

'Conspiracy Existed'

Offer to Ray on Cash

NASHVILLE (Tenn.) — (AP) — Fired state corrections commissioner Harry Avery says he told James Earl Ray he would "go and get" any money Ray had "stashed away" and deposit it in a trust fund for him.

The offer, Avery said last night, was part of his attempt to "get at the full truth" in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for which Ray is serving 99 years in state prison.

Avery, contacted by telephone while on a fishing trip at Cookeville, Tenn., said Ray "commented at some length about the offer, but I don't intend to say anything about his comments . . . since he has attorneys trying to get him a new trial."

Avery, fired Thursday by Gov. Buford Ellington, said he "talked to Ray at great length" after Ray, who

pleaded guilty March 10 to killing King, was brought to the prison.

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Avery said Ray told him "a conspiracy existed" in the King death, but Avery refused to elaborate on what, if any, details Ray might have given him.

"I told him that if he wanted to tell me the full truth about this in his own handwriting and if anyone was interested in purchasing it, I would see that every nickel that anyone paid was placed in his trust fund," Avery said.

"If he doubted my sincerity in this respect," Avery continued, "I told him if he'd tell me whether he had anything stashed away anywhere — such as what he spent on his travels to Europe — I'd be glad to go and get it and deposit that.

"I did not want one percentage point of it at all — all I was doing was seeking the full truth, for two reasons. First, to give me some idea who I might protect him from in prison, and second, to determine whether people other than himself might be engaged in a conspiracy to kill a very prominent person."

Firing of Avery

Avery had said previously he believed a plot existed at the prison to kill Ray should he be released from maximum security.

Ellington fired Avery shortly after a report highly critical of the entire state penal system was released by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Avery, however, said the governor told him the dismissal was because of his dealings with Ray.

NYTimes, 31 May 69

TENNESSEE OUSTS PRISONS DIRECTOR

Special to The New York Times

NASHVILLE, May 29—Gov. Buford Ellington dismissed Harry S. Avery, the State Commissioner of Correction, on Thursday.

The Tennessee Governor charged Mr. Avery with improper conduct in the handling of James Earl Ray, who is in prison for the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The summary action came after Mr. Avery had rejected Mr. Ellington's request for his resignation. It also followed a week-long investigation into reports that the Commissioner was contemplating writing a book about the Ray case.

Mr. Avery denied any impropriety in handling Ray and said he had never intended writing a book about the case. At a news conference during which his eyes frequently filled with tears, he also defended his seven-year record in office. He said existing deficiencies resulted from his inability to get the Governor's support for needed legislation and adequate appropriations.

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