

MEDIA

Of Nixon And Press Criticism

NEW YORK (AP)—White House communications chief Clay T. Whitehead said Tuesday the government should not interfere with "the quite healthy and quite constructive" dialogue between President Nixon and the press.

Whitehead said some in government feel the White House should grant favors or otherwise use its legal power "to somehow coerce favorable coverage" by the networks and print media.

He called the idea "totally unconscionable" and added, "To the extent it actually results in any legal steps, it is illegal."

Whitehead, who is stepping down this spring as director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, commented in a speech to the New York Society of Security Analysts.

He said President Nixon once told him that "no matter how bad the press is in its performance, the need is not for more governmental control."

At the same time, Whitehead said, the President and his aides "have a need and a privilege to talk back to the press."

"The First Amendment was not set up to make the press an immune institution," he said.