UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

DISCUSSION

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

AND U.S. IMMIGRATION ISSUES

University of California at San Diego
Graduate School of International Relations
and Pacific Studies
Robinson Auditorium

Thursday,
October 7, 1993
1:00 p.m.
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CATHRYN THORUP
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VAN WHITING, JR.
Senior Fellow, Center for U.S./Mexican Studies
Panel of Experts

MICHAEL BERNSTEIN
Chair, Department of History

MILES KAHLER
Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies

COLLEEN MORTON
Vice-President, Institute of the Americas
MR. GOUREVITCH: Attorney General Janet Reno is already well known to most Americans. Born in Miami and raised in Dade County, Florida, Ms. Reno earned her B.A. in chemistry at Cornell, and a law degree from Harvard. In 1978 she became State Attorney for Dade County, was reelected five times, and then served as State Attorney for Florida. It was in March of this year that President Clinton appointed her Attorney General of the United States.

The Attorney General will speak to us today about NAFTA and immigration. Following her talk, I'm hopeful that we'll have some time for questions. Please hold any comments or remarks you may have until the question period. The Attorney General has a very busy schedule today, so at about 1:40 or so she'll leave for the next scheduled event, and the rest of you are welcome to stay and continue our discussion of NAFTA here.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's a very great honor for me, as Dean of the Graduate School of International Relations of Pacific Studies, to introduce and present to you the Attorney General of the United States, Janet Reno.

HONORABLE JANET RENO: Thank you so much, Dean, and thank you for this very warm welcome.

It's a little over seven months ago that I started this
great adventure. Then, I was in Miami, thinking I would begin a new term as State Attorney, and did not think that any of this would ever happen to me. It has been an incredible adventure. The American people give me such hope for the future, and this opportunity to visit with you, to talk about an issue that is of great concern to me, and I think imperative for the nation to consider, is a real privilege for me.

I come today to talk about immigration and the North American Free Trade Agreement. I come to talk with you today about California and the challenges it faces, knowing in some small measure, from Miami, what those challenges may be: immigration, and drugs, and the impact that these forces can have on a state and its economy, and so much of what goes within each of our communities.

I came to Washington from Miami, where I was the daughter of an immigrant, a man who came to this country when he was 12 years old, who was teased for his funny clothes and his funny language, and never forgot what it was to be an immigrant, and spent all of his life as a police reporter for the Miami Herald, reporting the bad news, reporting the hard news, but trying to do it in a way that was respectful of everybody involved, and gentle to all concerned.

I come from Miami, where we have seen the burden of
immigration, in our courts, our court calendars, our
prisons, our hospitals, and our public schools, but we have
also seen the magnificent contribution of immigrants
throughout our community.

The lessons taught me will always be with me. His
example guides me, and I want to try to approach the issues
I face as Attorney General in that spirit. I think the
greatest single issue that I will face as Attorney General
is the whole issue of immigration. How do we maintain this
nation's tradition as a nation of immigrants, while at the
same time balancing the burdens that immigration can place
on a community? One of the jobs as Attorney General
involves the whole Immigration and Naturalization Service,
and the Border Patrol, and I am dedicated to doing
everything I can, in the time that I am Attorney General,
to develop appropriate procedures along the border, with the
Border Patrol, to stem illegal immigration, but I am here
to tell you that the passage of NAFTA, of the North American
Free Trade Agreement, will help me protect our borders.

NAFTA is our best hope for reducing illegal
immigration, in the long haul. If NAFTA passes, my job will
be easier. If NAFTA fails, my job, stopping the flow of
illegal immigrants, will be much, much more difficult, if
not impossible.

I'd like to talk with you candidly about illegal
immigration. The women, men, and children who cross our borders from Mexico take tremendous risks. Illegal immigrants don’t make their perilous journeys so that they can stand in one of our welfare lines, or be treated in some emergency room. No; illegal immigrants come to America for jobs. It’s that simple, and those that would tell you otherwise aren’t speaking the truth; they’re just being political about it.

I want to be clear about this. I want to treat everyone, regardless of who they are, with respect. I want to insure that our laws and our procedures for due processes are carried out, no matter who is involved, but I also want to insist on doing everything humanly possible to protect those borders from those who would ignore our immigration laws.

To focus on the border for a moment, when I came into office I became concerned because I found there were resources on the border that were not being used, because a car didn’t have a radio, there was not a backup procedure, and one of first things that I undertook was to make sure that the resources of the Border Patrol are being used as wisely as possible, and that equipment is not sitting on the sidelines, unused, as we face this tremendous challenge on the border.

Under the President’s leadership, as we consolidate the
resources, we're increasing the size of the Border Patrol. In the coming months, I will be announcing new and innovative approaches to deploying our personnel most effectively along the border. We're also using new technologies, including integrated sensors, enhanced inspection systems, and better communications networks, to sharpen our eyes and ears on the border. Our administration is moving aggressively to shut the loopholes that some use to flout our immigration laws.

