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## Labor Market News Letter, February 1949

Maine Employment Security Commission

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# LABOR MARKET



# NEWS LETTER

Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine



FEBRUARY - 1949



## LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

THE VOLUME of unemployment in Maine reached a ten year mid-winter peak during February, and while there has been some evidence of increasing stability in the employment situation since the first of the year, significant declines in the number of unemployed are not looked for until late in the spring. Job opportunities are extremely scarce at the present time, and there are many workers now in the labor market who possess skills which were in heavy demand a few months ago. Nonagricultural employment in the State dropped to 253,200 in the middle of January from a mid-December level of 261,700. This decline was due in part to seasonal curtailments, but, at the same time, employment in many industries fell below normal seasonal levels. In spite of recent developments, it appears that officials of many of the State's leading industrial establishments are confident that favorable business conditions will prevail during the current year. It is doubtful, however, that employment will reach the peak levels of 1948.

### UNEMPLOYMENT IS AT HIGHEST MID-WINTER LEVEL IN TEN YEARS

RECORDS OF the Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission indicate that unemployment in this State is at its highest mid-winter level in ten years. The volume of unemployment, however, has not reached proportions which should prove severely disruptive to the over-all economy of the State, and, in making comparisons with recent years, it is well to point out that unemployment in the past decade has been at a low level generally due to such factors as the extensive defense and war production programs between 1940 and 1945, the movement of young men and women from the labor market to the armed forces during the war emergency, and the boom in civilian production between 1946 and 1948. Current unemployment is running about 45 per cent above last year's February level, and it appears likely that there will continue to be a larger number of workers than usual in the labor market through the remainder of the winter period and probably through the spring months.

### LAY-OFFS HAVE SHOWN A DECLINE SINCE THE FIRST OF THE YEAR

LAY-OFFS, as measured by claims for Unemployment Compensation Benefits and Servicemen's Readjustment Allowances filed by newly unemployed workers, have dropped slightly since the first of the current year, but the volume of lay-offs is still relatively high. During the first part of February the average number of claimants entering new spells of unemployment

each week was 2,821, whereas during January the average weekly number of newly unemployed claimants was 3,569. Separation rates usually show a marked upswing in January due to employment curtailments in many establishments which operate with skeleton crews during first-of-the-year inventory taking periods. Seasonal declines in fields such as the construction and retail trade industries also contribute heavily to January claims load increases. This year, however, pay roll reductions have occurred in various industries which ordinarily do not experience significant declines in January or February, and for this reason the number of workers entering the labor market has been abnormally high.

### UNEMPLOYED CLAIMANTS TOTAL 23,939

DURING THE WEEK ending February 12, a total of 23,939 totally or partially unemployed residents of this State filed claims for Unemployment Compensation Benefits or Servicemen's Readjustment Allowances. Twenty one thousand two hundred and thirty-four were in an "insured unemployment" status (i.e., they were filing claims during an uninterrupted period of unemployment which had commenced in some preceding week), while the remaining 2,705 were newly unemployed claimants. The volume of "insured unemployment" (in spite of the fact that 2,138 persons exhausted their benefit rights during December and January and therefore will not be eligible to file claims again until after April 1) has shown an increase of 46.4 per cent since the first of December.

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## **JOB APPLICANTS HAVE INCREASED IN NUMBER**

THE NUMBER of persons seeking work through the sixteen employment offices of this Commission now totals 27,401. Of these workers, 20,149 are males and 7,252 are females. Ten thousand six hundred and seventy-seven of the registrants are veterans, and 1,817 (1,101 veterans and 716 nonveterans) are handicapped persons. The registrants are classified, according to their past work experience, in the following broad occupational groups: professional and managerial—706; clerical and sales—2,110; service—1,626; skilled—5,696; semi-skilled—7,617; and unskilled—9,646. Geographically, the supply of available labor is fairly evenly distributed, although there are some towns in which the unemployment-population ratio has become pronounced.

## **VERY FEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST AT THE PRESENT TIME**

THE PROSPECTS of persons seeking jobs in this State at the present time are not bright. Judging from job vacancies listed with the employment offices of this Commission, it appears that employment opportunities are more limited in number than at any time since V-J Day. As of the first of February, only 439 job openings in activities other than woods operations were listed with the local offices. These openings were in a number of different industries, and there was no concentration of job vacancies in any one area. The industries in which the vacancies existed were: construction—29; manufacturing—180; transportation and other public utilities—9; restaurants and retail and wholesale trade establishments—92; banks, real estate, and insurance—14; personal, business, and professional services—65; private households—42; and government—8. Openings listed in woods operations totalled 6,012.

## **DEMANDS FOR LABOR EXPECTED TO PICK UP IN THE SPRING**

DEMANDS FOR LABOR are expected to remain at a low level during the next month or two, but requirements should pick up late in the spring. During January local office representatives contacted 1,037 nonagricultural employers who employ approximately 68,700 workers. Some of these employers indicated that they might expand their pay rolls slightly by the middle of March, but the majority anticipate no significant changes in their employment requirements in the near future. Although there have been general declines in employment in the past few months, a great many of the employers contacted appear to be looking forward to the

remainder of the year as a period of relatively high industrial activity. It appears to be the consensus, however, that employment levels will be somewhat below last year.

