

Prosecutor to hear witnesses in King case

REUTERS

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — A Tennessee prosecutor said yesterday that his office would interview witnesses who allege they can prove James Earl Ray was not behind the 1968 slaying of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

But District Attorney General John Perotti, who up to now has called the case "a sham and a fraud," said he would not grant immunity to anyone claiming to have been part of a conspiracy to murder Dr. King.

"If someone actually is guilty of capital murder and I give him immu-

nity just to clear the books on this, I ought to be run out of town," the prosecutor said.

Perotti's remarks came as ABC-TV prepared to air an interview with Memphis businessman Lloyd Jowers, who says he played a role in a conspiracy to assassinate Dr. King.

ABC released a statement that said Jowers, who owned a restaurant below the boarding house where Ray was staying at the time of the assassination, would tell ABC's *Prime Time Live* program last night that he hired someone other than Ray to carry out the killing.

Dr. King was shot and killed April 4, 1968, as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel.

Ray, who has maintained his innocence, is serving a 99-year sentence.

On Tuesday, a Shelby County grand jury refused to grant a hearing to a private Memphis attorney who wants to subpoena five witnesses whose testimony he contends would exonerate Ray.

Lawyer Wayne Chastain, acting on the instructions of Ray's attorney, Bill Pepper, applied for a hearing before a grand jury in Tennessee in which he would name a retired U.S.

businessman who claims to have hired the man who killed Dr. King.

King family members have declined to comment on the case. But the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was with Dr. King at the time of the shooting, said Sunday that he had always suspected a conspiracy.

The latest episode came to light over the weekend, when a London newspaper, the *Observer*, reported that a Memphis businessman confessed to arranging Dr. King's murder in exchange for a \$100,000 payment from two other men, including one with alleged links to the Mafia.