

Ford May Change His Mind on Choice

Washington

Some White House aides said privately yesterday that the nomination of Andrew Gibson as federal energy administrator will not be submitted to the Senate for confirmation because of the conflict-of-interest controversy that has been raised since President Ford announced the appointment on October 29.

Gibson, however, said on leaving the White House late yesterday that he had not been asked to withdraw from the appointment and has no intension of withdrawing.

Gibson's statement to reporters did not deter some Presidential assistants from their belief that the nomination will never be submitted.

These developments capped a day of behind-the-scenes maneuvering at the White House, where there was considerable embarrassment over public disclosures that Gibson has a ten-year employment separation contract with a company that operates oil tankers and that he would be receiving \$88,000 a year from the company while serving as the federal energy chief.

There were some indications that White House officials want Gibson to withdraw rather than have the president withhold the nomination and find another candidate.

Yesterday morning White House press secretary Ron Nessen read the following statement:

"The matter is being reviewed diligently. It is being given serious consideration. We hope to be able to resolve the matter in the near future and tell you about it."

On Thursday Nessen had said only that the conflict-of-interest charges were under investigation.

But Nessen would neither confirm nor deny a story that had appeared in the Washington Star quoting informed sources that the nomination will not be submitted.

After the morning briefing, however, White House aides hinted that there



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ANDREW GIBSON
Energy-chief designate

might be another statement on the matter.

Gibson was at the Federal Energy Office Thursday, brushing up on the duties he would assume on taking office following his confirmation.

But after the question of his possible conflict of interest was raised at a White House briefing, Gibson disappeared from government offices and could not be found by reporters and photographers for 24 hours.

At mid-day yesterday, he showed up at the White House for meetings. After about two hours, he emerged and was immediately surrounded by reporters.

Gibson was asked if he intends to withdraw.

"I do not," he said.

Was he asked to withdraw?

"No, I was not."

Does he consider his ter-

mination contract a conflict of interest?

"No, I do not."

Would he fight for his nomination before the Senate?

"Obviously; there are allegations that need to be cleared up."

Last night Gibson returned to the White House and, once again, met with administration officials.

New York Times