

1 SPEECH BY THE
2 HONORABLE JANET RENO,
3 ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
4 AT THE
5 NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF BLACK LAW ENFORCEMENT

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7
8 Sunday, July 17, 1994
9 Marriott Hotel
10 Salon E
11 500 E. Broad Street
12 Richmond, Virginia
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P R O C E E D I N G S

7:10 p.m.

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3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you, Chief
4 Anderson.

5 It is a great honor to be here with you
6 today, because back in the early eighties when
7 issues were very difficult for a state attorney in
8 Dade County, it was NOBLE that rallied around me
9 and said, "Yes, you can do the job. Let's work
10 together, and we'll continue to work together. We
11 can work through these hard issues that this
12 community has faced." And I will never forget it.

13 It was Fred Crawford and Chief Anderson
14 and so many other people from NOBLE, both locally
15 and when other representatives came to town and
16 provided me strong support and encouragement.

17 There is something so close to a family
18 in law enforcement that I felt in Miami. We'd
19 fuss at each other sometimes, but there was a
20 network that was pretty incredible with 26
21 different municipalities represented by police in
22 Dade County, but now I find that it extends around
23 the nation.

24 When I can stand here today and see
25 Reuben Greenberg who was chief of police when I

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1 started in Miami, and he was chief of police in
2 Opa-Locka, and when I served with Chief Perry
3 Anderson, it is a very touching feeling for me to
4 think of how our paths continue to cross and how
5 important it is for law enforcement to continue to
6 communicate together, to share ideas, to figure
7 out what's working and what's not working, to
8 understand and support each other. And so it is a
9 very special privilege to be here today.

10 I think, and I've said this consistently
11 since I became State Attorney in Miami, that
12 police officers have the most difficult job of
13 anybody I know. They've got to make legal
14 decisions, most of them not having gone to law
15 school, not being able to plop their feet up on a
16 desk with a law library at their back and take
17 careful study time to figure out what the right
18 legal issues are.

19 They've got to calm out angry crowds
20 oftentimes without having a master's degree in
21 psychology. They've got to deal with emergency
22 situations. They've got to do so much.

23 And the good police officers is but
24 little lower than the angels when you look at what
25 he or she does day in and day out in their

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1 community to bring their community together.

2 My father was a police reporter for the
3 Herald, and I would go to work with him. He never
4 had his office at the Miami Herald. He always had
5 it at the police station because he was a police
6 reporter, and he thought that police officers had
7 a tougher job than newspaper reporters, too.

8 They trusted him and they told him
9 stories, and they'd come up and sit at his desk
10 and tell him the latest of what was going on, and
11 I think that's when I gained my understanding of
12 what policing is all about.

13 Policing isn't just enforcement.
14 Policing is putting the people first, involving
15 people, trusting people, making people feel like
16 they are somebody, that they can make a
17 difference. And NOBLE represents the best of what
18 people should be trying to do in terms of your
19 objectives, your goals for this organization as
20 you try to implement them throughout the nation.

21 But as the local State Attorney I used
22 to figure out that I wished that Washington didn't
23 come to town with five different federal agencies
24 that never seemed to work together, with five
25 different federal agencies telling us all what to

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1 do at the local level, and I hoped that when I
2 came to Washington I could do something to bring
3 people together, to forget who should get the
4 credit, but just let's get the job done.

5 And it has been wonderful to work with
6 Ron Noble in the treasury department, with the
7 various treasury agencies with whom I had such a
8 good working relationship with Miami customs and
9 ATF, and to start working together so that we come
10 together as partners at the federal level.

11 But more rewarding is the opportunity
12 for us as partners to become a partner with local
13 law enforcement. Local law enforcement is on the
14 front line in terms of what drugs are doing to the
15 community and in terms of violence.

16 Ninety percent of the cases involving
17 violence in America are handled by local law
18 enforcement. Violence is the number one crime
19 problem in this nation today.

