

CONNECTION

NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL
OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CONNECTION: NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT is published four times a year by the New England Board of Higher Education, 45 Temple Place, Boston, Mass. 02111.

Phone: (617) 357-9620

FAX: (617) 338-1577

Vol. VII, No. 1 SPRING/SUMMER 1992

ISSN 0071-3643

Copyright © 1992 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 Writer: Jennifer McCauley

Art Direction, Production, Printing:

The Media Shop, Inc.

Boston, Mass.

Page Design and Layout:

John Hall

Coordinator, Advertising Sales: Douglas Shank

Subscription Information: \$16 per year (4 issues); regular issues \$2.50 each; annual FACTS issue \$12.

Printed in New England.

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 authorized by the U.S. Congress. NEBHE's purpose is to advance and develop programs that encourage higher education opportunities and improve efficiency in the use of resources among New England's public and independent colleges and universities.

Chairman: Walter Peterson, president,
Franklin Pierce College

President: John C. Hoy

CONNECTION Editorial Advisory Board

Chairman:

Kenneth Hooker

Former Editor

New England Business Magazine

Richard Barringer

Director

Edmund S. Muskie Institute of Public Affairs

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

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

E D I T O R ' S M E M O

Tourist: Does it matter which road I take to Portland?

Maine Native: Not to me it don't

Down East accents and droll Yankee humor have been used to peddle so many products lately, they may reveal more about the culture of Madison Avenue than about the true nature of New Englanders. But that particular exchange between the lost tourist and the Maine country native does seem to symbolize an enduring — though hardly endearing — side of the New England character.

While New Englanders may not be as *fiercely independent*, not as *taciturn*, not as *frugal*, not even as *Yankee* as legend has it, our sense of what matters to us sometimes is too limited for our own good — especially when state lines are involved.

Change the characters to residents of two New England states and the question to: "Does it matter which road we take to economic recovery ... which road to environmental protection ... which road to forward-looking public policy?" The answer is likely to be: *Not to me it don't*.

And so the New England states are wading through one deep recession, clinging to at least six separate economic development plans, at least six separate environmental strategies and a myriad of conflicting public policies. All the while, New England jobs are disappearing and the region's infrastructure is crumbling with no regard for state lines. Divided, we are falling.

A core of well-established New England regional agencies and voluntary organizations offers the promise of a united front on issues such as education, energy, environmental protection, tourism and transportation. When these interstate groups try to collect dues from struggling New England companies or secure appropriations from revenue-strapped states, they are asking constituents, in effect, if their work *matters*. And too often the answer is: *Not to me it don't*.

Meanwhile, the region's newspapers offer a running commentary on the progress of economic unification in Europe. The reports document the benefits of creating common interests from Belfast to Berlin. But good luck finding a thoughtful newspaper story on the common interests of, say, Belfast, Maine, and Berlin, N.H.

The "Cover Stories" in this issue of CONNECTION are intended to begin a dialogue about regionalism here in New England. It is a subject that has rested in our editorial subconscious. Whether our focus has been higher education financing or the future of environmental technology or international trade, CONNECTION has always operated on the assumption that what happens in one New England state matters to the other five.

The Massachusetts biotech company and the Vermont dairy farmer matter to each other. The prestigious liberal arts college in New Hampshire and the urban high school in southern Connecticut matter to each other. The Rhode Island marine researcher and the Maine lobsterman matter to each other. Labor markets do not respect New England state boundaries. Nor do natural resources. Nor ideas — this region's specialty.

Nonetheless, like the proverbial lost tourist, New England regionalists often see their queries greeted with indifference. We trust that the following exclusive essays on regionalism will elicit a more spirited response.

Finally, readers will note that the interstate work of the New England Board of Higher Education figures prominently in our discussion of New England regionalism. To preserve our credibility, contributors' praise for NEBHE generally winds up on the cutting room floor. In this issue, however, several essayists clearly found NEBHE's programs inextricable from any meaningful analysis of interstate cooperation in New England. Playing down NEBHE's central role in this case, we determined, would have really stretched credibility.

John O. Harney is the editor of CONNECTION.