

Whitehead Plans to Quit Watching TV for Nixon

By Keith Power

Clay T. Whitehead, the controversial director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, disclosed in a speech here yesterday that he is leaving the Nixon administration early next year.

Although the move had long been speculated about within the communications industry, it was the first official word that Whitehead — regarded at one time as the President's hatchetman against the television networks — was quitting.

Whitehead made the dis-

closure in an off-hand remark during a speech before a Commonwealth Club luncheon in the Sheraton - Palace Hotel heavily attended by local TV executives.

Reviewing the hotly debated past proposals of his office and looking toward future plans, Whitehead said that he personally planned "to be a long way from government next year."

An aide confirmed later that 35-year-old Whitehead, the first man to hold the telecommunications post, will resign early next year and return to private life, although he has no specific occupation in mind.

"He said some time ago," aide Brian Lamb told The Chronicle, "that he didn't want to make a career of government and he has been in it five years."

In his speech yesterday, Whitehead said it was "a very sad time in Washington" and spoke of "public confidence in the credibility of the administration" being "at an all-time low."

Whitehead, formerly a teacher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a staff member of the Rand Corp. was confirmed in his newly created job by the U.S. Senate in July, 1970.

After about a year of obscurity, Whitehead first attracted critical attention when he told educational broadcasters that public TV was becoming a "fourth national network with meager input at the local level.

In December, 1972, Whitehead condemned "ideological plugola" and "elitist gossip" in network news reporting and said local stations would have to bear responsibility for such material carried over their facilities.

He disclosed then that the White House had drafted tough legislation that would hold individual stations accountable, at the risk of losing their licenses.

Network spokesmen and a number of newspapers charged that Whitehead was acting as President Nixon's hatchetman to bring the electronic media into line with administration news.