20 The federal government should be a true
21 partner, providing a two-way street to local law
22 enforcement, exchanging information, providing the
23 leads.

24 We've done a lot in terms of forming
25 this partnership in the last 16 months, but we

1 need to do more. I still come to a community and
2 find that one federal agency has a task force for
3 violent crimes, another federal agency has a task
4 force for violent crimes, and another one has a
5 task force for violent crimes, and they haven't
6 talked together too much. They're working with
7 the locals, but we need to talk together more.

8 We can do so much if we all come
9 together and focus our resources in the right way,
10 understanding what the problems of crime are, and
11 designing strategies that can make a difference.

12 Let's take a community. Let's see who
13 the violent traffickers are. The FBI and the DEA
14 should be sharing with local law enforcement.
15 Maybe the case should be prosecuted in state
16 court. Maybe it should be prosecuted in federal
17 court. Let's make the decision based on what's
18 the right thing to do and not who gets the credit.
19 Let's get the bad guy off the streets.

20 We find increasing evidence by the
21 federal government working with local law
22 enforcement that handles some cases of organized
23 gangs in the federal court because the state law
24 doesn't provide some of the support and assistance
25 that the federal law has.

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1 If it's the right thing to do, we'll
2 take it to federal court. If it's the right thing
3 to do, we'll cross designate people through the
4 local prosecutor's office to do it the right way,
5 but we need to go after those organized gangs
6 because we can see a dramatic increase when you
7 take a whole gang out of a community.

8 But we've got to provide support and
9 assistance to fill in the vacuum that that gang
10 has created to make the difference, knowing that
11 unless we provide comprehensive strategies, it
12 won't make a difference.

13 Let us look at what is drug induced.
14 Dr. Brown has been one of the great, most eloquent
15 hosts for the fact that we've got to focus on
16 these hard-core offenders. We've got to provide
17 follow-up. We've got to provide punishment that
18 fits the crime, but we have got to provide
19 treatment if they have a serious drug problem.
20 We've got to make sense of it.

21 But ladies and gentlemen, where we must
22 all come together is to focus on the problem of
23 youth violence. It may not necessarily be a
24 federal problem, but the federal government cannot
25 stand on the sidelines and do nothing and fail to

1 support you in a comprehensive effort to do
2 something about youth violence.

3 If there's a ringleader, let's take him
4 out and get him the punishment that he deserves,
5 that's fair and fits the crime. If he is a
6 youngster and is coming back to the community,
7 let's provide the aftercare and follow-up, but
8 let's start understanding the dimensions of youth
9 violence.

10 Today the Justice Department has
11 published a report showing that too many children
12 are being killed in America as a result of
13 violence, and too many youngsters are doing the
14 killing. It is an extraordinary problem.

15 But let me share statistics with you
16 that staggers the imagination, that reflects the
17 tragedy in this nation that you and I can no
18 longer tolerate continuing.

19 The Center for Disease Control in 1992
20 determined that there were 17 per hundred thousand
21 deaths for young, white males age 15 to 24 from
22 homicide. There were 37 per hundred thousand for
23 all young males in that age category. There were
24 159 per hundred thousand for young, black males.
25 We cannot tolerate that any longer.

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1 And when we see what the profile of the
2 homicide is, the victim and the perpetrator were
3 acquainted. It usually started from an argument.
4 It usually was not felony-related. It usually
5 involved alcohol, not drugs. It usually was the
6 same sex, same race, and it usually involved a
7 handgun.

8 Knowing these figures, we must do so
9 much more in terms of prevention. And to that
10 end, we are trying to work with communities around
11 the nation.

12 I just had a wonderful tour, thanks to
13 you, Chief, of the Gilpin Court Housing and
14 Development here in Richmond with the mayor and a
15 housing authority director who knew what they were
16 doing in terms of trying to create a comprehensive
17 community initiative.

