

Many people do not realise that industrial hemp is nothing new, that it has been proved that it was the first crop cultivated by man for fibre and that its extensive use can be tracked through nearly every culture and civilisation. It is only in the past century that this enormously beneficial plant has been criminalised, and its use banished to the marginalised outer edge of society.

Hemporium was founded in 1996 by Duncan Parker and Alistair Maclean who were then students at UCT, with me, Tony Budden, joining soon after to help with marketing and general hemp activism. The first order of material arrived



from China in May 1996 and a range of bags and clothing was developed during the course of the year, distributed in Cape Town mainly through The Hemp Shop in Long Street and through a wider range of outlets in Gauteng and even Windhoek.

Hemporium was promoted by many loyal hempathizers who generously agreed to promote the company through the use of car bumper stickers. Many activists also marched on Parliament in early 1997 in an attempt to educate people about the difference between marijuana and hemp.

Hemporium took a break from early 2000, while we followed alternative interests, until mid 2003 when Duncan and myself decided to again devote our time to the hemp industry. Alistair is currently in the Far East working on other projects.

After a long period of research and development, our



by TONY BUDDEN

HEMPORIUM

WWW.HEMPORIUM.COM

new range of environmentally responsible urban survival gear was launched together with an educational concept store in Constantia Main Road. We use this space to retail our products, as well as to educate consum-

ers. There are now over 30 industrialised nations that have a legitimised industrial hemp industry. In 1996 hemp was only grown in the ex-communist countries who obviously didn't have listen



Building materials 100% hemp chipboard, hemp/lime cement and hemp fibre reinforced panelling are examples of hemp based building materials. **Twine** Hemp fibre has long been prized for its strength and durability and used in twines and ropes. **CD Case** This CD case is made using hemp plastic. Hemp has the potential to replace many petro-chemical plastics. (See www.hemplastic.com for more.) **Plant pot** Hemp stalk and natural resins are compressed to make various products from car door panels to bio-degradable plant pots.



ers. We have a hemp lounge where everything is made using hemp and hemp literature and samples can be seen. We also opened the adjoining Parks Café where we are introducing hemp nutrition by using the seeds and oil in some of the food. The seats are covered with hemp fabric, and even the menu is printed on hemp paper.

Originally we used hemp in our products for its obvious physical and environmental benefits and coupled this with the unique marketing angle of it being a renegade product, something that was the victim of an injustice. Our initial customers mostly consisted of non-conformist hippies and the stoner/wear-what-you-smoke market who were already educated about the benefits of hemp and wanted to show their support.

But over the last 10 years much has changed in the at-

titude towards hemp. There are now over 30 industrialised nations that have a legitimised industrial hemp industry. In 1996 hemp was only grown in the ex-communist countries who obviously didn't have listen

to America and its demonisation of the plant, and France, who pride themselves in never bowing down to the States and continued to grow and recognise the usefulness of hemp.

Since then Canada, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and many more have recognised the many benefits of this plant and realised the irrationality of banning all the beneficial industrial strains because certain strains can be abused. Not one of these countries has reported any negative impact on their drug markets since the reintroduction of a legitimate industrial hemp industry. This has been done by the enforcement of the reality that industrial hemp and its narcotic cousin, marijuana/dagga are different and should be treated as such. The strains are different and are valued for different properties with the

industrial strains being very low in THC, the psychoactive compound prized in dagga, and therefore they have no value as a drug.

There has been a concerted effort by the hemp industry to reinforce this by separating the industrial and psychoactive uses and educating customers about the difference.

What this has done is allowed hemp to enter into the mainstream consumer consciousness. It has elevated from being an "alternative" product being used by those wishing to make a statement or be different to one being sought out by those who have realised that changes needed to be made to the way we

use our resources if we want our planet to survive. It is now being released from the dogma that has been fed to us, and is valued for its versatility, durability and organic and sustainable growing practices.

Another important process we are seeing is the development of technology regarding processing and utilisation of hemp. From the 1930's to the 1990's, there was very little technological advancement within the hemp industry. If you consider how much every other industry developed during this period, you can realise the technological lag that hemp is currently coming out of. With many industrialised nations now having access to the raw material, exciting progress is being made and new markets are being developed.

Take the following two examples: One of Canada's premier hemp companies, Hemptown,

URBAN SURVIVAL GEAR

- Hidden pocket
- Key D-ring
- PDA/Mp3 pocket
- Sunglasses pocket
- 100% hemp adjustable waistband mechanism
- Wallet pocket
- Phone Pocket

114 Constantia Main Rd, Wynberg 7800, Cape Town, South Africa.
www.hemporium.com

is currently working with the Canadian governments on a new process for removing the fibre from the stalk. Traditionally this is done by a 2 week retting period where natural bacteria eat away the lignin that glues the fibre onto the stalk. They are now developing an enzyme that will be able to eat away the lignin on the same day the stalk is harvested, totally eliminating the retting process and produc-

ing single fibres up to 3 metres long. They are calling this process "Crailar". In Australia a new product called Hempstone is being developed using a process called Zelfo. Basically it transforms hemp fibre, cellulose and water into a liquid format that can be sprayed over a mould and will set hard taking on similar properties to hardwood. Here in South Africa we are making some good progress with re-

gards to legislation change and the development of the industry, but it is still early days.

