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February 1, 1983

Ms. Madeleine Edmondson  
Newsweek  
444 Madison Avenue  
New York, N. Y. 10022-6999

Dear Ms. Edmondson:

Thank you for your letter of January 25 which responds to mine of November 23 regarding your profile of Ambassador John Negroponte (International, November 8).

I'm not sure how useful it is to carry on this dialogue since there appears to be no disposition on Newsweek's part to reconsider its position or, indeed, to address the point I raised. However, your reply cannot go unchallenged.

I really cannot think of a more mealy-mouthed excuse for the publication of a personal attack upon a public servant than that "the views expressed were those of Negroponte's fellow envoys or officials he's worked with in Honduras -- and represented no wish on the part of Newsweek's editors, its writers or researchers, to cause Negroponte any harm or injury."

Was there no editorial discretion involved? Supposing your informants had also expressed the view that Negroponte was gay, suffered a loathsome disease or was a vampire? Surely you have some obligation to consider the impact of what you print on some basis beyond simple legal liability.

By the same token, and this was the point of my letter, you have an editorial obligation to look beyond the perceptions of people on the scene who could be expected to identify the U.S. Ambassador as the source of U.S. policy. Newsweek's editorial staff should be in a position to understand that ambassadors carrying out major policy towards their host countries are not formulating their own foreign policy. I do not argue your judgment on U.S. policy in Central America for the purposes of this letter, but simply point out that you have harshly attacked a career public official for carrying out the instructions of his Government. This he is sworn

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to do, whether or not he personally approves of those instructions. In so doing you have done an injustice to the man, to the public service and to your readers.

I repeat that I believe you owe all three an apology.

Very truly yours,

PRR