

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

# U.S. Judge Gives Approval To Ray's New Work Program

From The Commercial Appeal Nashville Bureau

NASHVILLE, Jan. 12. — Federal Dist. Judge William E. Miller approved a prison work program Monday for James Earl Ray, four days after the convicted slayer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. started his new chores.

The program is built heavily around Ray's painting the state penitentiary's maximum security building interior, but he also will help guards clean the building and serve food to other prisoners.

Judge Miller approved the program after a five-minute review hearing attended by state corrections commissioner Lake Russell, penitentiary warden W. S. Neil and Bart Durham, an assistant state attorney general, among others.

The judge called the plan reasonable and said it conformed to his order for prison

officials to come up with a suitable program of work, exercise and recreation following a hearing Dec. 29.

Judge Miller took under study the question of whether he will retain Ray under the court's jurisdiction. Ray, serving a 99-year sentence, had asked in a petition that he be freed from maximum security and placed in the general prison population.

Neil said after Monday's brief court session that Ray began his chores in maximum security last Thursday. It is expected to take Ray about two years to complete the painting job.

He pointed out that, including daily exercise periods, Ray will be busy outside his cell from about 6 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., though the schedule will vary from time to time.

Judge Miller refused to order the release of Ray from maximum security after officials strongly suggested an attempt would be made on his life if he were released into the general prison population.

It was the position of Ray's attorneys that his mental powers are suffering as a result of his being kept in a maximum security cell with practically nothing to do but read and watch television.

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