Ray's Innocence Can Be Proved
by SCLC's Rev. Bevel, Abernathy Believes

By HENRY P. LIEFFERMAN
By United Press International

The Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy said Thursday he believes one of his aides, the Rev. James Bevel, can prove James Earl Ray is innocent in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"I have absolute confidence in his judgment and integrity," Abernathy said of Bevel, the Ray's attorney, Percy Foreman, of Houston, has not commented on Bevel's offer of help. Neither Foreman, who is in Memphis, Tenn., nor Bevel was available for comment Thursday.

Bevel has refused to elaborate on whatever information he has.

Abernathy's telegram statement was issued after he, Bevel and other SCLC officials discussed the situation by telephone on Wednesday.

Bevel had been subpoenaed as a defense witness in the Ray trial by Ray's former attorney, Arthur J. Hanes Sr., the ex-mayor of Birmingham, Ala.

Hines, in an interview after Ray fired him and hired Foreman last November, said he had planned to prove that a black power group with Communist ties killed King, with a goal of creating civil disturbance in the wake of the assassination.

Abernathy made the statement in a telegram released by the SCLC offices here.

Bevel, longtime staffer under King and Abernathy, is director of nonviolent education and direct action for SCLC, and presently works in the SCLC's Philadelphia office. In a telegram to Ray last Saturday, Bevel offered to defend him and said, "I know you are not guilty."