

AIM for Accuracy

To err is human enough, but those in the news business should never do it. This is the stern thesis of a Washington-based organization called Accuracy in Media, and it is wielding a potent weapon to challenge any miscreants: the advertisement. Founded three years ago on a nonprofit basis, AIM operates with a volunteer staff of 30 and a modest budget of \$15,000 in contributions. It seeks out errors in news reporting and commentary, requests retractions, then buys ads to publicize the mistakes if they are not corrected.

The first AIM ad took NBC's David Brinkley to task last January in the *Washington Post* for likening the U.S. to 19th century Prussia because it spent about two-thirds of "regular tax income" for military purposes (AIM claimed the U.S. figure was more like 40% of all income taxes). In June, AIM took a two-column ad in the *New York Times* to condemn Correspondent Anthony Lewis for reporting as fact from Hanoi that the U.S. mining of Haiphong harbor was ineffective without checking out the facts. AIM plans to place another ad in the *Times* charging Columnist Tom Wicker with a variety of minor inaccuracies over the past two years.

Critics of AIM claim it is prone to nitpicking and preoccupied with criticizing news judgment rather than errors of fact. But Abraham Kalish, '66, the organization's executive secretary and former feature writer for the U.S. Information Agency, insists: "All we're interested in is accuracy—to be an ever-present prod to the news media so they will strive to be sure their stories are accurate."

TIME, AUGUST 14, 1972