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Still Short On Truth

THE PURPOSE OF the House Assassinations Committee is to answer the unanswered questions about the assassinations of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

In its first public hearings last week, with the man who pleaded guilty to the King murder dominating the scene, the committee again raised some of the questions.

If there were any answers, they were veiled and incomplete.

Nothing really was clarified.

JAMES EARL RAY proved he is still what he always has been — a wily, crime-wise, penny-ante crook whose main thought is to get himself out of prison.

In three days of testimony Ray failed to make his "conspiracy" case, although the committee left so much dangling until it resumes hearings in November that the merchants of a conspiracy theory are still going strong.

Much of the so-called "evidence" Ray had promised went up in smoke. Instead of buttressing Ray, the committee's stream of witnesses and documents poked holes in Ray's claim that he could not have been King's killer, or that the mysterious "Raoul" was the trigger man. Perhaps the high point of Ray's incredibility came when he insisted he didn't know Martin Luther King existed.

What the nation saw was the small mind of a small-time criminal for whom

aliases and lies are instinctive. Indeed, if the hearings did one useful thing it was to reveal Ray's mentality in an unfiltered state.

We have said from the time the select House committee was born back in 1976 — and all through its problems with members, staff, money and leaks — that we hoped it would at last give the doubters the full truth about both the King and Kennedy assassinations.

In the King case, the truth sometimes has been hard to pin down, partly because Ray never was tried in a courtroom, partly because of revelations of FBI failures to follow through on some leads, and also because of the documented campaign of the late J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, to discredit King.

The committee probably would not have gotten off the ground had it not been for the fact that some black leaders perceive the FBI as either bumbling or in some way related to a conspiracy to get rid of King.

Ray has been delighted to feed the idea that more than one person was involved in King's death.

BUT WHAT CAME OUT of the House Assassinations Committee in the first act of its \$5-million show on a public stage was of more interest to curiosity seekers than to truth seekers.

We still have hopes. The questions still need answers.

But we haven't seen anything resembling full truth as yet.

The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Monday, August 21, 1978

Ray Dupes A Nation

By D'ARMY BAILEY

IT'S time to put an end to the charade in which James Earl Ray leads the world in a losing search for claimed conspirators in the assassination of Martin Luther King. We should also end the baseless call of a new trial for this confessed killer of one of the world's greatest citizens.

For years now Ray has been talking of a frame-up, claiming he was not really the one who killed King. Ten years ago he pleaded guilty to shooting King and was sentenced to 99 years in the penitentiary.

Since Ray confessed to this heinous crime he has made a steady effort either to escape from prison or to convince the courts that his guilty plea should be set aside and he be given a new trial.

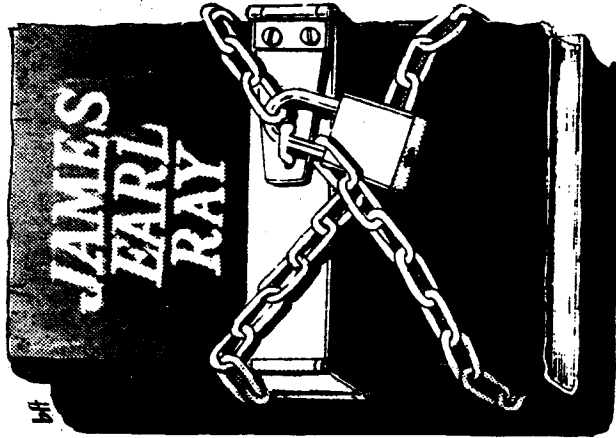
IN SPITE OF Ray's continuing claims of innocence, he has not in these last 10 years provided significant proof that he was not guilty nor has he shown substantial evidence that anyone else was guilty.

Ray has had ample opportunity to talk. Yet the best that comes from him is a string of inconsistent fantasies that shed absolutely no new light on the subject of King's death.

Through television interviews and his appearance before U.S. District Judge Robert M. McKee Jr. here in 1974 when he argued for a new trial Ray has shown no foundation in his claims for a new trial. His claims of coercion to enter the guilty plea are familiar among some facing many years in prison.

And unlike many in prison Ray had the benefit of choosing from among the best lawyers in the criminal field.

IT IS DISTRESSING to see well-intentioned black leaders join the chorus of those pleading



in the assassination. King had enough enemies, as a leader of millions and a man who often spoke what was unpopular to some.

But King is dead. Now we have to ask what good comes from continuing to dig and to discuss and to speculate about his death without new facts.

The long awaited congressional hearings into the King assassination last week demonstrated again that there are no credible new evidence or leads pointing to anyone but Ray in the King death. The hearings probably had to be held to at least show that an apparently good faith effort was being made to explore the black leader's death.

But Ray and his lawyer Mark Lane sought to use the hearings more as a stage in an effort to give obscure facts and create sympathy and give Ray legitimacy before the American people.

There is an underlying racial manipulation in Ray's activities. He appears to want to appeal to the Archie Bunker instinct, painting himself as an underdog hero caught in the web of circumstances.

To some extent he has succeeded. It was chilling to see the local supporters Ray had when he broke out of Brushy Mountain Prison. It is doubtful his cheerers believed him innocent of his confessed crime.

RAY DESERVES WHAT he got. Now the world should rest easy that he is soundly locked up at the Brushy Mountain Prison. Let us stop being duped and giving attention to a notorious liar and confessed assassin.

Should there ever be any substantial evidence that there was a conspiracy, or that someone other than Ray was guilty, we should waste no time having a thorough inquiry. Until then our leadership should find a better cause than joining the parade behind James Earl Ray.

Ray's case. He least of all among prisoners deserves the impassioned pleas that he have another hearing.

In the absence of strong evidence to the contrary Ray remains the man who took a hunting rifle and shot a bullet that flattened on impact and tore into Dr. King's face.

It is understandable that many Americans would think that others beside Ray were involved

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RAY

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