

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

# Talks Set On Ray Shift

By WILLIAM BENNETT

From The Commercial Appeal  
Nashville Bureau

NASHVILLE, Dec. 21. — Corrections Commissioner Mark Luttrell will meet with State Atty. Gen. David Pack soon after Christmas to discuss the legality of transferring James Earl Ray from the state penitentiary here to the federal prison system.

Although Luttrell said Friday the proposed transfer of the convicted slayer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is "kind of in the talking stage," federal officials evidently have agreed tentatively to the move and it also has Gov. Winfield Dunn's endorsement.

The reason for the meeting with Pack is to make sure a transfer against his will would not violate any of Ray's constitutional rights.

"We anticipate Ray will object to it (the transfer)," Luttrell said.

These main points in favor of a transfer were listed by the commissioner:

- There are fears Ray either would escape or be killed if he is turned into the general prison population.

- It would not be proper to keep Ray in relative isolation in the maximum security building, without

access to rehabilitation and vocational programs.

Luttrell said that, as a security measure, Ray was not permitted to take his exercise periods with other inmates and two or three months ago he refused to take any more exercise.

"It's bound to deteriorate him," the commissioner noted, for Ray to do nothing but lie in his bunk or watch television 24 hours a day.

Luttrell called Ray "an extreme security risk," pointing out he tried to escape from prison in Missouri and was an escapee when King was shot in Memphis in April, 1968. Also, Ray tried to escape twice while he was at Brushy Mountain Prison in East Tennessee.

Ray, along with about 400 other inmates, was transferred to the main prison here when Brushy Mountain was closed in July, 1972, because of labor difficulties with the guards.

Luttrell said it is believed that if Ray were allowed to mingle with other prisoners, someone may "pay a black man to kill him."

The official said even though Ray is serving a 99-year sentence for murder, training programs should be available to him as well as

other inmates and noted such services could be provided in a federal installation.

Luttrell was emphatic in his belief Ray would flee if he were removed from maximum security.

"We're confident that in the Nashville unit, he will escape," the commissioner said. He added he would favor Ray's transfer to federal prison "if he were a relative or loved one of mine."

Luttrell said the tentative plan is to send Ray to the Federal Bureau of Prisons' hospital unit at Springfield, Mo., for a series of tests and later move him to one of the bureau's maximum-security facilities.

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