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Labor Market News Letter, April 1949

Maine Employment Security Commission

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LABOR MARKET



NEWS LETTER

Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine



APRIL - 1949



LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

THE NUMBER of persons employed on a full or part-time basis in Maine nonagricultural industries dropped by 4,900 between February and March to a low for the year thus far of 243,100. This decline occurred principally in manufacturing activities — nonmanufacturing industries showing a decrease of only 500 for the period. It is estimated that nonagricultural employment in the State during pay periods ending nearest to March 15 was 13,200 below comparable periods last year.

Unemployment in the State continues at an exceptionally high level, and it is expected that further increases in the number of unemployed will materialize during April and May. Current forecasts, however, indicate that the employment situation will improve during the latter part of June.

EMPLOYMENT TREND STILL DOWNWARD IN MAINE

THE NUMBER of persons employed on a full or part-time basis in Maine's nonagricultural industries continued to follow a downward trend in March. According to estimates compiled by the Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 243,100 workers were on the pay rolls of nonagricultural employers in pay periods ending nearest to March 15. This figure reflects a 2 per cent decline from mid-February when 248,000 persons were engaged in non-farm jobs. March represents the seventh consecutive month in which employment in nonagricultural activities has dropped.

SEASONAL AS WELL AS NONSEASONAL FACTORS ACCOUNT FOR DECLINES

THE SLACKENING in general business conditions which started late last summer has contributed materially to the employment declines that have occurred. A decrease of 13,200 between March 1948 and March 1949 in the number of employed non-agricultural workers in Maine supports the conclusion that other than seasonal factors have been responsible at least partially for the present level of employment. However, seasonal influences have played a prominent part in determining the expediency for and the extent of curtailments in many of the State's major industries. A large percentage of the employment declines which took place between the middle of February and mid-March, although sharper than usual for some activities, de-

veloped in industries which normally have pay roll contractions in the latter part of the winter.

MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT SHOWS A 4.1 PER CENT DROP

LATE WINTER employment declines are common in several of this State's largest manufacturing industries. Some manufacturing industries frequently experience gains at this time of the year, but these gains usually are more than offset by pay roll reductions in such activities as woolen textile manufacturing and woods operations. This year has not been an exception. Between February and March there was an over-all drop of 4.1 per cent in the number of persons working in manufacturing establishments. Estimated employment in manufacturing industries during pay periods ending nearest to February 15 was 106,300 as compared with 101,900 for mid-March pay periods. Establishments producing durable goods had an aggregate reduction of 2,400 during the thirty-day period while those producing nondurable goods experienced a drop of 2,000.

DECLINES FROM LAST YEAR IN MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT HAVE BEEN FAIRLY GENERAL

MARCH EMPLOYMENT in all manufacturing industries, except the paper and allied products industry, was below March of last year. Heaviest declines in terms of workers affected were in the textile and food processing industries which showed twelve-month losses of 5,900 and 1,700 respectively. However, significantly large decreases were noted also in most of the other

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manufacturing groups. Although not reflected in figures relating to numbers of workers employed, but nevertheless important with respect to the reduced earnings and purchasing power of workers with jobs, is the fact that scheduled work-weeks have been shortened in many manufacturing fields. In nearly all cases, cuts in the number of persons employed and/or in hours of work have been caused by a falling off in demands for the products manufactured.

NONMANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT IS DOWN SLIGHTLY

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT in nonmanufacturing industries during pay periods ending nearest to March 15 was 141,200. This represents a decrease of only 0.4 per cent from February, and of 2.7 per cent from March of last year. No particularly significant declines occurred between February and March in any of the nonmanufacturing groups. However, fairly appreciable employment losses were sustained in the construction, public utilities, and the wholesale-retail fields from March 1948 to March 1949. In the annual period, declines for the three were: construction — 1,200; public utilities — 1,200; and wholesale-retail trade — 2,800.

VOLUME OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN MAINE CONTINUES AT HIGH LEVEL

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT offices of the Maine Unemployment Compensation Commission are being confronted with exceptionally high claims loads. In fact, more claims were taken under the Unemployment Compensation and the Servicemen's Readjustment Allowance programs in March of this year than in March of any previous year (1938-1948) in which this agency has accepted claims. During the last week of March, approximately 23,900 residents of this State were in an insured unemployed status (i.e., these persons were filing claims during uninterrupted spells of unemployment which had commenced in some preceding week). The volume of insured unemployment was slightly lower at the end of March than earlier in the month, or for that matter in weeks during February. This is explained largely by the fact that during February and March 3,544 persons exhausted their benefit rights and drew the last benefit payment they were eligible to receive during the benefit year period ending on March 31.

\$4,436,792 IN BENEFITS ISSUED DURING FIRST QUARTER OF 1949

DURING THE first calendar quarter of this year, the gross amount of money issued to unemployed persons by the Commission under the Unemployment Com-

pensation and Servicemen's Readjustment Allowance program was \$4,436,792. The size of this figure, when considered in the light that benefit payments allow the average claimant an estimated 25 to 30 per cent coverage against wages lost through unemployment, is of especial significance. With such large amounts in unemployment insurance payments being issued, it is apparent that the benefits program is proving effective in cushioning the shock to our economy of decreases in the purchasing power of covered workers who have lost their jobs. Undoubtedly, without the stabilizing effects of this program on the purchasing power of unemployed persons, business declines in the past few months would have been much more acute. Also, this program has gone a long way in preventing a serious and far-reaching relief problem from developing rapidly within a short period of time.

