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## Labor Market News Letter, April 1951

Maine Employment Security Commission

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# LABOR MARKET



# NEWS LETTER

Maine Employment Security Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine



APRIL - 1951  
ISSUED BI-MONTHLY



## LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

The labor market in Maine has been characterized during the past several weeks by an unusually high level of activity for the winter and early spring seasons of the year.

Labor demand has been firm in all but a few industries which have experienced normal seasonal declines; workers have continued, although apparently in decreasing numbers, to leave the State for high paying defense jobs elsewhere; military service inductions have created job vacancies; and new job-seekers have entered the labor market in far greater volume than ordinarily would be expected.

Though recent over-all employment trends — reflecting the effects in a few industries of seasonal influences, material shortages, and pricing problems — have dipped slightly, a sharp increase in job opportunities throughout the State is in prospect in the next two or three months.

Unemployment, already at a comparatively low level, should drop even further in spite of the fact that many school and college youths will become job-seekers within a matter of weeks.

No manpower shortage is likely to develop in the foreseeable future, particularly since there is a large reserve pool of potential workers in Maine who could, if needed, be attracted to the labor market. However, it appears increasingly evident that many employers may, in the coming months, have to resort to such practices as job dilution, in-plant training, and up-grading if they are to fill some of their job vacancies.

### DEMAND FOR LABOR

Demand for labor continued at a relatively high level during March in most of the State's major industries. Seasonal contractions in a few activities — especially in the logging and lumbering industry — along with production interruptions attributed to problems related to the prices and supplies of basic materials, contributed to a decline during March in the total number of job openings received for worker referrals by the local employment offices of the Maine Employment Security Commission. The local offices were requested to obtain workers for 2,680 job vacancies in March as compared with 3,069 in February. Listed openings during the two months in industries other than logging and lumbering were: February — 1,982, and March — 2,237.

### SHORTAGE OCCUPATIONS

Shortages of qualified workers available for certain classes of jobs continue to exist, but these are more or less localized and are not indicative of a lack of manpower reserves in the State as a whole. Many of the shortages which were in evidence at the beginning of the winter have since been resolved, although from time to time other job vacancies which could not be filled immediately from local sources of labor supply have developed. At the present time, requirements which are not being met in some sections are for certain types of experienced workers needed in the textile, apparel, metalworking, business services, quarrying, and lumber and wood products industries.

MAY 11 1951



## OUT-OF-STATE LABOR DEMAND

Heavy munitions and ordnance plants in other New England states are still attracting Maine workers, but, in contrast to last fall and the early part of the winter when numerous opportunities existed for persons with varying degrees of work experience, most of the requirements in such plants are, at the present time, for skilled workers. This, along with the fact that a sizeable portion of the State's mobile labor force has already been drawn to the out-of-state defense production centers, is causing at least momentary diminution in the flow of labor from Maine.

## JOB-SEEKERS IN THE LABOR MARKET

In spite of accelerated hiring activities in several industries and substantial labor force losses through out-migration and military service inductions, the number of persons seeking employment through the facilities of public employment service offices has remained fairly constant during the past several months. It is apparent that as workers have found employment, or have withdrawn from the labor force for other reasons, additional job-seekers — new entrants to the labor market and workers separated from seasonal industries — have very nearly filled the numerical gaps in the State's labor supply. At the end of March, 16,600 persons — as compared with 16,900 on February 28, and 17,800 on January 31 — had active applications for work on file in the local employment offices.

## ANTICIPATED LABOR SUPPLY

The number of workers from whom Maine employers may draw to meet their labor needs should be augmented during the next two months as high school and college youths, along with housewives who usually accept summer jobs, enter the labor market. However, since most of these potential workers will become available at a time when seasonal industries are having expanding employment requirements, their appearance in the labor market will not create an excessive over-

supply of labor. As a matter of fact, it is expected that the summer expansion in job opportunities will be greater than the increase in the labor supply, and, for this reason, a drop in unemployment is looked for by the middle of the coming summer.

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Employment — excluding self-employed persons, domestics in private households, and unpaid family workers — in nonagricultural activities in Maine totalled 253,400 during the middle week of March, according to preliminary estimates compiled by the Maine Employment Security Commission in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. This represented a thirty-day decline of 2,500 from the February 15 employment level but an increase of 16,300 over the level of a year ago when, during the week ending nearest to March 15, an estimated 236,100 persons had jobs in nonfarm industries. The 1 per cent decrease between February and March was attributable primarily to seasonal curtailments in the construction and lumber and wood products industries and to a strike which affected a number of woolen mills, whereas the twelve-month increase of 6.9 per cent reflected widespread gains in many different industries.