One very promising project is called "Grow your own house" using hemp and hopefully sponsored by a French company using the carbon credit system. This project is being championed by the National Organic Produce Initiative.

Hemporium is one of the founding members of a Section 21 company, the Western Cape Hemp Initiative, and we aim to educate about hemp's potential and help promote legislation change. We see our role as being crucial in the development of markets for industrial hemp, so that when we do have raw product available, there are customers willing and eager to use it.

We believe that in the Western Cape, after the primary market for the fibre, the two best applications for hemp will be in housing and nutrition. Hemp hurds (the stalk) mixed

with lime and ash forms a natural cement that petrifies over time and can be used in nearly all building applications. The hemp seed is a super-food that contains all the essential fatty and amino acids as well as being high in a very good protein, Globulin Edestin. It is extremely beneficial as a supplement, especially in the case of a nutrition blocking disease such as TB.

Hemporium will continue to use clothing and accessories as a vehicle to educate and promote the use of hemp, and are committed to a healthy future for South Africa that benefits from environmentally sustainable housing, nutrition and job creation that industrial hemp can offer. We are very excited to see the growth in the organic and natural markets, and the corresponding demand driven changes in farming practices that will benefit not only the customers, but the planet as a whole. ☺

The House of Hemp

by **THANDEKA KUNENE**
HOUSE OF HEMP
WWW.HOUSEOFHEMP.CO.ZA

The House of Hemp Pty Ltd, (hoh) is a South African company founded with a vision to promote the production and marketing of hemp.

At its inception, hoh was a department within Hooked on Hemp SA Ltd, a black-owned company founded in 1998 to explore existing business opportunities in the global hemp industry. Hooked on Hemp was founded by me in partnership with six other entrepreneurs. I started research on hemp at the age of 13, when while I was walking home with two of my friends from the Soweto Saturday School For Gifted Children when we passed a group of *tsotsis* smoking some *dagga* in a corner. One of my outspoken friends said: "Sies ba tsuba matekwane (disgusting they are smoking dope)" and one of the *tsotsis* retorted, saying "stupid girl if only you knew that this is the wealth of Africa; it can feed, clothe and shelter us. This

thing makes very nice clothes..." and I was hooked; thus began my research in hemp. The fact that *dagga* was illegal in South Africa did not deter my interests but instead stimulated me to research further on the controversial plant.

While pursuing my MSC in mathematics at the University

of Cape Town I got linked with Professor Aimes and a student called Arthur Phaswana (now a pilot with SAA) and we started a research project called ancient hemp. Here I discovered that while cannabis was outlawed in most countries during the 1930s there was renewed worldwide interest in the cultivation of a harmless type of the *dagga* plant, known as hemp.

In 1998 while studying for my MBA at the Richmond University in London, the Body Shop launched their successful hemp range which prompted me to start my own hemp company

as part of realising my dream of making hemp a force to be reckoned with in South Africa. I joined forces with James Wynne of the South African Hemp Company and wrote a proposal to the national department of agriculture about hemp in South Africa.

After obtaining my MBA degree, cum laude, from the Richmond University in London, I turned down numerous attractive job offers, opting instead to use the valuable knowledge on hemp which I accumulated to set up Hooked on Hemp. I approached six other black people who also had done some research in hemp



In 2001 Minister Ben Ngubane (Department of Arts, Craft, Science and Technology) and MEC Max Mamase (EC Department of Agriculture) officially launched the HOH shop in central Johannesburg.

and invited them to join mw. So Hooked on Hemp was registered in 1999 by myself in partnership with Moses Mlangeni (a senior economist journalist at SABC), Sibusiso Mtshali (a Biochem honors student at University of Joburg), Robert Sefatsa (a law graduate), Mante Sekhukhune (an entrepreneur based in Limpopo), Bukelwa Menye (an entrepreneur based in East London) and Mkhushi Elliott (a London based entrepreneur). Hooked on Hemp's aim was to get black people involved in the emerging hemp industry by supporting black entrepreneurs in the farming, processing, manufacturing and marketing of hemp products.

During the same year the South African government took a decision to conduct agronomic trials on the cultivation of hemp for commercial purposes and set up the National Hemp Foundation (NHF) to drive the hemp pilot project in the Eastern Cape. The NHF comprised representatives from government, private sector and farming communities.

from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology for the poverty alleviation initiatives of the NHF. Hooked on Hemp's HRD program saw 250 farmers trained in the country's first hemp cultivation trials planted in Libode in Umtata, Mtiza in East London, Qamata near Queenstown and Addo in Port Elizabeth. Hooked on Hemp's HRD program also helped 10 entrepreneurs to set up small businesses to manufacture clothes, handbags and interior décor products based on hemp fabrics imported from China. These includes EzeAfrica from Indwe, Ekunyamezeleni from Umtata, Masizame in Grahamstown, Felmok Fashions from Soweto, Zakheni in Joburg and Twine Alive from Port Elizabeth.