260,178 WEEKS OF UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATED DURING QUARTER ENDING ON MARCH 31

BENEFITS WERE issued during the calendar quarter ending on March 31 to compensate eligible unemployed workers for an aggregate of 260,178 weeks in which they were either totally or partially unemployed. Since there were thirteen weeks in the quarter, the number of claimants receiving checks averaged 20,014 per week. During the first quarter of 1948, weeks of unemployment compensated under the Unemployment Compensation and Servicemen's Readjustment Allowance programs totalled 172,670. The average number of recipients of benefit payments in the first quarter of last year was 13,285.

NUMBER OF PERSONS REGISTERED FOR WORK HAS RISEN TO 34,558

PERSONS REGISTERED for work in the sixteen local employment offices of this agency totalled 34,558 on April 1. Not since the middle of 1940 have as large a number of workers maintained active applications for work with the Commission. Of the current registrants, 25,796 are males and 8,762 are females. The workers are classified according to their experience and aptitudes in the following broad occupational groups: professional and managerial — 747; clerical and sales — 2,406; service — 1,948; skilled — 7,510; semiskilled — 10,807; and unskilled — 11,140. Included in the total number of active job seekers at the first of April were 13,381 veterans, of whom 12,493 were veterans of World War II. Handicapped workers seeking employment through the facilities of local offices totalled 2,016 at the beginning of the current month. Of these, 1,307 were veterans.

**PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE
OF NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT IN MAINE
March, 1949¹ (In thousands)**

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

INDUSTRY	Mar. ² 1949	Feb. ² 1949	Mar. ² 1948	Percentage Change	
				Feb. 1949 to Mar. 1949	Mar. 1948 to Mar. 1949
Total Nonagricultural Employment.....	243.1	248.0	256.3	-2.0	-5.2
Total Manufacturing	101.9	106.3	111.2	-4.1	-8.4
Durable Goods.....	30.8	33.2	31.9	-7.2	-3.4
Lumber and Wood Products.....	18.3	20.6	18.4	-11.2	-0.5
Primary and Fabricated Metal Products and Machinery.....	9.2	9.3	9.5	-1.1	-3.2
All Other.....	3.3	3.3	4.0	0.0	-17.5
Nondurable Goods.....	71.1	73.1	79.3	-2.7	-10.3
Food and Kindred Products.....	6.4	6.1	8.1	4.9	-21.0
Textile Mill Products and Apparel..	25.7	27.9	31.6	-7.9	-18.7
Paper and Allied Products.....	18.1	18.3	17.9	-1.1	1.1
Leather Products.....	16.8	16.7	17.3	0.6	-2.9
All Other.....	4.1	4.1	4.4	0.0	-6.8
Total Nonmanufacturing	141.2	141.7	145.1	-0.4	-2.7
Mining and Quarrying.....	.5	.4	.5	25.0	0.0
Contract Construction.....	7.9	8.0	9.1	-1.3	-13.2
Transportation and Other Public Utilities.....	19.1	19.2	20.3	-0.5	-5.9
Wholesale and Retail Trade.....	44.3	44.6	47.1	-0.7	-5.9
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate...	6.4	6.4	6.4	0.0	0.0
Business, Personal and Misc. Services	22.5	22.6	22.7	-0.4	-0.9
Government ³	40.5	40.5	39.0	0.0	3.8

¹ 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.

² Estimate corrected to April 20, 1949.

³ 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.

CURRENT DEMAND FOR LABOR IS VERY LIGHT

AT THE FIRST of April demand for labor, as reflected in job openings listed with the local offices of this Commission, was very light. Excluding openings in the lumber and wood products industry, local offices held orders for only 762 workers. Job listings were greater in number than at the first of February when employer requisitions for workers totalled 439, but they were still far below the number which offices have been accustomed to have on hand. The labor needs represented were distributed by occupational groups as follows: professional and managerial — 23; clerical and sales — 143; service — 168; skilled — 81; semi-skilled — 48; and unskilled — 299. Of the job openings on order, 280 were for women and 482 were for males.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK SHOULD IMPROVE IN JUNE

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS are not likely to improve until after the middle of June, according to current forecasts based upon information obtained from various employers contacted during March by representatives of the Commission's sixteen local employment offices. Increases in the number of unemployed are anticipated during April and May due to further seasonal curtailments in a few industries, and it is quite probable that unemployment will ascend to new peaks in those months. However, with the advent of summer and the usual pick-up in employment in numerous year-round as well as in strictly seasonal industries, the over-all labor market picture should become brighter. It is doubtful though that job opportunities will be as plentiful as in the summer of 1948.

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

After Five Days Return To
MAINE
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION COMMISSION
AUGUSTA MAINE
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY MAIL
UNITED STATES POSTAGE
ACCOUNTED FOR UNDER
ACT OF CONGRESS
(PAR. 13, SEC. 579, P. L. & R.)