

Union backs marijuana growth

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Randy Dillon imagines a future in which his fellow woodworkers' union members will be planting marijuana seedlings to help reduce erosion on forest clearcuts.

Plants could also be grown as an alternative to trees to produce dioxin-free paper, clothing, fuel and more, he said Tuesday.

Dillon has persuaded the members of his union, International Woodworkers of America-Canada local 1-3567, to endorse a resolution in favor of legalizing hemp.

"They voted almost 2-1 in favor of legalization," Dillon said of voice vote at the recent Fraser Valley convention. "As far as I know, our local is the first to advocate legalization in Canada."

The resolution now will go to the IWA-Canada national convention in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, for debate later this year.

"I'm told it won't get anywhere," Dillon said. "But then I was told it wouldn't get past our

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— Randy Dillon,
Canadian woodworker

local convention."

When Dillon first raised the issue, the union executive of local 1-3567 laughed and recommended the resolution be voted down.

"While the executive didn't take him very seriously, the membership took it very seriously," said David Tones, president of local 1-3567.

Tones said he plans to meet with Dillon to go over the research on hemp that won over the support of about 200 union delegates at the Fraser Valley convention, representing about 5,000

workers in the Vancouver area. Dillon, 34, said he started looking seriously at the possible economic and environmental merits of hemp about two years ago.

"I've decided to step out of the closet on this pot thing since I've smoked it half my life," he said.

With the annual allowable cut in forests declining, Dillon sees hemp as a way to provide a broader employment base for IWA-Canada members.

He said the plant can be used to produce paper, fine linen clothing, carpets and rope and the seeds can be used to produce clean-burning fuels in place of sulphur-laden fossil fuels.

The best part is it takes only three months for plants to mature — growing up to 23 feet tall — compared with 15-50 years for a tree seedling, he said.

Dillon notes Hungary has produced a variety of hemp that is relatively free of the psychoactive ingredient THC — only .9 percent.

"That's like a no-alcohol beer," Dillon said.

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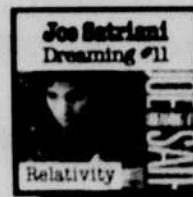
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