



FAREWELL ADDRESS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

**TO THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT STAFF
THE GREAT HALL, MAIN JUSTICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2001

(Applause, cheers.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: As I have told you before -- as I have told you before, whatever I have done was done by you.

I work for one of the greatest institutions that I know of. I work with the most wonderful public servants anywhere in the world.

For the last eight years, I've had a chance that few lawyers ever have: to work with wonderful public servants, the best lawyers I've known, the best law enforcement agents, wonderful administrators, great support staff, people who take good care of me, like the guards who greet me at the front in the morning with the latest news.

You have all touched my life in such an extraordinary way, but it has been a remarkable experience.

Mr. Brown, I'm not sure that in 1962, when you taught me tax at Harvard Law School, that we ever dreamed we'd be here today in this capacity.

But -- (applause) -- but Ernest Brown represents to me what public service is about.

After a full career as a professor of constitutional and tax at Harvard Law School, he has served over 30 years here

in the department, in some extraordinarily distinguished service. And he represents to me what the department is all about.

You come here, and you don't know what an EOUSA and an EEOR (sp) and an OPR and an OJP is -- (laughter) -- and then people take you by the hand, and they start teaching you, and you see a team forged. Those who are appointments of the new administration, those civil service and career people come together.

And this team that we have forged together -- that is a team -- is extraordinary.

We have been through some of the darkest times. We have been through times of joy. We have been to lonely hillside cemeteries and mourned for those who gave their lives in the service of our country. And we have laughed and told stories on each other and wondered what we could do to get around some rule of Shirley's (sp) -- (laughter) -- knowing that we'd never do it.

The leadership offices have been magnificent. I have been so fortunate to have the deputy attorney general, who is there whenever I need him but is out there forging his own way and doing so much to contribute to justice in this country.

My wonderful -- (applause) -- Dan Marcus is new and I wish he weren't. I wish he'd been around for a long time.

I have been very fortunate to have great, great people in that position.

And the solicitor general -- (pause) -- (laughter) -- I know of no greater, better, finer lawyer and more wonderful person.

And the people in the leadership offices, those, like Oz, who took me and made me feel at home in a new world and in a new land.

And thank you, one and all.

In the solicitor general's office I have seen lawyering like I never thought I would see: beautiful writing, effective advocacy, a great attention to the public policy of the law, and a willingness to do it at the drop of a hat if the cause of justice required it.

The Office of Legal Counsel is one of the best law firms I've ever seen. It has a collegiality, it works on the principle of teamwork, it has just -- I don't know what I'm going to do when I have to confront a hard legal issue and turn around and there's no OLC there.

To one of the divisions who takes the slings and arrows and takes it with gallantry, with courage, with strength, with, "I'm going to do what's right -- what I think is right" -- the Criminal Division, I salute you. You have been a magnificent force.

The Civil Division has done so much to protect our taxpayers' pocket in litigation that staggers the imagination and, as Adlai Stevenson would say, "converts vanity to prayer." They are lawyer's lawyers. They've represented me.

They do this nation proud.

The Civil Rights Division and I have walked long paths together. They represent a part of this department that is so critical.

This is an extraordinary institution because there is no other institution that has so touched, and has the authority and the jurisdiction to touch so many components of justice in the world: prosecution, but defense in certain situations.

Civil rights and the protection of the rights of those who sometimes cannot help themselves. Voting rights.

Rights of those who are disabled.

So many forces that need a champion, and the Civil Rights Division has been there.

Antitrust -- forging new paths across America to make sure that the American consumer has competition in the marketplace that will give them the best deal possible.

And ENRD, the Environment and Natural Resources Division. I stood in the Rose Garden that day, on February the 11th, and I said each American has a favorite lake, a mountain, a pond, or for some, just a patch of sky.

The Environment and Natural Resources Division has done so much to carry forward my promise of trying to protect that patch of sky and those favorite places.

And the Tax Division. Mr. Brown, you taught me tax, and I've forgotten most of it -- (laughter) -- but I haven't had to worry too much about it because I have had wonderful lawyers in the Tax Division advising me.

