

LAWYER FOR RAY ARRIVES IN LONDON

Former Birmingham Mayor
Preparing for Defense

By ALVIN SHUSTER

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, June 20—Arthur J. Hanes, former Mayor of Birmingham, Ala., who described himself as a "pretty fair country lawyer," arrived here today to prepare for the defense in the United States of the accused slayer of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

His client, James Earl Ray, alias Ramon George Sneyd, is in Wandsworth Prison, awaiting an extradition hearing next Thursday. It was regarded as unlikely that Mr. Hanes would be permitted to see him.

Mr. Hanes, who arrived with his 26-year-old son and law partner, Arthur Jr., refused to discuss who would be paying for his services.

"I work for money but I will not tell you who will pay," he said. "I cannot discuss the fees. I have the faith I'll get by and I'll make expenses."

Speaking to reporters at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, Mr. Hanes said he received a letter from "R. G. Sneyd" last week asking him to represent him if the extradition efforts by the United States succeeded.

Never Met Client

"I don't know how he heard about me," Mr. Hanes said. "I've never met anyone by the name of Sneyd, Ray or any of the other aliases. But I think I'm a pretty fair country lawyer and my client must think so too."

Mr. Hanes reported that the letter was sent on June 10 from Brixton Prison, in Southwest London, to the Birmingham Bar Association with the request that it be forwarded to him. Mr. Hanes said he received it June 14 and decided to take the case.

"This case is a challenge," the 51-year-old former Mayor said. "I like to go where the action is."

Mr. Hanes said he recognized that he could have nothing to do with the pending action against Ray in this country and agreed it would probably be difficult for him even to see his client. But, he said, he wants to talk personally with Ray's lawyers here.

Two of Ray's lawyers, Michael Dresden and Michael Eugene, sat beside Mr. Hanes at the meeting with reporters, an uncomfortable role for British lawyers who customarily shun publicity and rarely make public statements during a case. As expected, they referred all questions to Mr. Hanes.

Asked for his thoughts about Dr. King, who was killed in Memphis on April 4, Mr. Hanes replied:

"I've seen him and I've met him. As far as I'm concerned his business was his business and mine was mine. I don't knock anyone's kick."

Doesn't Like Labels

On the question of whether he was a segregationist, Mr. Hanes replied that he did not believe in labels.

"You don't label liberal lawyers 'integrationist,'" he replied. "This question doesn't enter into this case. My views on civil rights are too far afield here."

Mr. Hanes represented the Ku Klux Klan members accused of the 1965 highway murder in Alabama of Mrs. Viola G. Liuzzo of Detroit, a white worker for Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The defendants in that case were Leroy Wilkins Jr., William Orville Eaton and Eugene Thomas. In the first trial, when they were defended by Matt Murphy, a Klan official, there was a hung jury. In the second trial, after Mr. Hanes's defense, the three were found not guilty.

Asked if he had any information about a possible connection between his client and the Klan, Mr. Hanes said he had "no knowledge of the Klan and wouldn't know if my client" was a member.

"I don't join organizations myself," Mr. Hanes said. "I don't join right-wing groups or left-wing groups. Just the Lions Club and the P.T.A."

Mr. Hanes said that if Ray was extradited to Tennessee, the scene of the murder, he understood from authorities in the state that he would be permitted to try the case there. He plans to leave London Sunday.

The United States is seeking the extradition of Ray on two counts. He is wanted for the slaying of Dr. King and as a fugitive from Missouri State Penitentiary, from which he escaped last year after serving seven years of a 20-year sentence for armed robbery.

He was seized in London on June 8 on charges of possession of a fraudulent passport and carrying a revolver without a permit.