The bottom line, though, is this: people come to America illegally because they seek better jobs. We will not reduce the flow of illegal immigrants into this country until these illegal immigrants find decent jobs, at decent wages, in Mexico. Our best chance to reduce illegal immigration is sustained, robust Mexican economic growth. NAFTA will create jobs in Mexico, jobs for Mexican workers who otherwise cross illegally into America. These jobs will help us deal with the immigration problem.

I have read so much since I first heard about NAFTA, pro and con, and I didn’t come to this job as an expert in NAFTA, or international trade, or what should be the content of trade treaties between the North American nations, but the more I read, the more I see an awful lot of political rhetoric, and I think we've got to cut through it. I think we've got to look at what the real facts are, and see the
direct linkage between free trade, a strong economy in
Mexico, and reduced illegal immigration.

In 1986, before NAFTA became such a hot potato,
Congress created the Commission for the Study of
International Migration. After completing its work, this
commission concluded that the creation of new and better
jobs in Mexico, through measures including a free trade
pact, is the only long-term way to reduce illegal
immigration to the United States.

I wanted to find out about this commission. I sent my
people back, and said, "Make sure they know what they're
talking about. Make sure it was a commission that was
balanced, and composed of people who knew what they were
talking," because I don't want to stand up across this
country and talk about ideas, unless I feel like they have
some backing, and I'm satisfied that this report is a
thoughtful, balanced, and fair report.

A University of California study in 1991 also found
that free trade with the United States, and international
economic reforms, would reduce illegal immigration from
Mexico. The study estimated that NAFTA could reduce illegal
Mexican immigration by anywhere between 250,000 and 1.1
million people. Even a NAFTA opponent at the Economic
Policy Institute concluded, in 1991, that NAFTA would reduce
illegal immigration from Mexico by as many as 1.6 million
people by the turn of the century. These studies also found that reduced illegal immigration will produce real wage increases of as much as six percent for low-wage American workers who are now edged out of opportunity by illegal immigration. According to the International Trade Commission, the passage of NAFTA will boost Mexican economic growth by several percentage points. The commission also found that NAFTA will increase jobs and average wages in Mexico.

The failure of NAFTA will only serve to worsen the problem. For example, major agricultural reforms are already underway in Mexico. One of the points raised to me is, "Well, if you get NAFTA, that will increase the people leaving the farms to go to the cities, and that will increase illegal immigration." That’s happening now, because, with or without NAFTA, those agricultural reforms are taking place. People will be going to the cities. If they go to the cities and don’t find jobs, guess where they’re coming? These agricultural reforms in Mexico are going to happen anyway. If NAFTA fails, these urban centers will not be able to absorb the influx. That will mean even greater pressures on our borders.

Let us protect our borders with the most personnel, the best technology that we can muster, but let us also face the facts. A richer, more stable, more competent Mexico is the
only solution, I think, to real, substantial immigration
reform, but such a Mexico is a better partner for America. That is why I think we've got to approve the agreement.

I have another job, probably one that more people think of in connection with the Attorney General, and that's doing something about drugs in the United States. There is no simple solution to the problem of drugs in the United States. It's going to take a balanced approach of focusing on the kingpins, going after the people who traffic in this human misery, making sure that we use our dollars wisely, but there is no doubt that we must also put a far greater emphasis on education, prevention, and treatment, recognizing that drugs are a symptom of a deeper problem in society, and that is that too often we have forgotten and neglected people, and we have failed to make an investment in people. We see it in terms of violence, in terms of drug abuse, and we have got to renew our commitment to people, and to giving our children a chance to grow, as strong, constructive human beings.

In addition, besides these efforts, it's going to take a genuine, sustained cooperation with the government of Mexico. One of the great experiences that I've had in these seven months is to have an opportunity to talk with the Attorney General of Mexico, a very distinguished person with a deep and abiding regard for human rights, a deep and
abiding regard for honest, fair, vigorous law enforcement. He's one of the best people that I've talked to in my whole experience in Washington, in terms of understanding the facts and realities, but refusing to give in to what's gone on before, and with a real commitment to do everything he can in his office to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement in Mexico.

President Salinas and Attorney General Carpizo have increased the Mexican anti-drug budget, they have battled the drug lords, and they've tackled the corruption, but we need to do much more. The passage of NAFTA will cement for decades close ties between America and Mexico. The trade agreement will make cooperation between our countries the norm, instead of the exception. With NAFTA in place, I can work far more effectively with my Mexican counterparts, to insure tough, honest enforcement of our anti-drug laws. Cooperation with Mexico is good for American law enforcement. It will help us do our job, and that's another reason we need NAFTA.

I journey to Mexico next week to address our joint efforts to reduce illegal immigration and drug trafficking. I'm confident that the passage of NAFTA will significantly enhance the cooperative work of America and Mexico.

Before I close, I'd like to speak directly to the people of California. Being a Floridian, born and raised
there, and oftentimes a bit competitive with California, I
nevertheless have admired this state, admired the spirit in
which this state became one of the greatest in the nation.
I have to tell you now, having flown out here three or four
times in these last four months, I just have an incredible
respect for the people who founded this state, who came
across those mountains, or around those oceans. It is a
pioneering state, a state that has never fallen back from
a challenge, never shrunk from the opportunity to do
something better. I come from a state that is in many
respects newer. My city didn't become a city until 1896.
In its first newspaper, published on May 15th, 1896, it
said, "We now have 1,500 people; we should incorporate."
And now look at it. I don't think Miami, South Florida,
Florida, or California want to shrink from challenge, want
to shrink from change, want to shrink from moving towards
the future and the spirit in which this state grew to what
it is today.