And OPD, the Office of Policy Development. (El D. ?), I could let you go and know that in the end I would get a report and a project and an initiative that was shaped in the best of public policy and was on target for successful conclusion.

And the Office of Justice Programs and its components. Anybody who wanted to shape America and shape the criminal justice system and shape crime-fighting, if they wanted to ask for the best people to do it, all you'd have to do is look at the Office of Justice Programs.

And OJJDP, the Juvenile Justice Programs; and the Office of Victims of Crime; and BJA, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and the National Institute of Justice. And do me a favor, Department of Justice, when I leave and there's nobody to say, "Have you checked with OJP to see what they can do in it?" just remember, I'm there saying, "Come on. Come on. Come on. Check. Check. Check."

One of the great divisions of this department is the Justice Management Division, the civil servants who have sat around that conference room table and have shaped budgets, shaped personnel practices that comply with good government.

And there is nothing more wonderful than to have people who know that budget inside and out telling you what's good government and what's not and knowing that they have the insights, the knowledge. And I would like to pay specific tribute to Adrian Curtis (ph), who is one of my heroines who is absolutely dedicated to good government, and our thoughts and prayers are with her. (Applause.)

And the U.S. attorneys. They warned me. They said you had 20 Chinese warlords in Florida. We have 93, each individual distinct, presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed persons that are going to call it on their own.

They are the greatest team and the most wonderful group of people that I have seen come together in the practice of law.

And they are dedicated, each in their own districts, some small, some huge, some distant, some right around here.

They do this nation proud, as do the assistant United States attorneys who serve with them. And they are incredible.

The United States Marshal Service is the oldest law enforcement agency in the country, and one of which I am very proud.

It serves with distinction in so many different ways across this nation, providing the court security and security in other situations.

But the Federal Bureau of Investigation, that agency and I have been through the best of times and the worst of times.

Louis Freeh and I have disagreed and other people have gotten those disagreements plop on the front page on any newspaper they could find.

But Louis Freeh is one of the finest people I have known in law enforcement.

Some people like to pick fights between us.

The Agency, having been through such rough times sometimes and through such great times other times, is an agency of which I am very proud and I have watched it do miraculous things.

One of the things we have got to realize is that we have to work through issues, and you don't work through issues in a small way, just taking a piece. You disagree, you discuss things, you sometimes disagree very vehemently.

But those disagreements pale in comparison with what we are able to work through, and this has just been a model for me.

I would like to pay special tribute to the detail that has provided my security. They have been the people I know best in Washington, I think. (Applause.) Yes, they did lose me on the Potomac, I did not lose them.

(Laughter.) And Caroline (sp), I won't take that radio, but you will be my friends for ever and ever, and thank you.

I have seen so many different faces of the FBI, and it is something.

The Drug Enforcement Administration was wonderful to me back in Miami. Tom Cash always saw to that, but they continue on.

And Donnie Marshall was, to me, special because he maintained his interest and his commitment in Scouting and saw what Scouting could do in terms of preventing problems that his agency has to deal with.

He is, to me, an example of how you can serve family, country, and those who can make a difference.

He is very special, as is his agency.

And the Bureau of Prisons, now, Kathy (sp), if you don't fix the tuck pointing, the stuff is going to begin to break away and you're going to have more preventative maintenance in the long run. (Laughter.)

It is one of the best-run agencies I have seen in Washington, and a great tribute to the people who work there under the most trying of circumstances and

what has to be one of the most challenging aspects of law enforcement.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service. Doris, you, your colleagues, the service and the Border Patrol have done so much to maintain this nation's tradition of immigration, a tradition that I think my father would be very proud to tell you you have not only maintained, but you have promoted and left in better order because of the wonderful people that worked with you and because of your leadership.

And the COPS program has helped America come to understand that a police officer is the face of government that most people see in the course of their life. And the way people view a police officer is oftentimes the way they view their government.

