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## Labor Market News Letter, December 1949

Maine Employment Security Commission

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# LABOR MARKET



# NEWS LETTER

Maine Employment Security Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine



## DECEMBER-1949

ISSUED BI-MONTHLY



### LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

UNEMPLOYMENT in Maine rose sharply during November and the early part of December. The increase, however, was attributable primarily to seasonal causes. Job opportunities generally are scarcer than they have been for a number of years, and, unless unforeseen developments occur within the next few months, there is little likelihood that the employment picture — except in one or two industries — will improve during the winter months.

Nonagricultural employment dropped in November to 249,100. This represented a 3.6 per cent decline from the October nonfarm employment level, and was 5 per cent under the number of workers engaged in nonagricultural activities during the middle part of November last year. Despite declines from last year, employment conditions in the majority of this State's major nonseasonal industries have remained comparatively firm during the past few months.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT ON THE INCREASE SINCE OCTOBER

UNEMPLOYMENT in Maine has increased rather sharply since the middle of October, when the number of jobless persons in the labor market was at its lowest point for the current year. The increase has been caused primarily by seasonal lay-offs in a number of industries which usually experience employment reductions in the fall. There have been a few instances of employment reductions within industries which are not ordinarily subject to seasonal influences at this particular time of year, but such pay roll curtailments have been more or less isolated and certainly not indicative, to date, of further downward trends in general economic conditions.

#### NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS FOR UI BENEFITS HAS RISEN BY 64 PER CENT

CONCURRENT with the recent upswing in over-all unemployment there has been a decided rise in the number of persons filing claims for unemployment insurance benefits. In mid October claimants for UI benefits totalled 14,500, whereas during the second full week of December 23,800 unemployed workers filed for benefits. This 64 per cent increase occurred despite the fact that by the first part of the current month over 6,250 former claimants had exhausted their benefits rights and therefore were not eligible to draw benefits for the remainder of the present "benefit year" which ends on March 31, 1950.

#### WORK APPLICATIONS ON FILE TOTAL NEARLY 28,200

ON DECEMBER 1, nearly 28,200 residents of this State had work applications on file in the local offices of the Maine Employment Security Commission. This represented an increase of about 4,700 over the number of job-seekers registered in the local offices two months ago, and a gain of 10,500 over December 1, 1948. As a rule, claimants for unemployment insurance benefits account for a large majority of the work applications on file, but nonclaimants are also included among the applicants.

#### DEMAND FOR LABOR HAS BECOME VERY LIGHT

DEMAND for labor, as measured by job openings listed with local employment offices in this State, has become very light. As a matter of fact, local offices had fewer job opportunities during November to which they could refer available workers than they had had in any month for several years. Only 2,457 openings, many of which offered employment for but a limited period of time, were made known to the offices. The drop in job listings cannot be attributed to failure on the part of employers to utilize the services of the local offices, since it is apparent that more employers than ever recognize the savings in time and expense which they can make in establishing the practice of hiring from the groups of available qualified workers that local offices can channel to them in response to their requests for referrals.

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## NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT DROPPED IN NOVEMBER

NONAGRICULTURAL employment in Maine dropped from 258,500 to 249,100 in the thirty-day period, October 15 to November 15, according to preliminary estimates compiled by the Maine Security Commission in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. This 3.6 per cent decline in the number of full- and part-time workers on the pay rolls of non-farm employers was due largely to seasonal factors.

## SOME INDUSTRIES ARE SHOWING CONTINUED STRENGTH

ALTHOUGH over-all employment fell off in November, a number of major industries, which were not affected by seasonal curtailments, showed continued strength. The lumber and wood products industry registered an aggregate employment gain of 400 between October and November; despite curtailments in some mills, the total number of workers engaged in manufacturing textile products increased 500; a net increase of 300 occurred in the paper and allied products industry; and the number of persons employed in the finance, insurance, and real estate fields rose by 100.

## ESTIMATES POINT TO A NOVEMBER DECLINE IN AVERAGE WORK-WEEK

ESTIMATES relating to the average weekly hours worked by production workers in manufacturing industries and the average weekly earnings of these workers showed a downward tendency in November. Following is a summary analysis of estimates pertaining to average work-weeks, average hourly earnings, and average weekly earnings for mid-month periods in November 1949, October 1949, and November 1948. These estimates are based upon data furnished each month by selected employers throughout the State.

