GENERAL business during the past thirty days, as reflected in reports of representative interests throughout the district, was in the main satisfactory. While considerable irregularity still exists and some weak spots are in evidence, recent gains in certain lines were maintained and in a few instances increased. Routine distribution and consumption of commodities continues heavy and stocks in all positions are of moderate proportions. Without any growth in buying for forward requirements nor change from the policy of conservatism which has prevailed for many months, retail merchants are placing fair orders for additional supplies, and the character of their purchases indicates no contraction in the outlet to final consumers. Due to almost universal employment at high wages, the purchasing power of the public in the industrial centers continues in a strong position, and with improvement in market conditions and prices of farm products, reports from the country are more encouraging.

As compared with a year ago, when a rapid expansion was taking place in commerce and industry, a number of important lines show rather sharp decreases in sales. However, the situation now is apparently on a sounder and more satisfactory basis than during the earlier period. Further progress has been made in price stabilization, changes during the past thirty days having been relatively narrow, and there is an almost entire absence of speculation in commodities. While their books show a smaller volume of advance orders than during past years, most merchants in the cheaper grades of goods. This attitude has resulted in curtailment of sales, and in a majority of instances, the reduction of profit margins to a minimum. In a lesser degree the same is true in hardware and furniture. In the latter line, jobbers and retailers are holding down their purchases to such goods as they absolutely have to have, and are insisting upon reductions in prices, which manufacturers say they are unable to grant because of the high cost of raw materials and labor.

Unevenness marked the movement of food products during the period under review. The general line of staple groceries was more active than heretofore, but the dressed beef trade was listless and wholesale meat prices are low, ranging from 20 to 70 per cent under the peak levels, and in some cases are under 1913 prices. Marketing of hogs continues on an enormous scale, farmers being disposed to ship their stock because of the high price of feed. The flour and feed situation underwent no change worthy of note, the dull conditions of the preceding thirty days still obtaining. Cereal prices fluctuated rather broadly, but closing quotations on February 15 were about on a parity with those on the same date in January. Spot cotton in the St. Louis market ranged from 34c to 32¼c between January 15 and February 15, the low figure of the range being recorded on the latter date.

Employment conditions throughout the district, according to the Employment Service of the U. S. Department of Labor, continue in the main satisfactory. While there is some surplus building labor in the northern sections, spring building activities are expected to rapidly absorb the available supply. Normal quotas of employees are being maintained in most industries, many operatives who were temporarily released during the inventory period having been reengaged. There is still a good call for common labor on road and river work, and farm help is in better demand than at the same time last year. Some unemployment is reported among railroad workers, particularly in the shop crafts. Unemployment among negroes in St. Louis and other Northern centers, noted during the preceding month, still prevails.

With the return of milder temperatures and diminishing fears of a serious coal strike in spring, the fuel situation lost much of the spontaneity which featured it during the cold weather a few weeks back. The
domestic demand has eased off materially in the larger cities, and the movement to the country is described as slow and below normal for this time of year. Some contracting and storage by steam users was in progress, but this was confined chiefly to the larger industrial centers, sales to the small towns and country being relatively light. Producers report, however, that there have been few cancellations of orders placed during the extreme cold weather, and filling of these orders has served to maintain a movement of fair proportions. Production for the country as a whole was well sustained during January, the Geological Survey showing a larger bituminous output during that period than in any previous year, with the weekly average exceeding 11,500,000 tons.

January business of railroads operating in this district showed a large gain over the same month in 1923, and in point of total number of cars loaded with revenue freight was the record January in the history of the lines. These results were accomplished in face of the inclement weather, which hampered log and lumber loading in the South and generally interfered with traffic. According to the American Railway Association loading for the country as a whole for the week ending February 2 totaled 929,936 cars, an increase of 38,000 cars over the preceding week and a gain of 64,000 cars over the corresponding week last year. Coal loadings totaled 198,955 cars, a high record as compared with corresponding weeks in previous years. The St. Louis Terminal Railway Association, which includes in its membership 26 roads operating through this gateway, interchanged 211,541 loads during January, the largest number ever handled in any January, and comparing with 189,644 loads in December, 207,973 loads in November and 208,584 loads in January, 1923. During the first nine days of February 64,721 loads were interchanged against 51,581 loads for the first nine days of December, and 60,408 loads for the corresponding period a year ago. Passenger traffic of the reporting roads decreased 2 per cent in January under the same month in 1923.

