

2 REPORTERS, LAWYER, PROBER

Court Holds 4 in Contempt For Ray Case Comments

MEMPHIS (AP) — A state court judge held four persons, including two newspaper reporters, in contempt of court today for comments made and written concerning the case of James Earl Ray, the man accused of killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Judge Preston Battle ruled that comments by Ray's lawyer and an investigator hired in stories by the reporters were "extremely prejudicial and constitute a clear and present danger" in trying to find an impartial jury.

ALTHOUGH HOLDING that the four had failed to show cause why they should not be held in contempt, Battle withheld any punishment until a

later date. He said that future acts by the four could possibly mitigate or purge the contempt.

The four involved were Arthur J. Hanes of Birmingham, Ray's attorney; Renfro T. Hayes, a private investigator hired by Hanes, and two Memphis newspaper reporters, Charles Edmundson of the Commercial Appeal and Roy Hamilton of the Press-Scimitar.

HAYS AND HANES denied making many of the statements attributed to them in the newspaper articles concerning Ray's conditions in jail. Hanes testified he may have discussed the conditions with newsmen but that he first raised the points in open court.

Battle held there was a distinct difference between comments in court, where they

can be challenged and unsworn testimony outside the court.

HAYS HAD denied making
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any statements concerning conditions in the jail. Edmundson testified his reporting of what Hays allegedly said was accurate and correct.

Battle said both Hanes and Hays were named specifically in his orders regulating pre-trial publicity. The reporters were not named specifically, he said, but Tennessee law holds that anyone who aids and abets in the violation of an injunction is guilty of contempt. He said it was clearly proven that all four had notice of the order.