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 Wall Street Journal (1889-Current file). New York, N.Y.:Jan 25, 1965. p. 24 (1 pp.)

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Citation style: ProQuest Standard

Document 1 of 1

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Document types: article
 Dateline: WASHINGTON
 Publication title: Wall Street Journal (1889-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jan 25, 1965. pg. 24, 1 pgs
 Source type: Historical newspaper
 ProQuest document ID: 122032752
 Text Word Count 555
 Document URL: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=122032752&Fmt=2&clientId=31810&RQT=309&VName=HNP>

Abstract (Document Summary)

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Cable TV Trade Group Finally Confirms Ford Is Its New President

He Resigned From FCC Dec. 31,
Took Post Jan. 1, but White
House Delayed Announcement

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON — Three weeks after the fact, the National Community Television Association made it official: Its new president is Frederick W. Ford, lately of the Federal Communications Commission.

Mr. Ford, the association announced, resigned his \$27,000-a-year job as an FCC member on Dec. 31 and assumed his new duties as NCTA president on Jan. 1. His salary at NCTA is understood to be \$50,000 a year.

The irony of it all is that the association had been trying to land Mr. Ford for nearly a year, and when it finally did it couldn't immediately say so, even though the fact was widely reported in stories attributed to anonymous sources. NCTA's embarrassment was due to the White House, and the ticklish nature of President Johnson's relations with the FCC stemming from Lady Bird Johnson's ownership of an Austin television station that is regulated by the commission.

Mr. Ford is said to have decided last spring to take the NCTA job when his term expired June 30. But that was about the time the commission was wrestling with an Austin community TV case involving the Johnson station, and it would have been particularly touchy in an election year for Mr. Johnson to name a new commissioner. It was said that Mr. Ford had told the White House in the spring that he didn't want reappointment, but, as it turned out, he did accept appointment to a new seven-year term expiring June 30, 1971. At his senate confirmation hearing, Mr. Ford said that it was his "intention" to serve out the full term.

At some time before the end of the year, he changed his mind, apparently with the President's approval. Mr. Ford, according to NCTA, "received a personal note from President Johnson" upon his departure from the FCC.

But neither the association nor Mr. Ford could say anything, it would seem, because of the President's policy of not announcing resignations until he has a successor lined up. On Jan. 16, after news stories began to note the strangeness of the situation, the White House announced that Mr. Ford had indeed resigned.

NCTA is a trade group of companies in the booming and controversial business of picking up with master antennas the signals of sometimes distant television stations and feeding them by cable into the homes of viewers who are willing to pay for the service to obtain a better quality picture or to get a wider variety of programs. The competitive threat that "cable TV" and other forms of pay TV pose for the nation's free-TV industry, and particularly for small-city television stations, is worrying the industry, the FCC and Congress. There probably will be hearings this year in the House, and they could be the scene of a battle over the extent to which the FCC should regulate cable TV and other pay-TV systems.

With this possibility in mind, Bruce Merrill, NCTA chairman, commented in formally announcing Mr. Ford's new post: "Mr. Ford brings to NCTA qualities of leadership, fairness and an intimate knowledge of both the (cable TV) and broadcasting industries" that make him . . . "the man ideally qualified to direct the association through this vital period."