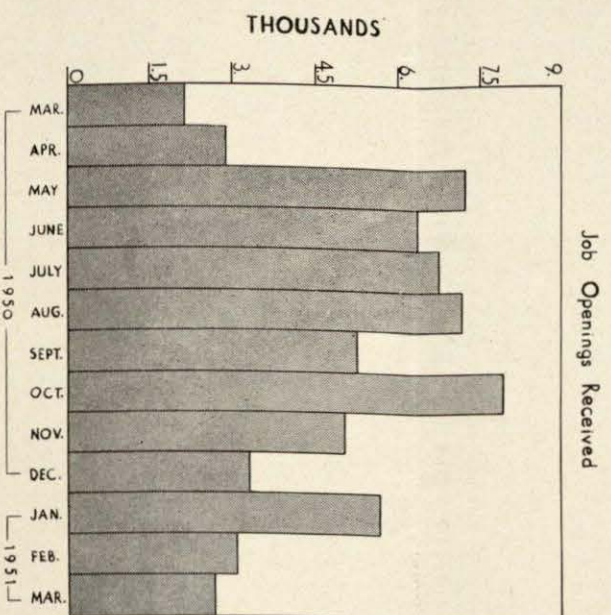
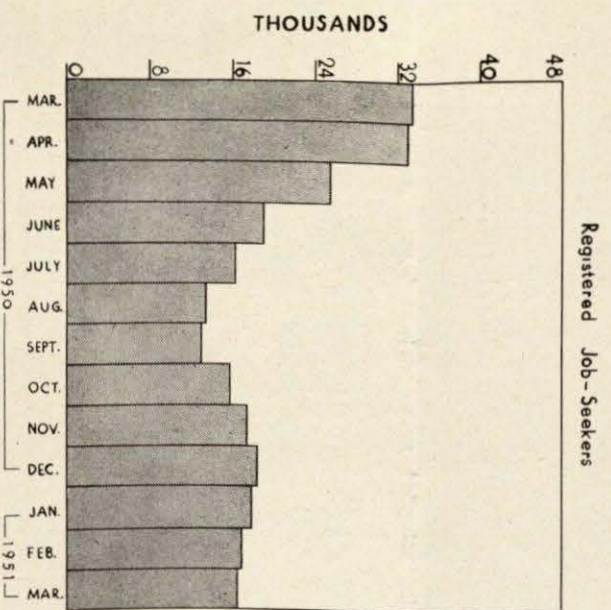
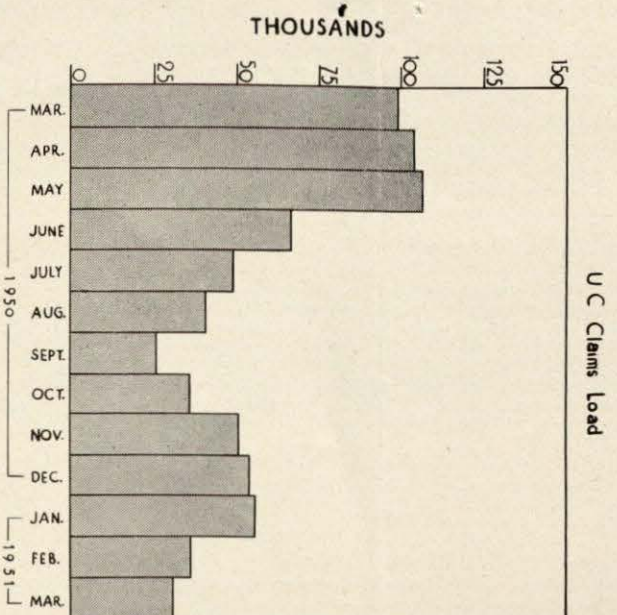
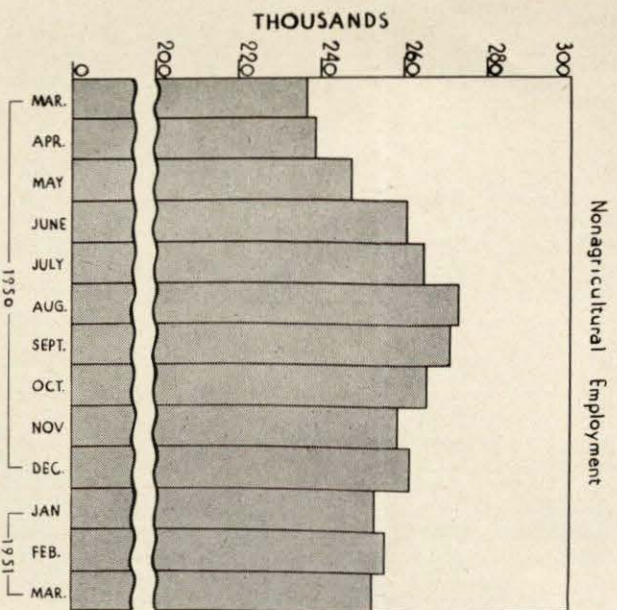
## DEFENSE PRODUCTION

Although defense work is being carried on in various manufacturing plants in Maine, direct government contracts, as listed by the United States Department of Commerce, have been awarded to comparatively few individual plants in the State. Twenty-two concerns, operating a total of thirty-eight manufacturing establishments in Maine, have received contract awards from government defense agencies since the first of the current year. Industries represented by these firms include cotton and woolen textiles, shoes, paper, shipbuilding, canning, and metal products. Only in a few plants have there been noticeable employment expansions following the receipt of defense orders.



# Selected Labor Market Trend Indicators

MARCH 1950 — MARCH 1951





## EARNINGS OF PRODUCTION WORKERS

The average hourly earnings of production workers in manufacturing industries in Maine rose from \$1.28 for the middle week of February to \$1.29 for the comparable week in March. March was the eighth consecutive month in which average hourly earnings have shown an increase from a mid-summer 1950 low of \$1.16. A year ago in March the average

hourly earnings of production workers amounted to \$1.18. It is expected that in the next few months, as pick-ups occur in certain seasonal activities in which wage rates traditionally are low, the state-wide average will drop below the point reached in March which apparently was the highest hourly earnings level in the history of the State.

## 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.)