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Lauding the action of the Senate today in confirming President Nixon's nomination of Morris Thompson as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton said he was confident Thompson would provide the leadership to begin "a new era for American Indians."

“We want to work together with the Indian people in accord with the President's historic message to the Congress in July 1970," Secretary Morton said. "The policy of this Administration will continue to be one of advancing the opportunities of our Indian citizens for self-determination, without termination of the special federal relationship with recognized Indian tribes.

"As an Indian himself and as an experienced administrator both on the regional level and at top policy levels, Morris Thompson will, I am confident, bring to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to the Indian people the leadership so urgently needed to carry this program forward."

Secretary Morton said that Thompson would report directly to him and function as if he were an assistant secretary on a comparable level of responsibility and authority with the current assistant secretaries in the Interior Department. Legislation is now pending before the Congress to establish the position of Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

Thompson, who was nominated for the post by President Nixon on October 30, will be the youngest man, at 34, to serve as Commissioner. Thompson is an Athabascan Indian born in Tanana, Alaska. Since March 1971 he served as Alaska Area Director of the Bureau. Prior to his Alaska assignment, he had been a special assistant for Indian Affairs to former Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel.

Thompson succeeds Louis R. Bruce, whose resignation as Commissioner became effective in January 1973. Marvin L. Franklin was named to the position of Assistant to the Secretary for Indian Affairs on February 7, 1973, and had been responsible since that time for the Department's Indian programs which will now be directed by Thompson.