18 We want to be partners. The federal
19 government, through HUD, and HHS, and Education
20 and Labor, and the other federal agencies working
21 together want to work with communities, not in
22 telling communities what to do, but in rebuilding
23 communities the right way through a partnership
24 where we provide the resources and the community
25 defines its needs, defines its resources, and

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1 says, "Yes, we will be accountable for how we
2 spend these dollars."

3 We have so much to do if we are going to
4 give our young people a strong and healthy future,
5 but I am dedicated in trying to do it.

6 We will not solve the problem by waiting
7 for the homicide to occur. We will not solve the
8 problem by waiting for their first offense to
9 occur. We have got to solve the problem by
10 starting very young when they first are conceived
11 and giving the children of America a chance to
12 grow in a strong and positive way.

13 Through our partnership with local law
14 enforcement, through the federal agencies working
15 together and trying to share information
16 concerning violence, and drug trafficking, and
17 drug abuse, through initiatives with local
18 government, we can do so much.

19 But ladies and gentlemen, we have a
20 golden opportunity right now in these next weeks
21 to provide resources to local government that can
22 make a significant difference.

23 We have a crime bill pending in the
24 Conference Committee. It will be considered this
25 week. It is time for us to all come together to

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1 get that crime bill fashioned in a way that can
2 provide proper punishment that fits the crime,
3 that's fair, community policing where it counts,
4 and prevention programs that can make a
5 difference.

6 This crime bill provides about 28
7 billion dollars, and we'll never see that source
8 of money again for an allocation that can make a
9 difference.

10 Historically, so much of it has gone
11 into prisons, but you and I know that we can't
12 build our way out of the crime problem and out of
13 youth violence with just prisons. This bill
14 provides the balance: A proper segment for
15 prisons, about nine billion dollars for 100,000
16 community police officers on the streets of
17 America where they count, and prevention programs
18 totalling seven to eight billion dollars that can
19 make a significant difference in the lives of the
20 youth of America.

21 We've got to get that bill passed.
22 We've got to come together and understand that
23 anything that's that big, there may be a piece
24 that we don't like, but we have got to get it
25 passed so that we can provide support.

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1 And I can tell you I have seen it
2 working in your community. I have been to
3 Oakland, California last Saturday, walked through
4 a housing development, saw it work. I have walked
5 through south Dallas with community police
6 officers and seen it work. I have been to
7 Worcester, Massachusetts and walked through the
8 community and heard the residents respond.

9 And this afternoon I walked through the
10 streets of Richmond and saw what a difference
11 community police officers who care about their
12 community, what a difference they can make.

13 Chief Greenberg has talked to you about
14 community policing and what is it. I'll give you
15 my definition that is derived not from me, but
16 from my experience working with chiefs of police
17 and with community police officers, both in Miami,
18 and now after 16 months in this nation.

19 Community police officers believe in
20 people, and they put the people first. They go to
21 the residents. They involve the residents in
22 identifying the problems and priorities. They
23 believe in the residents' ability to deal with
24 their own problems if they're given only half a
25 fighting chance up front.

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1 This was so exciting to see what happens
2 when community police linked with the housing
3 authority at Gilpin Court this afternoon. As the
4 chief and the officers walked through, here was
5 the housing authority leader.

6 But more importantly, what they had done
7 was to give leadership training to the citizens of
8 the community so that the citizens were working
9 with the police officer, and the police officer
10 knew all the residents who were the leaders and
11 who were putting it together.

12 As you walked down the street and talked
13 to the people sitting on their stoops, you could
14 see the reaction. It was not suspicion. I
15 suspect every police officer in this room has seen
16 that suspicious look: "Umph. I don't want to
17 talk to you. I don't want to have anything to do
18 with you." Here were people reaching out and
19 saying, "Hi." Here were kids trailing along after
20 the police officers. It probably helped to have
21 the television cameras there, too.

22 But Chief Greenberg pointed out that you
23 can't give up if it doesn't work the first time.
24 You've got to involve the residents. You've got
25 to give them the training. If it's in a housing

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1 development, you've got to have a housing
2 authority that cares and provides sound housing
3 stock and who makes sure that the grounds are
4 maintained and that people can have pride in their
5 life. It requires everybody working together.

