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Labor Market News Letter, June 1952

Maine Employment Security Commission

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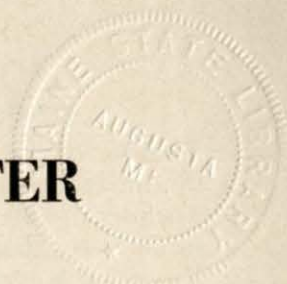
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LABOR MARKET



NEWS LETTER



Maine Employment Security Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine



JUNE - 1952
ISSUED BI-MONTHLY



LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

The Maine labor market, stimulated by accelerated hirings in seasonal activities and generally improved conditions in several major nonseasonal industries, has become exceptionally active during the past few weeks.

Job opportunities have been more plentiful during the spring and early summer than in the comparable periods of the past several years.

Unemployment has dropped off appreciably since the last of April, but there is still a large supply of labor in the State.

Localized shortages of experienced workers in selected occupational lines are becoming more numerous. However, such shortages are being resolved, for the most part, through interarea recruiting or through in-plant training and upgrading practices.

The employment outlook for the next few months is unusually favorable. Material shortages could interrupt planned employment expansions in some industries, but, on the whole, the prospects of further over-all employment gains during the summer are most promising.

DEMAND FOR LABOR

Exceptionally heavy demand for labor has arisen during the last several weeks in numerous industries throughout Maine. Labor requirements move upwards each year with the advent of warmer weather in the late spring and early summer, but the pick-up this year has been more extensive than usual. Improved employment conditions have become apparent, not only among industries which might be expected to respond to seasonal influences, but gains also have been noted in other industries which are basically nonseasonal in character. While needs for additional labor have been wide-spread, the most outstanding recent advances have been in the construction, agricultural, trade, service, lumber and wood products, and food processing industries.

VOLUME OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Trends in the volume of job opportunities listed with the local employment offices of the Maine Employment Security Commission are indicative of the extent to which labor market activities have increased. During April, the sixteen offices received orders requesting the referral of qualified workers to over 7,800 job vacancies, and in May the number of job openings made known by employers totalled 8,400. During each of the first three months of the current year, job openings received were less than half the number received in either April or May, and of particular significance is the fact that the April-May listings this year exceeded the number received in the corresponding months of each of the preceding four years, 1948 through 1951.

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LABOR SUPPLY

Because of the appearance of new job-seekers in the labor market, the supply of available workers in the State has not fallen off at the same rate that employment has increased. Proof of a continually ample supply of manpower is established by the fact that at the beginning of June over 17,000 persons had active applications for work on file in the local MESC offices. This represented a two-month decline of around 2,000, but, during the same period, there was an estimated increase of 6,600 in the number employed in nonagricultural activities. New entrants to the labor market have consisted primarily of youths from high schools and colleges, housewives interested in supplementing family incomes in the face of the high cost of living, and out-of-state males who have been attracted to construction, logging and lumbering, and other outdoor jobs in Maine.

LABOR SURPLUS AREAS

Since the supply of labor is not distributed evenly among the various cities and towns in Maine, there are some areas in which employers are encountering difficulties in recruiting needed workers, while there are others in which labor surpluses are in evidence. The principal concentrations of unemployed job-seekers during the past two months have been in several scattered textile and shoe manufacturing communities. In recent weeks, however, unemployment has become slightly less pronounced in a number of industrialized centers which had been rather severely affected by adverse developments during the past year in the textile industry, and there have been encouraging indications that the shoe industry is recovering rapidly from its spring-period slack spell.

HARD-TO-FILL JOBS

Recent expansions in the demand for labor have revealed a number of localized shortages of qualified workers available for certain classes of jobs. In some places, jobs have opened in occupations in which local workers would not have had an opportunity to have gained experience; migration to other areas or acceptance of other work during prolonged

periods of unemployment has depleted the local supplies in some occupational groups; higher-than-usual demand has been the cause of a few shortages; and deaths, retirements, and job-hopping have created part of the vacancies which are hard to fill. Although there are many types of workers needed by employers at the present time, the most noteworthy shortages, in terms of numbers of workers involved, are in occupations found in the lumbering, shipbuilding, and nonelectrical machinery industries.

NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

According to the latest estimates compiled by the Maine Employment Security Commission in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, over-all nonagricultural employment in the State started on a sharp upward climb between April and May. All but a few of the major industries participated in the general upswing which resulted in a thirty-day rise of 8,700, from 259,800 to a May 15 level of 268,500, in the number of workers engaged in nonfarm employment. The only industries experiencing declines during the period were shoe manufacturing and quarrying. Curtailments in the shoe manufacturing field were due to stock taking and style-change production adjustments, while labor disputes were responsible for a small decrease in the quarrying industry.

