



31 FROM HEMP'S ABSURD BAN TO "HEMP FOR VICTORY!" AGAIN

JUL

(A Brief History of American Silliness and Smarts Regarding Hemp)

In 1937, the United States federal government failed its citizens by restricting hemp farming. Even before our country was founded, people widely produced and diversely used hemp to make important products, such as rope, clothing and paper. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson famously grew hemp on their farms. The first draft of the Declaration of Independence was, in fact, written on paper made from hemp. In the same year it was restricted, Mechanical Engineering proclaimed hemp to be the "most profitable and desirable crop that can be grown." Aside from being an incredible immune system builder, hemp provided materials for plant-based plastics, durable paper and military grade fabric. In spite of its exceptional quality, versatility and promise, hemp was criminalized by the Marihuana Tax Act. The umbrella law regulated hemp's plant species, cannabis sativa, even though the target was the mind-altering variety known as marijuana. Ignoring past and present arguments for marijuana legalization, why would the farming of such a wonderful crop as hemp also be banned?

A Case of Mistaken Identity

“ You'd have to smoke a telephone pole of hemp to get high, and that's physically impossible.”



From a practical point of view, the restriction of the entire species of cannabis sativa was convenient. Since the two varieties have similar appearances, they can truly only be differentiated with chemical analysis for the presence of cannabinoids like THC, marijuana's main psychoactive compounds. Hemp contains less than 0.3% of this compound while THC levels in marijuana run from anywhere from 5–20%, with the prize strains tipping towards 25–35%. To put this into perspective, "You'd have to smoke a telephone pole of hemp to get high, and that's physically impossible." Steve Rose from the Maui Hemp Institute for Research and Innovation explains. To make it easier to enforce marijuana prohibition, the government banned hemp as well.

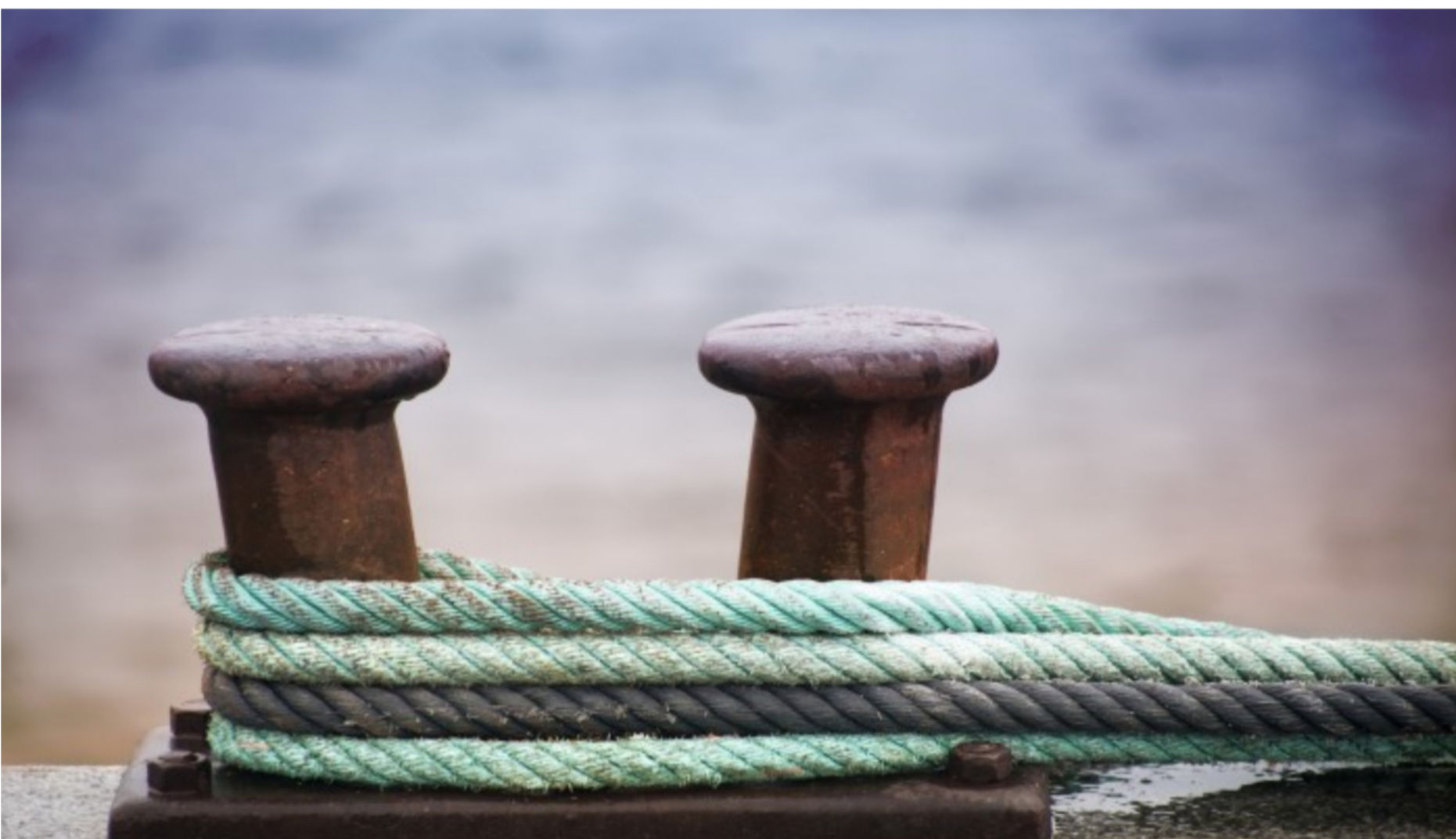
It is still federally illegal to farm hemp. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) highlights this absurd situation with a brilliant analogy: "In my view, keeping the ban on growing hemp makes as much sense as instituting a ban on Portobello mushrooms...There's no reason to outlaw a product that is perfectly safe because of what it's related to." Unfortunately for us, hemp is not as easy to distinguish from marijuana as Portobello mushrooms are from their hallucinogenic cousins. Over 30 countries around the world permit industrial hemp farming while prohibiting marijuana, which begs the question: if their police forces can successfully manage the complex situation, could ours not do the same?