If the police officer reaches out to them, involves them in the solution of community problems, in the solution of crime and the prevention of crime, if the police officer reaches out and trusts and works with them, if the police officer stands by them, courageously and strong, they are going to build a safer community. And they are going to have far more confidence in their government.

The COPS program and the individual officers who serve in

it across this nation have done so much to build that bond between law enforcement and its people that makes government so important in the eyes of the people who otherwise wonder How do I get my problem solved?

I'd like to pay special tribute to OIPR, who has done such an incredible job under very difficult circumstances.

You never get any credit, but you know the credit you deserve.

And CRS, all you had to do was listen to people this summer during the conventions and hear the great work that CRS did.

But I'm still puzzled about the person who I called to thank her on a Saturday afternoon, she said, "You must be kidding." (Laughter.) And so many others.

Exec Sec. Some of you don't know what Exec Sec is, but Executive Secretariat of the Department of Justice keeps us doing and keeps the trees that fall to make paper that pile up on people's desks, you keep it in order, and we are deeply grateful.

And the pardon attorney and the U.S. trustees. The Office of the Inspector General has done so much.

The office of Professional -- OPR has just been magnificent.

You all are perfectly wonderful. But remember what we are here today about: public service. It takes courage.

Imagine what it's like to be 45 years old, sending your children to college, your fortune, your reputation on the line.

Not only do you have to battle in court, but you have to take the slings and arrows of a free press and of a third branch of government that is independent and has oversight authority. You pursue justice with courage. You pursue the right, based on the evidence and the law, in a way that

makes me very proud. I can't tell you how proud I am of the people I serve with.

But spread the message. Speak to young people. Let them understand that though there are risks, there is nothing more challenging, nothing more rewarding than using the law the right way to serve the American people.

And let them know of some of the joys that you've had in public service.

Open up this department a little bit. If people could only see what you do day in and day out, I don't think it would affect a fair trial, I don't think it would affect the national security, but I do think the American people would have a far better idea of the great work that you do for them day in and day out.

Remember how fragile democracy is. You have probably seen or been around the table when a minister of justice or a minister of interior has appeared here from an emerging democracy in Eastern Europe or from a troubled democracy someplace else in the world. When they first come, they have stars in their eyes and they're excited and they're thrilled, and it is so inspiring to listen to them try to put a democracy together. And you realize how difficult it is. You realize that if they get one piece right, another piece may be missing, and how do you develop an independent judiciary, and what do you do about this? And well, you can't work that out if you don't have salary scales that can attract people and keep them free of corruption.

They come back six months later or a year later, and you watch democracy slipping away from some.

It is a fragile institution. The rule of law is fragile. The rule of law is based on people, and democracy is based on people.

There is, on the east side of this building, on the 9th Street side, a statement: The common law derives from the will of mankind, issuing from the life of the people,

framed by mutual confidence, and sanctioned by the light of reason.

The law issues from the life of the people. Democracy is the people. It won't work unless the people are involved.

We have seen in these last weeks our democracy put to a test, and while some said that there might be a crisis, the American people that I met said, "No, we'll get through this." And we will. We will get through it because of people like you, who are willing, day in and day out, to carry on with government; that as one administration ends and another begins, you continue to do your duty as you see it, based on the evidence, the law, and particularly our magnificent Constitution.

I love the law. I love good and caring lawyers. But never have I loved people as much as I do you for what you do for this country.

Keep it up. Don't become complacent. Remember, if people stand by, democracy is at risk. And don't let that happen, because I have had a chance to see you across this nation, to travel across this nation and see Americans at work doing incredible things in inner cities, in distant rural areas. I have seen people who are so committed.

Yes, I have been cussed at, fussed at, and figuratively beaten around the ears. (Laughter.) But after eight years in this job, after seeing America, I know two things: I have never believed so strongly in this nation's future, in the rightness of its ways, as I do; and I have never believed so strongly that we must continue to fight so that the law issues from all of the people, not just some; that it's framed by true mutual confidence and respect that honors the diversity of this nation, and that it's time to get in the little red truck and go really enjoy it. (Applause.)

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