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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND

ROGERS C. B. MORTON
AT THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY
OF

ROGERS C. B. MORTON
AS
SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

12:22 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Vice President, Rogers Morton, distinguished Members of the Congress, Mr. Justice Powell, members of the Department of Commerce family, ladies and gentlemen:

I think there is some significance to my coming here. It has a dual purpose, one to indicate my great interest in the Department of Commerce, as the former Secretary has said, and my great interest in one of my closest and best friends, Rog Morton.

I do want to pay my respects to a very vital department of the Government and to a devoted friend of mine. This is a very special day for Rog Morton. In addition to becoming Secretary of Commerce, with its many duties and great responsibilities, I have also asked him to continue as the Chairman of the Energy Resources Council, with all of its very essential and vital responsibilities.

I have a feeling there is going to be an awful lot of energy conserved, but I am not sure that it is going to be done by Roger. Because of this dual responsibility, Rog will be wearing two hats, and from my knowledge of him over a long period of time, he can do it.

I don't mean he has a big head. (Laughter)
I think he just has plenty of talent.

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I have had the privilege of knowing Rog as a Congressman, Party Chairman, a Cabinet member, and in each capacity, he has done an outstanding job, and I am absolutely confident he will continue this string of success as the new Secretary of Commerce.

With the end of the Vietnam era, tragic as it was, I think it is time for America to look ahead, to move forward, as I have said before, with a new agenda for the future, an agenda designed to solve the Nation's problems as we move into this third century in our great history.

A top item on that agenda is the restoration of a dynamic and effective economy and a revitalization of our free enterprise system as we know it and we love it in America.

The Secretary and the staff of the Department of Commerce must play a very key role in bringing this about. Let's not kid ourselves. Despite the enormous material progress and the individual freedom which we have attained in America through the free enterprise system, confidence in that system today is considerably lower than it should be.

One reason is inadequate education and a lack of understanding of the free enterprise system, which has produced for all of our citizens the highest standard of living in the history of the world. Because it has worked so well for so long a time, we have tended, unfortunately, to take it for granted. I don't think we can do that any longer.

We must make sure we do not lose this great legacy of freedom, 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 your new Secretary comes in.

Rog Morton, it is up to you and your department, along with the business community, to get the facts to the people, to resell Americans on the most productive and the most responsive economic system the world has ever seen.

It will be your task, Rog, to help restore -- and I am positive you can do it -- the confidence of the business community in Government and the public confidence in the business world.

Let me assure you I will work with you in that vital effort.

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As you take over these new and these very vast responsibilities, I want to wish you the very best, the best success in pursuing these new goals. I am fully confident that this Department, its new Secretary, have the energy, the ability and the character and the integrity to do this important job.

It is now my privilege and pleasure to ask Justice Powell to administer the oath to our new Secretary of Commerce.

(Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., administered the oath of office.)

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SECRETARY MORTON: Thank you very much, Mr. President, Members of the Congress, colleagues in the Cabinet, ladies and gentlemen:

Fred, I deeply appreciate your kind introduction. It reminds me a little bit of a story Bryce Harlow tells. Bryce always says, "You know, when I started out in Government, I was exactly Rog Morton's size." (Laughter)

I was very much afraid that the President was going to allude to the fact that I might have two heads. (Laughter) But he did not, and I appreciate it.

First, Mr. President, let me say I think your concept of a challenge for the future here as we pass our 200th birthday--going into really laying the groundwork and the cornerstone for a new century for American progress--that the challenge is certainly something that all of us -- all Americans -- should accept.

Rest assured that I will do my part, wherever I can.

I cannot pass this opportunity, sir, to thank the people of the Department of Interior, with whom I have worked over the last four years and four months, and to congratulate them on their accomplishments.

Let me say with excitement equal to the gratitude that I feel toward all of them, I am looking forward to working with the great people of this Department. Bear with me, be patient, I will need a lot of learning.

I am looking forward to working with you, both as teachers and as partners, in the great challenge that the President has laid out for us.

There is no reason in America for us to scrap what has been great and what has been unique in the development of world civilization. Just because every race that we run is not perfect, and just because there are a few rainy days among the sunny ones, let's not overlook or forget the great heritage and wonderful accomplishments many people have died for and striven for all of their lives.

Let's build a second America that on its 300th birthday can look back with great pride and accomplishment.

President Ford, your leadership, your faith, your devotion to duty and the greatness, really, of your spirit, I think, will give us guidance to do just that.

END

(AT 12:32 P.M. EDT)