I know the last years have been very hard ones for
Californians. Economic forces from within and beyond
California's borders have turned viciously against the
state, yet illegal immigrants have continued to flock here,
and the result has been economic hardship. I understand.
I understand that some are tempted to pull back, to
retrench, to hunker down and wait out the economic storms.
For most people in times of such trouble, this would be the most natural path to take. But that's not a path that Californians, nor indeed the people of this country, have taken, when they have faced challenges in the past.

I think the time has come to understand that we can do so much if we look to the future, look to the future in terms of competition against all comers, both from at home and abroad. We've beaten people before, when we've competed effectively, square-on, and we can do it again. You've got it better in California than anyplace else.

Now you've got to decide whether to support NAFTA, and whether to encourage your representatives in Congress to do the same. I don't think the facts, when I get through all the rhetoric back and forth, and read all the pros and cons, and think it out, I don't think the facts leave doubt as to what should be done. NAFTA will create jobs in Mexico, but it will also create jobs in California. These will be good, high-wage jobs, for, despite what NAFTA's critics say, a job created in Mexico is not a job lost in America. This is so for two reasons.

NAFTA eliminates Mexican trade barriers which now hamstring business. The average tariff, as I understand it, into Mexico, is about 10 percent, two-and-a-half times the barriers going the other way, of about four percent. That can only benefit American business.
Second, more jobs at better wages in Mexico will increase Mexican spending on American-made products. I'll let the facts speak for themselves, as to whether NAFTA will be good for California, good for this country.

Since 1986, as Mexico began to get its economy in order, California's yearly exports to Mexico and Canada have already totaled almost $14,000,000, and trade with Mexico and Canada supports nearly 190,000 jobs for Californians. These markets for California goods are growing. California trade with Mexico has tripled since 1987. Mexicans already purchase more goods from America, per capita, than the Japanese or the Europeans, even though Mexican wages are much lower. As NAFTA causes Mexican incomes to rise; California's exports will rise, right along with them.

NAFTA will expand the profitable Mexican and Canadian markets for California businesses. NAFTA will tear down Mexican trade barriers that now discriminate against California firms. If NAFTA is ratified, California companies will expand their Mexican markets, from satellites to computers, to lumber, to industrial machines.

NAFTA will create good, high-paying jobs for American workers. It's estimated, and I've not seen any significant refutation, that 200,000 new American jobs will be created over the next two years. American companies now caught in the straitjacket of American trade barriers will be freed.
by NAFTA to pursue the growing Mexican market.

American exports to Mexico, which have already skyrocketed from $12,000,000 to $40,000,000 in just five years, will soar even higher because of NAFTA. Under NAFTA, America will become the leading country in the world's largest free trade zone.

These are the facts. Sometimes, though, facts can be obscured by the fear of change, by the worry of a worker afraid for his job, by the fear of the college graduate apprehensive about her future. I understand this fear. I know how difficult change can be. NAFTA does mean change for America, but it is change for the better.

As I have traveled across this country, I have seen a new spirit awakening in America, a spirit recognizing that we cannot continue to provide health care as we have done before, that we cannot continue just to build prisons, but we've got to prevent crime in other ways, by banning guns and addressing the issues that cause crime in the first place, that we have got to develop an educational system that will provide standards of excellence for all of our children, not just a few, that give them a chance to grow, and to become strong, constructive members of our society.

We have got to develop a sense that enables us to react to change, that can let us focus on prevention, rather than crisis. Let us focus on our children, and an investment in
our people, rather than the results of indifference and
neglect, whether it be in prisons, drugs, or low academic
achievement.

The time is here for change, and I think the American
people are committed, committed to doing their very best,
to being their very best, to competing against all comers,
and to showing the world that, given a level playing field,
with Mexico, with the other nations of the world, we can do
a better job, compete better, provide stronger, better
products and services than anybody else.

It has been an incredible journey for me, back and
forth across this country, in the small towns and the major
cities. There are problems, but this nation was never, ever
made great by shirking its problems. This state did not
become the great state that it is by putting its head in the
sand, and saying, "We don't want to compete." This state,
this nation, came out into a new land, into a new world, and
said, "We can do it." And I think we will.

MR. GOUREVITCH: I think we have an opportunity for
questions. I'd like to just suggest only that you make your
questions short, so that we can have as many as possible.
The Attorney General will remain there, and I will try to
help by calling on people.

Who would like to ask the first question?

SPEAKER: I'd like ask a question about a local issue,
specifically the San Diego-Tijuana border. I think we’re all in agreement with what you said, that NAFTA is a good thing for the economies of San Diego and Tijuana. Development depends on them being closely linked, yet now it’s very, very hard to have any commercial or other intercourse across the border, because of very long waits getting into the U.S., long and uncertain waits, and I wonder if you have thought about the problem of having rigorous enforcement of our immigration laws, but still allowing commerce to easily work across the border.

