



—United Press International

The Rev. Jesse Jackson is flanked by the Rev. Alvin Poussaint as he talks to newsmen after visiting James Lawson (left) and Harvard Professor Dr. King James Earl Ray in prison at Petros, Tenn.

Jesse Jackson Talks to Convict

King's Ally Doubts Ray Did Killing

PETROS, Tenn. (UPI) — Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson emerged from a face-to-face talk with James Earl Ray with a "profound doubt" that Ray is the killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Jackson, who was with King when he was slain by a sniper's bullet in Memphis in 1968, said he called the Justice Department yesterday before he left Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, where Ray is serving 99 years for King's murder, to back Ray's demands for a new trial.

The Chicago rights leader said he told Deputy Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti a new trial for Ray would be "in the national interest" because there are still strong doubts about the FBI's true role in King's assassination.

"We're seeking to meet with Attorney General Griffin Bell on Tuesday of next week in a real effort to challenge the Justice Department to take a new look at the evidence," Jackson said.

Pointing to years of FBI harassment of King, and Ray's contention he was part of a conspiracy,

Jackson accused the federal investigative agency of complicity in King's death.

"The very thought of a conspiracy is what compels me to file for a new trial," he said. "The FBI followed Dr. King 24 hours a day. The motives of the FBI are far greater than this man's (Ray's) motives."

Ray pleaded guilty to killing King and was sentenced to prison. But he later tried to reverse his plea, claiming he was pressured into the plea.

Jackson, president of Operation PUSH and one of America's most prominent black leaders, said he came away from the unprecedented three-hour meeting certain the 50-year-old Ray did not fire the bullet that killed the Nobel Peace Prize winner.

"I have profound doubt that he killed Dr. King. I am convinced that he was involved but was not alone. It may very well be that Mr. Ray was a diversion in a grander scheme.