

F E D E R A L R E S E R V E B O A R D

STATEMENT FOR THE PRESS

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The following summary of general business and financial conditions in the United States, based upon statistics for the months of May and June, will appear in the forthcoming issue of the Federal Reserve Bulletin and in the monthly reviews of the Federal reserve banks.

Volume of production in basic industries and employment at factories decreased further in May, and wholesale prices declined. Foreign withdrawals of gold, which had been in large volume in May and the first half of June, practically stopped after the middle of the month.

Production and employment - Production at mines and factories declined further in May, and the Board's seasonally adjusted index of industrial production showed a reduction from 64 per cent of the 1923-1925 average in April to 61 per cent in May. Output of coal was substantially reduced, particularly in the anthracite fields; shipments of iron ore showed less than the usual seasonal increase, production of iron and steel declined, and activity at textile mills and shoe factories was further curtailed. In the automobile industry output increased considerably.

In the first part of June activity in the steel and cotton industries was reported to have declined further, while output of automobiles continued at about the same rate as in the latter part of May.

Further reductions in employment and earnings of factory workers accompanied the smaller volume of manufacturing output in May, particularly in the steel and machinery industries, and in the textile and clothing trades. Employment at automobile plants and in the seasonally active food industries showed an increase.

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Value of building contracts awarded, according to reports to the F. W. Dodge Corporation, after increasing somewhat in April and May, declined slightly in the first half of June, reflecting chiefly smaller awards for public works and other non-residential building.

Distribution - Railroad freight traffic decreased further in May, the largest reduction being in shipments of coal and miscellaneous freight. Sales of department stores in leading cities, which had increased substantially during April, were smaller in May.

Wholesale prices - Prices of commodities at wholesale were 1.7 per cent lower in May than in April, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. There were large decreases in prices of many domestic agricultural products and of hides and textiles. Prices of petroleum products advanced.

During the first three weeks of June, market quotations for a number of non-agricultural commodities were relatively steady, and prices of sugar, meats, and livestock increased. Prices of wheat, after considerable fluctuations, were at unusually low levels at the beginning of the third week in June.

Bank credit - Withdrawals of gold from the United States continued through May and the first half of June, and the country's stock of monetary gold declined by \$435,000,000 between May 4 and June 15. After that date there was no further decline in the total stock of monetary gold, continued gold exports representing gold previously earmarked by foreign central banks. During the first part of May continued purchases of United States Government securities by the reserve banks enabled member banks further to reduce their discounts; in later weeks, however, funds released through these purchases

were absorbed by the demand for gold for export, and there was also a decrease in member bank reserve balances.

Loans and investments of reporting member banks in leading cities, which had declined sharply earlier in the year, showed wide fluctuations after the middle of May. In the middle of June total loans and investments were larger than a month earlier, the increase in holdings of United States securities being more than sufficient to offset declines in other investments and in loans.

Money rates in the open market remained at low levels. Rates on prime commercial paper were reduced to a range of $2\frac{1}{2}$ - $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent in the second week of June.