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\*DUKE: Rick, if, if Congress is now changing in its attitude toward helping El Salvador, giving the president basically what's he (sic), what he wants in terms of, of new assistance for El Salvador, there's no indication of any change where Nicaragua is concerned, and, and helping the rebels who are fighting in that country. Why is there such fervent opposition, especially in the House, to doing this? \*\*SMITH: Paul, the feelings are very strong. They're very emotional. They're very deep. They're linked both to pragmatic, geopolitical considerations, and of moral feelings. The people who want to see the contras aided say that it is morally wrong to abandon these people that we have put in the field and financed through the CIA; that we must meet the Communist Soviet, Cuban, and Nicaraguan subversion with counter-subversion; and that you cannot separate the aid to El Salvador from aid to the Nicaraguan rebels because they're putting pressure on the Sandinistas. On the other side, you have very, very strong, similarly strong moral feelings that it is wrong for the United States to be involved in warfare against an established foreign government. And the critics say, people like Tip O'Neill, Edward Boland, both from Massachusetts, northern liberals, and by the way, the Democrats who are most outspoken about this tend to come from the Northeast, the Midwest, California, they say it's a violation of the organ..., of the charter of the Organization of American States. The United States has no business going in there. They also say that it's not an effective program. The administration itself says the aid continues to flow from Nicaragua, and it's not effective. Why should we be offending our friends and interfering in another country?

DUKE: So is the aid going to be cut off? SMITH: I think there's a stronger chance now that it will be cut off than ever before. The issue now goes to the Senate, which has regularly approved the aid, and the question will be whether or not they can find some formula, the administration can find some formula to keep a little bit alive, but the odds are getting dimmer and dimmer for it.

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***EXCERPTED***

\* Paul Duke

\*\* Hedrick Smith (The New York Times)