

Ray Wishes He'd Gone On Trial

By the Associated Press

James Earl Ray, quoted as wishing now he had elected to stand trial for the Martin Luther King assassination, was joined in his regrets today by the U.S. Justice Department.

A source in the department said the feeling there over Ray's abrupt guilty plea "is one of frustration." The reason: a full-fledged trial might have shed light on questions which have led to widespread suspicion that Ray was only one figure in a conspiracy.

Second Thoughts

In Nashville, the Nashville Tennessean said in a copyright story that Ray disclosed second thoughts about the guilty plea within hours of his sentencing in Memphis to an agreed 99 years in prison.

Ray also has inquired about how he could hire a new attorney, the paper said.

The story said unidentified official sources quoted Ray as saying:

"When I went to court Monday I was convinced if I didn't plead guilty I was going to the electric chair. I wish the hell I hadn't now because with what they had on me I believe the worst I'd gotten would have been life."

Parole Rules

Under Tennessee law a life prisoner could be eligible for parole after 13 years 7 months, or even earlier if he earned maximum good behavior time. Under a 99-year

sentence a prisoner must serve at least 30 years.

The Tennessean said a prison source further quoted Ray:

"My attorney and my brother told me about six weeks ago that the best thing I could do was to work out a deal to keep me out of the chair. They told me they thought this could be done.

"I was thinking about it and every day they thought I would plead guilty. Last week I just told them if they thought this was best and what I ought to do, then I would plead guilty."

New Lawyer

Ray was reported to have asked escorting officers during his trip from the Memphis jail to the Nashville pen-

itentiary how he could hire another lawyer.

In Washington, Justice Department sources acknowledged the government was informed in advance that Ray would plead guilty and take 99 years.

But they denied the government was involved in any way with decisions leading up to the sudden move by Ray and his lawyer, Percy Foreman of Houston.

'King Day' Killed in Committee

SACRAMENTO — (AP) — A resolution for California to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is dead because a senator threatened a floor fight over the late civil rights leader's background.

The measure earlier passed the full Assembly on a voice vote, but the five-man Senate Rules Committee killed it 3-2 yesterday.

The resolution asking Gov. Reagan to proclaim "Martin Luther King Day" April 4 — the first anniversary of King's assassination in Memphis, Tenn.

Sen. John Schmitz, a member of the John Birch Society, protested that the resolution sought to honor King's image as a nonviolent civil rights pioneer. But Schmitz, a Tustin Republican, said "the real King" incited others to create crisis and tension in support of his cause.

Sen. H. L. Richardson (R-Arcadia), already had presented Rules Committee members with 21-page dossiers on King alleging that he "received monetary contributions and support from top identified Communist leaders..."

The author of the two-house resolution, Assemblyman Charles Warren (D-Los Angeles), indicated he would submit a new resolution that would require Assembly passage only.