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evolving, and they are getting more and more information from more and more sources, but you need to put the components in a framework that dictates to them that this is being done is a measured, thoughtful way.

J.T.: *I don't know if you've been tracking this, but in Uruguay, it sounds like the legislature is poised to pass a measure legalizing marijuana. Uruguay is a very different place from Oregon, but have you learned any lessons from how they did that?*

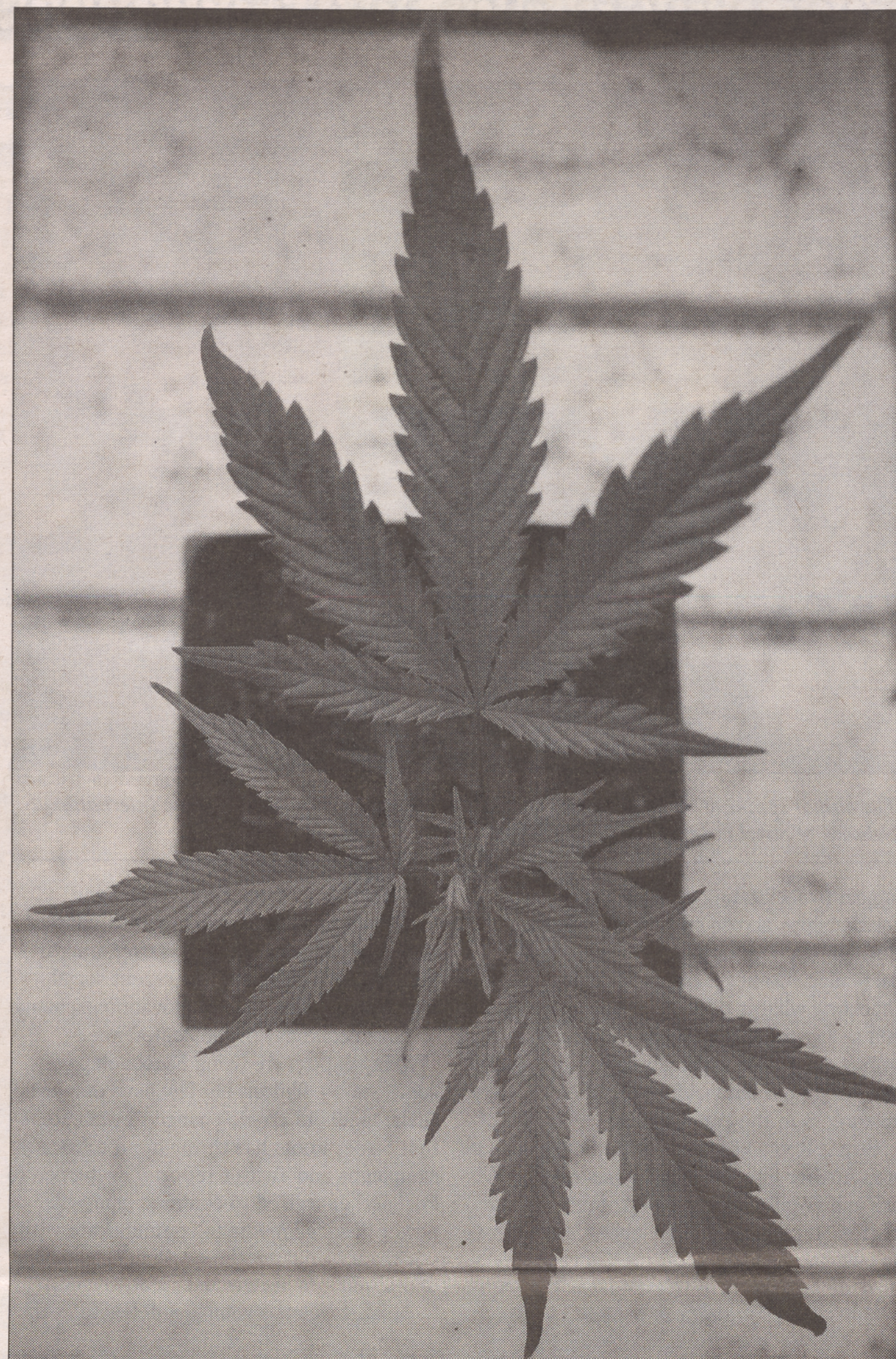
R.K.: I have been tracking that very closely, and I think that first of all, it's incredibly exciting for Uruguay to be the first country in the world to say that the drug war hasn't worked. I think there are a couple lessons. The president of Uruguay developed a framework on his own with his team and got pushback from legislators and pushback from different stakeholder groups, which is what happens in a democracy. And what they did is they came back and put together a coalition focused on the public safety and public health aspects of the issue, and they really created something that the legislature could look at and vote on.