HONORABLE JANET RENO: This past summer, I went to the border. I saw the lines. I heard the problems. I talked with merchants. And one of the points that is of particular interest: the border, and the problems along the border, change as you go up and down the border from here to Texas, but of principal concern in many instances is commercial interchange and economic interchange.

In a bigger vision, I am concerned when I see lines anywhere in the country. A successful business doesn’t become really successful, and doesn’t make its profits, by keeping its customers standing in line, and somehow or another, working together, I think we can address how we stem illegal immigration, while at the same time encouraging good economic exchange that benefits both nations. To that end, we are trying to work. The Immigration and
Naturalization Service is working with Customs. I was amazed when I took office to find that Customs and INS inspectors were oftentimes standing side by side, when one person could perhaps be doing the same functions. We want to make sure that there is no overlap, no duplication, no fragmentation between those services, that we can develop other means and methods for providing prompt economic intercourse, while at the same time addressing the problem.

As you well know, there are no easy answers, and every time I think I've found one solution, then another problem pops up. But somebody asked me when I took office, what did I know about being Attorney General? What did I know about federal issues? It is amazing, after you've been prosecutor in Dade County for 15 years, what you learn in terms of how complex problems can be, but if you work at it hard enough, if you let people know that there's no instant solution, if you look at the resources you have, and try constantly to refine them so that they work together better, you can make a difference, and I'm dedicated and determined to try.

SPEAKER: In respect to the environment in bordering states that will be greatly affected by this, how does the U.S. propose to implement policies, environmental policies, that Mexican and U.S. citizens will be able to abide by?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: There is a side agreement that I think goes a long way towards protecting the environment,
a side agreement to NAFTA that has been negotiated by the
administration. If we don't have NAFTA, we're going to have
nothing that can provide protection where Mexican influences
would affect the border, or the area immediately across the
border. I can't give you these assurances, other than a
very personal one.

The Secretary of the Department of Environmental
Regulation, Carol Browner, comes from the same hometown that
I do. She was Secretary of our Florida Department of
Environmental Regulation, and she was superb. I have every
confidence in her, and I think she refers to NAFTA as the
"the greenest treaty." I think it will give us an
opportunity that we would not have if NAFTA were not passed,
to make sure that some of these issues can be addressed.

MR. GOUREVITCH: The student back there.

SPEAKER: Before I was a student, I worked in an
electronics factory, that the main export to Mexico was our
well-paying jobs and health benefits, to a Mexican
maquiladora plant, where they were able to expose the
workers in their plant in Mexico to toxic chemicals. But
that's not even what I even wanted to ask about. I just got
reminded about it, when you talked about the green effect
of NAFTA. I think of the effect on workers exposed to
trichloroethylene and pentylene (phonetic), and other
chemicals.
What I want to know is, you talked about your Mexican counterparts' belief in human rights, but what about these American unionists who were detained the other day, including one of my fellow graduate students? They were detained on a fact-finding mission, trying to determine what the conditions were for maquiladora workers.

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I am not familiar with the details on it. If you'll give me the details afterwards, I'll be happy to check into it.

MR. GOUREVITCH: There was another hand up, over here.

SPEAKER: My question concerns job retraining. Obviously, jobs are going to go south of the border, to some extent. What policies is the Clinton administration proposing right now for job retraining, about how much monies are in the budget, and what industries are they going to?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: That's a good question, and I can't give you the specifics, but I'll get your name, and try to give you the specifics afterwards, and call you when I get back to Washington, or have somebody call you with the details.

One of the points that has impressed me about the President, with regards to the issues arising from NAFTA, because nobody denies that there will be some jobs lost to south of the border: the fact is that a lot many more jobs,
good jobs, will be created here. Both with respect to jobs
that might be lost as a result, but, more importantly, jobs
that are lost because of whole industries, or products, or
processes becoming obsolete, I have had recent conversations
with the Secretary of Education, and with a number of other
people with the Department of Labor, and the whole emphasis
of the administration is to emphasize retraining as a fact
of life in the United States. With technology developing
as it is, with industries becoming obsolete, or a particular
process becoming obsolete very quickly, I think we are going
to look forward to a future where retraining, job
retraining, will be as much a part of our life as K through
12, and I think everything that Secretary Reich in the
Department of Labor, and the administration, and the
Secretary of Education are trying to do in this regard
focuses on just that effort.

SPEAKER: Attorney General, my name is John Brooks.
In the press in the last week, there have been some
reflections on the enhanced border enforcement program along
the Texas border, and some at least implied criticism of the
damage it has done to the Texas economy, and a suggestion
that an enhanced border program might be better suited to
the California border. I wonder if you could comment on how
our economy might escape what happened in Texas.

HONORABLE JANET RENO: Well, first of all, as I pointed
out in the earlier question, the one that was first asked, I have been told by far better experts than me that the border varies as you go through from one state to another, and there are different situations. The experience in El Paso is one that should be reviewed; number one, to determine how it can be done cost-effectively, long-range; number two, how it can be done without disrupting economic relationships along the border that people want to preserve; number three, how it can be done in close coordination with the government of Mexico, to make sure that there are no tensions or ill-will developing.

