# BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN THE SIXTH FEDERAL RESERVE DISTRICT 

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA

District Summary With the exception of contracts awarded for residential construction, which increased about 10 per cent over January, and a small increase in payrolls, trade and industrial activity in the Sixth District declined somewhat in February. The seasonally adjusted index of department store sales in February was about the same as in January, but wholesale trade declined more than it usually does. The rate of textile operations, pig iron and coal production, and the total value of construction contracts awarded in February declined slightly. In comparison with February 1938, however, activity in all of these lines shows gains, some of them very substantial in amount.

The February declines in department store sales, and in construction contracts awarded, in the Sixth District were smaller than for the country as a whole, but the changes in pig iron output, textile activity and employment payrolls, were somewhat less favorable. Comparing February this year with that month a year ago, however, this District fared better than the nation in department store sales, in textile operations and pig iron production, and the District gain in contract awards over February 1938 was very much larger than the national average.

Trade In February department store sales in the Sixth District increased by about the usual seasonal amount, but wholesale trade declined. Business failures declined in February and in the first two months of 1939 were less than in that period last year.

After allowing for seasonal influences and the shorter month, the adjusted index of department store sales for February was 115.1 per cent of the 1923-1925 average, against 115.2 per cent for January. This decline of 0.1 per cent for this District compares with a decrease of 2.1 per cent for the country. In comparison with February 1938, sales in this District were up 2.8 per cent, while in the United States they were down 2.1 per cent. In the first two weeks of March preliminary figures indicate an increase for

| CONDITION OF 22 MEMBER BANES IN SELECTED CITIES (In Thousands of Dollars) |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\begin{array}{r} \text { March } 15, \\ 1939 \end{array}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { Change } \\ \text { Feb. } 15,1939 \end{gathered}$ | From : <br> Mar.16,1938 |
| Loans and Investments-Total | \$602,997 | + 4,995 | +51,733 |
| Loans-Total. | 306,395 | - 128 | +19,460 |
| Commercial, industrial and agricultural loans. | 170,893 | - 1,103 |  |
| Open mariet paper. | 2,953 | - ${ }^{1 / 582}$ | +14,912 |
| Loans to brokers and dealers in securitios. | 6,653 | + 14 |  |
| Other loans for purchasing |  |  |  |
| or carrying securities | 12,751 | - 34 | - 2.472 |
| Real estate loans | 27,491 | + 17 | - 555 |
| Loans to banks. | 81816 | + 12 | -1,031 |
| Other loons; | 84,838 | +1,548 | 19,441 +3273 |
| Investments-Total | 296,602 | + 5,123 | +32,273 |
| U. S. direct obligations. . . | 155,239 | + 238 | -1,208 |
| Obligations guaranteed by | 57,533 | + 6.491 | +25,569 |
| Other securities.... | 83,830 | $-1.130$ | $+7,912$ +7073 |
| Reserve with F. R. Bank | . 113,050 | + 926 | + 7.073 |
| Cash in vault. | 11,520 |  | + 1,103 |
| Balances with domestic banks | 172,894 | +14,904 | +43,751 |
| Demand deposits-adjusted. | . 367.010 | + 7,765 | +39,178 |
| Time deposits | 184,079 | + 2.256 | + 2,119 |
| U. S. Government deposits | 39,744 | -2,062 | +19,001 |
| Deposits of domestic banks | 258,887 | +15,389 | +51,991 |
| Borrowings |  | - 52 | - 167 |

this District of 8.8 per cent over that period a year ago, a gain almost twice as large as for the country. February sales reported to the United States Department of Commerce by 149 wholesale firms in this District declined further by 8.8 per cent, but were 9.6 per cent larger than a year ago.

- Inventories at department stores rose 8.7 per cent in February in preparation for spring trade, but were 4.2 per cent less in dollar value than a year earlier, and wholesale stocks increased 2.8 per cent over January but were 5.1 per cent smaller than for February 1938. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' index of wholesale prices averaged 2.5 per cent lower in February this year than last.


