

# CONNECTION

NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## EDITOR'S MEMO

The "cover stories" in this issue of *Connection* focus on New England's economy — its downturn and its possible resurgence.

As *Connection* went to press, American warplanes were bombarding Iraq and Israeli citizens were taking gas masks to bed with them. Many American families faced the prospect of a father or a mother or a son or a daughter being killed in the fighting.

Back in New England, people went to work as usual — but there was less work to go to. Unemployment had risen sharply over the past year.

Buses, trains and taxis were running on schedule — but they were running on gasoline, coughing soot into the air and adding to our dependence on imported oil.

Airplanes were flying too — but airports were gridlocked. A report by The New England Council found that the region's businesses would have trouble competing in international markets unless another major airport were built.

People took time to do their normal banking business — but many banks were on the verge of collapse. Several in Rhode Island were shut for lack of trustworthy deposit insurance.

Teachers were helping students cope with the war — but some of the discussions took place in "portable classrooms," led by underpaid teachers and aimed at underfed, underloved kids.

Television was carrying reports of the combat success of New England-made high-tech weaponry — but many New England high-tech firms were using euphemisms worthy of the Pentagon to say they were cutting their workforces.

Academics were being tapped for their expert opinions on all angles of the war — but every New England state government was considering cuts in public funding of higher education and student scholarships. Many talented faculty members had already fled the region for states where public higher education commanded more fiscal respect.

Older people offered thoughts on wars past — but care for the elderly, like public safety and programs for the disadvantaged, were targeted for "downsizing" as the six states tried to address a cumulative budget shortfall in excess of \$2 billion. Congressional budget specialists said the war could cost between 14 and 50 times that much, depending on how long it lasts.

In most places, people observed Martin Luther King's birthday — but 22 years after King preached peace and racial justice, data showed that Black Americans were over-represented in the fighting force and under-represented among recipients of advanced degrees at New England colleges and universities.

Boston apartment-dwellers were presumably safe from missile attacks — but not from evictions, which reportedly increased 70 percent during the past year largely because of the economic downturn.

It is true that all the bad economic news imaginable doesn't inspire the nausea brought on by live television coverage of an air raid; nor is a prescription for economic resurgence as compelling as a plan for peace.

But there is indeed an urgency to the collection of essays that appears in the "Roads to Recovery" section of this issue of *Connection*. For New England, by many accounts, is in the depths of a protracted recession whose casualties are jobs, homes, living standards and technological progress. We are grateful to our contributors for so eloquently defining the problem and offering solutions. □

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*John O. Harney is editor of Connection.*