6 We have an extraordinary chance here.
7 Can you imagine if we do it right, if we get the
8 dollars so that communities can hire community
9 police officers throughout this land, an intensive
10 program, not just in Gilpin Court, but in east
11 Richmond, in the small cities?

12 I have sheriffs tell me, "Well, all the
13 big cities are going to get it." I have chiefs of
14 police in small cities. There's a chief of police
15 from Florida City here who is in a very tiny,
16 little city, and he can tell you we recognize the
17 needs of small cities as well. It is meant for all
18 America.

19 But here is what is most exciting about
20 this. When I walked the streets of south Dallas
21 with the community police officers, a young woman
22 comes up to me and says, "I didn't trust cops for
23 most of my growing up. I was taught not to trust
24 cops, but when I see these people around, when I
25 talk to them and they care about me, when they

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1 follow through, I am beginning to trust them, and
2 they are becoming my mentors."

3 When I go to South Central Los Angeles
4 to an elementary school, and I ask a school that's
5 40 percent Hispanic, 40 percent African American,
6 and 20 percent Cambodian what they want to be when
7 they grow up, they look over my shoulders and
8 smile and point to the police officers and say, "I
9 want to be a police officer."

10 When I watched three young men take
11 their own time to come to Washington with their
12 community police officers to tell the President of
13 the United States what a difference these men
14 meant in their lives by giving them something
15 positive to say yes to, pulling them back from the
16 brink of crime, community policing is doing
17 something wonderful for America.

18 It is making the police officer the
19 lead. The police officer is on the cutting edge
20 of pulling the community together again.

21 The housing authority officer this
22 afternoon said, "What we need are the community
23 police officers to make the community feel safe
24 enough for the residents to come out and start
25 exercising their voice in government, but then we

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1 need community police officers that can relate to
2 the community."

3 Ladies and gentlemen, you-all know how
4 long it takes to hire police the right way, to
5 train the police the right way. You-all, or there
6 are too many representatives in this room who have
7 seen community policing work the right way who
8 would like to see it expanded.

9 We need to get that bill passed and
10 passed now so we can get the dollars to you
11 October first so we can start hiring police
12 officers who can make the difference and start
13 bringing America together again.

14 But Chief Greenberg also added a number
15 of cautions. One of the problems is if the
16 community police officers do their job, they're
17 going to bring some kids back from the brink, a
18 lot more if it works right and if there are
19 prevention programs to back them up, and if the
20 community comes together to support them.

21 But they are also going to be making
22 arrests, or they are also going to be providing
23 leads for a robbery detective to make an arrest,
24 and they're going to be frustrated, as I suspect
25 the chief's officers have been frustrated by

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1 seeing one of the ringleaders arrested,
2 prosecuted, convicted, sentenced for the right
3 sentence, and then out in 20 to 30 percent of the
4 sentence because we didn't have enough prison
5 cells to house them for the length of time the
6 judges were sentencing them.

7 There are offenders, dangerous offenders
8 who deserve their prison time, and we should make
9 sure there is prison for sentencing. The crime
10 bill provides for grants to state and local
11 governments to provide that.

12 But it also recognizes that there are a
13 lot of people in prison today who don't need to
14 stay there that long. It recognizes that one of
15 the dumb things we do in the United States is send
16 somebody to prison who doesn't have any job
17 skills, who's had a drug problem, who's lived over
18 an open-air drug market where he got in the
19 trouble in the first place, we take him to prison,
20 put him there for three years, and then dump him
21 back into the community with no aftercare or
22 follow-up, no opportunity to come back to the
23 community with a chance of success.

24 This bill, I tried to make sure, will
25 provide for aftercare and support in terms of job

1 training and placement, in terms of aftercare for
2 drug programs, in terms of support mechanisms that
3 can give that young person a chance to come back
4 with a chance of getting off on the right foot.

