

Dear Bill,

7/23/96

The Fellowship interview of Rev. James Lawson (March/April 1996 issue) is headlined "The Truth Behind the Murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.," and it is not that. I do not question Lawson's sincerity but I do note that his record and that of other blacks is not consistent with the thrust of this interview.

I know nothing of the security team of eight black Memphis detectives of whom Lawson speaks but I do know there is no reference to them in all the FBI's records and I do know that a different security team, one I'd not have chosen of preferred, met the plane, went with King to the motel, hung around it all day, and finally left at the demand of the King party, Memphis part.

The "surveillance teams deployed" at the firehouse did not exist as they were not "pulled out." They were there not to protect them, those two black detectives, they were to spy on him and who went to see him. One only was removed and that was because of a threat against him.

Lawson says he could kick himself for not going to court on how Ray, according to his lawyers, was treated. He might better have said he could kick himself for, and this is the truth, remaining removed from the entire case until when it was too late and not helpful. Mark Lane got him, Ralph Abernathy and others involved in it.

I was writing a book on the case. I did not write Lawson but I wrote the Rev. Sam Kyle three times, without response. I went there as Ray's investigator and got no help from a single black. Even when I appeared on black radio and let it be known what I was in Memphis for.

Not only Memphis blacks in general and the King family and friends in particular. At least one person left SCIC over its refusal to get interested. Several got copies of Frame-Up and were silent, did and said nothing. The black caucus leader in the Congress would not even speak to me about it. I gave copies of the book to each member of the black caucus. The King family lawyer would not talk to me although someone in his office did speak to me in the reception area.

I have read Bill Pepper's book. It took the wrong approach if intended to get the case in court and it ignored entirely then existing official evidence. Much of what is in it has no credibility and it certain to kick back if ever used in court. Lawson is not correct on how Pepper got into the case or why although like Lane he was involved with other whites in the south in the early sixties.

Pepper, who forgot it, was in touch with me about a book he wanted to do in the early 70s. That was long before he was Ray's lawyer. He is handling the case as he'd do a book or a movie, not to get a trial or win a case. Yes, Jesse Jackson would not talk to me or to a black friend who phoned him for me. It is this black attitude that turned me off the case so I'd not waste my time. Best,
Vard