We are reviewing that whole experience, to determine what, if anything, we can learn from it, and how it might be applied both here and in other parts of the border, and I think we still have some lessons to learn from it.

SPEAKER: On the gun control, do you think the bill will pass, are you in favor of it, and do you think it will have an effect?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: By "the bill," let me just categorize two bills. I think the Brady bill is going to pass. Wherever I go in the United States, even in areas where I would think that people might shy away from talking about regulation of guns, there is a very firm feeling that you ought to make sure that you have plenty of time to make sure a person is capable and authorized to properly use a
weapon, and I just have a great feeling that if everybody will listen to the people of the United States, and vote what the people of the United States think, it's going to pass, and overwhelmingly.

With respect to the ban on assault weapons, I think, equally, that will pass. It is a ban not on weapons used for sporting purposes; it's clearly defined to provide for a ban on assault weapons not used for sporting purposes. There is no reason for those weapons except to kill people, and they should be banned.

With respect to the crime bill as a whole, because these bills might pass as part of a whole crime bill or separately, I think the crime bill is going to pass. It provides for up to 50,000 additional community police officers. Now, one of the questions raised by some people is, fine, you add police officers, but what are the prosecutors are going to do? What are the courts going to do? What are the prisons going to do?

I have seen so many excellent examples of community policing in South Florida that prevented crime, as well as focused on the really significant motivator or crime in the community, and they were just excellent programs. Now, traveling around the nation, I have found program after program that works, by involving the community, by focusing on community problems and dealing with the community, and
problem-solving, as opposed to just response to 911 calls.

I think those combined efforts will pass. It is one of the administration's high priorities, and I feel strongly about it. At the same time, I think that the whole problem that we have seen with youth violence, I don't think we can suggest that there are any simple solutions. We can ban guns, we could ban guns in the hands of teenagers, but that doesn't mean that those tremendous volumes of weapons that are out there now still won't find their way into the hands of children. I think it's imperative that we focus on prevention programs for violence, as well as everything else.

In the last 10 years, the DARE program and other similar programs throughout the country have proven to me that you can do a lot in terms of education, prevention, and treatment, for drug abuse, and teaching children about drugs, and I was pleased to see that the DARE program is now expanding into violence-prevention programs, as well. There are a number of school systems throughout the country that have conflict resolution programs in their elementary schools, that teach children how to resolve conflicts peacefully. There are peer mediation programs that I've visited around the country.

I think the time has come, whether it be on NAFTA, violence, drugs, the whole issue of job retraining and
wages, that we recognize, and I think the American people understand that there are no easy answers. It’s not going to be solved with 30-second sound bites. It’s not going to be solved by a lot partisan rhetoric. It’s going to be solved by thoughtful people, Democrats and Republicans, the private sector and the public sector, all sitting down, working together, and resolving these issues. I just have a sense that that’s what the American people want, and are quite willing to do.

MR. GOUREVITCH: The student right there on the end.

SPEAKER: In regards to the Mexican worker, a great many American companies move their companies to Mexico because the labor is cheap and there are less restrictions. How can NAFTA assure that more companies won’t move to Mexico, and continue the exploitation of the Mexican worker?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I think that you’re seeing it now. Recently, some German automobile companies relocated their factories, not in Mexico, attracted by low wages, but in the United States, attracted by a better educational system, by a whole system and infrastructure that attracts companies, and I think that you’re going to see it again and again. It’s not just low-wage jobs or low-wage workers that attract a company; it’s the whole polity of living.

SPEAKER: You mentioned in your remarks that NAFTA might help with the drug enforcement. What is your position

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on the number of laws that allow the seizure of property in
the course of trying to interdict these drugs? There's a
moral hazard, that some law enforcement agency might try to
use this seizure to enhance their equipment supply, and so
forth. What's the Attorney General's position on this, and
do you have any plans to help alleviate this problem?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: Asset forfeiture is a remarkable
tool for law enforcement, and I will give you an example.
While I was State Attorney, a friend was telling me how he
had visited a federal prison, talked with somebody who had
been there for five years and was just about to get out, and
said he was 25 years old when he came to prison, knew he was
serving a five-year sentence. It didn't bother him, because
he had three square meals a day, clean sheets, an
opportunity for recreation, an opportunity to do a
correspondence course, working towards his college degree,
and when he got out he'd never have to work again.

I want people to understand that five years in prison
is not a nice business expense, that they're going to be hit
where it hurts, in the pocketbook, and that the proceeds of
their illegal drug deals will be seized whenever possible.

At the same time, as State Attorney, I was concerned,
from a public policy point of view, about a system that
permits you to "retain what you see," as the old bounty
system, and I think it's imperative, and I have asked the
Deputy Attorney General to lead a review of all our asset forfeiture procedures and laws, to make sure that the seizure fits the crime, that there are no abuses, that due process is carried out, and that we have the best asset forfeiture law possible, one that is consistent with due process, one that is fair, but one that is vigorously enforced.

