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# LABOR MARKET



# NEWS LETTER

Maine Employment Security Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine

OCTOBER - 1952

ISSUED BI-MONTHLY

## LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

The volume of unemployment in Maine dropped to its lowest point of the year early in October.

Seasonal employment declines were noted at the end of the summer, but labor force withdrawals prevented a rise in the number of workers in the labor market.

There are practically no experienced workers available to fill job vacancies in several occupational categories. However, such shortages are surprisingly few in number.

An over-all surplus of labor, although smaller than for a number of years, continues to attract the attention of prospective employers interested in finding suitable plant sites in Maine.

Further seasonal curtailments will cause additional declines in total employment in the next few months, but the job outlook in nonseasonal activities is exceptionally promising.

### CURRENT UNEMPLOYMENT IN MAINE

There are communities in Maine in which distinct, although not sizeable, surpluses of labor exist at the moment; but, State-wide, unemployment is at a relatively low level. The volume of claims for unemployment compensation has dropped off steadily since early in the spring, reaching a low point for the year in the latter part of September and the first part of October, when 3,400 workers were in an insured unemployment status. From claims and total employment data which are available, it may be deduced that at the first of the current month less than 2 per cent of the workers in the Maine labor force were unemployed. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 2.3 per cent of the civilian workers in the country as a whole were unemployed in September — the latest period for which nation-wide figures have been assembled.

### LABOR FORCE DEVELOPMENTS

Since the end of the summer, seemingly contradictory trends in total employment and unemployment have been in evidence, in that there have been reductions in both the number of workers with jobs and the number unemployed. Such paradoxical trends may be explained primarily by the fact that as seasonal employment started to decline in those activities which were stimulated during the summer months by the patronage of summer vacationists, youths, who had been available for summer jobs, withdrew from the labor force in order that they might resume their educational pursuits. Although the movement of workers to out-of-state defense production centers has been a factor in the past two years in restricting the size of Maine's labor force, the migration of labor from and to this State is now approximately in balance.

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## FARM LABOR RECRUITMENT

No difficulty was encountered during the past season in recruiting farm labor for the harvesting of crops until September when the digging of potatoes in Aroostook County got under way. For several years it has been necessary to import workers from outside the county to assist in carrying out the operation, but this year recruiting efforts in other Maine areas and throughout the rest of New England fell far short of desired goals because of a general scarcity of persons available for such work. Since harvesting operations were late in starting, the period in which potatoes could be dug was shortened. This caused the situation to become even more acute. However, the problem was met by utilizing a greater number of Canadian workers than had been deemed necessary earlier in the season, and the excellent cooperation of Canadian National Employment Service in recruiting additional labor on extremely short notice did much to forestall possible serious potato crop losses.

## SUPPLY OF NONFARM LABOR

The supply of labor available for nonfarm employment in Maine, although at its lowest point in several years, is proving adequate — numerically, at least — to meet most of the demand for workers as it occurs. However, qualitative deficiencies in the supply have continued to arise and at present, the Employment Security Commission has listed in its local offices 173 job openings which cannot be filled from local sources. There appear to be no outstanding shortages, except of woods workers, in any single occupation, and, as far as can be determined, the shortages which do exist are not disrupting the operating plans of any employer. In recent weeks, openings for skilled textile, construction, and metal trades workers have proved most difficult to fill.

## NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Total employment in nonagricultural industries in Maine decreased from 286,400 in August to 285,500 in September, according to the latest estimates compiled by the Maine Employment Security Commission in coopera-

tion with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. The indicated decline of 900 non-farm jobs was due principally to curtailments of a seasonal nature in segments of the retail trade, service, transportation, and leather products industries. Despite the thirty-day decline — which is to be expected at the end of the summer and in the early fall each year — the over-all employment picture is considerably brighter than a year ago when, in September, 279,500 workers were on the pay rolls of nonagricultural establishments. Noteworthy over-the-year employment advances have been made in the shipbuilding, ordnance, textile, and leather products industries.

## INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

Not only have employment expansions occurred in numerous Maine establishments of long standing, but contributing to the upswing which has taken place in the course of the past year has been the opening of additional jobs in new plants. The State has lost a few establishments which have been forced, for various reasons, to cease operations in Maine, but such losses have more than been offset by gains represented in new plants. Indicative of industrial growth is the fact that more employers are now subject to the Maine Employment Security Law than at any other time since the law has been effective. On October 1, employers subject to the law totalled 4,766. This represented an increase of sixty-six for the past year and was 1,957 greater than the number subject at the end of the first full year (1937) the law was in operation.

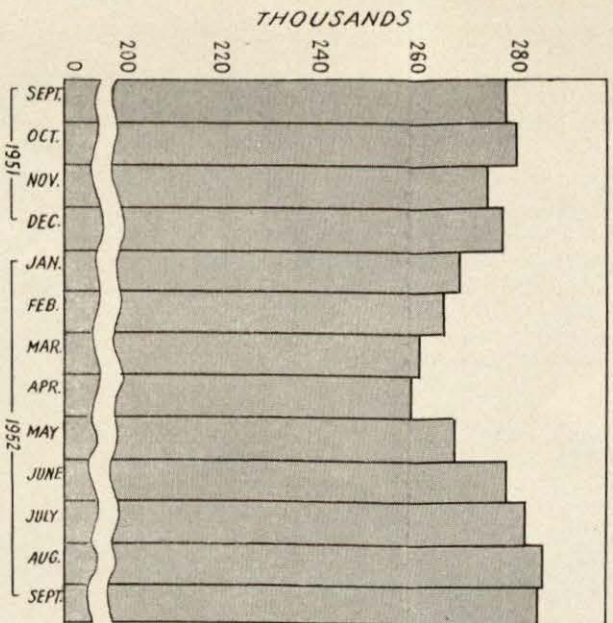
## HOURLY AND WEEKLY EARNINGS

Despite wage-rate cuts at the first of the summer in parts of the textile industry, the over-all average hourly earnings of persons engaged in production jobs in Maine's manufacturing industries have remained firm. In September such workers earned, on an average, \$1.35 per hour, which is approximately the same as the amounts computed for each of the preceding five months. In 1951, average hourly earnings reached \$1.35 only in December — in September last year the average was \$1.32. Average weekly earnings have also shown a decided increase, moving upwards from \$53.39 to \$55.45 between September 1951 and September 1952.

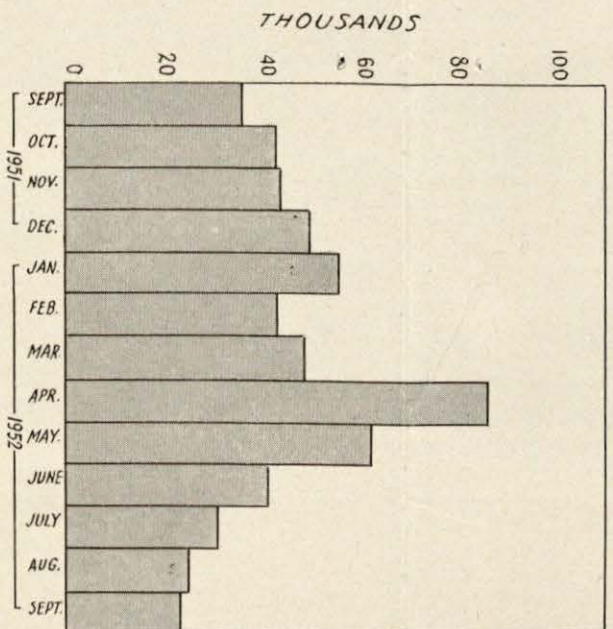
# *Selected Labor Market Trend Indicators*

