

George Washington Carver Written Primary Source Activity

Hearings on General Tariff Revision Before the Committee on Ways & Means House of Representatives, 1921

In 1921, George Washington Carver testified before Congress on behalf of the United Peanut Association of America. The purpose of the hearings was to determine which agricultural products should be protected from international competition through the use of tariffs.

Carver brought numerous examples of items made with peanuts to the hearing, including instant coffee, candy, ice cream, milk, flour, cooking oil, ink, dye, and animal feed.

Carver was expected to give a ten-minute prepared presentation, however, the Congressmen were so interested in his testimony that they gave him extra time and asked him several follow-up questions.

First, read the following excerpts from Carver's testimony. After each excerpt, indicate what you have learned about peanuts and what you have learned about Carver's personality and demeanor.

Then, respond to the follow up questions that follow the excerpts.

I. GEORGE W. CARVER, REPRESENTING THE UNITED PEANUT ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, TUSKEGEE, ALA

A. Mr. Carver: *Mr. Chairman, I have been asked by the United Peanut Growers' Association to tell you something about the possibility of the peanut and its possible extension. I come from Tuskegee, Ala. I am engaged in agricultural research work, and I have given some attention to the peanut, but not as much as I expect to give....I am especially interested in southern crops and their possibilities, and the peanut comes in, I think, for one of the most remarkable crops that we do not already know, and you will also observe that it has possibilities that we are just beginning to find out.*

If I may have a little space here to put these things down, I should like to exhibit them to you. I am going to just touch a few high places here and there because in 10 minutes you will tell me to stop.

This is the crushed cake, which has a great many possibilities. I simply call attention to that. The crushed cake may be used in all sorts of combinations—for flours and meals and breakfast foods and a great many things that I have not time to touch upon right now.

Then we have the hulls, which are ground and made into meal for burnishing tin place. It has a very important value in that direction, and more of it is going to be used as the tin-plate manufactures understand its value.

Now there is another confection. It is peanuts covered with chocolate. As I passed through Greensboro, S.C., I noticed one of the stores that this was displayed on the market, and, as it understood better, more of it is going to made up into this form.

Peanut	Carver

B. Carver: *Here is a breakfast food. I am very sorry that you can not taste this, so I will taste it for you. [Laughter.]*

Now, this is a combination and, by the way, one of the finest breakfast foods that you or anyone else has ever seen. It is a combination of the sweet potato and the peanut, and if you will pardon a little digression here I will state that the peanut and the sweet potato are twin brothers and can not and should not be separated. They are two of the greatest products that God has ever given us. The can be made into a perfectly balanced rations. If all of the other foodstuffs were destroyed—that is vegetable foodstuffs were destroyed—a perfectly balanced ration with all of the nutriment in it could be made with the sweet potato and the peanut. From the sweet potato we get starches and carbohydrates, and from the peanut we get all the muscle-building properties...

Here is another breakfast food that has its value. I will not attempt to tell you, because there are several of these breakfast foods that I will not take the time to describe, because I suppose my 10 minutes' time is about up. Of course I had to lose some time in getting these samples out.

Congressman Garner: *I think this is very interesting. I think his time should be extended.*



Peanut	Carver

C. Congressman Rainey: *The varied use of the peanut is increasing rapidly?*

Mr. Carver: *Yes, sir.*

Congressman Rainey: *It is an exceedingly valuable product, is it not?*

Mr. Carver: *We are just beginning to learn the value of the peanut.*

Congressman Rainey: *Is it not going to be such a valuable product that the more we have of them her the better we are off?*

Mr. Carver: *Well, that depends. It depends upon the problems that these gentlemen have brought before you.*

Mr. Rainey: *Could we get too much of them, they being so valuable for stock foods and everything else?*

Mr. Carver: *Well, of course, we would have to have protection for them. [Laughter.] That is, we could not allow other countries to come in and take our rights away from us. I wish to say her in all sincerity that America produces better peanuts than any other part of the world, as far as I have been able to test them out.*

Mr. Rainey: *Then we need not fear these inferior peanuts from abroad at all? They would not compete with our better peanuts?....*

Mr. Carver: *Well, you know that is just about like everything else. You know that some people like (margarine) just as well as butter, and some people like lard just as well as butter. So sometimes you have to protect a good thing....That is all a tariff means—to put the other fellow out of business. [Laughter.]*

The Chairman: *Go ahead brother, your time is unlimited.*



Peanut	Carver

D. Congressman Carew: *Did you make all of these products yourself?*

Carver: *Yes, sir. They are made in the research laboratory. That is what the research laboratory is for....The sweet potato products number 107 up to date....The peanut products are going to beat the sweet-potato by far. I have just begun with the peanut. So what is going to come of it why we do not know.*

This is the very last thing. Now this is a pomade. That is, it is a face cream and will be attractive to the ladies, of course, because it is just as soft and just as fine as the famous almond cream, and it has the quality of vanishing as soon as put on. It carries a very high percentage of oil and thee minutes after it is applied to the skin you can not tell that any has ever been put on at all, yet is a finer softener of the skin than almond cream, and it will take any perfume that one wishes. You can have rose or carnation or any of those fine perfumes.

Peanut	Carver

E. Carver: ...if we think of how the peanut is used, it is the only thing that is universally used among civilized and uncivilized people, and all sorts of animals like it, and I do not know of a single case—that is I mean normal—that complains because peanuts hurt them. I remember a little boy that we have in our town. Well he is a one of our professor's boys. He made up his Christmas budget, his Santa Claus budget. He started out with peanuts first, and then he would mention a house, and then peanuts, and then a dog, and then peanuts. Peanuts were the beginning and the ending. He eats peanuts all the time. So that it is a natural diet that was intended that everybody should use. 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 upon the face of the earth, and every tree bearing a seed. To you it shall be meat." That is what he means about it. It shall be meat. There is everything there to strengthen and nourish and keep the body alive and healthy.

The Chairman: Mr. Carver, what school did you attend?

Carver: The last school I attended was the Agricultural College of Iowa—the Iowa Agricultural College....

Congressman Green: What research laboratory do you work in now?

Carver: At the Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Ala.

Congressman Carew: You have rendered the committee a great service.

Congressman Garner: I think he is entitled to the thanks of the committee. [Applause.]

Peanut	Carver

II.

- A. What evidence is there in the excerpts that the members of the House of Representatives attending the hearings were impressed by both George Washington Carver and the peanut?
- B. Do you think that Carver thought that a tariff on peanuts coming from overseas was needed? Why or why not?