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## Labor Market News Letter, October 1954

Maine Employment Security Commission

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## LABOR MARKET



## NEWS LETTER

Maine Employment Security Commission 331 Water Street Augusta, Maine



OCTOBER - 1954

ISSUED BI-MONTHLY



**Labor market developments** — in Maine during the past several weeks have been fairly consistent with usual trends in the fall period of the year. In a few activities employment changes materialized which could not be attributed to seasonal factors, but where such deviations from normal patterns occurred they were caused, by and large, by either localized or temporary conditions. On an over-all basis, total employment has fallen off since the end of the summer, but, at the same time, unemployment, reflecting the effects of withdrawals from the labor force of youths and housewives who had been available only for summer jobs, showed a tendency to decrease during much of September and the first part of October. Demand for labor needed in nonfarm jobs has been far from brisk, and, for the most part, there has been no difficulty in filling job vacancies as they have arisen.

**The weather proved** — decidedly uncooperative throughout most of September and into October with respect to permitting various types of outdoor work to be carried on extensively. The potato harvest in Aroostook County was the hardest hit, being delayed by a continuation of the rainy weather which plagued potato farmers during the greater part of the planting and growing seasons. Several hundred workers who had been imported into Aroostook, particularly from Canada, discouragedly moved out of the county when the weather prevented them from performing the tasks for which they had been recruited, and the exodus of these persons created a serious labor shortage which was partly resolved through the utilization of personnel made available from military installations in the area, and partly through the extension well into October of summer vacation periods for Aroostook schools.

**While a shortage** — of manpower existed during the harvest season in the northernmost county of the State, surpluses of industrial workers were in evidence in some of the manufacturing centers located in other sections. Efforts to relieve the short-term shortage of harvest hands through intensive recruitments in industrialized areas proved not too productive largely because of transportation problems, uncertain employment conditions to be faced in Aroostook, and possible loss of chance to return to regular work if absent from home area for any length of time. The areas in which surpluses were most pronounced were, to a large extent, textile manufacturing towns which

had been adversely affected by curtailments in textile-mill employment in the last half of 1953, and the first few months of the current year.

**Unemployment in Maine** — generally, continued at a higher level than a year ago, but, the volume of joblessness, as measured by claims for unemployment compensation benefits received by the Maine Employment Security Commission, has not risen to the post-war high for the fall period reached in 1949. During the first half of October, the average weekly number of persons in an insured unemployment status under the State UI program totalled 7,521. This number was above insured unemployment of 6,201 for the same period in 1953 but well below the 10,216 insured unemployed in the early part of October 1949. Exhaustions of benefit rights also are running higher than last year but lower than in 1949.

**Declining labor needs** — since the end of the summer have shown up in the number of non-agricultural job openings listed in local offices of the Maine Employment Security Commission, but decreases in demand for workers are looked for each year in this period. At the start of the current month unfilled openings on hand for nonfarm workers totalled 5,335. Of these openings, 4,714 were in woods jobs in which bonded Canadians could be utilized if domestic workers were unavailable. Current demand is not too much different from a year ago when 5,447 openings, of which 3,438 were for bonded Canadian woodsmen, were on hand in the local offices.

**The supply of labor** — despite labor force withdrawals at the end of the summer, has remained firm. On October 1, the number of persons registered for employment in the local offices of this Agency totalled 13,431. This was slightly higher than the 13,299 registrants at the end of August, but was less than the number (15,818) at the end of July by 15.1 per cent. The composition of the registered supply of labor has undergone discernable changes in past weeks in that the proportion of younger workers in the labor market has dropped off sharply since Labor Day. The available job-seekers were distributed percentage-wise on a broad occupational group basis as follows: professional and managerial — 3.2; clerical and sales — 10.4; service — 5.1; skilled — 16.6; semiskilled — 30.0; and unskilled — 34.7.

**Employment** — in a number of nonagricultural activities dropped off in September in accordance with usual expectations, and it was such curtailments which were primarily responsible for a downturn in the over-all level of nonfarm jobs. Latest estimates compiled by the Maine Employment Security Commission in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reveal

that nonagricultural employment in Maine dropped by 1.9 per cent, from 276,300 to 271,100, in the period, August 15 — September 15.

**Declines occurred** — between August and September in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing jobs, and it is apparent that, while seasonal factors played an important part in determining trends, there were reductions which could not be attributed to seasonal influences alone. On an over-all basis, jobs in manufacturing industries dropped by 3.7 per cent from 109,600 to 105,500, while nonmanufacturing employment decreased by 0.7 per cent, from 166,700 to 165,600.

**The downward trend** — in employment is almost certain to continue into the coming months due to seasonal factors, and, except for a temporary halt at the end of the year, there appears to be little likelihood that the trend will change until next spring when outdoor activities and food processing start to pick up. There are indications that production requirements in a few nonseasonal manufacturing lines are falling off slightly at the present time, but, as far as can be ascertained, no large, wide-spread layoffs are in prospect.

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