Considerable irregularity is reflected in reports on collections. In some sections returns are satisfactory, while elsewhere there are complaints of backwardness. Some delays were occasioned by heavy snows and rains, which prevented farmers from coming to town, and interfered with means of communication. Improvement was noted in the coal mining areas, particularly Illinois, where increased activity at many mines aided the communities in which they are located. In the tobacco and rice sections there has been good liquidation, but numerous backward spots are reported in the cotton areas, due to reduced yields and failure of the 1923 crop. Wholesalers in the large cities report settlements of accounts due in February under the corresponding period last year. Answers to 410 questionnaires addressed to representative interests in the various lines throughout the district show the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 1924</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 1923</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 1923</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commercial failures in the Eighth Federal Reserve District during January, according to Dun's, numbered 143, involving liabilities of $1,669,880, against 96 defaults with indebtedness of $1,954,500 in December and 97 failures for $1,855,028 in January, 1923. The per capita circulation of the United States on February 1 was $41.77, which compares with $44.22 on January 1, and $40.74 on February 1, 1923.

MANUFACTURING AND WHOLESALE

**Automobiles**

Production of passenger cars and trucks for the country as a whole during January increased 4.3 per cent over December and was 30.1 per cent greater than in January, 1923. Complete figures of passenger cars produced in January by companies reporting direct or through the Automobile Chamber of Commerce were 267,211 against 275,267 in December. Trucks built in January numbered 28,247 against 27,068 in December. Distribution of automobiles and accessories throughout the district continues active. Sales of passenger cars during January, according to reports of 230 dealers, were 1.2 per cent larger than for the same month in 1923, and 12 per cent in excess of the December total. The entire line participated in the activity, but purchases of medium price cars were relatively larger than the more expensive makes. Sales of accessories in January showed a gain of approximately 10 per cent over the same month in 1923, due in large measure to intensive selling campaigns. Stocks of new cars in hands of dealers show the usual seasonal increase. Used car stocks are moderate, and in both numbers and investment value represented, are below those at the corresponding period last year. Several price changes were reported by manufacturers of passenger cars, most of which represented upward revisions. The tire market continues depressed, but stocks in hands of jobbers and dealers have been reduced, and on standard sizes price declines have been halted.

**Boots and Shoes**

Sales of the 11 reporting interests in January were 21.6 per cent larger than for the corresponding month in 1923 and 3.1 per cent less than in December. Orders booked during the first half of February were in satisfactory volume, and indicate a substantial increase for that month as contrasted with the same period last year. As has been the case for several months, business in women's and children's wear is relatively much better than in men's shoes. Factories working exclusively on women's novelty goods are operating full time and in many instances are behind on deliveries. The comment is made that uncertainty relative to styles is holding back future business. There was no change worthy of note in prices of finished goods but raw materials reflect the firmer trend in hides, and some fancy and novelty leathers were higher. Factory operation was at from 80 to 100 per cent of full capacity. The total number of pairs of shoes produced in this district during December was 7.1 per cent less than during the preceding month, and for the country as a whole, December production decreased 15.8 per cent under the November total.

**Clothing**

Seasonal improvement was noted in sales of men's clothing and generally the movement of both women's and men's wear was more satisfactory than during the preceding month. The comment is made, however, that ordering is on an extremely conservative basis, with uncertainty relative to prices and styles tending to hold down commitments for forward delivery. The spell of mild weather in early February brought an end to reordering of winter goods, and stocks in that category have been well cleaned up. Special clearance sales by retailers during January met with good response, and accounted for the movement of a large volume of apparel. Prices quoted by wholesalers and jobbers underwent no change worthy of mention during
the period under review, but in many instances conces-
sions were made by retailers in order to dispose of
accumulations of cold weather goods. January sales
of the 11 reporting interests were 6.3 per cent larger
than for the corresponding period in 1923, but 12.7
per cent under the December total.