SEPTEMBER 1951 — SEPTEMBER 1952

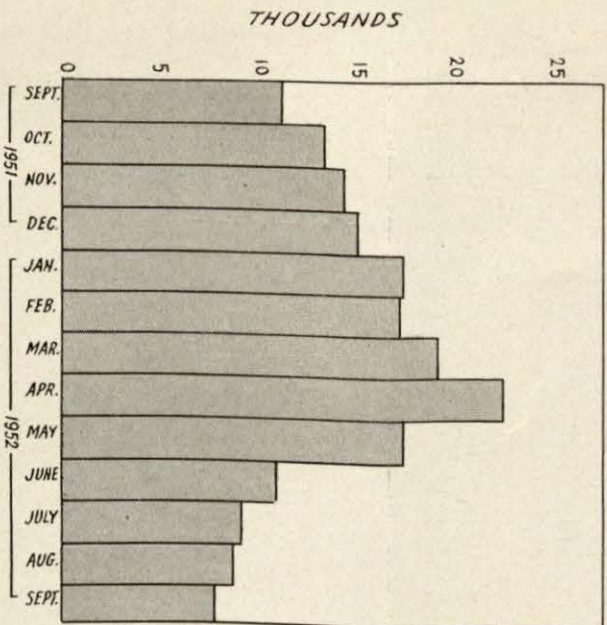
NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT



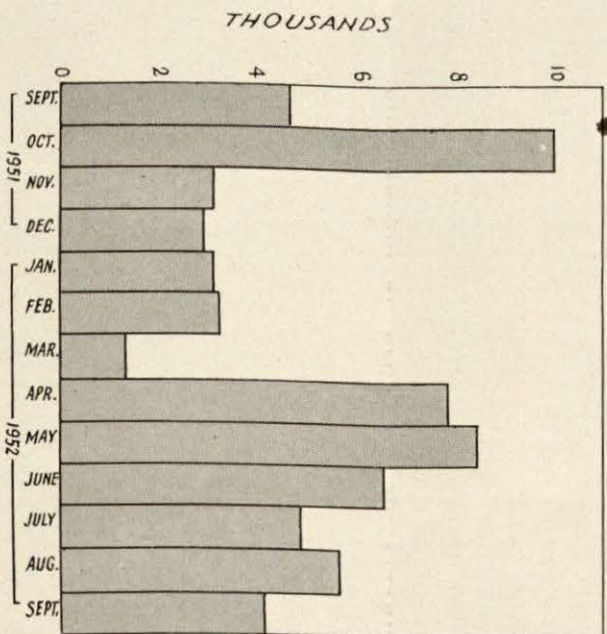
U C CLAIMS LOAD



REGISTERED JOB SEEKERS



JOB OPENINGS RECEIVED



## HOURS OF WORK

Estimates based upon information furnished to the Maine Employment Security Commission by selected employers throughout the State reveal that the average work-week for production workers employed in manufacturing industries in September was 41.1 hours. In comparing this figure with the average of 40.5 for September 1951, attention is directed to the fact that — along with a larger employed working force than a year ago — a greater percentage of the workers with jobs are employed on a full-time basis. Since the first of the year, the average workweek dropped below 40 hours only in July, when production schedules in several industries were curtailed as a result of plant shut-downs for recognized vacation periods. In 1951, the average work-week fell below 40 hours in five months — May, June, July, October, and November.

## JOB OUTLOOK

Reports from all sections of the State are exceptionally optimistic with regard to the employment outlook for the next several months. Seasonal declines in several industries later in the fall and during the winter months undoubtedly will throw many workers into the labor market, but, because no serious nonseasonal slumps apparently are anticipated in any major industry, far-reaching unemployment problems are not expected to arise. There have been indications that labor requirements in the fabricated metal products industry will rise rather appreciably; the immediate and long-range prospects in the construction field are most favorable; there have been no signs that a high level of activity will not continue in shoe manufacturing in spite of the closing of one large factory in Portland; and the textile industry appears to be recovering after having been adversely affected by uncertainties stemming from weak consumer demand for many types of textile-mill products.

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AUGUSTA MAINE  
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EMPLOYMENT SECURITY MAIL  
UNITED STATES POSTAGE  
ACCOUNTED FOR UNDER  
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(SEC. 35.4 (P) (1) P. L. & R.)