## Banking Demand deposits-adjusted at weekly reporting

 member banks in the Sixth District have recently reached a new high level and holdings of investment securities have increased to about the late December level. Since the high levels recorded on the last Wednesday in December, total loans and investments had declined about 12 millions of dollars by the middle of March, almost all of the decrease being accounted for by a drop in loans, as total investments were only slightly lower. In this period all classes of loans declined, excepting open market paper, and investments in securities guaranteed by the United States increased 15.2 millions but this has been offset by decreases of 13 millions in United States direct obligations and of 2.7 millions in Other Securities.Demand deposits-adjusted have risen since December to a level on March 15 higher than at any previous time, and deposits of other banks also reached a new peak at the middle of March.

- In comparison with the corresponding report date of last year, there were increases in total loans and investments on March 15 this year of 51.7 millions, of which 19.4 millions was in loans and 32.3 millions was in investments; demand deposits-adjusted were up 39.2 millions, and deposits of correspondent banks were 52 millions larger.
- At the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta reserve deposits of member banks have increased in the first half of March to a level higher than at any previous time. Total deposits and total cash reserves on March 15 were also the largest on record.
- Estimates based on latest available figures of deposits in-
CONDITION OF FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA
(In Thousands of Dollars)
March 15,

dicate that reserve deposits of all member banks in the District on March 15, amounting to 193.5 millions of dollars, were about 50.1 millions, or 34.9 per cent, in excess of legal requirements. In terms of percentage this is the largest amount of excess reserves since February 1937, and in actual amount it is the largest since the first half of August 1936, just prior to the first increase in reserve requirements.

Agriculture Farmers in the Sixth District received 27 per cent less cash income in January this year than last. Receipts from livestock were slightly larger than in January 1938, and Government payments were about three and one-half times as large, but receipts from crops were off about 44 per cent because large commodity credit loans and sales of cotton made in earlier months left less cotton than usual available for sale in January.
On the basis of reports to the United States Department of Agriculture, farmers in this District intended on March 1 to plant larger acreages this year than last in oats, peanuts, cowpeas and tame hay, and in barley in Tennessee, but smaller areas are indicated for corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tobacco and soybeans, and for rice in Louisiana. To-

tals for the six states of this District combined are compared in the table.

Industry A somewhat lower level of industrial activity in the Sixth District in February was reflected in small declines in construction contracts awarded, in textile operations, and in output of coal and pig iron.
After declining sharply in January from the large December total, there was a further drop of 2.4 per cent in the value of construction contracts awarded in February. Residential contracts, however, increased 9.6 per cent. In comparison with February 1938, however, total contracts awarded in February this year increased 81.6 per cent, residential awards 56.7 per cent, and other contracts 98.0 per cent. February last year, it should be recalled, had the smallest total volume of construction contracts in this District for any month in the past three and one-half years. Combined totals for the first two months of 1939 show a gain in total awards over that period a year ago of 79.3 per cent, against an increase of 51.6 per cent for the country; residential awards for the two months period were up 64.6 per cent over a year ago in this District, while for the country they were more than twice as large, and other awards gained 87.3 per cent in this District and 33.1 per cent in the country as a whole.
The rate of cotton consumption in Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee declined 1.0 per cent in February, in contrast to an increase of 2.6 per cent for the country. Consumption in this District was 39 per cent greater than a year ago, however, which compares favorably with a gain of 32 per cent for the country. Mills in this District are consuming 32.7 per cent of the total amount of cotton currently being consumed in the United States.
$\rightarrow$ In February cotton seed oil mills crushed about half as much seed as they did in February last year, and output of principal cotton seed products also declined about half.
Operations in the steel industry in Alabama have been at 72.0 per cent of capacity since the first week of February, compared with an average of 63.5 per cent for January. The current rate of 72.0 per cent for Alabama compares with 55.5 per cent for the United States. The daily rate of pig iron production in Alabama declined 1.8 per cent in February, to 7,958 tons, after increasing from 2,859 tons in July las tyear to 8,106 tons in December and January. In the United States the February rate of production increased 4.8 per cent over January. Alabama production was 61.2 per cent greater than a year ago, and that for the country was 58.7 per cent larger. In the first two months of 1939 Alabama production was larger than in that part of any year since 1927.
February production of coal in Alabama and Tennessee declined 4.7 per cent from January, and in the country output declined 4.6 per cent, because of the shorter month. In Alabama and Tennessee production was 18.0 per cent larger than a year ago, which compares with a gain of 23.6 per cent for the country as a whole.
Electric power production in this District declined 1.1 per cent in January, following an all-time high in December, but was 25.2 per cent greater than in February last year.


