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Labor Market News Letter, February 1952

Maine Employment Security Commission

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LABOR MARKET



NEWS LETTER

Maine Employment Security Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine



FEBRUARY - 1952

ISSUED BI-MONTHLY



LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

Latest estimates reveal that current employment in nonagricultural activities is at a higher level than during the winter months of any of the past five years.

Declines have been noted since the fall months in the number on the pay rolls of nonfarm employers, but this development has been attributable, for the most part, to normal curtailments in seasonal industries.

Maine's supply of labor continues to be more than sufficient numerically to satisfy all current and anticipated demand, and, except in a few isolated instances, the supply is adequate to meet requirements for workers in all occupational grades.

No important changes in labor market conditions are looked for in the next several weeks. However, in the late spring, job opportunities, particularly in industries which usually have expanded operations in the summer, should show a marked increase.

NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

Although the total number of Maine workers engaged in nonagricultural jobs has declined seasonally during the past several weeks, and in spite of weak spots in some major non-seasonal industries, over-all nonfarm employment in this State has been at a higher level this winter than in the comparable periods of the past five years. During the middle week of January, 268,000 persons were on the pay rolls of nonagricultural establishments in Maine, according to preliminary estimates compiled by the Maine Employment Security Commission in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. This represented a twelve-month employment increase of 8,500 and was 7,600 above the previous post-war January peak of 260,400 attained in 1948.

INDUSTRY TRENDS

One of the most significant features of employment level changes of the past year has been the demonstrated adaptability of a large segment of the Maine labor force during a period in which extensive shifts have occurred in the labor requirements of various key industries. Not only have many workers, confronted by job opportunity scarcities in the industries to which they were ordinarily attached, moved to out-of-state defense areas and to types of work not directly allied to their customary occupations but, also, hundreds of others have transferred to expanding industries within the State. Industries in Maine which have absorbed the greatest numbers of available workers since January 1951 include lumber and wood products, shipbuilding, and contract construction. Employment gains in these activities have more than offset losses in such industries as textiles, shoes, and machinery manufacturing.

APR 11 1952

CURRENT LABOR DEMAND

The total demand for labor, primarily because of curtailments in seasonal activities, has dropped off since the fall period, but, judging from the job vacancies being listed with the local employment offices of the Maine Employment Security Commission, labor needs are not falling behind normal expectations for this time of year. There has been no evidence of exceptionally high requirements for workers in any particular industry, but pointing to fairly active demand generally is the fact that last month the local offices received requests from employers to refer qualified workers to over 3,100 job openings. In the preceding month, job listings approximated 2,900.

SUPPLY OF LABOR

The total number of job-seekers in Maine is great enough to meet all known needs, but, because of geographic differences in the distribution of the demand and supply, requirements in some areas are not being met from local sources. The number of workers who have signified their availability by registering with the employment offices of this Commission approximated 17,100 on February 1. This does not constitute the entire supply since all of the persons in the labor market at any one time do not seek employment through the facilities of the local offices. However, it is apparent from this count, which is accepted as a partial measure of total supply, that there is an over-all surplus of labor in the State at the present time.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JOB SEEKERS

The characteristics of the registered job-seekers indicate that available workers in the State could be utilized in a variety of activities. Virtually all had had prior work experience, with around 7,500 being qualified, on the basis of their work histories, for skilled or semiskilled types of work. Those previously employed in jobs of an unskilled nature totalled

7,000; nearly 400 were equipped for professional or managerial occupations; and the remaining 2,200 were experienced in clerical, sales, or service industry jobs. Of the total applicants, 9,000 were males.

INSURED UNEMPLOYMENT

The volume of insured unemployment under the unemployment compensation program, while subject to considerable fault as an exact measure of trends in labor market conditions, has risen sufficiently in the last several months to warrant consideration as a rough indicator of the unemployment situation in Maine. During the first week of February, the ratio of insured unemployment to average monthly covered employment was 5.6 per cent. This indicates that for every 1,000 employed in covered activities, 56 persons were unemployed and filing continued claims for UC benefits. A year ago the ratio was 5.2 per cent, and early in October — when the claims load was at its lowest level of 1951 — the ratio was 3.7 per cent.

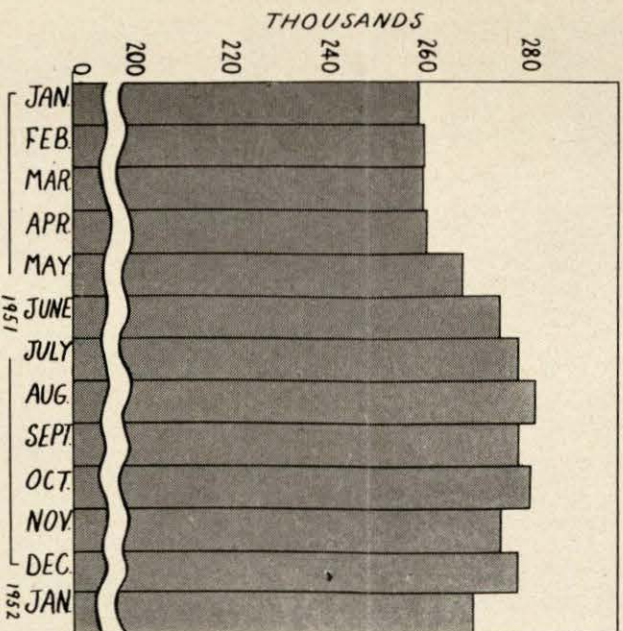
AVERAGE EARNINGS AND HOURS OF WORK

Because of a rather significant increase in the average workweek between mid-November and the middle of January, the average weekly earnings of production workers in Maine's manufacturing industries rose from \$50.06 to \$57.07. The average hourly earnings of such workers did not change to any measurable extent — during both the middle week of November and the week ending nearest January 15, average hourly earnings approximated \$1.33 — but the average workweek was expanded from 37.6 to 41.4 hours. This increase was attributable partly to the closing of seasonal activities which in November were operating on a shortened workweek basis, and partly to pick-ups in the production schedules of certain other industries whose operations are not usually classed as being of a seasonal nature.