SPEAKER: How difficult is it going to be for President Clinton to get NAFTA approved? What's he going to have to do to get it approved?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I think that it is clear, and it is so heartening to me, because, as I became Attorney General and saw the array of issues that I was going to have to look at, health care fraud in relation to health care reform, and so many different issues, I wondered about it. He has a tremendous grasp of government and of issues. He is terribly caring. I think he is a good communicator, and what he and the entire administration are going to have to do is talk sense to the American people.

When I trip up, it's when I say something that I really can't support, or feel a little uncomfortable about, and people will tell you in my office that I send them back, "No, go check that out. I don't really feel comfortable saying that." The America people want the hard facts. They understand that there's not going to be any simple solution,
but I think with all of us, and, for example, where NAFTA affects me in terms of immigration, where NAFTA affects Carol Browner in terms of the environment, all of us will be talking to the American people. The President will be leading the way. The American people have got to let their elected representatives know how critical it is.

MR. GOUR EVITCH: Last question?

SPEAKER: You talked about job retraining, and I want to back up for a minute. I've seen the effects on foreign investment in China, and the positive effects for the workers there, so I can see that happening in Mexico, as well. But as I came home this summer from two years in China, I watched two factories close in my community, and a lot of talk about job retraining, but nothing was done for these people. Unemployment benefits last longer now, and I believe that Congress has renewed that, but these people have no jobs. They need work, and they're not in retraining. What is the administration's plan to retrain them?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: There are a number of good retraining programs, and if you'll give me the specifics on those two areas, I will have somebody, if you could be right over here, I'll have somebody get your name, and we'll try to give you what information is available in that particular area. You're seeing it in a number of areas, with the whole
base-closing issue. And one of the significant problems: again, there is no easy answer, if you think about it for a moment, because the economic situation is something has produced this, and then you have the base closings on top of that, and you can retrain, but you’ve got to have something to retrain to.

Another significant problem, and people minimize it, but if you think about the long-range consequences of it, you have a significant number of people coming out of prison who are going to be in the community. If you take them out of prison, if they had a drug problem, and you don’t address the drug problem, if they didn’t have a skill that could enable them to earn a wage, that’s another problem. If you send them to prison for committing a crime, and then send them back to the community without addressing the problems, guess what they’re going to do again?

There are significant problems. There are no easy answers, but with respect to those two I’ll try to get some information for you, and have somebody call you. Thank you.

I think President Carter said it best, that this is the time not for political rhetoric and not for demagoguery; this is the time for thoughtful, clear discussions. There are some people who oppose NAFTA, and oppose it very thoughtfully and very carefully. I think they’re wrong, but it is time for important, good, substantive discussion, by
people of good will who are trying their best to make sure that they've got the most accurate facts to address this critical issue.

PRESS: Madame, the traffic across the border seems to be in two different situations. One involves jobs and economies, and one involves crime, such as people who are shipping drugs north, people who, perhaps, are coming across the border into the San Diego or California, to commit crimes and go back across. How do you balance a free trade agreement against the problems that you're still going to have in keeping the border secure from crime?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I think that's the whole reason that NAFTA is so important, because I think that much of the influx is by people who are seeking jobs. If we can develop a strong economy, a strong job base, in Mexico, for Mexican workers, that, as I have said, is the way to address the problem of illegal immigration in the long haul.

With respect to drugs, that's got to be addressed both in the United States, in terms of reducing our demand for drugs, and through education, prevention, and treatment, by going after the major drug pins, by helping nations abroad who may be source countries to build democratic institutions that can help withstand the drug lords, and we're dedicated to trying to do that. I don't want to do anything that would in any way reduce our efforts in terms of drug...
enforcement. I want to see it enhanced by improving our
balance, in terms of education, prevention, and treatment,
as well.

In terms of criminal activity, again, that has been a
problem in the past. It may have been increased now, but
I think developing good relationships with governments like
Mexico will be as important as any other step, in terms of
being able to take effective action against those who would
violate our laws.

PRESS: Would you see still, then, having a very strong
Border Patrol, to maintain the security at the border?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I think that a Border Patrol
that is strong, that is fair, that vigorously enforces the
border to prevent illegal immigration, but that at the same
time honors and respects the due process of all involved,
is going to be an important of our national effort. A
Border Patrol by itself, without addressing the issue of why
people are coming to the United States, will not be the only
answer, however.

PRESS: What do you think of the blockade situation?
Do you think that situation would work for San Diego?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I have not made a judgment on
that yet. We have the results of the El Paso pilot project.
There are issues that have to be addressed, and one of the
things that I want to look at, as I've mentioned before,
people tell me again and again that the border is different
from place to place. Clearly, the border here, where
there's such a close opportunity, is a unique situation that
we're going to have to look at.

Most of all, based on my experience at the border in
August; one of the things that I asked for was a report.
We've got that report now, as to how present resources are
being allocated, what it's going to take, how we deploy
those resources, and, most of all, how do we make sure that
we're deploying them carefully? It was indicated to me that
there were 1,000 people available, but only 100 might be on
the border. Why were only 100? Well, you had to take some
people to court, you had to do something else. Can I get
other people? Can we get other people who are not actually
Border Patrol officers to handle transportation issues?

There are so many issues that we have to address, and
I think we will have a good plan.

