MONTHLY REVIEW **BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN THE SIXTH FEDERAL RESERVE DISTRICT**

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA

March 31, 1939

District With the exception of contracts awarded for residential construction, which increased Summary 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 BANKS IN 3 (In Thousands of Dollars		IES
March 15, 1939	Change	From : Mar.16,1938
Loans and Investments—Total	+ 4,995 128	
Open market paper	-1,103 -582	+ 14,942
Loans to brokers and dealers in securities	+ 14	+ 47
or carrying securities	34 + 17	2,472 555 1,031
Other loans	$^{+}$ 12 + 1,548 + 5,123	+ 9,441 + 32,273
U.S. direct obligations	238 + 6,491 1,130	
Reserve with F. R. Bank. 113,050 Cash in vault. 11,520 Balances with domestic banks. 172,894	+ 926 + 346 + 14,904	+ 7,073 + 1,103 + 43,751
Demand deposits-adjusted	+ 7,765 + 2,256 - 2,062	+39,178 + 2,119 +19,001
Deposits of domestic banks	+15,389 -52	+51,991 167

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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 vear 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,		e From :		
	1939	Feb.15,1939	Mar.16,1938		
Bills discounted		- 195	- 968		
Bills bought	. 821 . 118,403 . 119,386 . 293,584 . 147,967 . 193,541 . 45,809	$\begin{array}{ccc} & & & & & \\ & & & & &$	$\begin{array}{r} + & 699 \\ + & 10,942 \\ + & 10,816 \\ + & 40,508 \\ - & & 4,101 \\ + & 9,333 \\ + & 34,690 \\ + & 58,091 \end{array}$		
advances	. 150	- 3	— 131		

DEBITS	τo	INDIVID	UAL	ACCOUNTS
(1	n Th	onsands	of D	olime)

(In Indusands of Dollars)							
ALABAMA— Birmingham\$ Dothan Mobile Montgomery	Feb. 1939 74,826 2,963 29,563 19,223	\$	Jan. 1939 96,339 3,150 40,255 22,560	\$	Feb. 1938 71,561 2,555 32,338 19,080	Feb. 19	t Change 39 From : Feb.1938 + 4.6 + 16.0 - 8.6 + 0.7
FLORIDA— Jacksonville Miami Pensacola Tampa	71,018 55,999 7,291 27,420		78,389 56,061 8,089 30,892		66,773 52,027 6,752 26,700	9.4 0.1 9.9 11.2	+ 6.4 + 7.6 + 8.0 + 2.7
GEORGIA Albany Algusta Brunswick Columbus Elberton Macon Newnan Savannah Valdosta	4,879 174,232 14,024 2,304 12,295 983 1,2488 1,557 24,765 3,164		5,759 195,122 17,084 2,548 13,975 1,028 14,030 1,693 26,989 3,536		4,263 170,625 13,486 2,393 10,981 962 12,059 1,414 24,201 3,069		+14.4 + 2.1 + 4.0 - 3.7 + 12.0 + 2.2 + 3.6 + 10.1 + 2.3 + 3.1
LOUISIANA— New Orleans	198,868		223,299		197,524	—14.8	+ 0.7
MISSISSIPPI Hattiesburg Jackson Meridian Vicksburg	4,225 27,464 9,899 6,569		4,547 26,740 10,568 6,664		4,040 21,064 9,129 7,155	-7.1 + 2.7 6.3 1.4	+ 4.6 +30.4 + 1.6 - 8.2
TENNESSEE Chattanooga Knoxville Nashville	35,698 28,196 81,931		46,704 36,891 85,018		31,794 25,778 67,000	23.6 23.6 3.6	$^{+12.3}_{+9.4}_{+22.3}$
26 Cities	931,844	1	,067,930		876,207	-12.7	+ 6.3
UNITED STATES	,490,293	\$32	,339,577	\$25	547 , 209	15.0	+ 7.6

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-

	Intended Acreage 1939	Planted Acreage 1938	Per Cer Chang
Corn. Oats. Tame Hay. Barley (Tennessee). Rice (Louisiana). Potatoes. Sweet Potatoes. Tobacco. Peanuis. Cowpeas. Soybeans. TOTAL.	802 4,925 56 464 190 481 233 1,397 978 877	16,321 761 4,868 44 195 489 234 1,317 974 888 26,585	

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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.

▶ 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.

