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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE SWEARING IN OF  
ROGERS C. B. MORTON AS SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon to pay my respects to a vital department of the government and to a devoted public servant I have worked with and respected for many years.

This is a very special day for Rogers Morton. In addition to becoming Secretary of Commerce, with its attendant duties and responsibilities-- I have also asked him to continue as Chairman of the Energy Resources Council, with all its attendant duties and responsibilities.

I have known "Rog" Morton as a Congressman, as a party chairman, and as a Cabinet member. In each of these capacities, he has done an outstanding job. I know he will continue this string of successes as Secretary of Commerce.

With the end of the Vietnam era, tragic as it was, it is time for America to look ahead--to move forward with a new agenda for the future--an agenda designed to solve this nation's problems as we move into its third century.

A top item on that agenda is the restoration of a dynamic and effective economy and a revitalized free enterprise system. And the Secretary and staff of the Department of Commerce must play a key role in bringing this about.

Let us not kid ourselves. Despite the enormous material progress and individual freedom we have attained in America through the free enterprise system, confidence in the system is today considerably lower than it should be.

One reason is inadequate education and lack of understanding of the free enterprise system which has produced for our citizens the highest standard of living in the world today. Because it has worked so well for so long for so many, we have tended to take it for granted. We can do so no longer.

We must make sure we do not lose this legacy of freedom and progress and prosperity through apathy or indifference--or even ignorance.

And that is where this department and this man who is about to be sworn in as its new Secretary come in.

Rog Morton, it is up to you and your Department--along with the business community--to get the facts to the people, to re-sell Americans on the most productive and most responsive economic system the world has ever seen. It will also be your task to help restore the confidence of the business community in government and the public confidence in the business world. I will do my part. As you take over these new and vast responsibilities, Rog, I want to wish you success in pursuing this vital new goal. I am fully confident that this department, and its new Secretary, have the energy, the ability, the character and the integrity to do this important job.

Thank you very much.

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