5 But it also focuses on youngsters,
6 trying to design boot camp programs and youthful
7 offender programs that provide the proper mix
8 between punishment and treatment. They can get
9 a chance to get off on the right foot.

10 Just punishing a 14-year-old without
11 providing support, without providing
12 encouragement, without providing the aftercare,
13 without providing him a chance to know that that
14 albatross is not going to be around his neck for
15 the rest of his life if he gets off on the right
16 foot. We have got to provide the mix.

17 Too many of our people end up in prison
18 because of the drug problem. About five years ago
19 we started in Miami a drug court that operated on
20 the good-old-fashion parent-stick approach that
21 says, "Look you're a first offender charged with
22 possession of a small amount of cocaine. You can
23 go and be prosecuted and punished, or we'll work
24 with you. You'll have to agree to drug treatment,
25 a random drug testing. We'll work with you on job

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1 training and placement, and if you remain drug
2 free for a year, we'll clear your record, and
3 really get you off on the right foot."

4 That program has now been evaluated by
5 independent evaluators who tell me it's working.
6 The crime bill provides for dollars to expand that
7 significantly throughout this nation. And
8 wherever I go, people are asking for the monies to
9 do just that.

10 Ladies and gentlemen, punishment won't
11 be right unless it's fair. I've tried to do
12 everything I could, have every check and balance
13 on me as a prosecutor in Dade County to make sure
14 that the decisions that the criminal justice
15 system made were as fair as they could possibly
16 be.

17 We need to do everything we can through
18 a fairness in sentencing effort at the federal
19 level to make sure that the federal government is
20 doing it the right way, that we can make a
21 difference and insure people, not just punishment,
22 but the fair punishment that fits the crime that
23 applies to all people.

24 But if we do this, that won't be enough.
25 As a prosecutor for 15 years, I had the chance to

1 see too many lives come across my desk. I saw an
2 18-year-old charged with armed robbery, and the
3 presentence investigation, stuff that could have
4 been taken, when he dropped out of school, when he
5 was arrested the first time, when he was truant at
6 eight years old for the first time, when he was
7 left alone by his mother at three and the police
8 officers came and they couldn't do anything
9 because it wasn't bad enough to have him declared
10 a defendant, when he was born and his mother was
11 obviously suffering from a serious drug problem.
12 At each point along the way we could have
13 intervened to make a difference in the life of the
14 youngster that I think about.

15 But in America we have for too long
16 waited before it was too late. It is clear to me
17 from my 15 years of experience that we've got to
18 start up front. Now, people say, "Janet you're
19 just a social worker." And I say to them, "I am a
20 person who has prosecuted and sent people to the
21 electric chair. I have sent people away for life.
22 I have sent people away for significant prison
23 sentences. I am just a person operating out of
24 common sense."

25 I haven't met a victim who would rather

1 have had the crime happen than have it prevented.
2 And if we know how to prevent it, we ought to get
3 at doing it.

4 But unless we make an investment in our
5 children beginning when they were born, we will
6 not have enough prison cells in 18 years to begin
7 to deal with the problem. Unless we make an
8 investment in our children throughout America, all
9 of our children, we will not have a work force
10 with the skills necessary to fill the jobs to
11 maintain America as a first great nation.

12 Unless we make an investment in our
13 children in terms of preventative medical care,
14 our health care institutions will be brought to
15 their knees. Unless we make an investment in our
16 children early on, in early childhood development,
17 we will not begin to have the schools that can
18 match the rest of the world. This is an
19 investment for all America.

20 And it has been so exciting to watch
21 through the leadership of Congressman Scott and
22 others, Congress say, "Look, we're going to make
23 sure there are prevention monies in here as well."

24 The YES program that the President has
25 conceived. The youth employment skills program

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1 that focuses on kids at risk, young people at
2 risk, and provide youth employment skills and
3 placement to these youngsters and young people at
4 risk that will give them a job that can develop
5 skills that will enable them to earn a living
6 wage.

