

New Group Battling Abplanalp For Control of Sullivan Airport

Special to The New York Times

MONTICELLO, N. Y., Aug. 23 — A new group was reported today to be competing with Robert H. Abplanalp, the millionaire industrialist, for control of the all-but-dormant Sullivan County International Airport.

The presence of the new group was confirmed by Milton Levine, chairman of the Sullivan County Board of Supervisors, who said he has asked the prospective operators "to come up and furnish us with all the necessary information."

Frank Lennon, a spokesman for and principal in the new group, said it could "do better by the people of Sullivan County" than the pending agreement to turn over control of the airport to Mr. Abplanalp, a close friend of President Nixon.

"All we need is time from the county to finalize the proposal," said Mr. Lennon.

But Mr. Levine, a Democrat nominated for the State Supreme Court, indicated that a county decision on the signing of the controversial Abplanalp agreement is "getting imminent."

The proposed contract for operation of the airport, situated 10 miles north of Monticello, has come under fire from some individuals within the county who label it "a giveaway," and Mr. Levine has acknowledged it is "a bad contract."

Mr. Lennon said that a preliminary outline of the new group's plans could be in Mr. Levine's hands next week.

Many public officials and spokesmen for large business interests have insisted that the Abplanalp deal must go through if the airport, abandoned by five operators since 1969, is to be made fully operational. They view a successful airport as a key to the revival of economic activity in this declining resort area.

In the meantime the United States Attorney's office has been investigating reports that the Federal Government was defrauded during construction

of the airport at a reported cost of more than \$6-million.

Besides Mr. Lennon, the new group interested in taking control, was said to include Ellis Deull, a member of the New York City law firm of Leaf, Kurzman & Deull, which is representing the prospective operators.

Mr. Lennon said that if the group received an opportunity to become operators of the airport, "a group of principals will be put together by Mr. Deull and myself." He added: "I am not at liberty to say who the prime investor would be in such a group."

As to airline service, Mr. Lennon said his group would "be prepared to guarantee one round-trip daily to the metropolitan area." The proposed agreement with Mr. Abplanalp obligates him, through his company's Huson Valley Airways, to use its "best efforts" to provide scheduled airline service.