

On Today's Editorial Page  
Further Case And The Public  
Editorial  
Pope Paul VI  
Editorial

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

FINAL  
★ ★ M  
Latest Stock Prices  
Pages 14A and 15A

Vol. 100, No. 217

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1978

15¢

Supplied  
by the  
St. Louis  
Post-Dispatch

## Charges House Panel Hired Spy In Ray Case

By JO MANNIES

**Of the Post-Dispatch Staff**  
The attorney for James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., says House investigators hired a black jacket man to spy on Ray's brother.

And, said attorney Mark Lane, investigators for the House Select Committee on Assassinations then gave the "spy" answers — some false — for his official testimony.

Lane was in St. Louis on Monday for something of a three-day circus of disclosures and allegations. In addition to the charges about spying, Lane:

— Accused the committee staff of using illegal means to gain evidence, including wiretapping and thefts, all as part of a "conspiracy" to prevent a fair

investigation into King's death.

— Engaged in a mild shoving match with a New York Times reporter and accused the Times of being an unwitting "transmission belt" for false disclosures about the King murder. Lane maintained that committee investigators had intentionally leaked the information to the Times to discredit Ray's contention that, despite his guilty plea, he is innocent.

Lane said he decided to make his allegations public because, "Members of Congress have not the faintest idea that they are being betrayed by their own staff."

A spokesman for the committee said Monday night only that the staff is aware of Lane's contentions and that

"we consider them serious. We will be investigating. Ray is expected to testify publicly before the committee later this month," the spokesman said.

U.S. Rep. Harold Sawyer, D-Mich., a member of the committee, denied Lane's contention that Ray was offered his freedom in exchange for an admission of guilt.

But he said Ray had been told that authorities in Missouri and Tennessee would be asked to consider a reduction in Ray's sentence if Sawyer was given "hard" evidence that others were involved.

Sawyer defended the proposal. "Every prosecutor in the country does this at times to gain information," he said. Such a deal is now almost impossible.

Sawyer said, because Lane "has just deliberately blown it" by discussing it publicly.

The news conference was held in St. Louis at the Hilton Inn near Lambert Field. Its primary aim, Lane said, was to explain the role of Oliver Patterson, 34, of 1238 Old Halls Ferry Road, an alleged undercover agent for the committee who said he had become disenchanted with his job.

Patterson said he had once been an informer for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and had been employed for the last few months by the House special committee to spy on James Earl Ray's brother, Jerry, a friend of Patterson's for several years.

He said his duties included tape-re-

cording telephone conversations with Jerry Ray, sifting through Ray's belongings for letters from his jailed brother — and even acquiring samples of Jerry Ray's hair.

In April, Patterson said, he appeared before the committee's investigative staff to answer questions about his undercover work. "During that testimony, I was asked questions by a lawyer for the committee named Michael Eberhardt, and on several occasions I was handed written 'answers' to the questions by Conrad Baetz, a staff investigator."

Other staff members appeared to be aware of what was happening, Patterson said, but "the stenographer apparently took the answers down as my own."

Patterson said he was told by Baetz to say that "I had seen Jerry Ray carry a gun — which is not true" and "to say something nice about" J.B. Stoner, an advocate of white supremacy.

Baetz, who lives in Madison County and is a sheriff's deputy there, could not be reached for comment.

The spying continued, Patterson said, until he was told by an FBI agent and Baetz that Lane had somehow learned of the undercover work. "I was told that Lane or Ray might take retaliatory action against me or my family," he said.

Patterson said he was advised by Baetz to hold a news conference Sunday where he was to accuse Lane of being a homosexual and contend that his under-

See RAY, Page 8



**NO JOKE:** Attorney Mark Lane (center) making a joke at an otherwise serious press conference here Monday. With him are Oliver

Patterson of Black Jack and Susan Wadsworth, a friend of Patterson's. (Post-Dispatch Photo by Karen Elshout)

## Ray

■ FROM PAGE ONE

cover work had reinforced James Earl Ray's guilt.

The conference was postponed, Patterson said, after he and Baetz learned of Pope Paul VI's death. After a meeting with Lane, Patterson said he had a change of heart and decided to "tell the whole truth about the secret operation."

Patterson said he was displeased with the job, because the committee owed him \$900 and was "just going to dump everything on me — the illegal wire taps, the opening of mail, the thefts, everything. I'm willing to take a lie detector test, too," he said.

To lend credence to Patterson's story, Lane displayed an armload of tapes, said to be recordings of conversations with several persons, including Baetz and a New York Times reporter. Lane said Patterson had been instructed to "leak" false information to the Times during a St. Louis interview scheduled for Monday.

But instead of a being given a private interview, Times reporter Anthony J. Marro found himself walking into a hotel room full of news cameras and reporters. Marro pushed his way out of the room, saying that he was being used. Lane followed Marro out into the hall, shouting, "Don't you want to print the truth?"

Lane believed that the incident supported his contention that "the staff of the House committee panicked when they learned that I was aware of what was going on. So they decided to set up a secret meeting with The New York Times and discredit me."

Patterson said he knew nothing of recent reports by Russell E. Byers of Rock Hill that Byers had been offered money by two Imperial, Mo., men to arrange King's killing.

Marro, whose newspaper broke Byers' allegations, reported that Patterson had never been reached by the Times and had never provided the paper with any information concerning the King assassination prior to Monday.

In a brief telephone interview, Marro added, "We chase a lot of leads. Some are good — some aren't. I'm going to Washington to chase a few more."

Lane said he was disturbed with his

findings. An assassination buff who has written two books — "Rush to Judgment" and "Code Name Zorro" — about the murders of King and President John F. Kennedy, Lane contended that "it seems impossible for anybody to now take the House Select Committee on Assassinations seriously."

Patterson, a self-proclaimed gypsy salesman who says he has sold everything from real estate to geraniums, says he now has other matters to worry about.

Because he fears for his life, he said, he was to leave the St. Louis area Monday night. "I don't know where I'll go," he said. "But when it comes to knuckles, I think mine are going to get slapped."

In a related development, FBI director William H. Webster said Monday that the 1974 FBI report containing an informant's statement about a payoff made to Ray after King's killing was never turned over to federal investigators because of "simple inadvertence."

This document came to light last March, along with an earlier document, which was an FBI report that Byers had told two lawyers that he had turned down a \$50,000 offer to arrange King's death. The FBI here had been checking into Byers after he had become a prime suspect in the two break-ins at the St. Louis Art Museum. Charges against Byers were subsequently dropped.

The second document quoted an informant as saying he was told by Byers that a Missouri businessman was "the individual who made the payoff to James Earl Ray after the killing" on April 4, 1968.

Webster said that the second document constituted "heresy three times removed." In New York to address the American Bar Association's national convention, Webster said that although an investigation by his office concluded that the report's misplacement was a mistake, it was not overly significant because "it has not yet been verified that the informant spoke the truth."

Although the document, as censored when it was made public, did not specify who Byers said had paid off Ray, the report contained the first allegation that money was actually paid to Ray.