SIXTH DISTRICT BUSINESS STATISTICS

SIXTH DISTRICT BUSINESS STATISTICS SALES						
Fi Cor RETAIL TRADE Jan. 1933 Atlanta	4 - - -	1939 With 1938 + 8.3 + 7.3 - 6.3 + 4.2 - 6.8 + 4.2 - 6.8 + 2.9 + 2.3	Com Yec	$\begin{array}{c} \text{nFeb.} \\ \text{Incl.} \\ \text{pared} \\ \text{with} \\ \text{rr} \text{ Ago} \\ + 8.6 \\ + 4.0 \\ + 6.0 \\ - 2.2 \\ + 8.1 \\ - 2.7 \\ + 1.8 \\ + 3.0 \end{array}$	STOCKS Feb. 1939 Compared With Feb. 1939 — 0.6 — 4.9 — 1.7 + 3.1 + 1.0 — 4.2	TION RATIO
WHOLESALE TRADE Groceries.		- 8.5 - 4.4 - 19.6 - 18.8 - 3.3 - 3.4 - 5.4 - 9.6		$\begin{array}{c} & 6.4 \\ + & 4.7 \\ + & 19.7 \\ + & 8.3 \\ + & 12.6 \\ + & 20.7 \\ + & 8.5 \end{array}$		85.3 35.4 48.2 65.8 45.2 23.9 59.6
(000 Omitted)						
COMMERCIAL FAILURES— DISTRICT Number (Actual) Liabilities\$	Feb. 1939 69 679	19	m. 39 75	Feb. 1938 \$ 826	-	eb., Incl. 1938 150 \$ 1,883
CONTRACTS AWARDED— DISTRICT\$ Residenticil\$ All Others Alabama Florida Georgia Louisiana Mississippi Tennessee	19,665 6,733 12,932 1,814 5,026 5,257 4,893 4,556 3,201	\$ 20.1 6,1 14,0 3,4 5,1 4,4 3,7 3,5 3,8	44 12 56 95 63	\$ 10,828 4,298 6,530 2,166 3,801 1,470 2,584 858 1,907	\$ 39,821 12,877 26,944 5,229 10,182 9,752 8,656 8,089 7,010	\$ 22,207 7,822 14,385 3,854 7,112 3,395 4,748 1,843 6,968
BUILDING PERMITS— 20 CITIES Atlanta. Birmingham Jacksonville. New Orleans. 15 Other Cities.	4,245 228 205 507 103 455 2,747	4 1 3 1	264r 41 30 15 65 73	5,444 391 218 2,569 125 445 1,696	8,509 669 346 837 218 820 5,620	8,375 625 622 2,882 207 722 3,317
PIG IRON PRODUCTION-Ton	s 223	0	51	138	474	291
Alabama	1,105	1,2		970	2,305	1,920
Tennessee	478	-'4	61	372	939	728
			(00	0 Omitte	d)	

COTTON CONSUMPTION-	Feb. 1939	Jan. 1939	Feb. 1938	AugF 193 8-3 9	eb. Incl. 1937-38
Alabama. Georgia Tennessee. TOTAL THREE STATES.	60 110 14 184	61 117 15 193	42 78 12 132	416 778 98 1,292	359 680 93 1,132
COTTON SEED CRUSHED-	110	122	224	1,132	1,740
FERTILIZER TAG SALES-Tons TOTAL SIX STATES *Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana,	309	184 sissippi.	3 54	903	888

	(000 Omitted)		
Jan. 1939 FARM INCOME*—Six States. \$ 43,936 Alabama	Dec. 1938 \$ 63,120 7,701 7,985 7,774 12,432 12,865 14,363	Jan. 1938 60,006 6,294 10,616 6,255 8,489 12,462 15,890	
ELECTRIC POWER PRODUCTION-kw hours			
Alabama 303,979 Florida 100,318 Georgia 123,855 Louisiana 149,133 Mississippi 5,688 Tennessee 174,654 TOTAL SIX STATES 857,627 By Water Power 455,093 By Fuels 402,534	281,033 98,768 132,066 147,576 5,785 202,024 867,252 405,500 461,752	$\begin{array}{c} 225,047\\ 91,722\\ 126,409\\ 115,179\\ 6,713\\ 119,899\\ 684,969\\ 362,433\\ 322,969 \end{array}$	