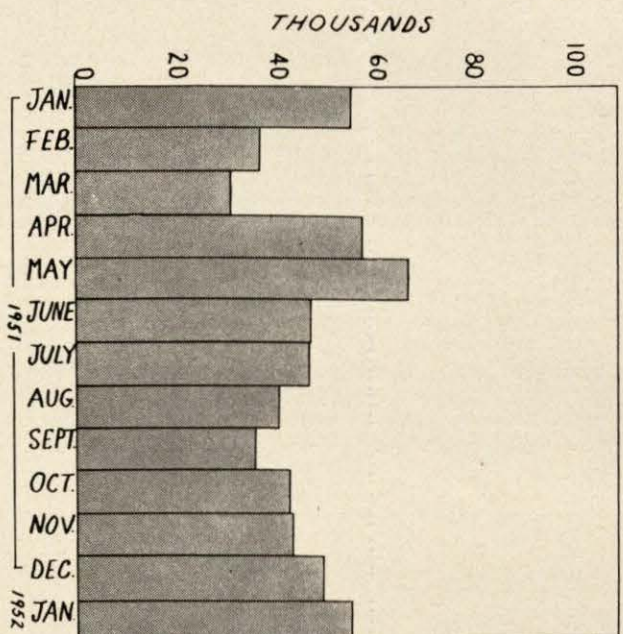
Selected Labor Market Trend Indicators

JANUARY 1951 — JANUARY 1952

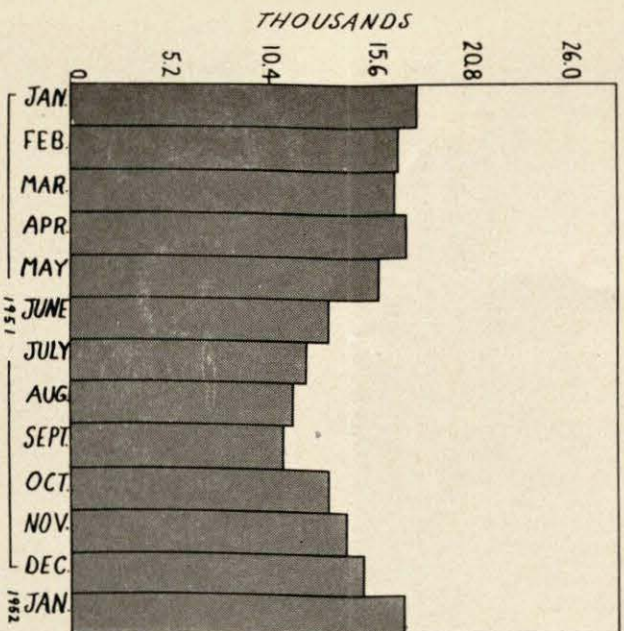
NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT



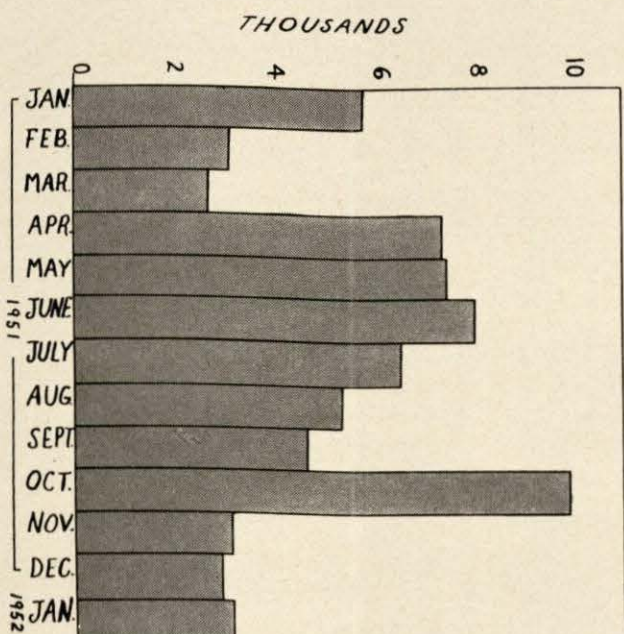
U.C. CLAIMS LOAD



REGISTERED JOB SEEKERS



JOB OPENINGS RECEIVED



EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

According to the information obtained by local employment office representatives in recent weeks from major employers throughout the State, there should be no important employment changes, other than those reflecting seasonal influences, during the next month or two. The long-range outlook appears to be somewhat unsettled in a few fields of

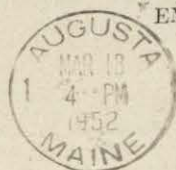
activity, and, for this reason it is not possible to forecast probable trends in over-all labor market conditions with any degree of assurance. However, it appears likely that the total number of job opportunities for available workers will increase during the late spring and summer months, and, unless unforeseen developments occur, the volume of unemployment should drop to a fairly low level by the middle of the year.

Maine Employment Security Commission

EMPLOYMENT OFFICES

<i>Location</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
Augusta	331 Water Street	1200-41
Bangor	131 Franklin 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	177 Main Street	1886

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