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Prison Meeting

Rev. Jesse Jackson, in white suit and vest, and Mark Lane, left, lawyer for James Earl Ray, entered Brushy Mountain Penitentiary in Petros yesterday

for a meeting with Ray on Ray's involvement in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (UPI Telephoto)

Jackson Doubts Ray's Guilt After Talk

By ANNE POWELL
News-Sentinel Staff Writer

4/11/78

PETROS — A civil rights leader with Martin Luther King Jr. when he was assassinated emerged from a meeting here with the convicted killer and said he plans to meet Tuesday with U.S. Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell to try to get a trial for

James Earl Ray.

Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was talking to Dr. King when he was shot during a 1968 Memphis garbage workers' strike, said "the tension built up in me" as he first met Ray here yesterday. "I knew I was looking at the man accused of killing Dr. King; yet I knew there is the possi-

bility he might be innocent."

Ray initially pleaded guilty to killing Dr. King but has since said he was not guilty and has been seeking a trial.

"Not to fight for a trial is to be willing to accept a tradeoff between a \$2 narcotics hustler and Dr. King," he said. "I have a profound doubt that he killed Dr. King. I think he was involved but I am convinced he did not act alone so I will work to get him a trial. The idea of a conspiracy is what prompts me to fight for a trial."

Ray goes this weekend to Washington, D.C., where he will appear before the House Assassination Committee Monday to testify on King's murder.

But Ray's attorney, Mark Lane, had harsh words for the committee which he called "a group of clowns." However, he said he endorses Ray's plans to testify

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publicly before the committee.

"Ray will testify but he is not trying to convince the committee. They already have their minds made up. But hopefully the American news media will be there," Lane said.

He also challenged reporters to "ask G. Robert Blakey how much he was paid — and my guess is \$50,000 — for selling his credentials to organized crime." He was critical of Blakey, the panel's chief counsel, for a Jan. 25 report of the committee that FBI and CIA clearance would be required to work for the committee.

Jackson said any fair investigation into the King murder will have to be conducted by a special committee because "the FBI is implicated and you can't ask the Government to investigate itself." It is Jackson's contention that the FBI was engaged in the coverup if not the actual conspiracy because "the FBI had been following Dr. King 24 hours a day from the time he received the Nobel Peace Prize until about an hour before he was killed. The motives of the FBI are far greater than this man's motive," he said.

Mr. Jackson said he began his meeting with Ray by asking him "point blank, 'Did you kill Dr. King?' He said, 'No.' We said, 'Prove it.'"

He said Ray told them he had almost no motive for killing King because he did not see him as an adversary and had no hostilities toward him or the black movement; that he has witnesses who can prove he was at the service station and not at the "flop house"; that his criminal history was one of non-violent narcotics hustling for pay; and that the bullet in King was never proved to have come from his rifle.

Jackson said his impression of Ray was that he was rational and that his recall was excellent. He questioned why Percy Foreman, Ray's attorney at the time, never called for a psychiatric examination of Ray after he spent eight months in solitary.

"It could be that he was a diversion of the grand scheme," he said. "There was so much contracting and hustling around the book situation, it was obvious neither of the lawyers took precautions to protect their client. The plea of guilty was not voluntary and was partly caused by Ray's confinement. Ray was under pressure for a long period of time to enter a guilty plea and not go to trial."

"There was no examination to see if he was competent to enter a guilty plea," Dr. Alvin Poussaint, assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard University and dean of students at Harvard Medical School, said. "Ray said it usually takes him six to eight weeks to recover after solitary and that he gives in easily to his lawyers. Then he realizes later what he has done. That should be grounds for a trial."

Dr. Poussaint and Lane accompanied Jackson to the meeting.

Dr. Poussaint said Ray "didn't show much nervousness; was calm and cool and answered questions directly and with cordiality, respect and concern. He did not come on strong as we had expected he would. He has a good vocabulary, is articulate and reasons well. But he is aware of his lack of credibility. Over-all Ray had a convincing quality about him."

Prison Warden Stonney Lane said the press was excluded from the meeting simply because his facilities would not accompany the 50 reporters who awaited the Jackson party's arrival. He said the

Tennessee Bureau of Criminal Identification had notified him three months ago of a second alleged escape plan for Ray but he had taken no new precautions.

"It's a bad habit watching one man," he said. "I've got 321 (maximum security) back there that are extreme escape risks and I know they're going to try to escape if they can. It's just a matter of simple arithmetic: you watch one and you'll have 10 run out."

He also said he has asked Federal officials for "two hours notice" to have Ray ready to go to Washington this weekend.

'No Doubt' Ray's Guilty, Probers Say

By TIM WYNGAARD
Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — The House Assassinations Committee has "overwhelming" evidence that James Earl Ray fired the shot that killed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in 1968, according to two committee members.

Evidence collected by committee investigators during its 15-month probe, including 28 hours of intensive, taped

interviews with Ray, "leave no doubt" as to Ray's guilt, they said.

Ray, scheduled to appear before the committee next Wednesday, now claims he was an innocent "fall guy" of a conspiracy to carry out the assassination, despite originally pleading guilty to the crime and avoiding a possible death sentence.

The two committee members, who
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asked that their names not be revealed because of a panel agreement not to talk to reporters until the investigation is completed, said the panel also will attempt to show that an FBI campaign designed to discredit King helped create "a climate" of violence that made the murder possible.

Next week's hearings are intended to be devoted to Ray's role in the King killing, and the allegations about the FBI will be the subject of public hearings in November.

The committee members' comments came at the same time Rev. Jesse Jackson, a civil rights leader who was with King when the assassination took place, said he had "profound doubts" Ray was the trigger man.

Jackson met yesterday with Ray at Tennessee's Brushy Mountain State Prison where Ray is serving a 99-year sentence. Jackson emerged saying he believed Ray "was involved but was not alone. It may very well be that Mr. Ray was a diversion in a grander scheme," Jackson said.

Three days have been set aside for Ray's testimony.

But a committee source said Ray and Mark Lane, his attorney, may have changed their minds and that Ray may refuse to answer questions from the panel.

"What can we do if he doesn't want to

talk? Threaten him with jail?" asked the source.

If Ray refuses to testify, the committee will retaliate by releasing convincing information — some in his own words — that he killed King, the source said.

"James Earl Ray talked to us for over 28 hours on tape. We have those transcripts . . . If he isn't going to testify, we'll release them," the source said.

Members of the committee who have read the transcripts and seen other evidence said flatly the committee can prove Ray killed King.

"When we get done, the American people will have no doubt that Ray pulled the trigger," said one committee member.

"But we are going to be able to show that a five-year program of harassment, surveillance and dirty tricks ordered by (FBI Director) J. Edgar Hoover orchestrated a climate in which the murder was inevitable," said the committee member who has been actively involved in the King side of the panel's work.

Abernathy Says Police, FBI Helped Ray Escape

MEMPHIS (UPI) — The FBI and local police helped "conspirators" whisk James Earl Ray from Memphis after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was gunned down in 1968, the successor to the late Civil Rights leader said yesterday.

In an interview with The Commercial-Appeal, Dr. Ralph Abernathy, who was with King when he died, said he is prepared to testify about the accusations Monday when he goes before a House committee investigating King's assassination in the first public hearing by the secretive panel.

Ray wants to be tried again for the King slaying, which he pleaded guilty to and was sentenced to 99 years in prison. The convicted killer is also scheduled to testify before the committee in Washington.