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Labor Market News Letter, December 1952

Maine Employment Security Commission

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LABOR MARKET NEWS LETTER

Maine Employment Security Commission  331 Water Street  Augusta, Maine

DECEMBER - 1952
ISSUED BI-MONTHLY

LABOR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

Employment in Maine continues to remain exceptionally high despite seasonal declines since the summer months.

Downward trends have occurred in industries which normally have contractions at this time of year, but such contractions have been less extensive than usual.

The supply of labor in the State is still ample, although isolated shortages have been noted in certain occupations.

Unemployment in Maine is at a comparatively low level, with a large percentage of those who are unemployed being concentrated in a few communities.

Further curtailments are likely to occur in the next two or three months in seasonal industries but the over-all employment outlook is most promising.

EMPLOYMENT AT A HIGH LEVEL

Although down seasonally from the peaks reached during the past summer, over-all employment continues at one of the highest levels ever attained in Maine. The latest estimate of nonagricultural employment, as compiled by the Maine Employment Security Commission in cooperation with the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, reveals that, in November, approximately 279,900 persons were on the pay rolls of nonfarm employers in this State. This represented a twelve-month gain of 4,400 in the number employed in nonagricultural activities; was reflective of a two-year increase of 20,900 jobs; and was 31,900 above the employment level of three years ago.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES SHOWING STRENGTH

The generally favorable employment picture in Maine may be attributed to the fact that all of the major manufacturing industries in the State are showing strength. Not all are at record-high employment levels, but, at the same time, not one is operating with a sharply curtailed working force. Many of the State's textile mills, which were hit by an industry-wide recession that started in the spring of 1951, have picked up perceptibly in the last few months; there have been no outstanding changes in the usually stable paper manufacturing industry; shoe manufacturing employment is higher than ever before; the lumber and wood products industries, although down from a year ago still have extensive labor requirements; and, with few exceptions, the metalworking industries are more active than they have been since the end of World War II.

JAN 27 1953
SEASONAL CHANGES NOTED
As is usually the case each year, total employment has dropped off from the seasonally inflated level of the summer months, but, because of greater stability in certain activities, the decrease this year has not been as pronounced as in 1951. Nevertheless, between August and November, the number of persons with nonfarm jobs declined by 6,500 — in 1951 the decline was 7,400. Among the industries in which pay roll reductions occurred were: contract construction, food processing, and trade and service activities which are supported largely by the patronage of summer vacationists. In at least one instance — retail trade — there was a marked end-of-the-year seasonal expansion. Reports indicate that many retail trade establishments throughout the State hired more temporary salespersons than ever to serve customers during the Christmas shopping period.

SUPPLY OF LABOR IS GENERALLY ADEQUATE
There are scattered local shortages of qualified workers in a number of occupations in which job openings exist at the present time, but, on the whole, very few vacancies are going unfilled because of a lack of utilizable labor. That the supply of labor available in Maine is fairly sizeable may be determined from the fact that on December 1, over 10,500 persons were registered for work in the sixteen local offices of the Maine Employment Security Commission. These job applicants, 5,400 of whom were women, were classified on a broad occupational group basis as follows: professional and managerial — 300; clerical and sales — 1,000; service — 800; skilled — 1,600; semiskilled — 2,400; and unskilled — 4,400.

SHORTAGE OCCUPATIONS LISTED
Currently, localized labor shortages are known to exist in Maine in thirty-eight different occupations. The shortages, listed with each local employment office for the purpose of informing qualified job-seekers in one area as to the demand for labor in another area, range from some in highly technical occupations to others in occupations in which prior work experience or training is not a requisite. Activities in which the shortages appear include woods operations, textiles, printing, metalworking, business services, educational, trade, private households, public utilities, contract construction, and government.

CLAIMS LOAD SHOWS INCREASE
The volume of claims for unemployment insurance benefits has risen during the past few weeks due to increased unemployment among workers from seasonal industries. The most noticeable concentrations of unemployment which have developed are in coastal communities in which fish canning plants are located. Unemployment problems occur, invariably, each winter in such towns, and it may be concluded from an appraisal of present trends in UI claims that this winter will not be an exception. Illustrative of the impact which the closing of fish canning plants has upon the entire unemployment situation in the State is the fact that during the second week of December, of a total of 9,200 UI claims received, over 38 per cent were filed by unemployed fish processing industry workers.

AVERAGE WORKWEEK DROPPED SLIGHTLY
The average workweek for production workers employed in manufacturing industries in Maine dropped slightly in November primarily as a result of shortened work schedules in the shoe industry which had lower production requirements due to between-season style-change adjustments. Actually, however, there was relatively little underemployment in November, in spite of the reduced man-hours worked in shoe factories, for during the middle week of the month the average number of hours worked in all manufacturing activities was 40 hours. During the middle weeks of September and October, the average workweeks were 41.1 and 41.2 hours, respectively. A year ago, when scheduled hours were lower not only in the shoe industry, but also in certain other fields, the average workweek was 37.6 hours.
Selected Labor Market Trend Indicators

November 1951 - November 1952

- Job Openings Received
- Registered Job Seekers
- Unemployment Claims
- Nonagricultural Employment
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK IS FAVORABLE

Predictions of a few months back, by some forecasters, that a general economic recession could be expected early in 1953, appear now to have been decidedly premature if future labor requirements data furnished to local employment office representatives, by selected employers in Maine, may be accepted as proper indicators of what is to come. According to the latest information received from these sources, labor requirements will be fully as high as in the past year, and, in certain fields, employment should run above 1952 levels. Seasonal contractions are almost certain to occur in a number of industries during the next two or three months, but these apparently will not be more severe than usual and they will be short-lived. The outlook could change rapidly, but it appears to be the consensus of most of the employers contacted that employment conditions will not deteriorate in the near future.

Maine Employment Security Commission

EMPLOYMENT OFFICES

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<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Augusta</td>
<td>331 Water Street</td>
<td>3-4511—Ex. 41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangor</td>
<td>131 Franklin Street</td>
<td>6435</td>
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<td>Bath</td>
<td>174 Front Street</td>
<td>1748</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biddeford</td>
<td>275 Main Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calais</td>
<td>87 Main Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caribou</td>
<td>Main Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellsworth</td>
<td>City Hall, Room 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Houlton</td>
<td>32 Bangor Street</td>
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<td>19 Park Street</td>
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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
(SEC. 35.4 (P) (1) P. L. & R.)