

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 697

By Holt

A RESOLUTION to honor the life and contributions of Dr. George Washington Carver.

WHEREAS, during the course of recorded human history, a few inspired and gifted individuals have looked around them at the everyday natural artifacts of creation and have seen what others could not see - the potential for new uses and new understandings which, when harnessed, radically changed the way people live; and

WHEREAS, in 1864 or 1865, on the farm of Moses Carver, near Diamond Grove in Southwestern Missouri, George Washington Carver was born during the last days of the Civil War; never knowing his father and losing his mother following capture by Confederate night-raiders; he and his brother were subsequently raised by Moses and Susan Carver; and

WHEREAS, struggling for education, he worked as a farm hand and studied at a one-room school house in Newton County, Missouri; he went on to attend high school in Minneapolis, Kansas, and, at age 25, was admitted to Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, as its first black student; and

WHEREAS, wishing to pursue a career in science, he transferred to Iowa Agricultural College (now Iowa State University) in 1891 and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1894 and a Master of Science degree in bacterial botany and agriculture in 1897; after graduation, Mr. Carver served on the faculty as its first African-American instructor, teaching classes about soil conservation and chemurgy; and

WHEREAS, in 1897, Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute for Negroes in Alabama, persuaded George Washington Carver to accept a position serving as Tuskegee's Director of Agriculture, where he served until his death in 1943; and

WHEREAS, looking about him at the scene of postwar southern agriculture, with its poor soil-conservation practices and reliance upon soil-depleting cultivation of cotton and tobacco, Carver drew upon his genius to persuade southern farmers to alternate their traditional crops with soil enriching crops of peanuts, peas, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and pecans; and

WHEREAS, from Alabama clay, George Washington Carver produced pigments, paints, powders, and stains; he created three hundred products from the peanut, including plastics, paper, flour, milk, cream, and cheese; one hundred and eighteen products, including starch, tapioca, mock coconut, and flour were produced from the sweet potato; cotton formed the raw material for paving blocks, insulation boards, cordage, and paper, and Carver launched the continuing growth of soybean products; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Carver, who received an honorary doctorate from Simpson College in 1928, and became an honorary member of the Royal Society of Arts in London, obtained patents on only three of his products; "God gave them to me.", he would say about his ideas and inventions, "How can I sell them to someone else?"; and

WHEREAS, George Washington Carver was a man of deep religious conviction, as revealed in his correspondence and conversation throughout his life; addressing the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee on January 21, 1921, concerning a proposed tariff on peanuts, Dr. Carver said, "If you go to the first chapter of Genesis, we can interpret very clearly, I think, what God intended when he said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb that bears seed. To you it is meat.' This is what He means by it. It shall be meat. There is everything there to strengthen and nourish and keep the body alive and healthy." At the end of his address, the Committee Chairman asked, "Dr. Carver, how did you learn all these things?" Carver answered, "From an old book." "What book?" asked the Chairman. Carver replied, "The Bible." The Chairman asked, "Does the Bible tell about peanuts?" "No, Sir," replied Dr. Carver, "but it tells about God who made the peanut. I asked Him to show me what to do with the peanut, and He did."; and

WHEREAS, for Dr. Carver, his creator was not a remote or inaccessible Deity, but rather a readily available teacher, guide, and friend; this view is clearly expressed in correspondence

with Mr. James T. Hardwick during 1924, in which Dr. Carver writes in part, "...My friend, God has indeed been good to me and is yet opening up wonders and allowing me to peep in as it were. I do love the things God has created, both animate and inanimate. As He speaks aloud through both, God willing, at Blue Ridge we will let Him talk to some of us." and later, "...As soon as you began to read the great and loving God out of all forms of existence He has created, both animate and inanimate, then you will be able to converse with Him, anywhere, everywhere, and at all times..."; and

WHEREAS, this American of humble origin, through his own genius and persistence, overcame great obstacles to educate himself and then, as the Father of Chemurgy and a world-renowned scientist, transformed rural life across the South and the nation as a whole and made lasting contributions to industry; and

WHEREAS, on December 28, 1945, the United States Congress passed Public Law 290 to declare January 5 as an annual Day of Recognition for Dr. George Washington Carver, in honor of his countless scientific innovations and for the humanitarianism and dignity of spirit which characterized his entire life; and

WHEREAS, it is difficult to measure the continuing impact of the life-changing contributions of Dr. Carver, but it is certain that men of his soaring genius, immense power of discernment, and sheer sweetness of character are rarely found among us; such greatness and humility are to be cherished; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that this body join with all Americans in honoring the life and towering achievements of Dr. George Washington Carver and in remembering his lasting contributions to the improvement of the quality of life for all humankind.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.