

NEW ENGLAND'S DEFENSE CLOSINGS*

PART I: IMPACT ON AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Announcement of the closing of several large defense installations in New England presents a challenge to many affected communities. The Defense Department made public its decision to close these bases several years in advance in order to allow the communities sufficient time to attract new industries. In some places, however, much time and effort were devoted to reversing the decision and "saving the installation." Now that the closings have been accepted, positive plans for the future are being made.

In this article, the varying impact of defense installation closings will be assessed. To help affected communities select useful industrial techniques, a description of some positive steps taken is also included. In general, during periods of full employment most affected communities can make the transition with relatively few problems.

GOVERNMENT AID

When the Defense Department finds it necessary to close a particular installation, a special program is used to cushion the impact for the workers and the affected community. This adjustment program is two-pronged. First, job opportunities are being offered to permanent civil service employees who are willing to be moved to another job in the Department of Defense. Second, a special community assistance program has been set up to help attract new industry to areas where the Defense Department has closed down. The Office of Economic Adjustment within the Department of Defense provides technical know-how to affected communities and particularly helps to locate and expedite Federal aid programs. Because the majority of workers are guaranteed other jobs within the government, the problems of the affected communities differ substantially from those of the displaced workers. Part I of this article deals with the community impact and Part II with impact on the workers.

Most of New England's affected installations played an important role in the country's early history. Capt. John Paul Jones' ship, the *Ranger*, of Revolutionary War fame was built at Portsmouth before it had an official naval shipyard. The Springfield Armory was the first to be established by the U.S. Government and dates back to 1794. There Eli Whitney developed machinery for standard interchangeable gun parts. The Watertown Arsenal, established in 1815, soon became particularly noted for its special metals and castings for cannon. Now, however, vast changes in technology have caused the Defense Department to consider their continued operation uneconomic.

Although the region has not been particularly hard hit by the closing

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