They chose to misrepresent their product's country of origin and over 200 people were poisoned as a result. However, the President, distressed by the news, decided to take immediate action. The administration set up an expert team to assess the situation and to develop a plan to ensure the safety of future food supplies.

In the meantime, the investigation continued. The Department of Health and Human Services, working closely with the Department of Agriculture, began to gather evidence. They found that the strawberries had been grown illegally in Mexico, and that the importers had deliberately concealed this fact.

The President called for a full investigation to be conducted. The House of Representatives voted to authorize an independent investigation by a select committee of the House. The Senate also took action, creating a committee to examine the charges.

As the investigation progressed, it became clear that the issues went far beyond the strawberries. There were allegations that other food products had been similarly mislabeled. The impact of this was enormous, both in terms of public health and the economy.

In response, Congress passed a bill that established stricter labeling laws and increased oversight of food imports. The President also signed an executive order establishing a new agency to oversee food safety, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The impact of this event on the strawberry industry was significant. The company involved, Andrew & Williamson, was forced to recall all of its products and to pay a large fine. The company's CEO stepped down.

The investigation also led to changes in federal laws. A new law was passed that required all imported food products to be labeled as originating from the country of production.

This was a turning point for the industry, and for the government's approach to food safety. It highlighted the need for a more robust system of checks and balances, and led to a new focus on international trade and food security.
Breed ordered his secretary to remove copies of her administrative report from USDA files.

But Gardei's April 3 statement to USDA investigators makes no mention of any calls in October from Breed or any other California strawberry leader.

Neither Gardei nor Breed have been available for interview. Breed denies in his statement to the inspector general's office that he sought to cover up misused USDA investigators. His secretary denied in her statement that he ordered her to remove Gardei's administrative report from USDA files.

While Michigan's Abraham had hoped to have a hearing soon to explore USDA handling of the strawberry purchase and probe, congressional aides say it appears as if no hearing will be held this year.

Congressional aides say USDA Inspector General Roger C. Viadero has asked to meet privately with interested legislators about the issue.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, this information, if true, is very inconsistent with what was asserted by Federal officials at a June 5 hearing of the full Agriculture Committee. There, Federal officials testified at the hearing that they knew nothing more than nondescript and vague complaints of potential violations at Andrew & Williamson, the San Diego company which sold the fruit to the Government for school lunches.

If the newspaper article and witness allegations are true, it would certainly raise serious questions as to whether the full committee and this Senate were misled. I believe we are owed an explanation and suggest the Government agencies responsible for protecting us are doing their job.

This dangerous incident, the poisoning of Michigan children by their own School Lunch Program, should concern us all, Mr. President. The company involved seems to have demonstrated a reckless disregard for public safety.

To that end, I have introduced legislation which makes such conduct a felony with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine of $250,000 per count. This change in law will ensure that individuals who intentionally misrepresent their goods will now suffer the appropriate consequences of their actions. The recent outbreaks of hepatitis A, cyclospora and E. coli demonstrate that a new commitment to food safety is sorely needed in this country. I will continue working to see that the appropriate measures are taken to protect the American food supply the safest in the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.  

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CHARLES ROSSOTTI, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE COMMISSIONER OF INTERNAL REVENUE.

The Senate continued with the consideration of the nomination. Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I yield such time as he may require to my distinguished friend and colleague on the Finance Committee, the Senator from Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I thank the ranking member, the Senator from New York, for recognizing me.

I take this time just to say a couple of words about the President's nominee to be the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner, Mr. Charles Rossotti, who I enthusiastically support. I think he is experienced in the good choice. It is interesting to note that this appointment will be the first nonlawyer to head the Internal Revenue Service since World War II. That might not make a lot of waves in some areas, but I think the problems we are experiencing with the Internal Revenue Service that this is a very positive qualification at the current time.

I say that because I think that many of the problems that we heard in the days of hearings that we had in the Senate Finance Committee about the Internal Revenue Service were not so much tax problems but human problems; not so much a problem about how much money was being collected and where it was being collected or where it was not being collected from or where it was not being collected from, but really more evidence was given to us about mishandling of individuals, mistreatment of individuals, setting quotas for Internal Revenue Service agents that they had to meet in order to be sure that they were placed in the right direction. They should not be judged just on how much money they bring in. They should be judged on a whole series of factors on how they perform their jobs, not the least of which is how they treat the people they work for—the taxpayers of this country.