## **NUMBER OF EMPLOYING ESTABLISHMENTS IN MAINE HAS INCREASED DURING PAST YEAR**

RECENT DECLINES in nonagricultural employment have tended to overshadow the fact that there have been marked increases during 1948 in the number of employing establishments in this State. Because of coverage provisions, many small establishments are not subject to the Maine Unemployment Compensation Law. However, records pertaining to subject employers reveal that the economic picture with respect to numbers of employers has shown definite improvement. At the beginning of 1948, 4,508 employers were subject to the law, while on January 1, 1949 the number had increased to 4,671. Nearly all of the newly subject establishments were small in size, and some had been in existence prior to 1948 but became liable during the year due to pay roll expansions. Nevertheless, expanded coverage under the law points to a basically sound economic condition. Of more than passing interest is the fact that since 1940 there has been a net increase of 907 in the number of employers subject to the Unemployment Compensation law.

## **NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT SHOWS 3.2 PERCENT DECLINE IN JANUARY**

ACCORDING to preliminary estimates compiled by the Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 253,200 persons were employed on a full- or part-time basis in nonagricultural industries in Maine during pay roll periods ending nearest to January 15, 1949. This represents a 3.2 percent decline from estimated employment during mid-December pay periods, and a drop of 3.3 percent from the January 1948 employment level. The dip in employment between December and January was due in part to usual seasonal curtailments in such activities as construction work, food processing, and retail trade. However, reductions in many industries may be attributed to the general business decline which has been in evidence throughout the country. The accompanying table summarizes employment estimates for the January 1948, December 1948, and January 1949 periods. These estimates are based upon data furnished each month by selected employers throughout the State.



**PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE**  
**OF NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT IN MAINE**  
**January, 1949<sup>1</sup> (In thousands)**

Compiled by the Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission in cooperation with  
the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics

INDUSTRY	Jan. <sup>2</sup> 1949	Dec. <sup>2</sup> 1948	Jan. <sup>2</sup> 1948	Percentage Change	
				Dec. 1948 to Jan. 1949	Jan. 1948 to Jan. 1949
Total Nonagricultural Employment.....	253.2	261.7	261.8	-3.2	-3.3
Total Manufacturing .....	107.8	109.3	116.0	-1.4	-7.1
Durable Goods.....	34.1	34.2	36.8	-0.3	-7.3
Lumber and Wood Products.....	20.9	20.7	22.3	1.0	-6.3
Primary and Fabricated Metal Products and Machinery.....	9.7	10.0	10.0	-3.0	-3.0
All Other.....	3.5	3.5	4.5	0.0	-22.2
Nondurable Goods.....	73.7	75.1	79.2	-1.9	-6.9
Food and Kindred Products.....	6.4	7.1	6.5	-9.9	-1.5
Textile Mill Products and Apparel.....	28.6	29.7	31.4	-3.7	-8.9
Paper and Allied Products.....	18.6	18.9	18.9	-1.6	-1.6
Leather Products.....	15.8	15.1	17.9	4.6	-11.7
All Other.....	4.3	4.3	4.5	0.0	-4.4
Total Nonmanufacturing.....	145.4	152.4	145.8	-4.6	-0.3
Mining and Quarrying.....	.4	.5	.5	-20.0	-20.0
Contract Construction.....	9.8	11.2	10.1	-12.5	-3.0
Transportation and Other Public Utilities.....	19.5	19.6	19.8	-0.5	-1.5
Wholesale and Retail Trade.....	45.3	49.3	47.1	-8.1	-3.8
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate.....	6.4	6.5	6.5	-1.5	-1.5
Business, Personal and Misc. Services.....	22.9	23.4	23.0	-2.1	-0.4
Government <sup>3</sup> .....	41.1	41.9	38.8	-1.9	5.9

<sup>1</sup> Data presented exclude domestics in private households, self-employed and unpaid family workers. Employment figures (except for government) relate to full- and part-time wage and salary workers in pay periods ending nearest the 15th of each month. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates corrected to February 14, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> These estimates, representing federal, state and local employment, are prepared by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Federal employment is as of the end of the month and excludes fourth-class postmasters and substitute rural mail carriers. State and local government estimates represent persons on pay rolls during end-of-month pay periods, exclusive of those persons who receive only nominal amounts of pay, such as for each meeting or fire attended.

# Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission

## EMPLOYMENT OFFICES

<i>Location</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
Augusta	331 Water Street	1200-41
Bangor	182 Harlow Street	6435
Bath	174 Front Street	1748
Biddeford	275 Main Street	2070
Calais	87 Main Street	427
Caribou	Main Street	3331
Ellsworth	City Hall, Room 7	333
Houlton	32 Bangor Street	3606
Lewiston	19 Park Street	46971
Machias	Main Street	167
Portland	615 Congress Street	2-0186
Rockland	437 Main Street	105
Rumford	244 Waldo Street	805
Sanford	25 Washington Street	1045
Skowhegan	29 Water Street	368
Waterville	79 Temple Street	1886

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