

DREW PEARSON

King Conspiracy Discarded by FBI

WASHINGTON—Despite James Earl Ray's courtroom hint that others helped to plot the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the FBI's painstaking, \$3.5 million investigation of the shooting produced absolutely no evidence of a conspiracy.

This column has checked carefully into all the conspiracy angles. I even flew to Los Angeles to investigate a dentist who was reported to have a grudge against Dr. King and might have hired Ray to gun down the Negro leader. Here are the conclusions:

1. Ray was a racist with a long record of crime and hate. He made no secret in prison of his burning hatred for Negroes. He even refused to go to the prison's honor farm because he would have to work alongside blacks. He also boasted to fellow convicts that he would kill Dr. King when he got out of prison.

2. Ray flew to Los Angeles around Easter Sunday, 1967, because he heard Dr. King was scheduled to speak there. Ray did not contact the Los Angeles dentist and the FBI quickly dropped its suspicions of the dentist. Ray continued to stalk Dr. King until the tragic day in Memphis.

3. Ray's hints that he was aided by conspirators apparently were motivated by a psychotic notion that he could invent a couple of non-existent persons and blame them for the actual shooting, thus avoiding the death penalty.

4. Ray spoke mysteriously, for example, of meeting a blond man by the name of "Raoul" in a New Orleans bar. Later this same mystery man was supposed to have turned up in Montreal while Ray was there. The FBI could find no evidence that "Raoul" ever existed outside of Ray's imagination.

5. The fact that Ray seemed to have plenty of cash caused the FBI to suspect at first that he may have collected a pay-off from someone who wanted Dr. King dead. The FBI was able to trace Ray's money back to profits from smuggling narcotics into prison, and to a series of holdups. He staged at least two robberies in this country, two in Canada, one in London and one in Portugal.

6. Although Ray bungled the shooting by leaving clues that easily would have convicted him, he had a twisted cunning that enabled him to throw the FBI off his track while he escaped the country. There is no evidence to support the rumor that the alleged conspirators hustled him off to Europe.

Clearly, James Earl Ray loves the limelight and he can be expected to make statements that will keep his name in the newspapers. Those who know him say he almost looked forward to re-

turning to prison as a celebrity.

NOTE: The whispers of conspiracy, however, continue to circulate. They have been spread in part by Dr. King's former associates in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who have found it easier to raise money with the conspiracy talk in the air.

THE STORY can be told of Lyndon Johnson's new year's resolution to chop another \$3 billion off his budget.

He invited Nixon's secretary of treasury, David

at the LBJ ranch

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