|  | (000 Omitted) |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| COTTON CONSUMPTIONBales | Feb. $1939$ | ${ }_{10}{ }_{1939}$ | Feb. 1938 | $\begin{gathered} \text { Aug. } \\ \text { 1938-39 } \end{gathered}$ | b. Incl. 1937-38 |
| Alabama. | 60 | 61 | 42 | 416 | 359 |
| Georgia. | 110 | 117 | 78 | 778 | 680 |
| Tennessee | 18 | 15 | 132 | 1,982 | 93 1.132 |
| TOTAL THREE STATES.. | 184 | 193 | 132 | 1,292 | 1,132 |
|  | 110 | 122 | 224 | 1,132 | 1,740 |
| FERTLLIZEA TAG SALES-Ton |  |  | 354 | 903 | 888 |
| *Georgia, Alabama, Louisiaria | $\begin{array}{r} 309 \\ \mathrm{nd} \end{array}$ | $\begin{gathered} 184 \\ \text { sippi. } \end{gathered}$ | 354 | 903 | 888 |


|  | (000 Omitted) |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { Jan. } \\ & 1939 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { Dec. } \\ 1938 \end{gathered}$ | ${ }_{1938}$ |
| FARM INCOME*-Six States. $\$ 43,936$ | \$ 63,120 | \$ 60,006 |
| Alabama. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3,807 | 7.701 | 6,294 |
| Florida. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 9,516 | 7,985 | 10,616 |
| Georgia.................... 4,372 | 7,774 | 6,255 |
| Louisiana. ................. . 4,557 | 12,432 | 8,489 |
| Mississippi................ 8 8,130 | 12,865 | 12,462 |
| Tennessee................. 13,554 | 14,363 | 15,890 |
| ELECTRIC POWER |  |  |
| PRODUCTION-kw hours |  |  |
| Alabama. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 303,979 | 281,033 | 225,047 |
| Florida. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 100,318 | 98,768 | 91,722 |
| Georgia. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 123,855 | 132,066 | 126,409 |
| Louisiana. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 149,133 | 147,576 | 115,179 |
| Mississippi. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5 ,688 | 5,785 | 6,713 |
| Tennessee................ 174,654 | 202,024 | 119,899 |
| TOTAL SIX STATES. . . . 857,627 | 867,252 | 684,969 |
| By Water Power. . . . . . . . 455,093 | 405,500 | 362,433 |
| By Fuels. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 402,534 | 461,752 | 322,969 |