PRESS: When do you think your plan will be
forthcoming? You mentioned it in your talk, as well.

HONORABLE JANET RENO: We received the report from the
Border Patrol. We're looking at the El Paso project, and
I would hope that after Doris Meisner, the Commissioner
Designate of INS, is confirmed, and I hope that that will
be shortly, that we will then be able to move ahead, because
I will want her to review it.
PRESS: The Mexican government has expressed some concern about this Operation Blockade. How much of the opinion of that country would affect your decision?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I'm always interested in other people's opinions, and certainly the government of Mexico, and what I would like to do is, in all issues where people express concern, I don't want to ignore it. I want to sit down, and I look forward to the opportunity to sit down with my counterpart in Mexico when I visit there this Monday, and discuss it, and see what we can do to address whatever concerns they might have, both historically and for whatever we do in the future.

PRESS: Ms. Reno, have you made any recommendations already to the President, after your visit to the border last August?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: What I stressed to him was that it was extremely important, and I had seen it in my experience in Miami, every time we had a crisis or after the great influx as a result of the Mariel exodus, there would be a reaction, "We need more police officers," and people would hire more police officers.

I think it's extremely important that when you build something you build it carefully, making sure that people are well-trained, that they are deployed in the most effective manner possible, that it matches machines or
matched with men. It's very frustrating to find somebody sitting behind a desk because there isn't a car to get him out in the field, and there isn't a car because there isn't a radio. I want to make sure that when we do it, we do it right, and carefully, and I think in the long run it gives us a far more effective effort.

PRESS: Are you also looking at Border Patrol training procedures at this point? There's a lot of people who say that the Border Patrol is out of control, in terms of human rights violations or training, is it adequate, that sort of thing.

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I have long concluded that training is one of the most essential ingredients of sound, professional law enforcement, and I think the Border Patrol has been asked to so much. I'm told that in the past a significant number were added, without the opportunity to get good training. If that be the case, I would ask that we make sure we do everything to insure effective training.

There are sometimes bad law enforcement law officers, just like there are bad lawyers, and bad plumbers. There is no one profession or trade that has a lock on the badness issue. But most people in law enforcement that I've met want so to do a good job. It is one of the most difficult jobs there is, anywhere, and particularly on the border. I just have a great respect for the very difficult job that
people face on the border, and I want to do everything I can
to make sure that they have the training that will equip
them to deal with the issues.

PRESS: Do you have a time table on the border blockade
decision; a month, six weeks?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: No. One of the things I learned
quickly after taking office in Miami, and I've learned an
even harder lesson in Washington; you say you're going to
do something as soon as possible, and then something else
happens, or a new piece of information comes in. I just
want to do it as soon as possible, consistent with a good
review, but I would anticipate that it would be shortly,
because I do hope that Doris Meisner will be confirmed as
Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service,
very quickly.

PRESS: Outside of NAFTA, a lot of people have said
that the long, long, multi-billion-dollar war on drugs
failed somewhere along the way. What kind of plans would
you like to see made, to truly fight the war on drugs?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I don't think it was ever really
fought effectively. I think with drugs you need a proper
balance between punishment and prevention. I think you need
to go after the major traffickers, the major distributors,
interrupt the organizations, put them out of commission.
I think you've got to focus on particular problem areas
within a community. You've got to involve the community in terms of these programs. It is very important.

I had a police chief in Miami tell me, "Don't give me any more police officers; give me some place, whether it be a jail or a treatment program, to put these people." It makes no sense for police to respond again and again, as they have, and I don't know about San Diego, but in other areas, to arrest a person who committed the crime because he had a drug problem, or arrest a person for possession of small amounts of drugs, prosecute them, and don't provide treatment, or send them to jail and then dump them back into the community without job training or placement, without addressing their drug problem. That doesn't make any sense.

For that reason, in Miami, on our own, we developed what we called the "drug court," which was first started for nonviolent first offenders charged with possession of a small amount of cocaine. We gave them the opportunity to go to court and participate in the program, which included job training, placement, treatment, and random drug testing, and if they messed up the judge pulled them right back in and gave them appropriate sanctions. It has now been evaluated, so that I can say that I'm not the only person that thinks it's a good idea, and other people are supporting it. There will be a major conference on it in Miami, I think, in the first part of December.
Programs like that, I think, could be expanded, but, as importantly, I think that drugs and violence, teen pregnancy, youth gangs, so much of what we're seeing in America today, are a symptom of a deeper problem in society, and that is that, for too often in these last 30 years, American has forgotten and neglected its children, and I think we have to make a major investment in early childhood care. I think you've seen the President's initiative there, through the Family Leave Act. Health care reform is absolutely essential to it. You see so many correlations between lack of early preventive medical care for children, or prenatal care, and learning deficiencies, failures in school, aggressive behavior down the road. The initiatives by Secretary Riley, in terms of the whole Goals 2,000, the Education Act, the Safe Schools Act, are critical. So much can be done in this nation to give our children a chance to grow as strong, constructive human beings.

