

Possibility of Federal Role in King Assassination Raised by Abernathy

BY TOMMY MILLER

Chronicle Staff

Civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy says he suspects that federal government officials may have been involved in the assassination of Martin Luther King.

"I believe that government individuals cooperated or were knowledgeable of what was actually happening," Abernathy said.

"I'm not making an accusation or an indictment," he said. "I'm just saying it's very difficult to see how they (government officials) could not have been knowledgeable" about the assassination.

Abernathy, a former aide to King, heads the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), a position King held until his death.

Abernathy is here participating in events observing today's 47th anniversary of King's birthday.

Abernathy made his remarks about King's assassination during a reception Wednesday night at Ramada Inn North, 4225 North Freeway.

Abernathy told a crowd of about 200 persons today at Antioch Baptist Church, 700 Mansfield, that whites are trying to pick the nation's black leaders.

"They want to pick the next successor to Martin Luther King," he said, "but we are going to pick our own leaders."

He said the public should call on the President to appoint a citizens' committee to investigate the death of King.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recently admitted that it conducted a campaign to discredit King during the 1960s.

U.S. Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, has said the panel did not uncover any evidence that the FBI was implicated in King's murder or any coverup.

Abernathy said he has "no proof" that the FBI was involved in King's death.

"I do believe that there were some people in high places, not necessarily in the government, in this country who definitely were involved," he said.

"It is totally impossible for me to believe that Mr. Ray, if he did the shooting, got out of Memphis" without help from someone, Abernathy said.

King was shot to death by a sniper in April 1968 in Memphis, Tenn. James Earl Ray, arrested in London in June 1968, pleaded guilty to the killing and was sentenced to 99 years in prison.

He later attempted to retract his guilty plea and has filed a motion for a new trial.

Mrs. Martin Luther King Calls for Jobs for All

United Press International

Charging the Nixon and Ford administrations with forcing the poor to bear the brunt of inflation, Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr. issued a call in Atlanta today for full employment in one of many ceremonies around the nation marking the 47th anniversary of her late husband's birth.

A massive march from Ebenezer Baptist Church, where the slain civil rights leader preached, to the Federal Reserve Bank in downtown Atlanta dramatized the need for jobs.

Elsewhere:

- A petition asking Congress to investigate the King slaying was signed by 888 persons, circulated in Milwaukee and sent to Rep. Henry Reuss, D-Wis.

- In a letter to Mrs. King President Ford pledged renewed dedication to the achievement of equality for all Americans, citing King's "eloquent commitment to the cause of civil rights" and his forceful leadership.

- The Southern Christian Leadership Conference sponsored a march in Louisville, Ky., designed to counter strong anti-busing sentiment in the area stemming from a court-ordered school desegregation plan.

- Marches were staged in Memphis, Tenn., where King was assassinated while leading a garbage workers strike in 1968, and in Montgomery, Ala., where he rose to prominence in the Montgomery bus boycott 20 years ago.

- In Illinois, where King's birthday is a state holiday the Chicago library's cultural center opened for showing of a film on King entitled, "I Have a Dream."

- City schools and agencies in St. Louis were ordered closed for the day.

- In Washington, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights said King's "deep commitment to securing justice, not just for blacks, but for all mankind" was the idea that "Marked the brilliant, all-too-short life" of the civil rights leader.