

Confiscation Action Called Mistake

DURHAM, Feb. 17 (AP)—Police Chief W. W. Pleasants said today that policemen committed an error of judgment in attempting to confiscate news photographers' cameras at the F. W. Woolworth store here Tuesday.

A corps of newsmen and photographers took to their heels when policemen and store officials attempted to take cameras after lensmen shot pictures of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Negro integrationist, inspecting a lunch counter closed after sit-down protests here.

Jim Sparks, president of the Carolinas Press Photographers Association and staff photographer for the Durham Morning Herald, conferred Wednesday with Pleasants about the incident.

Pleasants told Sparks he had instructed the captains of each shift to order Durham police officers not to molest photographers in any way. Pleasants told Sparks an officer could not confiscate a camera or arrest a photographer unless he was breaking the law.

Pleasants said, however, if a store manager asked a photographer to leave, and if the photographer refused, then an officer could arrest him for trespass.

"Under no circumstances can we order persons to refrain from taking pictures," Pleasants said.