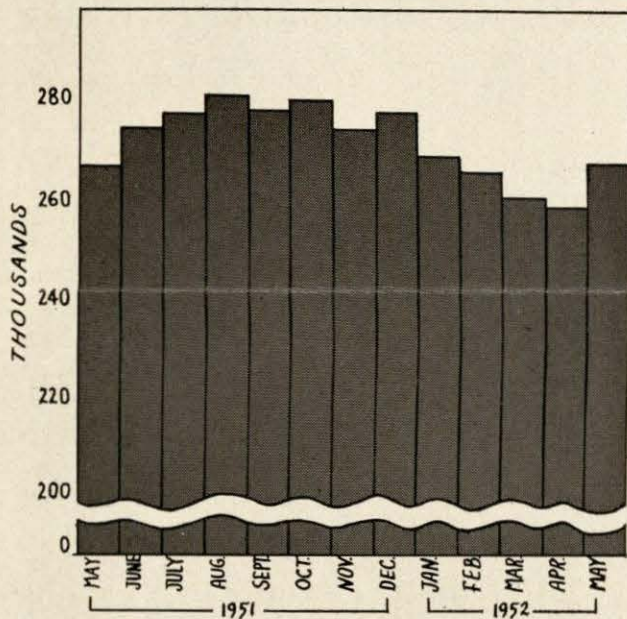
AVERAGE WORKWEEK AND EARNINGS

A noticeable downward trend in the average number of hours worked per week by production workers in manufacturing industries manifested itself during the spring months. Average workweeks for the last three months were as follows: March — 41.2 hours; April — 40.1 hours; and May — 39.5 hours. Declines were caused primarily by shortened workweeks in the shoe manufacturing industry and in segments of the textile industry. The average hourly earnings of production workers remained fairly constant during the spring. In March the average was \$1.34, while in April and May it was \$1.35. The average weekly earnings of production workers, because of workweek reductions, dropped from \$55.18 in March, to \$53.91 in April, and then to \$53.22 in May.

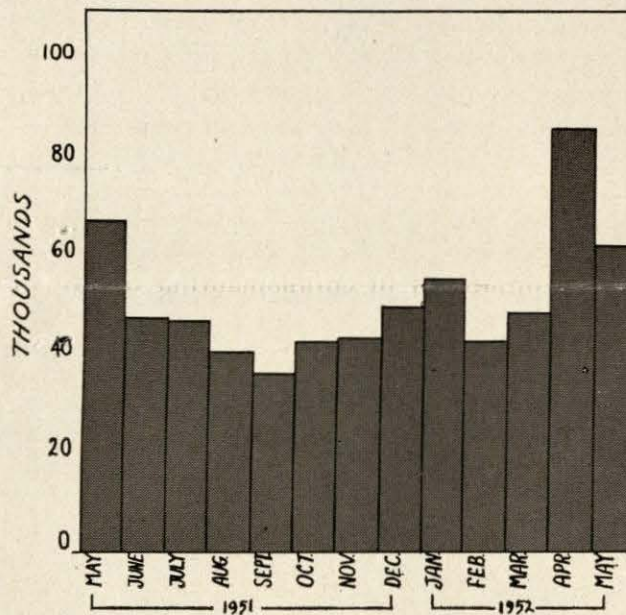
Selected Labor Market Trend Indicators

MAY 1951 — MAY 1952

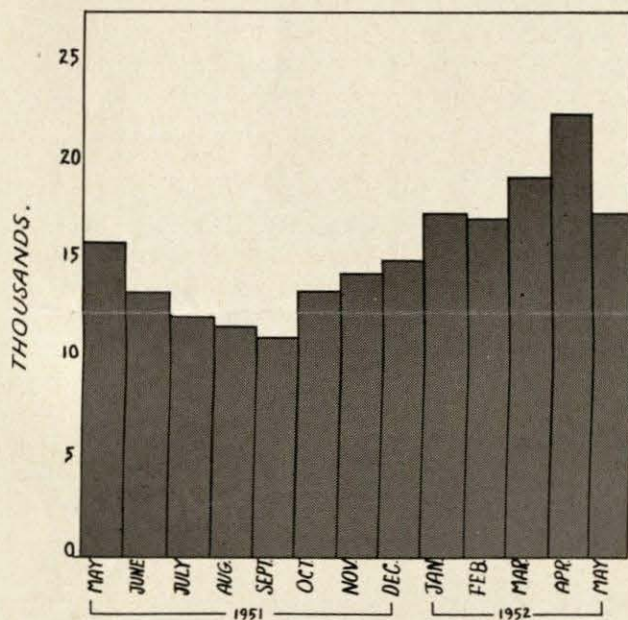
NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT



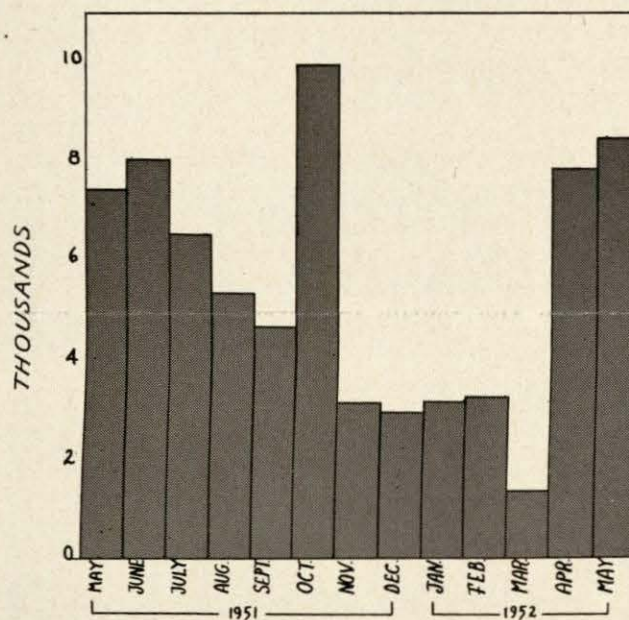
UC CLAIMS LOAD



REGISTERED JOB SEEKERS



JOB OPENINGS RECEIVED



EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

The over-all job outlook in Maine for the summer months appears to be very bright. Labor requirements in industries such as contract construction, food processing, agriculture, trade, and service, are expected to mount rapidly to high seasonal peaks, but, perhaps of greater significance is the fact that improvements are also looked for in a number of non-

seasonal industries. Among the latter industries, fairly sizable employment gains are anticipated — unless shortages of metals disrupt production schedules — in shipbuilding and machinery. Localized labor shortages may become more pronounced than at present if predicted hiring schedules are adhered to, but the total number of workers in the labor market is certain to continue to be comparatively large.

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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