

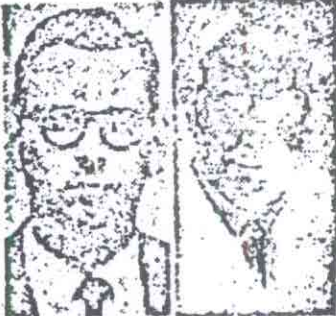
(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Ray's Innocence Can Be Proved by SCLC's Rev. Bevel, Abernathy Believes

By HENRY P. LEIFERMANN
By United Press International

The Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy said Thursday he believes one of his aides, the Rev. James Bevel, can prove James Earl Ray is innocent in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"I have absolute confidence in his judgment and integrity," Abernathy said of Bevel, the



James Earl Ray Percy Foreman

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) leader who offered to defend Ray last Saturday.

"If a conspiracy exists, and I believe it does, it must be fully exposed," Abernathy said. "I call upon America's oppressed and victimized to come to the aid and defense of the accused man."

Abernathy made the statement in a telegram released by the SCLC offices here.

Bevel, longtime staffer under King and Abernathy, is director of nonviolent education and direct action for SCLC, and presently works in the SCLC's Philadelphia office. In a telegram to Ray last Saturday, Bevel offered to defend him and said, "I know you are not guilty."

Ray's attorney, Percy Foreman of Houston, has not commented on Bevel's offer of help. Neither Foreman, who is

in Memphis, Tenn., nor Bevel, was available for comment Thursday.

Bevel has refused to elaborate

on whatever information he has. Abernathy's telegram statement was issued after he, Bevel and other SCLC officials discussed

the situation by telephone on Wednesday.

Bevel had been subpoenaed as a defense witness in the Ray

trial by Ray's former attorney, Arthur J. Hanes Sr., the ex-mayor of Birmingham, Ala. Hanes, in an interview after

Ray fired him and hired Foreman last November, said he had planned to prove that a black power group with Com-

munist ties killed King, with a goal of creating civil disturbance in the wake of the assassination.

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

Page 56

THE ATLANTA
CONSTITUTION
ATLANTA, GA.

Date: 1-24-69

Edition:

Author: HENRY LIEFFERMAN

Editor: REG MURPHY

Title:

RM

Character: AT100-5718

or AT100-2386-2210

Classification: 44

Submitting Office: ATLANTA

 Being Investigated 2386

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
JAN 24 1969	
FBI-ATLANTA	