**Dry Goods**

Purchasing of goods in this classification con-
 tinues on an extremely conservative basis, due mainly
to irregularity in prices and the recent broad fluctuations
in raw cotton. Future orders on books of wholesalers
and jobbers are considerably smaller than at the same
time a year ago, and a rather sharp reduction in Janu-
ary shipments was reported. Buyers visited the chief
distributing centers in large numbers, but their orders
were for the most part small in size and piecemeal in
character. The general comment of retail merchants
was that their customers are unwilling to pay higher
prices, and they are shaping their purchases accord-
ingly. Retail stocks are universally light, which fact
leads to the belief among wholesalers that spot buying
will be heavy during the next few months. The trend
of prices in certain cotton goods is easier, reflecting
the recent decline in the raw staple. The demand for
silk goods is reported quiet, though some silk mixtures
and fancy patterns are meeting good sale. Knit cotton
underwear and hosiery continue quiet, with prices a
shade easier. January sales of the 11 reporting inter-
est were 16.5 per cent under the same month in 1923.
Wholesale milliners report January sales 34.1 per cent
less than for the same month last year.

**Electrical Supplies**

January sales of the 12 reporting interests were
1.5 per cent less than for the corresponding month in 1923,
and 4.8 per cent in excess of the December total.
The demand for all varieties of goods going into new
buildings is reported active, particularly in the South,
where construction work has suffered little interrup-
tion during the winter months. Some improvement
over the preceding thirty days was noted in sales of
pole hardware and general supplies used by public
utility interests. The movement of supplies for mines
continues slow, but some betterment in the demand
from the oil fields has taken place since the first of the
year. The trend of prices was slightly easier, and as
compared with the same period a year ago the general
level of prices is from 5 to 10 per cent lower. In the
immediate past the upturn in copper, lead and slab zinc
has had a tendency to strengthen goods in the manu-
facture of which these metals are used.

**Fire-Clay Products**

A better tone has been in evidence during the
past thirty days, especially with reference to inquiries.
Glass producers have placed a considerable amount of
business and demand from the cement industry is
maintaining its recent rapid pace. Buying by the steel
industry is holding up well, while reduced operations
by some equipment manufacturers have prompted
ruling of furnaces. There has been good buying by
municipal plants, and several cities have sent out
inquiries on extensive vitrified projects. The value of
January shipments of the 5 reporting interests was
22.3 per cent under the total for the same month a
year ago, but new business booked by these firms dur-
ing the month exceeded that of January, 1923 by 16.6
per cent.

**Flour**

Production of the 11 leading mills of the district
during January was 306,012 barrels, the lightest since
last July, and comparing with 323,697 barrels in De-

cember, 404,824 barrels in November and 321,727 bar-
rels in January, 1923. In point of new business the
period under review was quiet, but shipping directions
were satisfactory, buyers generally ordering out flour
previously engaged. Trade in the South was relatively
better than elsewhere, the call from that section being
for soft wheat flours. Toward the end of January a
slight advance in prices was noted, the rise reflecting
the upturn in wheat values. The usual routine export
business with Latin-American countries continued,
but the demand from Europe was extremely slow, with
bids below asking prices of local millers. Mill opera-
tion was at from 60 to 65 per cent of full capacity.

**Furniture**

Sales of the 26 reporting interests showed a
decrease of 28.7 per cent under the same month last
year and a loss of 47.2 per cent as compared with
December, 1923. The general comment is made that
retailers are purchasing almost exclusively on a neces-
sity basis, the percentage of future business to total
sales being the smallest for this particular season in
a number of years. Uncertainty relative to prices and
styles is mentioned as a factor in holding down forward
commitments. Some improvement is reported in the
demand for metal beds, but the general run of
bedroom and dining room furniture is slow. Prices
of finished goods showed no change during the period
under review, but generally through the line prices
range from 10 to 15 per cent lower than at this time
last year. Factory operation ranged from 40 to 80 per
cent of capacity.

