

Britain Okays Proceedings to Extradite Ray

LONDON (AP) — The U.S. application to return James Earl Ray to the United States moved steadily forward today as the British government authorized extradition proceedings to begin.

Home Secretary James Callaghan signed an order authorizing the Bow Street Magistrate's Court to conduct the extradition proceedings against the 40-year-old escaped convict, accused of killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Frank Milton was expected to schedule a hearing in about a week.

THE APPLICATION was sent to the Home Office, the British equivalent of the U.S. Justice Department, after clearing its first legal hurdle in the Foreign Office a few hours after U.S. Consul General Jack Herfurt delivered the bulky petition.

Court formalities and appeals could delay Ray's return up to six weeks or longer if he fights extradition.

The inch-thick petition contains a summary of evidence against Ray in connection with the assassination of King at a Memphis motel April 4. It also contains information on his escape from the Missouri State Prison while serving a sentence for armed robbery, along with fingerprints and other identification material.

THE UNITED STATES is seeking extradition on both charges and must satisfy a British judge that both would be crimes under British law.

The Foreign Office certified that the petition came within the terms of the 1931 extradition treaty between the two countries.

If Milton grants extradition, Ray would have 15 days to appeal to the High Court. And if the High Court upholds the extradition order, he would have another 14 days to appeal to the House of Lords, Britain's supreme court.



—AP WIREPHOTO.
JANE NASSAU is one of two receptionists at London's New Earl's Court Hotel where James Earl Ray, suspect in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., reportedly spent some days during his London stopover. She says police are looking for another vacationing receptionist to find out if someone accompanied Ray when he arrived at the hotel.

MICHAEL DRESDEN, the British lawyer appointed for Ray, has given no indication whether Ray would fight extradition and has refused to comment on the case.

Scotland Yard continued its investigation of Ray's movements in London during the three weeks prior to his arrest last Saturday, and suspicion continued that he had a contact man.

Jane Nassau, a receptionist at one of the hotels where Ray stayed, told newsmen that police are looking for another vacationing receptionist, to ask her whether someone accompanied Ray when he arrived at the hotel.

IN TORONTO, where Ray went after the killing of King, police continued to look for a fat man who reportedly delivered an envelope to him.

The Toronto Star said in a copyright story that a cab driver reported picking up "a big fat man" May 2 across the street from the rooming house where Ray was staying.

The cab driver, Manuel Reis, 35, said he drove the man and an unidentified companion to a bank three blocks away, the Star reported.

Earlier this week the landlady of the rooming house said she saw a tall fat man hand an envelope to Ray.