| SIXTH DISTRICT BUSINESS INDEXES <br> (1923-1925=100 except as noted) |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| RETAIL SALES*-Unadjusted | Fem. 1939 | Jan. 1939 | Feb. 1938 |
| DISTRICT (27 Firms) | 101.3 | 91.0 | 98.5 |
| Atlanta. | 192.5 | 164.2 | 175.7 |
| Birmingham. | .. 92.4 | 74.8 | 86.4 |
| Chattanooga | . 69.4 | 89.7 | 68.1 |
| Nashville..... | . 988.1 | 82.5 77.2 | 81.1 83.8 |
| RETAIL SALES*-Adjusted |  |  |  |
| DISTRICT (27 Firms) | 115.1 | 115.2 | 111.9 |
| Atlanta. | 226.5 | 218.9 | 206.7 |
| Birmingham | 102.7 | 103.9 | 96.0 |
| Chattanooga | 87.8 | 88.2 | 86.2 |
| Nashville. | . . 113.4 | 110.0 | 95.4 |
| New Orleans | .. 88.8 | \$1.9 | 95.2 |
| RETAIL STOCKS-Unadjusted |  |  |  |
| DISTRICT (24 Firms) | 69.0 | 62.4 | 68.4 |
| Atlanta. | . 114.5 | 107.3 | 111.9 |
| Birmingham. | ... 64.9 | 59.0 | 66.7 |
| Chattanooga | . 59.7 | 53.2 47.8 | 60.8 52.4 |
| New Orleans | . 60.0 | 52.4 | 58.6 |
| RETAIL STOCES-Adjusted |  |  |  |
| DISTRICT ( 24 Firms). | 70.4 | 68.6 | 69.8 |
| Atlanta... | .119.3 | 116.6 | 116.6 |
| Birmingham. | ... 67.6 | 65.6 | 69.5 |
| Chattanooga | . 61.5 | 59.8 | 62.7 |
| Nashville... | 56.8 | 54.9 | 55.2 |
| New Orleans. | . 60.0 | 57.6 | 58.6 |
| WHOLESALE SALES-Total | 60.6 | 66.5 | 65.7 |
| Groceries. | 45.1 | 47.7 | 47.9 |
| Dry Goods | 48.9 | 52.6 | 51.6 |
| Hardware. | 78.1 | 89.2 | 71.1 |
| Furniture. |  | 54.1 | 57.9 |
| Drugs. | 104.2 | 114.4 | 114.6 |
| CONTRACTS AWARDED-DISTRICT. | .. 56.0 | 57.4 | 32.4 |
| Residential | 48.0 | 43.8 | 30.6 |
| All Others. | 61.4 | 66.5 | 31.0 |
| Alabara. | ... 39.7 | 74.7 | 47.4 |
| Florida. | . 34.7 | 35.5 | 26.2 |
| Georgia.. | ... 78.9 | 67.4 | 22.1 |
| Louisiana. | ... 77.8 | 59.8 | 41.1 |
| Mississippi | . 236.3 | 183.2 | 44.5 |
| Tennessee. | . 57.7 | 68.7 | 34.4 |
| building permits-20 Cities. | ... 37.7 | 37.9r | 48.4 |
| Atlanta. | .. 14.7 | 28.5 | 25.3 |
| Birmingham. | .. 13.8 | 9.5 | 14.7 |
| Jacksonville. | .... 61.6 | 40.1 | 312.2 |
| Nashville... | ... 16.2 | 18.2 | 19.7 |
| New Orleans. | ... 35.3 | 28.3 | 34.6 |
| 15 Other Cities. | .... 50.1 | 52.4 r | 31.0 |
| PIG IRON PRODUCTION-ALABAMA* | . . . 104.3 | 106.2 | 64.7 |
| COTTON CONSUMPTION-3 STATES*. | ... 161.4 | 163.0 | 116.1 |
| Alabama. | 188.6 | 184.3 | 131.8 |
| Georgia. | . 151.0 | 155.3 | 107.7 |
| Tennessee | . 148.7 | 149.7 | 128.0 |
| EMPLOYMENT (Av. for $1932=100$ ) |  |  |  |
| Alabama. | . 131.7 | 130.7 | 131.0 |
| Florida. | ...115.6 | 121.0 | 128.0 |
| Georgia. | ... 140.5 | 141.3 | 135.8 |
| Louisiana. | . 126.2 | 124.3 | 122.3 |
| Mississippi | . 110.9 | 109.6 | 111.5 |
| Tennessee SIX STATES | $\begin{array}{r} \therefore 126.1 \\ \therefore 130.5 \end{array}$ | 124.5 130.5 | 117.3 127.9 |
| PAYROLLS (Av. for $1932=100$ ) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Alabama. | . 206.2 | 202.2 | 188.5 |
| Florida. | . 93.4 | 96.2 | 99.6 |
| Georgia.. | . 181.8 | 182.9 | 160.4 |
| Louisiana. | ...143.4 | 142.1 | 149.5 |
| Mississippi | . 137.3 | 132.8 | 152.0 |
| Tennessee. | . 160.2 | 157.1 | 144.0 |
| SIX STATES | . 169.0 | 168.0 | 159.8 |
| ELECTRIC POWER PRODUCTION* | Jan. 1939 | Dec. 1938 | Jan. 1938 |
| Alabama. | 380.5 | 352.3 | 282.1 |
| Florida. | . 493.3 | 485.8 | 451.2 |
| Georgia. | . 206.1 | 219.8 | 210.4 |
| Louisiana. | . 560.1 | 554.1 | 435.0 |
| Mississippi | . 87.6 | 87.6 | 102.9 |
| Tennessee... | . 278.4 | 310.4 | 191.1 |
| SIX STATES | . 334.8 | 335.8 | 267.8 |
| By Water Power | . 338.0 | 295.8 | 269.2 |
| By Fuels..... | . . 331.2 | 380.2 | 266.3 |