**Groceries**

Bad roads and the consequent difficulty salesmen
have in covering territory has had its effect on buying
by country stores, while this same condition has pre-
vented many who live in rural sections from making
purchases from retailers. Low prices of farm products
is mentioned as a retarding factor. Withal both sales
and prices have held up well. The entire list is firm
to higher, due largely to upward tendencies in sugar
and coffee. Purchases of sugar have been only fair
in the face of its continued strength, merchants being
disposed to carry light stocks in preference to taking
inventory losses. Gross movement of sugar into consumers' hands, however, is slightly above nor-
mal for this season. Coffee, from the cheapest to the
choice grades, is slightly higher, with sales normal.
Demand for canned goods shows seasonal improve-
ment. Stocks throughout the line continue moderate,
though merchants are keeping up assortments. Janu-
ary sales of 23 reporting interests were 6.4 per cent
above those of the same month a year ago and only
0.1 per cent under the December total.
Hardware

Rather spotted conditions were reflected in reports covering business during the period under review. In some localities sales were well up to expectations, while elsewhere results were poor. The demand for builders' tools and hardware continued active, and there was a fair movement of shelf hardware and household goods generally. Hardware inventories and farm supplies on the other hand, were reported slow, farmers buying only what they are obliged to have. While stocks are generally of moderate proportions, jobbers and retail merchants are ordering on a very conservative basis. Orders placed for spring and summer sporting goods are smaller than a year ago. A excellent demand is reported for all varieties of spraying apparatus. January sales of the 12 reporting interests were 8.5 per cent under those of the same month last year and 12.4 per cent in excess of the December total. Prices on nearly all items are holding steady at about the levels current during the opening month of 1923.

Iron and Steel Products

While total volume of new orders for finished and semi-finished materials was hardly up to expectations of certain reporting interests, a fairly steady day-to-day movement has been in progress, and inquiries received by mills, foundries and machine shops indicate that substantial tonnages may be placed in the near future. Production during the period under review was well maintained, and shipments were somewhat larger than during the preceding thirty days. After a seven months decline, the production of pig iron for the country as a whole took a turn upward in January, the total output being about 100,000 tons larger than in December. Production of steel ingots in January also showed an increase, and was the largest since last August. Fabricators of structural iron and steel in this district report an excellent volume of orders for small jobs, and a number of large contracts are being figured on. Warehouse interests have increased their stocks and assortments in anticipation of the demand which they believe will appear with the opening of the spring building season. Stove plants, which were closed down earlier in the year for repairs and inventory, have all resumed production, and manufacturers of radiators and heating apparatus continue to operate at full capacity. Purchasing of track materials by the railroads has been on a large scale, and further improvement was noted in the demand for all varieties of drilling and general iron and steel supplies from the oil fields. Gradual improvement is noted in wire and wire products, and the same is true of the general run of rolling mill products. Sales of pig iron have been fairly heavy, due chiefly to covering by foundry interests on their second quarter requirements. The trend of prices of raw materials is upward, No. 2 Southern foundry iron being firm at $23, and No. 2 Northern iron of the same grade ranging from $24 to $24.50 per ton. Further advances were recorded in scrap iron and steel prices, with steel and cast grades going to new high points on the movement. January also showed an increase, and was the largest since January, 1923, and 63.7 per cent over December; manufacturers of boilers, stacks, elevators, radiators, and other miscellaneous products, 12 reporting, decreased 11 per cent under January, 1923, and 27.6 per cent under December.

Lumber

During the sixty-day period ended January 15, retail yards throughout the district bought sufficient lumber for early spring requirements, and since that time have been virtually out of the market at the advanced and very firm market prices. They are waiting for the arrival of favorable weather to start building work, so that they may put their own price increases, based on higher replacement costs, to the acceptance test. The belief prevails that large requirements for the second quarter still remain to be filled, and considerable supplementary buying is expected to follow the first protracted spell of favorable building weather, even should the mills be able to maintain the present level of prices in the meantime. Transit car prices, however, have been unable to endure the strain and have weakened to some extent, and stock unmatted before being put on wheels is hard to sell even at a narrow margin over November prices. The hardwood trade, on the other hand, continues active, and the price tendency is still upward in the more salable kinds and grades of stock, such as sap and plain red gum, the lower grades of plain oak, cottonwood and some of the minor woods. Buying by the automotive interests and car builders is an important factor in the situation.