In 2001 Minister Ben Ngubane (Department of Arts, Craft, Science and Technology) and MEC Max Mamase (EC Department of Agriculture) officially launched the hoh shop in central Johannesburg as part of the marketing program of NHF. The event was

attended by over a thousand well-wishers, from customers to producers and government officials.

hooked on Hemp was approached to become part of the National Hemp foundation as a representative of the SMME sector and was responsible for implementing a Human Resource Development (HRD) Program whose aim was to ensure substantial involvement of disadvantaged blacks in the emerging hemp industry. At the same time I was headhunted by CSIR's textile technologies division in Port Elizabeth to work as a manager in charge of the animal and plant fibres business area. I negotiated a contract where the CSIR would incubate Hooked on Hemp to implement its HRD program. The Hooked on Hemp-CSIR partnership raised R30 million

oils and others. All these end products were manufactured locally with 90% being from the SMEs in EC rural areas. All the raw materials (fabrics and oils) were imported from China, Hungary, India, USA and Portugal. Sadly, Hooked on Hemp collapsed when the research phase of the NHF came to a close and there was no program beyond it. At the beginning of 2002, I left the CSIR with the intention of taking full charge of House of Hemp. I approached some of the hooked on hemp founders and other black entrepreneurs to secure resources to restructure house of hemp to focus on distributing raw materials instead of end products. We decided to start with textiles as we had experience with hemp clothes and the shops had numerous requests for hemp fabrics.

In 2004 I teamed up with Thami Madliwa (Secretary of the hemp farmers association called INOFI) and approached DTI to assist us set up a Hemp Industrial Park (HIP) in the Eastern

DBSA and indication of support from the IDC, DSD and the ECCO to do a feasibility study that will investigate the commercial viability of setting up such a hemp industrial park. Should the feasibility study prove successful the Hemp Industries Pty Ltd will access DTI's incentive funds to set up the hemp industrial park.

At the same time the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture prioritised hemp as part of the integrated rural development strategy. This government department championed the revival of the NHF under the name Hemp Foundation South Africa (HFSA) to focus on the commercialisation phase of hemp in South Africa.

Both hoh and INOFI was invited to present their organisations in the 1st meeting of HFSA in mid-August leading to our Hemp Industrial Park (HIP) identified as the main program that will drive the commercialisation of the hemp industry on behalf of the HFSA with myself and Thami appointed to coordinate the



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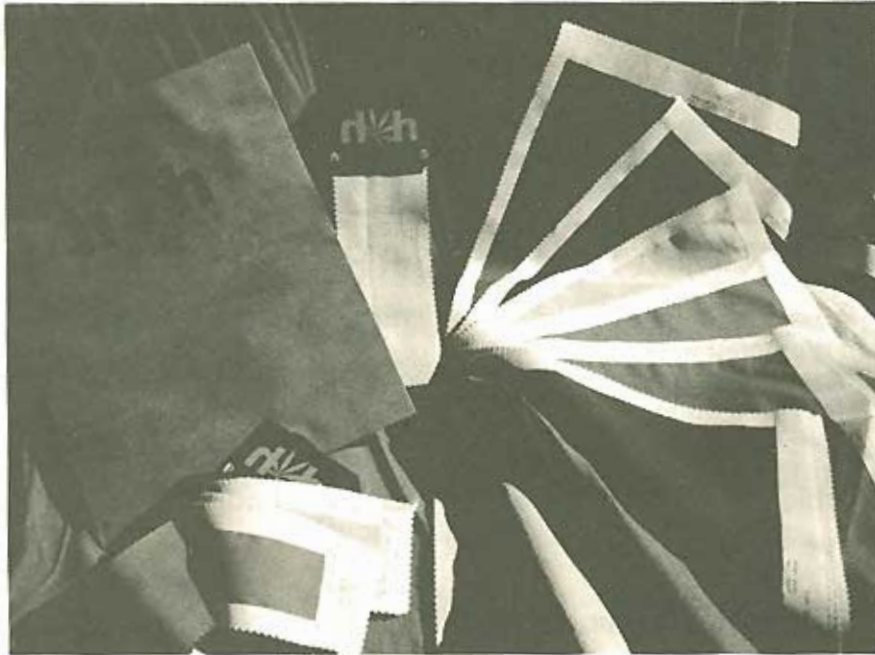
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House of hemp is South Africa's leading distributor of the following quality hemp fabrics:

- 100% hemp
- Hemp canvas
- Hemp cotton
- Hemp denim
- Hemp linen
- Hemp rayon
- Hemp silk blends
- Hemp tencil
- Hemp wool

House of hemp services the following user segments:

- Seamstresses & Tailors
- Designers and design houses
- Décor houses
- Training institutions
- Fabric distributors



Fabric distributors in Gauteng that carry house hemp fabrics include the following:

- What not (Kramerville)
- Norma fabrics (Parktown North)
- Sew Africa (Downtown Jozi)
- Fiona Fabrics (Randburg)
- Kempton materials (Kempton Park)

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