

HICKEL AIDE QUILTS POLLUTION POST

Sudden Resignation of Klein Is Accepted 'With Regret'

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 18—The White House announced today that President Nixon had accepted "with regret" the resignation of Carl L. Klein as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water Quality and Research.

The resignation came suddenly this afternoon, and department officials said they did not know whether it had been proffered or requested.

Mr. Klein, who received the appointment at the behest of the late Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois, has been a center of controversy in the department.

At the time of his appointment, he had served for four years as an Illinois State Representative. He had been chairman of the State Water Pollution and Water Resources Commission and as the result of his investigation had acquired the sobriquet of "Mr. Clean."

Klein Had Difficulties

Within the Department of the professional civil servants' Interior, and especially among in the Federal Water Quality Administration, Mr. Klein quickly became known as a man who talked more forcefully than he acted.

He contended that he could accomplish more by behind-the-scenes negotiation with cities and industries than by seeing recalcitrant polluters.

Some members of Congressional committees dealing with antipollution legislation felt that Mr. Klein was deficient in the technical knowledge that his position demanded.

He had difficulties with officials in the regional offices of the Federal Water Quality Administration, and he was often at loggerheads with the administration's commissioner, David D. Dominick.

Their latest disagreement became public yesterday after a hearing of the House Subcommittee on Conservation and Natural Resources. At the hearing, Mr. Dominick announced that the Nixon Administration had agreed to a voluntary inventory of industrial polluters and the nature and amount of the industrial wastes they discharged into waterways.

The subcommittee, headed by

Henry S. Reuss, Democrat of Wisconsin, had urged such an inventory for years.

Mr. Dominick strongly supported the inventory, which industry opposed, and Mr. Klein sided with industry.

At the hearing Mr. Reuss complained that Mr. Klein had repeatedly neglected to answer his letters, including an invitation to testify on the inventory.

The view in the Interior Department and on Capitol Hill today was that Mr. Klein's resignation represented a victory for Mr. Dominick.

Mr. Klein was attacked last Wednesday by the National League of Cities and the United States Conference of Mayors for a statement made the day before during an inspection tour of the Passaic River Basin.

"We'd be a lot further down the road to having clean water if local governments had been forced to pay the costs themselves," Mr. Klein said then.

Under the Water Pollution Control Act, the Federal Government pays 30 to 55 per cent of the cost of sewerage projects.