

ABPLANALP AIDE DENIES INQUIRY

Report on Precision Valve
Is Called 'Ridiculous'

NYT
A spokesman for the Precision Valve Corporation said yesterday that it was unaware of any investigation of its pricing policies by Government antitrust experts in 1970 and 1971.

The company is headed by Robert H. Abplanalp, a longtime personal friend of President Nixon and the man who helped the President finance the purchase of his estate at San Clemente, Calif.

The New York Times reported yesterday that the New York field office of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division had wanted to undertake an investigation of the company but that the inquiry had been killed by Justice officials in Washington. It is not uncommon for a field office to be overruled in such matters.

Inquiry Seen Aborted

Vince Carberry, a spokesman for Precision Valve, said that the company had "never received any complaint" from anyone about the rebate system it put into effect in late 1970 and "we certainly did not know anything about a Government inquiry."

He characterized The Times's article as "ridiculous."

Files that the Justice Department made available to The Times, upon request, showed that the suggested investigation had been aborted before any company documents had

been requested by the Government or any other action taken that would have alerted the company to the existence of an investigation.

The one discrepancy between the documents made available by the department and those in the possession of Representative Bertram L. Podell, Democrat of Brooklyn, who wants the case investigated, involves a memorandum from Richard W. McLaren, then head of the Antitrust Division, to John N. Mitchell, then Attorney General.

The memorandum requests permission to go ahead with the service of what are known as civil investigative demands, a sort of subpoena, on Precision Valve. The McLaren memo is not in the Justice Department files but is in the files made available to Mr. Podell. It contains Mr. McLaren's typed signature but is not signed.

Mr. McLaren, now a Federal judge in Chicago, said through a spokesman yesterday that he had no recollection of the Precision Valve case and did not believe it had ever reached him.

Subordinate's Role Hinted

He said it was a common practice for his subordinates to draft memorandums of this type for his signature and suggested that this had probably been done in this case.

The available Justice Department files indicate that the proposed investigation was called off by Mr. McLaren's deputy, Walker B. Comegys, who did not take the matter any higher.

Mr. McLaren could not explain why the draft memorandum for his signature, if that is what it was, was not still in the department's files, along with the other documents in the case.

Representative Podell plans to turn over the documents he has to Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor, today for an investigation of the possibility that improper influence was brought to bear in the case.