

Plot on MLK Jr. reported

Memphians admit to role, paper says

LONDON (AP) — A Tennessee businessman has admitted to hiring the assassin of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. a quarter-century ago, a respected British newspaper reported today.

The *Observer* claimed the Memphis-area businessman and four other people have come forward to authorities to admit to their role in plotting the assassination.

By implication, the report said, their version of events exonerates James Earl Ray, the man sentenced to 99 years' imprisonment for killing King as he emerged from his room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

News of the report quickly reached across the Atlantic to Memphis journalistic circles — in no small part spread by anxious phone calls from the *Observer's* British competitors. But there was no immediate corroboration of any of the newspaper's claims.

The *Observer* said the five had come forward in hopes of gaining immunity, rather than be exposed eventually by William Pepper, Ray's lawyer.

In a Dec. 3 interview with *The Tennessean*, Pepper said "dramatic evidence" would bring a breakthrough in Ray's case in the near future.

The *Observer* said a main source for its story is Lewis Garrison, who is identified as the businessman's attorney and who has apparently videotaped the five's "confessions."

"Without a doubt there has been a major miscarriage of justice," the newspaper quoted Garrison as saying. "I would love now for the truth to come out, but without immunity we may still be a very long way from justice."

The report also named Kenneth

Paper reports MLK Jr. plot

FROM PAGE 1A

Herman, a 56-year-old private investigator, as a source for its article.

The newspaper reported that the businessman was recruited by two men — one a Mafia figure — because he owned a business near the Lorraine, and was paid \$100,000 for arranging the assassination while the gunman he hired was paid \$10,000.

The newspaper identified the businessman as a white multimillionaire now in semiretirement who lives outside Memphis. The other four "witnesses" are described as three of his black female employees — one the businessman's former lover — and a black, male ex-convict hired later to take care of people "who knew too much." ■

12/12/93

Tennessean

Sam Parish