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SIXTH DISTRICT BUSINESS INDEX (1923-1925—100 except as noted)	ES	
RETAIL SALES*—Unadjusted Fem. 1939 DISTRICT (27 Firms) .101.3 Atlanta .192.5 Birmingham .92.4 Chattanooga .69.4 Nashville .96.4 New Orleans .78.1	Jan. 1939 91.0 164.2 74.8 69.7 82.5 77.2	Feb. 1938 98.5 175.7 86.4 68.1 81.1 83.8
RETAIL SALES*—Adjusted DISTRICT (27 Firms) 115.1 Atlanta 226.5 Birmingham 102.7 Chattanooga 87.8 Nashville 113.4 New Orleans 88.8	115.2 218.9 103.9 88.2 110.0 91.9	111.9 206.7 96.0 86.2 95.4 95.4 95.2
RETAIL STOCES—Unadjusted DISTRICT (24 Firms) 69.0 Atlanta 114.5 Birmingham 64.9 Chattanooga 59.7 Nashville 54.0 New Orleans 60.0	62.4 107.3 59.0 53.2 47.8 52.4	68.4 111.9 66.7 60.8 52.4 58.6
RETAIL STOCES—Adjusted DISTRICT (24 Firms) 70.4 Atlanta 119.3 Birmingham 67.6 Chattanooga 61.5 Nashville 56.8 New Orleans 60.0	68.6 116.6 65.6 59.8 54.9 57.6	69.8 116.6 69.5 62.7 55.2 58.6
WHOLESALE SALES—Total 60.6 Groceries 45.1 Dry Goods 48.9 Hardware 78.1 Furniture Drugs	66.5 47.7 52.6 89.2 5 4.1 114.4	65.7 47.9 51.6 71.1 5 7.9 11 4.6
CONTRACTS AWARDED—DISTRICT. 56.0 Residential. 48.0 All Others. 61.4 Alabama 39.7 Florida. 34.7 Georgia. 78.9 Louisiana. 77.8 Mississippi. 236.3 Tennessee. 57.7	57.4 43.8 66.5 74.7 35.5 67.4 59.8 183.2 68.7	32.4 30.6 31.0 47.4 26.2 22.1 41.1 44.5 34.4
BUILDING PERMITS—20 Cities. 37.7 Atlanta 14.7 Birmingham 13.8 Jacksonville 61.6 Nashville 16.2 New Orleans 35.3 15 Other Cities 50.1	37.9r 28.5 9.5 40.1 18.2 28.3 52.4r	48.4 25.3 14.7 312.2 19.7 34.6 31.0
PIG IRON PRODUCTION-ALABAMA*104.3	106.2	64.7
COTTON CONSUMPTION-3 STATES* 161.4 Alabama 188.6 Georgia 151.0 Tennessee 148.7	163.0 184.3 155.3 149.7	116.1 131.8 107.7 128.0
EMPLOYMENT (Av. for 1932 == 100) Alabama. 131.7 Florida. 115.6 Georgia. 140.5 Louisiana. 126.2 Mississippi. 110.9 Tennessee 126.1 SIX STATES. 130.5	130.7 121.0 141.3 124.3 109.6 124.5 130.5	131.0 128.0 135.8 122.3 111.5 117.3 127.9
PAYROLLS (Av. for 1932 == 100) Alabama 206.2 Florida 93.4 Georgia 181.8 Louisiana 143.4 Mississippi 137.3 Tennessee 160.2 SIX STATES 169.0	202.2 96.2 182.9 142.1 132.8 157.1 168.0	188.5 99.6 160.4 149.5 152.0 144.0 159.8
ELECTRIC POWER PRODUCTION* Jan. 1939 Alabama	Dec. 1938 352.3 485.8 219.8	Jan. 1938 282.1 451.2 210.4

ELECTRIC FOWLR FRODUCTION	Jun. 1000	Dec. 1000	Jan. 1000
Alabama		352.3	282.1
Florida		485.8	451.2
Georgia	206.1	219.8	210.4
Louisiana		554.1	435.0
Mississippi		87.6	102.9
Tennessee		310.4	191.1
SIX STATES		335.8	267.8
By Water Power		295.8	2 69.2
By Fuels		380.2	266.3

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

NATIONAL SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONDITIONS Prepared by Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

IN 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 publicly-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.

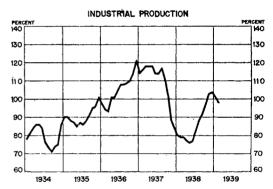
Bank Credit

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.

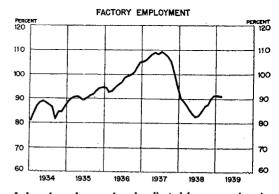
Money Rates

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.

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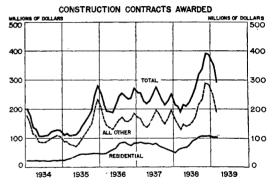
Index of physical volume of production, adjusted for seasonal variation, 1923-1925 average = 100, By months, January, 1934, to February, 1939.



Index of number employed, adjusted for seasonal 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.