PRESS: Madame Attorney General, back to immigration for a second. Why do think there is so much national interest in it now, in illegal immigration, not just on the border states but all through the country? Is the problem so much worse, or why is the interest so high?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I've asked that question myself, and it's puzzling to me, because it's been high on my agenda since I took office in Miami in 1978. I travel around the

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country, and people get very fierce at me, and then they
kind of look at me and say, "Oh, wait a minute. You're from
Miami; you understand." And so it's been part and parcel
of my life, with significant parts of my caseload involving
undocumented aliens.

I think it is of concern because the economy is such
that somebody who doesn't have a job, who watches the impact
on their community, feels it hurts more. So I think that's
perhaps one of the reasons, the whole global economy. Our
borders are shrinking. I think we see it around the world.
You look in Eastern Europe now, and the impact it's having
on Central Europe, and on Western Europe.

It is a problem for the entire world, and I think this
world is being put to new challenges. There are new issues.
We're seeing violence and atrocities that we haven't seen
in a long time, and I think it reminds us all that yes, we
can progress as people of this world, but we have a constant
challenge, particularly with economic challenges, with the
challenges of reconstituted continents, if you will, to
constantly be vigilant to the forces that would divide us,
that we can address these problems, and that it is
imperative that we address it with good will, without
bitterness, without tension, without divisiveness.

PRESS: To follow up on that, Madame Attorney General,
what do you think of the Governor's proposals to deal with
HONORABLE JANET RENO: I’m not familiar with all of his proposals, but one I feel quite strongly about, in terms of limiting or preventing health care for children of illegal aliens, or providing emergency care. I think that just is, again, waiting for the crisis to happen, rather than putting the money up front, in terms of prevention, in terms of disease, and the costly expenditures that would be required in emergency rooms and in medical care, if we don’t provide care up front.

PRESS: To follow up on that, would you support the federal government sending more money to California to help deal with that, since that’s what the Governor says the problem is?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: One of the points that I think is important for us all to consider, before we talk about states, because I have for a long time said, "Look, federal government, if there’s somebody in this country illegally, and I have to prosecute them, you all should have to bear the burden of it. As a state prosecutor, if I get him convicted, you all should have to incarcerate that person," referring to the federal government.

At the same time, I have recognized, and I have certainly seen, the tremendous contributions made by immigrants in Miami and throughout this nation. I think
It's important to realize that in many instances those who have immigrated to this country more than pay their way. Clearly, where they do not are those who have committed crimes, that have been convicted, and are being incarcerated. They are not in any way making a contribution, if you will.

One of the things that I've asked for us to do, and I don't have an answer yet, is to figure out how and what is appropriate for the federal government to do, in terms of assuming the burden for those who are in state prison now, under conviction, who are undocumented aliens. We want to approach it from the point of view of seeing who should be deported, when they should be deported, working with state systems to coordinate our efforts, because now they may serve their prison term, then get out, and then I find Immigration addressing the deportation proceeding, when we could probably do it up front, in a far more effective way.

I think that another area of concern to me is the use of prison cells. A federal court is different than a state court, but a federal prison cell isn't that much different than a state prison cell, and I want to make sure that the prison cells of American are used to house the dangerous criminal, the career criminal, the mean, bad person, as I call them, and that they get put away, and kept away for as long as I can possibly do it. And so we want to work with
state officials to try to achieve that goal.

PRESS: Back to human rights again, to follow up on human rights, many San Diego groups, I think some San Diego groups, I think some international groups, have told me that they gave you some reports last time you were in town, or sent you reports, about human rights abuses along the border, by the Border Patrol, and I have interviewed undocumented immigrants here who have been allegedly beaten by the Border Patrol, some at the Metropolitan Correctional Center downtown, and these cases are pending right now. What do you think of the reports that you've seen? You know, you mentioned earlier there are some, you know, of course, bad officers in every organization, bad apples, but Javier Bacera (phonetic), a congressman from L.A., is suggesting through legislation that there would be an oversight committee for the Border Patrol. What do you think of that, and do you think that the human rights are serious, to address in some way that they're not being addressed right now?

HONORABLE JANET RENO: I think it's important in terms of whether it be the Border Patrol law enforcement, no matter who it is where governmental authority is exercised through force, that, first of all, there be sound training, to teach people how to do it. It is extraordinarily difficult to be a police officer or to be a Border Patrol
official, and to deal with situations that involve the potential for violence, but training, I think, is essential in equipping people with skills necessary to do just that.

They presented to me cases, and then I think forwarded to us additional cases. I have followed up two, at least, to make sure that proper procedures were involved, and I’ve asked that I be kept informed as to the progress on the others. Again, I think that so much of the effort goes to training, but when we see an example of abuse, it be followed up.

From my experience as a prosecutor in Dade County for 15 years, I can tell you that it is extremely difficult to prove cases. Remember, when you file criminal charges you have to prove the case beyond and to the exclusion of a reasonable doubt. You have a dark night on the border, you don’t have any clear witnesses, and it becomes extremely difficult, but it’s something that we want to pursue as vigorously as we possibly can.

MR. GOUREVITCH: Thank you, Ms. Reno.

HONORABLE JANET RENO: Thank you all.

(Whereupon, at 2:00 p.m., proceedings in the above-entitled matter were recessed.)