I think some of our colleagues have probably had experiences in respective States where State troopers are promoted and evaluated based on how many tickets in 1 day or they were going to be looked upon as not doing their job properly. That is something that I think is a mistake.

Mr. Charles Rossotti has indicated that that will not be the basis for evaluating and determining performances of agents. I think that is very important.

I think some of our colleagues have probably had experiences in respective States where State troopers are promoted and evaluated based on how many tickets in 1 day or they were going to be looked upon as not doing their job properly. That is something that I think is a mistake.

Mr. President, this information, if true, is very inconsistent with what was asserted by Federal officials at a June 5 hearing of the full Agriculture Committee. There, Federal officials testified at the hearing that they knew nothing more than nondescript and vague complaints of potential violations at Andrew & Williamson, the San Diego company which sold the fruit to the Government for school lunches.

If the newspaper article and witness allegations are true, it would certainly raise serious questions as to whether the full committee and this Senate were misled. I believe we are owed an explanation and suggest the Government agencies responsible for protecting us are doing their job.

This dangerous incident, the poisoning of Michigan children by their own School Lunch Program, should concern us all, Mr. President. The company involved seems to have demonstrated a reckless disregard for public safety.

To that end, I have introduced legislation which makes such conduct a felony with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine of $250,000 per count. This change in law will ensure that individuals who intentionally misrepresent their goods will now suffer the appropriate consequences of their actions. The recent outbreaks of hepatitis A, cyclospora and E. coli demonstrate that a new commitment to food safety is sorely needed in this country. I will continue working to see that the appropriate measures are taken to protect the American food supply the safest in the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.  

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CHARLES ROSSOTTI, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE COMMISSIONER OF INTERNAL REVENUE.

The Senate continued with the consideration of the nomination. Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I yield such time as he may require to my distinguished friend and colleague on the Finance Committee, the Senator from Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I thank the ranking member, the Senator from New York, for recognizing me.

I take this time just to say a couple of words about the President's nominee to be the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner, Mr. Charles Rossotti, who I enthusiastically support. I think he is experienced in the good choice. It is interesting to note that this appointment will be the first nonlawyer to head the Internal Revenue Service since World War II. That might not make a lot of waves in some areas, but I think the problems we are experiencing with the Internal Revenue Service that this is a very positive qualification at the current time.

I say that because I think that many of the problems that we heard in the days of hearings that we had in the Senate Finance Committee about the Internal Revenue Service were not so much tax problems but human problems; not so much a problem about how much money was being collected and where it was being collected or where it was not being collected from or where it was not being collected from, but really more evidence was given to us about mishandling of individuals, mistreatment of individuals, setting quotas for Internal Revenue Service agents that they had to meet in order to be sure that they were placed in the right direction. They should not be judged just on how much money they bring in. They should be judged on a whole series of factors on how they perform their jobs, not the least of which is how they treat the people they work for—the taxpayers of this country.

I think some of our colleagues have probably had experiences in respective States where State troopers are promoted and evaluated based on how many tickets in 1 day or they were going to be looked upon as not doing their job properly. That is something that I think is a mistake.

Mr. Charles Rossotti has indicated that that will not be the basis for evaluating and determining performances of agents. I think that is very important.

I think some of our colleagues have probably had experiences in respective States where State troopers are promoted and evaluated based on how many tickets in 1 day or they were going to be looked upon as not doing their job properly. That is something that I think is a mistake.

Mr. President, this information, if true, is very inconsistent with what was asserted by Federal officials at a June 5 hearing of the full Agriculture Committee. There, Federal officials testified at the hearing that they knew nothing more than nondescript and vague complaints of potential violations at Andrew & Williamson, the San Diego company which sold the fruit to the Government for school lunches.

If the newspaper article and witness allegations are true, it would certainly raise serious questions as to whether the full committee and this Senate were misled. I believe we are owed an explanation and suggest the Government agencies responsible for protecting us are doing their job.

This dangerous incident, the poisoning of Michigan children by their own School Lunch Program, should concern us all, Mr. President. The company involved seems to have demonstrated a reckless disregard for public safety.

To that end, I have introduced legislation which makes such conduct a felony with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine of $250,000 per count. This change in law will ensure that individuals who intentionally misrepresent their goods will now suffer the appropriate consequences of their actions. The recent outbreaks of hepatitis A, cyclospora and E. coli demonstrate that a new commitment to food safety is sorely needed in this country. I will continue working to see that the appropriate measures are taken to assist the USDA, FDA, and Centers for Disease Control in their efforts to keep America's food supply the safest in the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.