

U.S. Lawyer Visits Ray--Vows Court Battle

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James Earl Ray's American lawyer visited him for the first time yesterday in a British prison and said afterward that he will make a court fight against the charges of slaying Dr. Martin Luther King.

"If this man comes to trial,

if he's the man, he will plead not guilty. A plea of not guilty will be entered." Arthur J. Hanes of Birmingham, Ala., told newsmen at London hotel. He said that Ray's health and mental attitude were good.

Hanes, denied the chance
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to see Ray during his first visit here last month, returned after learning that British permission for a visit had been granted.

Accompanied by Michael Eugene, Ray's court-appointed British lawyer for the extradition proceedings here, Hanes went to Wandsworth prison in a southwest area of the capital.

Hanes and Eugene spent 35 minutes in an interview room with Ray. The British lawyer had to be with him because Hanes has no status as a lawyer in this country.

Then Hanes left and Eugene spoke to Ray about the British extradition order against him, which is coming up on appeal late this month.

The Alabama lawyer, a former mayor of Birmingham, carefully avoided telling newsmen how he might plot Ray's defense.

"I will not try this man in the newspapers," he said. But he did indicate he probably would fight any prosecution move for shifting the trial from Memphis, Tenn., where the Negro civil rights leader was shot down last April 4.

"Most of the other citizens of the United States have television and they have got a barrage of information on this case everywhere. I see no point in a change of venue," he said.

Asked about reports he might go for an insanity plea, he stressed that this was "just one of a hundred possibilities" under study.

He also insisted on referring to his client as Ramon George Sneyd, although a British magistrate has held

that the prisoner's identity as Ray has been proved. Hanes said it would be up to the prosecution to prove it again in an American court.

He added that he had received three letters from the prison signed "R. G. Sneyd." In general, he said, they covered the man's request for legal representation.

"I have never seen this man before today," Hanes added.

Hanes was questioned sharply by reporters on who was paying his fee. Some

suggested he was handling the case for publicity — which he denied — or out of political ambition.

To that, Hanes snapped: "I would not swap places with the governor of Alabama for all the tea you have in England." His client, he said, "gave me the impression he could meet my fees."

The lawyer did not elaborate, but added: "No organization has contacted me, no organization has paid me. I expect to get paid. I have faith."