

Whitehead to Quit as Head Of Telecommunications

By LES BROWN

Clay T. Whitehead, director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy from its inception in 1970, said yesterday that he would resign within two or three months and that he desired to leave Government service.

Mr. Whitehead said that while he has no immediate plans, beyond possibly taking several months off to write a book on communications policy, he hopes to be able to relocate in "a small business situation."

Mr. Whitehead became a controversial figure as a spokesman for the Nixon Administration in its attitudes toward network news and public broadcasting, although his office was created to adjust national policy to the new developments in communications technology.

'Elitist Gossip'

Many believed he was carrying on where former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew had left off in his Des Moines speech of Nov. 13, 1969, which charged the networks with political bias.

For two years, until the Watergate developments this year muted his campaign, Mr. Whitehead was perhaps the most

vocal critic of network journalism in Government, best known publicly for his echarge that the news dealt in "ideological plugola" and "elitist gossip."

He rocked the public broadcasting industry early in 1972 when he recommended, with the President's allocation powers behind him, that the government-funded system give up the production of news and public affairs programs and that it stress local programing in preference to country wide.

Mr. Whitehead, some observed, had curtailed his public activities this year, corresponding with the snowballing Watergate revelations which, they noted, helped restore the credibility of the media in the public mind.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Whitehead said that he "has not gotten around yet" to notifying President Nixon of his intention to resign. He said he wanted to see the completion of several projects by his office before leaving.

Those would include producing a bill for the President's consideration on the long-range financing of public television and issuing the long-awaited cable report, that will recommend national policy for cable television. The cable report is expected to be ready in January.

A recommendation for new legislation on citizens' privacy is also forthcoming from his office, Mr. Whitehead said. This would relate to the gaps in existing privacy laws that have arisen from advances in technology—computers, for example—since the laws were written.

Mr. Whitehead said he expected the Office of Telecommunications Policy to continue as an arm of the executive branch of the Government after his departure, in spite of recommendations from Capitol Hill that it be transferred to the legislative branch.

Along with its other responsibilities, the Office of Telecommunications Policy manages the Federal Government's own communications system, which Mr. Whitehead described as a \$10-billion operation, and is involved in the planning of emergency communications.

Served as Nixon Aide

Mr. Whitehead, who earned a Ph.D. degree in management from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spent two years as a special assistant to President Nixon before he was named director of the O.T.P. when it was formed.

In disclosing his intention to resign, Mr. Whitehead becomes part of an exodus of officials from the key Government agencies concerned with electronic communications. During the last two weeks, two Democrats on the Federal Communications Commission—Nicholas Johnson and H. Rex Lee—announced their resignations, and Dean Burch, the F.C.C. chairman, has also made known his desire to leave before spring.

Because of the resignations, the F.C.C. next year will be made up predominantly of Nixon appointees. Although the law provides that at least three of the seven seats must be held by members of the opposition party, many observers feeling based on the Democratic appointments the President has already made—that the new F.C.C. will have a distinctly conservative character.

The effect of that, observers believe, will be to protect the present commercial broadcasting system and most of its policies from the advocates of reform whose representative on the commission had been Mr. Johnson.