

Pittsburgh Press 2/13/77

But Funds, Feud Hinder Panel

Probe Of King Death Reveals Africa Link

By MILES BENSON

WASHINGTON—"The investigation has gone abroad and the trail leads to Africa," says Chairman Walter E. Fauntroy, D-D.C., of the House assassinations subcommittee that is probing the 1968 murder of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

After King was shot in Memphis, James Earl Ray, who eventually pleaded guilty to the shooting, fled to Canada, then to England, then to Portugal, "where Ray was to have met someone with instructions and money to move him to Belgium and then to Africa," Fauntroy said.

Ray was arrested at Heathrow Airport in London, and was ticketed for Brussels, Belgium, according to committee investigators.

Fauntroy said the panel is unable to follow up the trail and corroborate what may be new leads in the case because the House has not provided the panel with money to send investigators abroad.

Now a bitter feud between Chairman Henry B. Gonzalez, D-Tex. of the full committee, and chief counsel Richard A. Sprague threatens to put the panel out of business permanently.

As an alternative to sending detectives to Africa, Fauntroy said, the committee should move "as soon as possible" to question Ray, who is now serving a life sentence at Brushy Mountain Prison in Tennessee.

That avenue also may be closed to the committee, however. Ray's attor-

ney, James Lesar, has said that he will advise Ray not to talk to the committee.

"Ray has no way of protecting his rights before the committee," Lesar said. "He has no right to cross-examine witnesses or to call witnesses on his own behalf."

Lesar said Ray was attempting to reach Rhodesia but was \$40 short of the cost of a boat passage when he was arrested at Heathrow Airport.

Meanwhile, Fauntroy said the committee investigation thus far supports a "tentative conclusion" that Ray "could not have acted alone in carrying out this assassination."

Whether the committee will get an opportunity to investigate further may be determined Wednesday when the panel meets to discuss rules of procedure and the future of chief counsel Sprague.

Chairman Gonzalez attempted to fire Sprague Thursday, but the other 11 members of the committee instructed the chief counsel to disregard the chairman's order.

The committee also is re-investigating the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.