## LAY-OFFS WERE HEAVIEST IN SEASONAL FOOD PROCESSING ACTIVITIES

LAY-OFFS of food processing workers accounted for an October-November employment decrease of 6,300 in the food and kindred products industry. Sharp curtailments always occur during the fall period in the canning both of vegetables and of sardines; so reductions in this industry were not without precedent. A number of sardine canning plants did, however, close earlier this year than in 1948.

## SEASONAL SLUMP IN SHOE MANUFACTURING THREW 1,500 OUT OF WORK

As is usually the case, shoe manufacturing activities declined seasonally in November. The slump this year caused a reduction between October and November of around 1,500 in the number of persons employed in the industry. Over-all employment in shoe manufacturing totalled approximately 15,700 in pay periods ending nearest to November 15. This employment level was the same as during the middle week of November last year.

## THE JOB OUTLOOK IS UNCERTAIN

THE JOB OUTLOOK for the next few months, except in one or two industries, is rather uncertain. It is anticipated that the shoe industry will resume full-scale operations soon after the start of the new year and will provide jobs for most of the available workers with experience in that industry. Gains also are looked for in some branches of the textile industry during the early part of 1950. On the whole, however, it is expected that job opportunities will be extremely scarce during the first calendar quarter of the new year, and it appears quite probable that further minor employment reductions in various activities will cause an increase in unemployment during the winter months.

## ESTIMATED AVERAGE WORK-WEEKS AND EARNINGS

Item	Mid-month Weeks In:		
	November 1949	October 1949	November 1948
Average Weekly Hours Worked.....	38.8	41.	39.3
Average Hourly Earnings.....	\$ 1.159	\$ 1.158	\$ 1.191
Average Weekly Earnings.....	\$44.92	\$47.53	\$46.75



# PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT IN MAINE

November, 1949<sup>1</sup> (In thousands)

Compiled by the Maine Employment Security Commission in cooperation with the  
United States Bureau of Labor Statistics

INDUSTRY	Nov. <sup>2</sup> 1949	Oct. <sup>2</sup> 1949	Nov. <sup>2</sup> 1948	Percentage Change	
				Oct. 1949 to Nov. 1949	Nov. 1948 to Nov. 1949
Total Nonagricultural Employment.....	249.1	258.5	262.1	-3.6	-5.0
Total Manufacturing.....	101.1	108.1	110.6	-6.5	-8.6
Durable Goods.....	27.4	27.5	33.3	-0.4	-17.7
Lumber and Wood Products.....	18.5	18.1	20.1	2.2	-8.0
Primary and Fabricated Metal Products and Machinery.....	5.9	6.0	9.5	-1.7	-37.9
All Other.....	3.0	3.4	3.7	-11.8	-18.9
Nondurable Goods.....	73.7	80.6	77.3	-8.6	-4.7
Food and Kindred Products.....	8.0	14.3	9.7	-44.1	-17.5
Textile-Mill Products.....	27.1	26.6	27.7	1.9	-2.2
Apparel.....	1.7	1.8	1.7	-5.6	0.0
Paper and Allied Products.....	17.0	16.7	18.1	1.8	-6.1
Leather Products.....	15.7	17.2	15.7	-8.7	0.0
All Other.....	4.2	4.0	4.4	5.0	-4.5
Total Nonmanufacturing.....	148.0	150.4	151.5	-1.6	-2.3
Mining and Quarrying.....	.6	.6	.7	0.0	-14.3
Contract Construction.....	10.0	10.6	11.9	-5.7	-16.0
Transportation and Other Public Utilities.....	18.5	18.6	19.3	-0.5	-4.1
Wholesale and Retail Trade.....	48.9	49.0	49.8	-0.2	-1.8
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate..	6.7	6.6	6.8	1.5	-1.5
Business, Personal and Misc. Services	24.2	25.1	23.4	-3.6	3.4
Government <sup>3</sup> .....	39.1	39.9	39.6	-2.0	-1.3

<sup>1</sup> Data presented exclude domestics in private households, proprietors, 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 December 16, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> These estimates representing federal, state and local employment, are prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Federal employment is as of the first of the month and excludes fourth-class postmasters and substitute rural mail carriers. State and local government estimates represent persons on pay rolls during the last pay period of the month, exclusive of those persons who receive only nominal amounts of pay, such as for each meeting or fire attended. Regular teachers on unpaid as well as paid vacations are included.



# Maine Employment Security 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	4-4571
Calais	87 Main Street	427
Caribou	Main Street	3331
Ellsworth	City Hall, Room 7	333
Houlton	32 Bangor Street	3606
Lewiston	19 Park Street	4-6971
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  
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION  
AUGUSTA MAINE  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

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