

BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
OF THE  
FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

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 October and the first three weeks of November, will appear in the December issue of the Federal Reserve Bulletin and in the monthly reviews of the Federal Reserve banks.

Industrial production continued to increase sharply in October and the first three weeks of November, reflecting principally larger output of steel and automobiles. Wholesale commodity prices showed little change in this period. Volume of employment and national income increased in October.

Production

In October the Board's seasonally adjusted index of industrial production was at 96 percent of the 1923-1925 average, as compared with 90 percent in September. Steel ingot production increased considerably, averaging 53 percent of capacity in October, and in the first three weeks of November there was a further substantial advance. In the automobile industry output was increased rapidly during October and the first three weeks of November both to stock dealers with new model cars and to meet the increased volume of retail demand accompanying the introduction of new models. Production, which in the first nine months of 1938 had been at a considerably lower level, was at nearly the same rate

as in the corresponding period in other recent years. Output of plate glass also increased sharply further in October. Cement production showed a considerable increase, while lumber production declined slightly.

Activity at textile mills, which had risen sharply during the summer, continued at about the August and September rate, although usually there is an increase at this time of the year. Shoe production declined somewhat further in October, and there was a decrease in output of tobacco products, while in most other industries manufacturing nondurable goods changes in output were largely seasonal in character. Mineral production showed a further moderate rise, reflecting in large part increased output of crude petroleum and nonferrous metals. Lake shipments of iron ore also were in larger volume, although a decrease is usual in October. Coal production increased seasonally.

Value of construction contracts awarded in 37 Eastern States increased considerably in October, according to figures of the F. W. Dodge Corporation, reflecting chiefly a sharp rise in awards for public projects. Contracts for hospital, educational, and other public buildings included in the Public Works Administration program were in large volume, and there was a further increase in contracts awarded for slum clearance projects of the United States Housing Authority.

#### Employment

Employment and payrolls increased somewhat further between the middle of September and the middle of October. At automobile factories employment continued to rise sharply and there were further moderate

increases in most other durable goods industries. The number employed at canning establishments declined and in other nondurable goods industries showed little change. Employment increased somewhat at mines, on the railroads, and in the construction industry, while in trade the rise was less than seasonal.

### Distribution

Sales at department and variety stores and by mail order houses showed less than the usual seasonal increase in October, partly because consumer buying of winter merchandise was retarded by unseasonably warm weather during most of the month. In the first two weeks of November department store sales increased moderately.

Freight-car loadings rose considerably further in October, owing largely to increased shipments of grains, coal, and miscellaneous freight. In the first half of November loadings showed a seasonal decline.

### Commodity prices

Wholesale commodity prices generally showed little change from the middle of October to the third week of November. Prices of steel scrap and leather advanced. Tin plate prices, on the other hand, were reduced, and there were also decreases in zinc, hides, and rubber. Prices of farm products and foods showed small fluctuations in this period.

### Bank credit

Total loans and investments at reporting member banks in 101 leading cities declined by about \$150,000,000 during the first half of November following a substantial increase during October. The decline

in November was almost entirely at New York City banks and reflected the retirement of State and local government obligations held by these banks. Adjusted demand deposits, which reached an all-time peak of \$16,000,000,000 at reporting banks in the last week in October, also decreased somewhat in the first half of November. Member bank reserves in the middle of November were at about the high level reached a month earlier.

#### Money rates and bond yields

The prevailing rate on open-market commercial paper declined slightly in November to  $5/8$  of 1 percent, a new low level. Other short-term open-market rates were unchanged. Yields on U. S. Government securities and on high-grade corporate bonds showed only small changes during November, continuing close to the low levels reached in October.