

# An argument:

# Legalize It!

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(The Gauntlet)

virulent campaign to discredit hemp, Americans and, following suit, Canadians, became afraid of something called marijuana. In 1938, the Marijuana Tax Act was passed and it marked the beginning of the end of hemp production in North America.

Soon after, the products that traditionally had been made of hemp began to be made exclusively of synthetic petrochemicals or wood. All ship lines and sails were once made of hemp--the word "canvas" is, in fact, the Dutch pronunciation of the Latin word "cannabis." All rigging, nets, flags, pennants, Bibles, most books, charts and logos were made from the hemp stalk.

The seeds of the hemp plant, under current narcotics laws, are considered illegal, unless sterilized, for obvious reasons. But the seeds, even when processed, contain high levels of certain proteins. Hemp seed oil, among the lowest in saturated fats at 8 per cent total oil volume, is also the highest in linoleic acid (LA)--55 per cent of total oil volume--and 25 per cent of linoleic acid (LNA). These fatty acids are responsible for the immune response. The medicinal use tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)--the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana--is slimly backed by clinical evidence. THC can help control nausea, relieve pain and stimulate appetite, all important factors in dealing with the effects of chemotherapy and cancer, as well as fighting off the "wasting-away" syndrome of AIDS. There is less

there have been conflicting reports of whether or not it was psychologically addictive. Unlike cigarettes, a person saying "I need a joint" will not exactly need a joint, but will simply crave one, as some people do chocolate. On the other hand, a person stating "I need a cigarette" does so because s/he is physically addicted to nicotine. According to clinical studies, no one has ever died directly from marijuana consumption, and no one becomes physically addicted to marijuana.

In one such study, it was found that the dosage necessary to kill a mouse was 40,000 times the dosage that shows signs of intoxication in people, putting the amount required to kill someone somewhere in the range of several hundred pounds. Yet

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paranoid "facts" still persist in the media.

But in the more refined, and somewhat more honest, '90s, people are now more willing to admit to having smoked, or to continue to smoke, marijuana. From the President of the United States to our own former Prime Minister Kim Campbell, to pop stars running a song about "Mary Jane" up the charts, it seems that everyone is finally coming out of the closet. There has even been a resurgence of interest in hemp as a potential new fuel source, as the stalk can be used to produce Methanol, which is currently used in race cars. If hemp began to be used in normal case, the world's

overwhelming need for fossil fuels would begin to decline, saving fuel reserves.

Hemp has been used for centuries as paper. The first two drafts of the U.S. Constitution are on hemp paper, made from Thomas Jefferson's private hemp stock. The parachute that saved former president George Bush's life as he bailed out of his plane in World War II was made of hemp (a mixed blessing at best). And with its use in textiles, and as a food source, hemp is slowly making its way out of the underground and back into the mainstream.

Hemp is not the devil weed that many in the '30s were tricked into believing, nor is it something that will turn you into a homicidal maniac, nor is it really conceivable that anyone can overdose--it is more likely that you will fall asleep before you reach enough dosage to kill you--and pot will not bring the Confederation craving into the ocean. At worst, hemp will become the safer alternative for alcohol, or, even worse, prohibition will continue and a valuable resource will continue to be used almost exclusively as a drug. At best, North America will wake up to a reality that has been for centuries before--that hemp might just be that one thing that isn't necessarily "too good to be true."

**T**hroughout the 1980's, drug paranoia ran rampant across North America. With the sophisticated ad campaign, vicious law enforcement crackdown, and the so-called war on drugs, both the U.S. and Canadian governments encouraged frozen, devolutionary thinking

drug that can lead recreational users to experimenting with harder, addictive drugs such as cocaine and heroin. But this argument still depends on the very fact that hemp is illegal, since users of illegal drugs see the same risks of "getting caught" for using marijuana as for using cocaine. Why take the same risks for smoking marijuana that you take for using cocaine, which is much stronger and lasts longer, when you'll receive a comparable jail term for either?

Hemp initially became illegal, after hundreds of

within the populace. Marijuana, also known as cannabis, also known historically as hemp, became the target of the most successful campaign to keep the plant illegal since the *Reefer Madness*-era ignorance of the initial stages of hemp prohibition.

But now in the 1990's, the political climate has changed drastically to a more "pot-friendly" environment. Hemp's uses outside of its use as a psychoactive agent are now widely publicized. Both the president and vice-president of the U.S. have admitted to smoking--if not inhaling--marijuana. Attorney General Janet Reno has even suggested that the U.S.'s current approach to hemp prohibitions is not necessarily the proper course of action. Reno is also urging the end of mandatory sentencing guidelines for low-level offenders. American conservatives, such as William F. Buckley and economist Milton Friedman (the father of Supply Side Economics) have argued the deficit-reducing potential of the end of hemp prohibition.

The main argument of the anti-drug lobby is still the same tune they were singing in the late '80s: marijuana is a "gateway"

**prohibition will continue**

**become the safer**

**alternative for alcohol,**

**or even worse.**

years of use, through lobbying by, among others, Du Pont Chemicals and the newspaper publisher William Randolph Hurst. In 1937, Du Pont had just patented a sulfuric acid process to make paper out of pulp wood. Du Pont estimated that the process would be its main source of revenues for the next 50 years. Hemp, which had been a mainstay of American agriculture, had suddenly become a big threat to big business. To stop the threat of hemp to the timber industry, Hearst began a rampant, and often fraudulent, campaign against hemp production. He began to refer to hemp by its Spanish name, marijuana, playing on racial fears of Mexicans, and misleading the public into the misbegotten belief that hemp and marijuana were two different plants. No one was afraid of hemp--it had been used for hundreds of years for medicine, burned in oil lamps, used for textiles, and for the more obvious usage--but after Hearst's

solid, but still substantial, evidence about THC's effectiveness in treating glaucoma, multiple sclerosis and epileptic seizures. Although the medicines produced naturally in hemp can be artificially produced, they are more expensive. These medicines include a synthetic of THC, called marinol, taken in pill form. These medications are said to equal or surpass THC, though the medical industry--mostly pharmaceutical companies--may have ulterior motives in its stance against the legalization of hemp.

But for the most part, this is all strictly academic. The main opposition to the legalization of hemp is due to its use as an intoxicant. Although there is no medicinal evidence to substantiate claims that marijuana is harmful, there is still much debate on whether or not marijuana is harmful to the body and mind of its user. Marijuana, when smoked, contains a much higher degree of tar than cigarettes do, but it is quite unlikely that any casual user will smoke as many joints in a day as the addicted cigarette smoker would cigarettes.

This leads to another argument on the anti-drug lobby, that marijuana is addictive. There is no medical proof of this, though