

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
OF THE
FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

STATEMENT FOR THE PRESS

For release in morning papers,
Tuesday, September 28, 1937.

The following summary of general business and financial conditions in the United States, based upon statistics for August and the first three weeks of September, will appear in the October issue of the Federal Reserve Bulletin and in the monthly reviews of the Federal Reserve banks.

In August industrial activity advanced from the level of the two preceding months and on a seasonally adjusted basis was close to the volume of last spring. Early reports for September indicate a decline in steel output and a seasonal decrease in the production of automobiles.

Production and employment

Volume of industrial production, as measured by the Board's seasonally adjusted index, was 117 percent of the 1923-1925 average in August as compared with a level of 114 percent in June and July and 118 percent during the spring. Steel production rose slightly further and was close to the high level prevailing before strikes curtailed output in June. Automobile production was maintained in considerably larger volume than is usual in the month preceding the shift to new model production. Lumber output declined, following a period of increase. In the nondurable goods industries output increased in August, reflecting

chiefly increases at cotton and woolen textile mills, following considerable declines in the preceding month. Activity at meat packing establishments increased somewhat from an extremely low level. Shoe production showed less than the usual seasonal rise. At mines, output of coal increased less than seasonally, while crude petroleum production continued to expand.

Value of construction contracts awarded, as reported by the F. W. Dodge Corporation, declined somewhat in August and the first half of September. Awards for private residential building showed little change and were in about the same volume as in the corresponding period of 1936, while publicly-financed residential building declined and was in considerably smaller volume than last year.

Factory employment, which had increased in July, showed less than a seasonal rise in August. Factory payrolls increased by about the usual seasonal amount. The number employed at steel mills increased somewhat further, while at automobile factories, railroad repair shops, and sawmills employment declined. In the textile industries employment in the production of fabrics decreased somewhat, while employment in the production of wearing apparel increased. Changes in employment in most other manufacturing industries were small.

Agriculture

Department of Agriculture crop estimates based on September 1 conditions were about the same as the estimates a month earlier, except for an increase in cotton and a decrease in corn. Output of leading crops is substantially larger than last season. Supplies of livestock and meats are expected by the Department of Agriculture to continue smaller than last year.

Distribution

Mail order sales and sales at department stores showed somewhat less than the usual seasonal increase from July to August. Freight-car loadings continued at the level of the previous month.

Commodity prices

Cotton prices declined considerably further from the middle of August to the third week of September and there were smaller decreases in cotton goods, silk, hides, steel scrap, copper scrap, and lumber. Prices of livestock and livestock products, after some decline in the latter part of August and the first week of September, advanced sharply in the middle of September.

Bank credit

Excess reserves of member banks increased in the five-week period ending September 22 from \$800,000,000 to \$1,000,000,000 as the result of a release of gold by the Treasury from its inactive account. The bulk of the increase in excess reserves went to New York City banks and on September 22 these banks had excess reserves of \$350,000,000, Chicago banks had \$50,000,000, and banks elsewhere \$600,000,000.

Commercial loans at reporting member banks in 101 leading cities, reflecting in part seasonal demands, continued to increase substantially during the four weeks ending September 15, both in New York City and outside. Holdings of United States Government obligations and of other securities showed a further decrease, with the result that total loans and investments declined somewhat.

Money rates

Rates on 9-month Treasury bills declined from 0.71 percent early in September to 0.44 percent later in the month, and average yields on long-term Treasury notes declined from about 1 5/8 percent to below 1 1/2 percent.