

Biographical Information
Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland

When Bob Bergland accepted President Carter's offer to become Secretary of Agriculture, he did so against the advice of his father and that of the editor of the leading Minnesota farm magazine. Selmer Bergland said that he thought his son was a "fool" to accept the job. Bob Rupp, editor of The Farmer, St. Paul, while admitting that "Bob would make a good secretary," went on to point out it might not be wise for him to accept a post administering farm programs "when his experience is needed in formulating farm policy."

But Bob Bergland chose to accept advice given to him by his father much earlier. After losing his farm during the great depression, Selmer Bergland told his children, "Politics is power. Get in it."

Mr. Bergland is the first farmer to serve as Secretary of Agriculture since Claude R. Wickard, who was named to the post by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Mr. Wickard served from 1940 until 1945. Mr. Bergland was nominated Secretary of Agriculture by President-elect Jimmy Carter on Dec. 20, 1976, he was confirmed by the Senate on Jan. 20, 1977, and he was sworn into office Jan. 23.

Born in Roseau, Minn., July 22, 1928, near the site of his present farm, Mr. Bergland was educated in the Roseau public school system and is a graduate of the University of Minnesota's two-year School of Agriculture. He is married to the former Helen Grahn, also a Roseau native. The couple has six children and two grandchildren.

He purchased his then 260-acre farm in 1950. The farm now consists of 600 acres, produces small grains and lawn seed.

Mr. Bergland became chairman of the Minnesota Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service in 1961, the year former Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman became Secretary of Agriculture. Two years later Mr. Bergland moved to Washington to serve as Midwest director for USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. He served in that post until 1968.

Although he lost his first bid in 1968 to represent Minnesota's 7th Congressional District, he was successful on his second try and was re-elected in 1972, 1974, and 1976.

In the House of Representatives, Congressman Bergland served as a chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Credit and as a member of the Agriculture Committee's Sub-committee on Livestock and Grains, and Dairy and Poultry. When named Secretary of Agriculture, he was the ranking Democratic member of his two subcommittees on the House Small Business Committee: Small Business Administration Legislation, and Commodities and Services.

Mr. Bergland also has served on the executive committees of the Congressional Rural Caucus and the Democratic Study Group, was a congressional advisor to the 17th session on the Food and Agriculture Organization Conference in Rome in 1973 and was a delegate from the House of Representatives to the United Nation's Conference on Trade and Development in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1976.

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