7 The Ounce of Prevention program which
8 will provide resources to enhance what the chief
9 and housing authority and others are doing here,
10 so that police work with social workers, work with
11 public health nurses, with drug treatment
12 specialists, with family service agencies to focus
13 on children at risk. Not when they're 14 and have
14 committed the robbery, but when they're six and
15 are found wandering unsupervised and left alone by
16 a mother who has a serious crack problem who needs
17 help.

18 Let us come together and put our
19 resources where they can really count. Through
20 the GREAT program, the Gang Resistance Education
21 and Training Program that has made a difference in
22 a number of communities, let's expand on that.

23 Let's expand on midnight basketball
24 games. A Congressman from the Midwest said I
25 ought to stop talking about recreation. But when

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1 you look at what these kids can do in midnight
2 basketball, not just in the basketball, but in the
3 educational components that goes with it, and the
4 leadership training that goes with it, you see the
5 difference that can be made.

6 Let's get a crime bill passed that has
7 the GREAT program in it, and this crime bill has
8 it. It has about nine hundred million dollars for
9 the YES program, for job programs. It has the
10 Ounce of Prevention program. It has programs that
11 can provide for the police partnership in the
12 Children Act so that police can expand their
13 efforts beyond what I saw today.

14 It has got the ingredients for programs
15 that can make a difference in mentoring, in
16 conflict resolutions. We can do so much if we
17 bring these resources to bear where they count in
18 communities. But as importantly, it focuses on
19 what I think is where violence begins.

20 In 1978 I did a study of who had been
21 killed in Dade County in the 20 previous years.
22 It went to the medical examiners office, got his
23 agreement, and we had internists go over there and
24 do a study. Forty percent of the people killed in
25 Dade County during that period of time were

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1 involved in some form of domestic violence.
2 Husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend,
3 ex-spouse.

4 We developed a domestic intervention
5 program that slowly evolved into the Domestic
6 Violence Center, and now the Domestic Violence
7 Court. We have got to interrupt the cycle of
8 domestic violence. No longer can police and
9 prosecutors around this country think it a
10 diminutive crime. We have got to focus on it
11 because unless we end violence in the home, we are
12 never to going to end it on the streets of this
13 land.

14 The child who watches his father beat
15 his mother comes to accept violence as a way of
16 life, and we see too often now it being handed
17 down from one generation to another.

18 We can make the difference by developing
19 programs. And this bill provides for significant
20 dollars for grants to state and local governments
21 to fund police units, to funds special courts, to
22 fund domestic violence centers, to fund innovating
23 means by attacking the problem.

24 We have the chance to get this bill
25 passed now. And I ask you to join with me in

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1 working through any differences to come up with
2 something that can best serve America. You have
3 proven the programs talked about in that bill
4 work. Let's go forward and get them done.

5 This is an exciting time in the United
6 States. You see so many youngsters now being
7 involved in good, positive programs. You see so
8 many success stories. You see so many people
9 turning their lives around. You see so many
10 youngsters with hopes and dreams of being
11 somebody, of making a difference, of wanting to be
12 involved and caring.

13 I just met a young man who volunteers as
14 a tutor over at the housing center. All of us can
15 make a difference if we will come together, put
16 aside the partisan political rhetoric, put aside
17 our differences and work through to solve our
18 problems of mutual concern.

19 I look forward to working with NOBLE on
20 this effort and together for many years to come.
21 Thank you for all your support.

22 (Applause and of attorney general Reno's
23 remarks at 7:55 p.m.)

24
25

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
CITY OF NORFOLK, to wit:

I, Arlene Martin-Johnson, do hereby
certify that the foregoing pages are a true and
correct transcript of my Stenotype notes of the
proceedings had at the time and place in the
caption mentioned.

This _____ day of _____, 1994.

Arlene Martin-Johnson, Notary Public

My term of office expires October 31, 1996.

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