Hemp Prohibition: Corporate Conspiracies or Sheer Ignorance?

Some have claimed up to three corporate conspiracies were responsible for hemp's prohibition. One theory argues that alcohol companies pushed for the prohibition of cannabis so that people would not be able to grow marijuana themselves and buy more of the recently legalized liquid intoxicants. A second argument suggests that hemp paper was a threat to newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst's investments in timber, and the vilification of cannabis spread by his media empire is additional proof. Finally, others speculate that the DuPont Company wanted hemp sidelined so they would have less competition for their newly invented fabric, nylon; moreover, they also had a stake in the wood-based paper industry, for the company recently discovered a more effective manufacturing process. Dr. David F. Musto, an expert on our country's drug policy and noted author of *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control*, criticized all three theories for lack of evidence.

Cannabis prohibition is typically viewed as a consequence of several factors: the rise of modern regulations combined with our nation's history of racism and hysteria. Medicinal products containing cannabis were popular in the 1800s, though they were not regulated until the Food and Drug Administration's first policy, the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act, declared them over-the-counter medicines. Meanwhile, the rise of recreational cannabis use in America was primarily attributed to African Americans as well as Mexican immigrants. When the Mexican Revolution ignited in 1910, more immigrants brought their tradition of smoking cannabis, sparking a racist backlash throughout the Southern states. A New York Times article from 1927 about a Mexican family illustrates media exaggeration: "A widow and her four children have been driven insane by eating the Marihuana plant, according to doctors, who say that there is no hope of saving the children's lives and that the mother will be insane for the rest of her life." This "Marijuana Menace," fueled by fear, bigotry, propaganda and the myth of drug-crazed degeneracy, seized the attention of our dispirited country, ultimately leading to 1937's federal prohibition.

Valiant Attempts For Hemp



While marijuana hysteria culminated in the Marihuana Tax Act, hemp's reputation as a miracle crop was still enthusiastically advertised. Popular Mechanics celebrated hemp as the "standard fiber of the world" and suggested that it "could be used to make more than 25,000 products, ranging from clothing to dynamite to Cellophane." Despite such tremendous praise and forecasted potential, hemp production steadily declined. A global crisis would soon revive the industry, but only temporarily. In response to an import shortage during World War II, the U.S. Department of Agriculture sanctioned domestic hemp farming with its "Hemp for Victory" campaign. This program included a now famous short film of the same name that enthusiastically promoted hemp's military uses, provided farming instructions, and powerfully concluded with these words:

“ American hemp will go on duty again: hemp for mooring ships, hemp for tow lines, hemp for tackle and gear, hemp for countless naval uses both on ship and shore. Just as in the days when Old Ironsides sailed the seas victorious with her hempen shrouds and hempen sails. Hemp for victory!”

After this peak, production once again decreased until the last crop was planted in 1958. Absurdly, this renowned plant panacea—a sustainable solution for food, clothing, paper, fuel, building materials and countless other products—would not be grown domestically again for 41 years.

The Call of A New Age: Hemp For Victory!

Fast forward to 2016 where the momentum has shifted dramatically for hemp and the entire species of cannabis sativa. Almost 30 states have legalized some form of hemp farming even though the federal ban remains. Just this year, Pennsylvania's House and Senate both unanimously passed a bill to legalize hemp research while Oregon and Washington legislatures are striving to similarly legalize hemp farming. Within a few months, the Drug Enforcement Agency will decide if cannabis sativa should be reclassified as a Schedule II drug, which would indicate it has some medical value and open the door further for hemp's federal legalization. The panic over hemp and cannabis sativa in the 20th Century has been replaced by a 21st Century movement backed by research, reason, technology and thousands of years of beneficial use. A Gallup Poll from late last year matched a 46-year high mark with 58% of people surveyed supporting marijuana legislation. A diverse group of politicians, farmers, scientists, engineers, environmentalists and entrepreneurs know that "with focused and sustained research and development, hemp could spur dramatic positive ecological and economic benefits." The United States Federal Government would be wise to reconsider hemp's value to our society. It's about time to rebroadcast "Hemp for Victory," but this time the enemy is ignorance.

GREEN INDUSTRY HEMP

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