

From: "Robbie Anderman" <robbie@coolhemp.com>

Hello Darlene,

Here is an article I recently wrote about hemp for a quarterly in Lanark, Greenspace magazine.

Hopefully, it will help inspire a song.

Hempily,
Robbie

A Look at Hemp in Our Future

Organic Hemp has the potential to make a big positive difference in the world, as I see it. Hemp offers a green renewable alternative to so many of our environmentally destructive products and practices.

Looking out over the Bonnechere Valley from our hilltop west of Killaloe, I see a beautiful world. Yet I notice when I venture off this hill, that most of the trees in the forests here are Poplar and Birch. Quick growing trees, they give the look of a forest while speaking of the old hardwoods and conifers that were here before, logged for human survival and profit. They also speak of being shade-providing nurse trees for the future forests my grand children will see and enjoy, IF we soon switch to hemp fibres for our paper and our construction fibre board needs. This switch to hemp is being successful elsewhere and can be successful in Canada as well.

Since 1937, about half the world's forests have been cut to make paper. If hemp had not been outlawed at that time, most would still be standing, oxygenating the planet. Hemp plants provide 4 times the paper fibre per acre per year than trees do, even plantation poplar trees... and can be planted again the next year. Previous to 1883, over 75% of the world's paper was made from hemp, much of it recycled from ships' hemp sails and ropes. With new processing technology, that could happen again, and in a way that pollutes much less than processing wood fibre. Hemp paper has proven to be more durable, longer lasting and recyclable more times than most tree based paper.

As I journey further downstream, I see the family farms, the aging farmers wondering how they and their families will survive in a society that demands food grown with harmful chemicals and generally does not pay true value for farm products. The economic vibrancy of the family farm began declining soon after farmers were prohibited from growing a familiar cash crop: hemp. Traditionally farmers grew hemp for the fibre for their ropes and cloth, since it grows the longest and strongest natural fibres, and for the seeds for their food and their animal feed, and to crush for their edible, lamp, and finishing oils.

Hemp is a crop that fits well into the farm rotation cycle, needs no pesticides or herbicides and when grown for fibre, easily eliminates weeds by outgrowing them, thus making it a good crop for transition to Organic certification.

As I journey further into town, I meet my friends and neighbours.

Some are suffering from dis-eases that could be eased with the Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) that are abundant in hemp seeds. EFAs, lacking in most North American diets, can clear arteries of cholesterol, slow MS symptoms, improve immune system and hormone functions, and nourish brain cells. Deficiencies manifest as arthritis, PMS, osteoporosis, depression and more. Recent studies show that hemp seeds can also help with some forms of diabetes.

There has been an interesting, official study done lately, conducted by the University of Kuopio, Finland, to compare Hempseed oil and Flaxseed oil in its nutritional value and other health benefits. And the findings are: Hemp oil gives a "dramatic increase in Blood Level GLA" - while flax oil actually lowers Blood Level GLA.

More easily digested complete protein can be grown per acre with hemp than with any other crop. Soybeans need cooking to make them digestible, while hempseeds' nutrients are available in either the raw or lightly cooked state. People have been eating them for thousands of years.

Hemp seeds made into a 'milk', along with a liver respecting diet, have been proven to cure TB. The edestine protein in hemp was shown to be the active principle.

Due to its high essential fatty acid content, hemp oil used in cosmetics can assist in the treatment of many skin ailments, including eczema, psoriasis, neurodermatitis and dry skin. We have found hemp body butter very soothing to our hands after a day of garden work or washing dishes and excellent for massage.

Hemp oils is also used in biodegradable soaps and cleaning products, easing the burden of chemical based detergents on the environment.

In 1937, Popular Science magazine listed over 25,000 potential uses for the hemp plant. The challenge today is for the processing technology to catch up to the farmers' ability to grow the crop. Dormant for 60 years, the hemp industry is only now beginning to creatively explore better ways of harvesting and processing the crop. One recent innovation has been to remove the crunchy outer shell of the seed to make the soft inner kernel available. Many other new food uses of the seed and the kernel have emerged onto the marketplace since Canada again legalized hemp growing in 1998.

Unfortunately, the USA has added another challenge. After September 11, the Drug Enforcement Agency ruled that hemp foods (with less than 0.000% THC are a banned drug, equivalent to heroin, cocaine, and marijuana (5 - 20% THC) and bearing the same mandatory prison penalties as of February 2002.

The lawyers of the Hemp Industry Association (www.thehia.org) have secured a stall on the ruling until our legal case to invalidate this rule has been decided. This will take several months, so, though hemp food companies have taken a financial drought, hemp foods are back on the shelves.

In Canada, Health Canada is still not allowing hemp foods to include Omega 3 and 6 and GLA in the nutrition panel.... and refuses to honor its commitment to the industry to hold a stakeholders' review of the hemp regulations....

Who benefits from these roadblocks? Certainly not the environment, nor our grandchildren.

Canada's original commitment to the Kyoto Accords can easily be reached if the government listened to Alan Rock's speech about the potential benefits to Canada and put its money where its mouth is by backing hemp, even by simply giving tax incentives to paper companies, textile mills, fibreboard plants, ethanol producers (hemp ethanol burns very cleanly), and other industries who switch to hemp for their raw material.

Hemp can help the environment by slowing climate change and lessening acid rain (by switching to hemp ethanol and hemp biodiesel fuels), by using less farm chemicals (cotton uses about 50% of all pesticides and herbicides in the US), by making paper from hemp (no dioxin bleach needed), and by reducing imports as Canada grows (and uses) its own. Domestically grown fuel also reduces the likelihood of future oil wars.

Hemp is not the only solution. A lot of it is some real basic choices. Like reconsidering real long range priorities. We, as a society, use too much paper. And methods need to be reconsidered. We are such a society of individualists, that a long range view, considering what is good for the Whole Earth, would be challenging to get implemented... and needs to be.

Hemp CAN help the farm economy, the environment, the health of the people, and the future of Canada.

the bio :

"Blessed by being able to live, work and play in the Wilno Hills for 30+ years, Robbie Hanna Anderman began studying about hemp 6 years ago and began working full time for hemp and the Cool Hemp Company (<<http://www.coolhemp.com>>) in 2000. He has been very active working in organic gardens & orchards while homesteading in a small off-the-grid community. An acoustic musician for 45 years, Robbie also handcrafted musical instruments from local woods for 25 years. With Christina, he has helped their 3 sons Learn at Home, and they have been great helpers in the business. His book about the herbal and edible qualities of the local trees may be seen at: <<http://www.coolhemp.com/healingtrees/>>