

discriminated against, that you be disadvantaged. If in fact you had those requirements, those prerequisites, then Charlie Hayes was indeed your champion and your leader.

Charlie Hayes served gallantly in this Congress. He was the first trade union leader to become a Member of Congress. He served gallantly on behalf of the people who reside in the First Congressional District. He was indeed a man whose every step was on behalf of the poor and the downtrodden, whose every act as a Member of this body, whose every act as a member of the trade union leadership movement, whose every act as an adult individual, his every act was characterized by his commitment to humanity, to the upliftment of humanity.

Mr. Speaker, I am very, very saddened as I stand before this body to deliver these few words of announcement that my friend, your friend, your colleague, Charlie Hayes, has passed on.

Mr. Speaker, as I sit back and I reflect for a moment on what Charlie is doing now in the assembly of God, in the heaven, I too know that he is looking here among us, and he is seeing and observing some of the things that are occurring here. I know that he is particularly saddened by that. I can just vividly imagine hearing his voice from the heaven calling down upon this body, addressing us all and saying, "Friends, colleagues, regular order."

SUPPORTING COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN LABELING LEGISLATION ON IMPORTED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, at a later point I will have something to say about our distinguished colleague, Mr. Hayes of Illinois, with whom I had the great pleasure of serving for many years.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to inquire of families in America that if they this past week bought strawberries in the grocery store and then one of their children became ill from eating those berries, would they be able to find out, as a U.S. consumer, where those berries had been produced and who had processed them? The answer is no, they would not be able to find that information out, when in fact consumers in our country have a right to know where their food is coming from.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a country-of-origin labeling bill on imported fresh fruits and vegetables. I also rise in support of labeling for frozen fruits and vegetables. Our distinguished colleague, the gentleman from California, Mr. SONNY BONO, has introduced the Imported Produce Labeling Act of 1997. I am pleased to join him as an original sponsor on that bill, to require all fresh fruits and vegetables to be clearly identified as to their country

of origin. With all the pesticides used in other places and the difficulties with border inspection, this is the least we can do for our people.

Also, we have written this week to the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Rubin. The Treasury Department has been dragging its feet for well over a year on the labeling of imported frozen items, which of course these particular strawberries, on which hundreds of our people have become ill, were imported berries that were processed and frozen. There is absolutely no reason that as we approach the year 2000 we cannot take better care of the American people.

A recent poll showed that nearly 70 percent of our people want to know and favor country-of-origin labeling for both fresh and frozen commodities.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. SMITH] for giving me the opportunity to place this on the Record.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of country of origin labeling on imported fruits and vegetables—both frozen and fresh.

Nearly every consumer product has origin labeling except the produce we eat.

Consumers have a right to know where their food is coming from.

The use of pesticides in other countries and border inspection practices raise even more questions in the minds of consumers about the quality and health risks of imported fruits and vegetables.

I am pleased to be a sponsor of the Imported Produce Labeling Act introduced by our colleague from across the aisle Representative SONNY BONO. This bill strengthens existing law to require all fresh fruits and vegetables to be clearly identified as to their country of origin.

This bill simply closes existing loopholes that allow fresh fruits and vegetables to be exempt from country of origin labeling requirements, by requiring that the products themselves—or the bins, display cases or containers holding the commodity—be labeled at the retail level with their country of origin.

It is critical that we clearly define the country of origin on all fruits and vegetables coming in this country so that we can effectively trace back bad lots.

The press has been full of reports about frozen strawberries with misleading country of origin information which were associated with an outbreak of hepatitis among school children participating in the National School Lunch Program. Commodities purchased for the lunch and breakfast programs are required by statute to be grown in America, unless no domestic product is available. Based on news reports, it appears that the processor may have falsified documentation to make Mexican strawberries appear to be American produce. As a result of this deception, thousands of children are threatened with disease.

On April 3, I wrote the Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin to urge him to proceed with the enactment of a final Customs Service Regulation which would clarify the requirements for country of origin labeling for frozen imported produce.

Last July, Customs published a proposed regulation clarifying that frozen imported

produce be clearly labeled as to country of origin on the front panel of packages, in permanent ink. In its Federal Register notice regarding the proposal, Customs declared that the clarification in policy was necessary because current standards allow variations in labeling which could create confusion or be misleading.

Current law requires imported frozen produce to be clearly labeled as to country of origin. But it appears to be a common occurrence for frozen produce that is brought into the United States to be repackaged without the required labeling. In other instances in which packages are labeled, the size of type, or poor quality of ink, make it impossible for consumers or Customs inspectors to verify compliance with the law. Customs has warned that their responsibility in verifying that all packages sold in this country comply with the law is made extremely difficult in the absence of clear standards for where the country of origin label is to be displayed.

Despite the importance of this issue and the right of all Americans to be informed about where the produce they buy for their families is from, Customs' proposed regulation received little public attention and few public comments during the comment period last summer. In fact, only about 50 individual comments were received: the majority of these were from food growers and processors in other countries.

However, American consumers and American food growers and processors appear to feel strongly about this issue. In fact, a recent national poll conducted after the comment period closed found that nearly 70 percent of American consumers would favor a Government regulation requiring country of origin labeling, and 73 percent stated that they would most likely notice the label if it appeared on the front panel of package. Perhaps most importantly, the survey found that 83 percent of consumers had never noticed a country of origin label on a package of frozen vegetables. These facts would seem to make the case for enactment of the Customs proposal crystal clear.

The recent news reports of thousands of American school children put at risk of hepatitis from frozen strawberries, imported from Mexico but misidentified as being product of the United States, serves as a dramatic reminder of how important it is for all American consumers to know where the food they eat comes from. The Customs Service must enact country of origin labeling on frozen fruits and vegetables immediately.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JENKINS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. SMITH] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, for everybody's information, I will be taking slightly less than 20 minutes for this presentation. I think this is the time of year when every American, Mr. Speaker, should be looking at their income tax returns and seeing how much they pay in taxes. They should be looking at their payroll check, if