

# CONNECTION

NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*Connection: New England's Journal of Higher Education and Economic Development* is published quarterly by the New England Board of Higher Education, 45 Temple Place, Boston, Mass. 02111. Phone: (617) 357-9620. Vol. V, No. 1 Spring 1990  
ISSN 0071-3643  
Copyright © 1990 by the New England Board of Higher Education.

**Publisher:** John C. Hoy  
**Editor:** John O. Harney  
**Managing Editor:** Charlotte Stratton  
**Associate Editor:** Wendy Lindsay

#### Staff Contributors:

Judith Beachler

#### Art Direction, Typesetting, Production:

Inga Soderberg, Janet Grover; The Pressroom, Gloucester, Mass.

**Coordinator, Advertising Sales:** Betsy Keady

**Subscription Information:** \$16 per year (4 issues); WI, SP, SU issues \$2.50 each, Fall/Facts issue \$12.00. Printed by Wellesley Press, Framingham, Mass. Advertising rates available upon request.

#### The New England Board of Higher Education

was established as a nonprofit agency by the New England Higher Education Compact, a 1955 agreement among the six states that was ratified by the U.S. Congress. It is the purpose of the Board to advance and develop programs that encourage higher educational opportunities and improve efficiency in the use of resources among New England's public and independent colleges and universities.

**Chairman:** Robert L. Woodbury, chancellor, University of Maine System

**President:** John C. Hoy

#### Connection Editorial Advisory Board

Chairman:

**Kenneth Hooker**

Former Editor

*New England Business Magazine*

**Richard Barringer**

Augusta, Maine

**Kevin E. Booth, Esq.**

Booth, Mattern and Clarke

**David Buchdahl**

Regional Director

*Community College of Vermont*

**Laura Freid**

Publisher

*Harvard Magazine*

**Peter A. Gilbert**

Former Editor

*The Andover Bulletin*

**Betsy Keady**

Boston, Mass.

**Arnold Koch**

Arnold Koch and Associates

**Senator Victoria Lederberg**

Providence, R.I.

**Thomas L. McFarland**

Director

University Press of New England

**Ian Menzies**

Senior Fellow

John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs

**Representative Neil Rolde**

Sewall's Hill, Maine

## EDITOR'S MEMO

This kind of thing had been happening to me ever since we started putting together the cover stories for this issue of *Connection*. There I was looking at an advertisement in another magazine, heralding, "Dubai: Your New Base for World Markets," and I was *seeing* my long-lost stamp collection. Seeing a blue postage stamp from Dubai.

The stamp depicted the New York City World's Fair of 1964, surrounded by a mix of English and Arabic words. Like stamps from the other "Trucial States," Dubai's portrayed the obligatory sheikh, but also U.S. satellites and things American like the New York City skyline. The stamps were glossy and modern. My brother, a fellow stamp collector, and I thought they were "fake."

We also discerned—from the stamps—that the Trucial States were Arab, newly rich, and somehow connected with the West.

The reason for my nostalgia was simple. The cover stories in this issue of *Connection* explore our relationship with the world around us. For me, that relationship began with stamps.

Eventually, I swapped my entire stamp collection, "Statesman" album and all, for one football card of an all-pro New York Giants defensive back. As trades go, it was a mugging. Nonetheless, I was lucky. With encouragement from our parents, my brothers and sisters and I held on to our collections long enough to pick up a lasting sense of the world.

Enough so that when Azerbaijanis fought in the streets early this year, I pictured paper-thin stamps from Azerbaijan, the image of a farmer against the sunrise, and the ominous overprint: "Occupation." Some years earlier when Britain engaged Argentina in the Falkland Islands, and too many Americans said the "What Islands?," I remembered my Falklands stamps depicting sheep and fishing boats, all under the watchful eye of Queen Elizabeth.

My context for the Tiananmen Square massacre came from an early lesson in geopolitics. My oldest brother, having moved to Canada where trade relations with the Communist world were maintained, was able to "smuggle" us a set of stamps depicting gymnasts from the People's Republic of China. We would surely be arrested if caught with the "Red" Chinese stamps in the United States, we thought.

Poster-style tributes to workers and tractors aroused our suspicions about East Bloc countries. The queen's visage on stamps from places like the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean taught us of colonialism. We puzzled over richly colored stamps from Croatia and other places that had seemed to disappear from the face of the earth, at least temporarily.

It was up to the schools to fine-tune our images of the world, to tell us, for example, that the Orange Free State was not a citrus paradise, but a land of apartheid. But the teachers would have had little chance at success had it not been for rainy afternoons at home, hovering over the stamp album.

It turns out, our avocation had blinded me to one important fact: On average, Americans have an atrocious understanding of geography and foreign culture. That problem, of course, has commanded new attention with the realization that knowledge of geography is now a pocketbook issue.

Our lead story is based on the premise that foreign markets are growing faster than U.S. markets, that the world is "shrinking." If we want to maintain a decent standard of living, we had better start understanding our world. As of 1987, exports represented only 6 percent of U.S. gross domestic product, compared with 26 percent in West Germany, 23 percent in Canada, and 10 percent in Japan, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Leaders of New England economic development and trade agencies say a lack of international cultural awareness among executives and entrepreneurs is a chief reason many businesses have not begun exporting. Could we perhaps suggest a hobby for those folks? □

---

*John O. Harney is editor of Connection.*