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## NATIONAL SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONDITIONS

## Prepared by Board of Governors of the Federal Remerve System

TN FEBRUARY industrial activity continued at the January rate, without showing the usual rise, and retail trade increased less than seasonally. In the first three weeks of March, however, industrial activity and trade showed seasonal increases. Commodity prices continued to show little change.

## Production

Volume of industrial production was at about the same rate in February as in the two previous months, although usually there is an increase, and the Board's seasonally adjusted index declined further to 98 per cent of the 1923 -1925 average. In the steel industry activity did not show the usual seasonal advance. Pig iron production increased, but new orders for steel were in limited volume and ingot production remained at about 54 per cent of capacity throughout the month. There was some decline in automobile assemblies, following a period of considerable increase. Output of lumber and plate glass continued to decrease in February, while cement production, which had been curtailed in January, increased considerably. In the first three weeks of March steel production increased to about 56 per cent of capacity and automobile output was also in somewhat larger volume.

Textile production in February was at about the same rate as in January. At cotton and woolen mills activity increased somewhat but at silk mills there was a marked decline. Output of shoes and tobacco products continued at high levels. In the meatpacking industry activity declined further and there was also a decrease in activity at sugar refineries.

Bituminous coal production was maintained in February, and crude petroleum output likewise continued in substantial volume. Anthracite output declined in February, and in March was reduced further as mine owners and workers agreed on a curtailment program.

Value of construction contracts awarded declined in February, according to F. W. Dodge Corporation figures, owing principally to a further decrease in awards for pub-licly-financed work. Contracts for privately-financed residential building increased further, while awards for private nonresidential building remained at the low level of other recent months.

## Employment

Factory employment and payrolls increased somewhat less than is usual between the middle of January and the middle of February. Changes in nonmanufacturing lines were largely of a seasonal nature.

## Distribution

Department store sales were in about the same volume in February as in January, although some increase is usual, and sales at variety stores increased less than seasonally, while mail order sales rose by slightly more than the seasonal amount. In the early part of March department store sales increased.

Freight-car loadings declined somewhat from January to February, reflecting for the most part reduced shipments of grains, forest products, and miscellaneous freight.

## Commodity Prices

Wholesale commodity prices were generally maintained with little change during February and the first three weeks of March. As is usual at this season prices of livestock and meats increased while dairy products declined. Silk prices advanced considerably in this period. In the early part of March current prices of pig iron and of semifinished and finished steel were reaffirmed for the second quarter of this year.

## Bank Credit

Investments in United States Government obligations by New York City banks increased considerably in February and the first half of March. In this period member banks reduced their holdings of Treasury notes and increased their bonds, reflecting in part exchanges of notes for new bond issues on March 15. Excess reserves of member banks continued somewhat below the high level of $\$ 3,600,000,000$ reached at the end of January, fluctuating largely in accordance with changes in Treasury balances at the Federal Reserve Banks.

## Money Rates

Average yields on United States Government securities declined to new record low levels from February 27 to March 10, following the announcement by the Treasury that no cash would be raised in the March financing. Yields rose slightly after the middle of March accompanying renewed tension in Europe. New issues of 91 -day Treasury bills continued to sell on practically a no-yield basis during March. Other open-market rates continued unchanged.


Index of physical volume of production, adjusted for seasonal variation, 1923-1925 average $=100$. By months, January, 1934, to February, 1939.


Index of number employed, adjusted for secsonal variation. 1923-1925 average $=100$. By months, January. 1934, to February, 1939.


For weeks ending January 6, 1934, to March 18, 1939.


Three-month moving average of F. W. Dodge data for value of contracts awarded in 37 Eastern States, adjusted for seasonal variation. Latest figures based on data for January. February, and estimates for March.


[^0]:    *Indexes of retail sales, electric power and pig iron production, and of cotton consumption are on a daily average basis. $\mathrm{r}=$ revised.