But I think that the lessons to take away, just reinforcing what we saw in Colorado and Washington, is to look at the issue from the perspective of the average voter and a broad coalition that includes the economic argument and the public safety argument and create an approach that works for your jurisdiction. And what they proposed in Uruguay are three models for cultivation: personal, co-op and commercial. I think that's something very interesting to look at and in the implementation phase, we will look to that.

J.T.: *Uruguay went through the legislative process. Do you think here in the U.S. we are going to go through the initiative process? Is one better than the other?*

R.K.: Even the most optimistic advocates and observers are very skeptical that the federal government will change its position on the issue or become a leader on this. It will become inevitable, but inevitable doesn't have a timeline, and I think at the legislative level there's real opportunity. What we've seen is that — looking at the medical cannabis movement that started as a ballot movement starting with California, and then Oregon and Alaska — states are now passing it at the legislative level.

Illinois has passed legislation legalizing medical marijuana — and that's *Illinois*. That's not a small-potatoes state; that's a big



REUTERS/ANTHONY BOLANTE

deal, and it probably took a decade to make that happen. Advocates worked on the issue, taking it to legislators saying, we can take it to the ballot box or you can be part of the process of putting this together. From 1996 to now, the issue has picked up unprecedented speed in public support. So I think it's certainly within the realm of possibility. I think within five years legislatures will start picking up the issue, but I think for now it's an issue that fares better in the citizen-initiative process.

J.T.: *Do you think these state initiatives are*

putting any pressure on the federal government?

R.K.: Undoubtedly. Attorney General Eric Holder, probably at this moment, is proposing big changes to federal mandatory sentencing guidelines because of the growth of the federal prison population over the past two decades. It's been an insane and frankly extremely racist and low-income biased policy. The people who tend to go to prison at the state and federal level are overwhelmingly persons of color or low-income people. There are some early signs

of appreciation that Attorney General Holder is ready to look at the issue in a real way, but I haven't seen the details of the proposal myself.

With the Illinois governor's signage of its medical marijuana law, now 40 percent of the population lives in a state where marijuana is legal in some way or another. So if you do the math and look at states that are looking at introducing medical marijuana programs or are actively working toward legalization, I think the pressure will get greater and greater on the federal government to recognize the failures and hypocrisies and get where the American people are on this issue.

J.T.: *Even if you get this passed, pot is still illegal on the federal level and it remains to be seen how Eric Holder will handle the situations in Colorado and Washington. Down the road, we could get a law-and-order president that could undo a lot of this work. Shouldn't we be focusing on the federal government?*

R.K.: There is some real and important work on the federal level. Being in Portland, we are lucky to have Rep. Earl Blumenauer as our representative. I met with him and his staff at the end of last year and he laid out his plan and vision for taking up the issue of marijuana prohibition at the federal level and is working with a bipartisan caucus on this and broader issues with marijuana policy. But I think there is a lot of important federal outreach that is happening.

Repealing marijuana prohibition is as much a Republican political opportunity that is aligned with the Republican Party platform as it is with the Democratic platform. If you look at the way Sen. Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wisconsin) ... even when Mitt Romney was asked about medical marijuana, he said that it's just a state's rights issue. If you look at it from a state's rights point of view, from a homeland security and drug war point of view, from an economic point of view, from individual responsibility and civil liberties point of view, these are major planks of the Republican Party platform. I think more Republicans are connecting themselves with this issue and portraying themselves as this being an issue they can lead on.

They haven't reached a critical mass level in the Republican Party yet. If you look at polling, and who's more likely to support legalization and regulation, it's making its way there and that's certainly part of what we're doing is having conversations with the business community and rural counties who

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Central City Concern & Street Roots - NW Broadway/Burnside