

**Hemp 101  
for Rural Vermont  
Friday, April 27, 2007  
6:30 pm - 7:30 pm  
Christ Church, State Street  
Montpelier, VT**

**Thomas Murphy National Outreach Coordinator, Vote Hemp**

Good evening. My name is Tom Murphy. I am the National Outreach Coordinator of Vote Hemp. I am also a member of our Board of Directors. Vote Hemp is a national, single-issue, nonprofit organization dedicated to the acceptance of and free market for industrial hemp and to changes in current law to allow farmers in the United States to grow low-THC industrial hemp. We are working in cooperation with Rural Vermont to pass your industrial hemp farming bill, H 267.

During America's Colonial days, hemp was a cornerstone of civil development, and its production was considered necessary. England and Holland hoped that their American colonies would furnish enough hemp for their great navies, for which it was as important as flax, iron, and timber. Alfred W. Crosby, Jr. wrote in *America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon* "Without Russia's hempen hawsers and rope, her flax sails and fittings and fastenings made from her iron, our sailing vessels would have been immobile piles of lumber." Smuggling hemp from Russia to England may have even been one of the causes of the War of 1812. Much of our hemp was imported from Russia as they water retted their hemp which made it stronger and more rot resistant than the field retted hemp that was produced in the American colonies. Russian hemp was also much less expensive to buy than domestically produced hemp.

During the 1920's and 30s the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) had a hemp breeding program and put out numerous articles on hemp growing in *Farmer's Bulletins* and in its *Yearbooks*. Lyster H. Dewey's article "HEMP" in the 1913 *Yearbook* was one of the longest and most detailed. The end of the USDA's hemp breeding program coincided with the retirement of Lyster Dewey, who was in charge of fibers other than cotton at the Department of Agriculture from 1858 to 1935.

The other event that shaped the future of hemp in the 1930's was the passage of the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937. Prior to and immediately after the passage of the Tax Act the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) was almost completely ignorant of how the hemp industry actually worked, down to the lack of knowledge that some leaves remained on the mature stalks that left the fields. They didn't even know what the active drug principle in *Cannabis* was or how to test for it! Once the Tax Act was passed the FBN feverishly collected real information on hemp and *Cannabis* and selectively enforced the provisions of the Act, particularly the transfer tax (especially for leaves on mature stalks), sticking to the letter of the law in Minnesota and Illinois and ignoring other states, especially Wisconsin, where fiber was produced for the U.S. Navy, and in Kentucky, where the certified seed for the hemp fiber industry in Wisconsin was grown.

After Pearl Harbor, when Manilla hemp imports from the Philippines to the United States were cut off, without changing any laws the U.S. government asked farmers to grow hemp once again, although growing it without a permit had been prohibited since 1937. USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation contracted with War Hemp Industries, Inc. to produce planting seed and fiber, and 42 hemp mills were built across the American Midwest. The USDA film "Hemp for Victory" was shown in theaters and Grange halls across the land. USDA *Farmer's Bulletin* No. 1935, entitled "Hemp," was issued to farmers in January 1943. Even 4-H clubs in Kentucky planted their own hemp patches "to serve their country in wartime." By war's end, nearly a million acres of hemp had been cultivated to support the war effort. In April 1952, during the Korean War, the USDA even reissued *Farmer's Bulletin* No. 1935 in an updated form. For a little more than a decade after World War II the hemp industry slowly died off, mainly due to stronger, man-made fibers and less expensive imported natural fibers like Manilla hemp, jute, and sisal. The last hemp crop grown in the United States was grown in Wisconsin in 1958. Here is a quote from an acquaintance of mine:

"The Rens mill in Central Wisconsin made its last purchase of raw fiber in the fall of 1957, but did not finish processing this material until the following spring. Meanwhile 2 LaCrosse County farmers obtained Licenses for hemp cover crops for spring 1958 planting, used to eradicate Canada Thistle from corn fields. There's no record indicating they attempted to market this material."

When the Controlled Substances Act was passed in 1970 the exemption for hemp was carried over verbatim from the Marihuana Tax Act, but without the provisions to register and license farmers, since there was no hemp industry to protest as there had been in 1937. All varieties of *Cannabis* were lumped together in Schedule 1 of the Act. And that is where federal law stands today and DEA continues to insist that hemp and marijuana are one and the same. The Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2007, recently introduced in Congress, would change that by defining what industrial hemp is and leaving the regulation of its production up to the states.

Eleven farming states introduce hemp legislation in 2007. The states that have introduced industrial hemp bills this legislative season are: California, Hawaii, Idaho, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) is now issuing licenses to farmers to grow hemp under existing state law and NDDA rules. I presented testimony in favor of these rules at a hearing in Bismarck last June. There were five new bills introduced in their House and Senate in 2007. Two of the five have been signed by Governor Hoeven. Two of the bills were resolutions urging Congress to recognize the multiple benefits of industrial hemp. The fifth HB 1020, passed the House 92-0 on April 24th and passed the Senate 47-0 on April 25th. HB 1020 has now gone to Governor Hoeven for his signature. As of this afternoon he has not signed it. North Dakota House Assisstant Majority Leader and farmer Dave Monson will be able to give you more information on the latest in North Dakota.

The work on the state level is very necessary and you can make a difference. If you are able, please support our work at Vote Hemp by making a donation at [votehemp.com](http://votehemp.com).

Even more importantly please support Rural Vermont in its work. There are a wealth of resources on their web site at [ruralvermont.org](http://ruralvermont.org) and you can always talk with Amy Shollenberger, Rural Vermont's Director.

Thank you.