignation was announced at the same time.

Sawhill, who differed with the administration on the development of energy policy, likewise is under consideration for another appointment.

When news stories last week disclosed Gibson's severance agreement with Interstate there were indications his nomination would run into se-

GIBSON, From A1

rious opposition in the Senate. It also was reported that the nomination, which has not been sent to the Senate because of the recess, would never be submitted.

But on Friday, after a meeting with an unnamed presidential assistant, Gibson told reporters that he would not ask that his name be withdrawn.

"Obviously these allegations that have been made have to be cleared up," he said.

White House spokesmen said that the President assumed that since Gibson had been cleared for earlier federal posts there was no clearance problem.

After the disclosure of the agreement with Interstate, where Gibson worked following his government service,

the White House ordered a full FBI investigation.

Deputy White House press secretary John W. Hushen said yesterday President Ford did not know of Gibson's arrangement with Interstate at the time of the appointment.

However, Gibson did inform other White House officials of the general nature of the settlement, Hushen said. He declined to identify the officials, and he said they did not know of the settlement's size.

For the Ford administration, the Gibson nomination and imminent resignation represents trading one controversy for another. President Ford and his energy chief, Secretary of Interior Rogers C.B. Morton, were heavily criticized when they forced Sawhill's resignation.

"It gets down to a matter of style," Morton told reporters at the White House, Oct. 29 when asked why he wanted Sawhill to resign. "If something was lacking, it was in this area of executive compatibility."

Asked then if the real reason was Sawhill's advocacy of higher gasoline taxes at a time Mr. Ford had opted for voluntary conservation measures, Morton replied; "No, I don't think it was that."

Morton agreed, however that it was Sawhill's philosophy rather than his style that put him out of step with the administration. "Change the word style to philosophy throughout the script," Morton had advised reporters at

the White House press conference.

But the Gibson philosophy, which Mr. Ford apparently felt would be more compatible than Sawhill's, drew immediate protests because of Gibson's close ties with the oil industry and administrative record at the Commerce Department.

Groups like the Consumer Federation of America charged it was "unconscionable to put an industry person in charge of our nation's major energy programs"; environmental groups complained that Gibson as maritime administrator refused to file an environmental impact statement on his massive tanker subsidy program until brought to court; and politicians zeroed in on the severance payment Gibson had obtained from his former employer.

The \$88,000-a-year, Severance contract receive about twice the salary he would receive as FEA administrator.

Gibson himself, aides said last night, felt the White House had rushed to announce his nomination without first looking at the papers he had turned over to administration executives, including the severance agreement. "He even called attention to that paper and asked them what was the rush in announcing his name," one Gibson aide said bitterly.