Consumption of Electricity

Considerable variation is noted in January figures of reporting centers, but increases and declines balance in number, resulting in only minor net changes. The increases over December are largely accounted for by the passing of the holiday season, but the decreases under January, 1923, represent specific cuttings. The most important changes for January, 1924, as compared with the same month a year ago are substantial reductions in delivery to several large air products companies, steel companies and to automotive manufacturers. Detailed figures follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of custom-</th>
<th>Jan. 1924</th>
<th>Dec. 1923</th>
<th>Jan. 1924 comp. to Dec. 1923</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ers</td>
<td><em>K.W.H.</em></td>
<td><em>K.W.H.</em></td>
<td><em>K.W.H.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evansville</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Rock</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1,466</td>
<td>1,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11,173</td>
<td>10,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>219</th>
<th>17,860</th>
<th>17,414</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**RETAIL**

Reports from retailers throughout the district reflect a continuation of the spotted conditions which have prevailed during the past several months. An encouraging feature has been the heavy turnover resulting from clearance sales, particularly in the category of textiles and apparel of all sorts. The recent decline in the price of raw cotton has quickened interest on goods based on that staple, and in the immediate past there has been notable marking down of print cloths, sheetings, ginghams and some other cloths. Further stabilization in prices of other lines, notably hardware, furniture and groceries, is mentioned as a factor tending to help the volume of retail trade. The principal adverse factor was the weather, storms and thaws having placed roads in many sections in almost impassable condition. This accounts for the relatively more active status of retail trade in the cities than in

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Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
the country, but increased production in certain basic industries has stimulated distribution in manufacturing centers. The comment is made that interest in dry goods, apparel, jewelry and furniture centers strongly in novelties, to the detriment of certain staple merchandise in these lines. Sales of gasoline and lubricating oils have been curtailed by the inclement weather, particularly in the rural areas. Purchasing of supplies for farms, except in the extreme southern tier of the district, is backward.

January sales of 3 interests operating 1,482 chain grocery stores show a 14.3 per cent increase over the same month a year ago. January reports from the 22 large department stores, while not uniformly encouraging, show a healthy demand, but with 8 of the reporting stores registering decreases under the same month a year ago. Detailed department store figures follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evansville</td>
<td>+ 9.3%</td>
<td>+ 7.6%</td>
<td>+ 17.1%</td>
<td>+ 1.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Rock</td>
<td>+ 1.9</td>
<td>+ 1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>— 5.7</td>
<td>— 4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>— 5.0</td>
<td>— 2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>+ 7.3</td>
<td>— 3.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th District</td>
<td>+ 4.1</td>
<td>— 2.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WAGE RATES

The average wage rate for male factory operatives in the Eighth District, according to figures compiled by this bank, continued during February at about the level reached last April, following an almost continuous advance since February, 1922. During 1923 the average rose 7 per cent, and the present figure of $26.89 per week is within 10 per cent of the 1920 peak.

Per capita weekly earnings of office workers, computed as $32.06, show an increase of 2.7 per cent during 1923 and are now slightly above the 1920 high, but just about on a parity with the cost of living.

![Average Earnings Compared With Cost of Living](image)

AGRICULTURE

Reports from scattered sections of the district indicate that winter wheat has come through the cold weather in good condition, there being few complaints of winter killing and these confined chiefly to late sown grain. Some little damage has been done by alternate freezing and thawing, the extent of which it is too early to determine. There was snow protection over the greater part of the wheat area, and early planted wheat is well rooted and has had ample moisture since the seeding period.

While farmers in surplus counties are selling more corn since the advance in prices, there is no disposition to rush stocks of this grain to market because of the fact that the high moisture content prevents a large percentage from grading high. The comment is made that arrivals at primary markets include very little choice corn, considerably less than usual grading above No. 3. Farmers are feeding large quantities of corn, despite the fact that the high price of corn and depressed market on hogs are holding down profits in such operations.

In the South some plowing has been accomplished, but as a rule early farm work is backward because of the unfavorable weather. Generally the condition of live stock is good. The movement of potatoes and other vegetables was interfered with to some extent by the extreme cold weather.

