

Bob Bergland, Agriculture Secretary Under Carter, Dies at 90

By Robert D. McFadden

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Bob Bergland, a Minnesota Democrat who as a liberal congressman and President Jimmy Carter’s secretary of agriculture was a zealous advocate for America’s consumers as well as its farmers, died on Sunday in his hometown, Roseau, Minn. He was 90.

Mr. Bergland’s son, Franklyn, said he died at LifeCare Roseau Manor, a nursing home where he had resided recently.

A descendant of 19th century Norwegians who settled in the blizzard country of northern Minnesota, Mr. Bergland experienced poverty, unemployment and, as a young man, was forced to leave his farm and go to Florida to find work. Later, representing a vast, largely rural district in Congress from 1971 to 1977, and then as a member of the Carter cabinet until 1981, he spoke passionately about his hard-pressed constituents.

“I know what it’s like to be poor,” he told The New York Times in 1978. “I know those times when we lost a crop and couldn’t find steady work around Roseau. I couldn’t buy milk for my kids then. I’m terribly upset when people who don’t know what they’re talking about criticize the poor who are struggling and want to work.”

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