

## Cox Exonerates Nixon Friend

# Abplanalp Cleared of Favoritism

### Washington

Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox has found no evidence of illegal favoritism in the government's 1971 decision to drop an antitrust investigation against President Nixon's friend, Robert H. Abplanalp, according to a letter released yesterday.

Cox, in a letter to Representative Bertram Podell (Dem-N.Y.), said he made a "thorough investigation" of the matter and found "no evidence on an improper conduct."

"Accordingly," he added,

"we contemplate no further action."

Podell, who brought the matter to Cox attention last July, had suggested a connection between a loan Abplanalp gave Mr. Nixon to buy a home in San Clemente, Calif., and the abrupt end of an antitrust inquiry into Abplanalp's Precision Valve Corp.

Abplanalp was not surprised Cox had found nothing wrong and was "delighted" that Cox announced it publicly.

"It erased any doubt that may have been cast on my

integrity through a cheap shot by a congressman who created a trumped-up charge on the eve of his indictment for an alleged violation of federal law," Abplanalp said in a statement issued from Precision Valve headquarters in Yonkers, N.Y.

Podell was indicted July 12 by a federal grand jury in New York on seven counts of bribery, conflict of interest and perjury in connection with alleged attempts to help a Florida airline obtain a regularly scheduled Florida-Bahamas route. He

pleaded innocent and is awaiting trial.

On learning of Abplanalp's response, Podell said:

"While he categorizes this as a cheap shot, he has not to this date explained why this investigation... was suddenly reversed and whether or not it had anything to do with a mortgage he lent to President Nixon of \$625,000 at the same time."

Podell said he is considering seeking a congressional investigation.

"We have no intention of letting this drop," he said.

## Charges

Podell had given Cox what he described as Justice Department files indicating the antitrust division started an investigation in June, 1969, into the pricing practices of Precision Valve.

The file showed, according to Podell's aide, that federal prosecutors in New York were told in February, 1971, by their superiors in Washington to "close out" the inquiry.

Cox provided none of the details of his investigation, except to say he had the help of the FBI.

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