The delivery of tobacco to market in some sections has been hampered by the bad condition of roads caused by snows and freezing and thawing. Weather has also been unfavorable for stripping and preparing the leaf for market. The Dark Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association opened its receiving houses in the dark fired district with only fair delivery. Not more than 30 per cent of the pooled tobacco has been delivered in that district. Demand continues for the extremes in quality, best grades of leaf, common lugs and trash selling readily at satisfactory prices.

The tendency is toward higher prices in both burley and dark tobacco. Recent sales on independent floors averaged around $24 for burley and $12.50 for dark tobacco. Both the Burley and Dark Tobacco Growers Cooperative Associations are reporting sales at good prices, the Burley Association having disposed recently of 60,000,000 pounds of the 1923 crop and 20,000,000 pounds of the 1922 crop, leaving unsold only about 17,000,00 of the 1922 crop, which consists largely of high grade leaf. The associations are functioning satisfactorily, and recent court decisions have removed doubts as to the validity of contracts made by growers who have pooled their tobacco. Membership in the Burley Association has passed the 100,000 mark.

The rice situation has undergone no change worthy of note during the past thirty days. There was an advance in rough rice which brought the price up to $1.30 for strictly No. 1, but the prevailing price for average grades has been around $1.15 to $1.25. Farmers are selling and delivering as rapidly as weather and road conditions will permit. The demand is excellent and should it continue for another month, very little rice will be left in producers' hands. Some few farmers still have small patches of rice in the field yet unthreshed, but the quantity is small, estimated at less than 5 per cent of the 1923 crop.

In spite of much bad weather, there has been considerable preparation for next season's cotton crop. Reports from scattered sections of the cotton area indicate that planters will practice intensive farming, with the view of producing as large a crop as possible on the acreage planted. Fertilizers will be extensively used, also poisons for combating boll weevil and other insect pests. Southern farmers are being urged to diversify, and particularly to plant more food and feed crops.

Results of the annual survey of live stock on farms in states of this district disclose reductions in the number of animals and a sharp decrease in total value represented on January 1 as compared with the corresponding date in 1923. Missouri farmers had a total of 9,754,000 head of live stock on January 1, compared...
with 9,826,000 head last year, and the value this year was $208,047,000 against $215,047,000 last year. 

In Illinois there was a slight increase in numbers, 10,004,000 head, against 9,998,000 head on January 1, 1923, but the value this year was $269,852,000 as compared with $285,088,000 last year. The count in Kentucky showed 3,442,000 head worth $81,340,000, which compares with 3,601,000 head with a value of $94,207,000 on January 1, 1923. Indiana showed an increase in the number of sheep and mules, the total number on January 1 being 12 per cent less than in 1914. In Arkansas all classes of live stock, except sheep decreased in numbers and the value of all animals was $49,440,600 as compared with $60,662,400 on January 1, 1923. Explaining the decreases in numbers and value of live stock, agricultural officials in the several states point out that low prices have discouraged stock raisers, and failure of crops in many sections has forced the liquidation of farm animals, not only to defray debts, but to reduce expenses. Many other contributing causes are mentioned, among which are drought, sheep-killing dogs, hog cholera, slack demand for draft animals due to increased use of automobiles and tractors, and high cost of feed.

### Live Stock Movement

Receipts and shipments of live stock at St. Louis, as reported by the National Stock Yards, were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Receipts</th>
<th>Shipments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef, live...........</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork, live...........</td>
<td>4,626</td>
<td>4,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour, bbls........</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hides, lbs...........</td>
<td>16,704</td>
<td>16,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses and Mules.....</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep................</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In thousands (000 omitted).

### Commodity Movement

Receipts and shipments of important commodities at St. Louis, as reported by the Merchants' Exchange, were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Receipts</th>
<th>Shipments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef, live...........</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep................</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In thousands (000 omitted).

### Commodity Prices

Range of prices on typical products in the St. Louis market between January 15, 1924, and February 15, 1924, with closing quotations on the latter date, and on February 15, 1923:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat................</td>
<td>$1.1354</td>
<td>$1.0854</td>
<td>$1.0958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn..................</td>
<td>$0.8254</td>
<td>$0.7949</td>
<td>$0.8170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2 red winter.....</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>$1.16 @ 1.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2 hard...........</td>
<td>1.145</td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>1.105 @ 1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 1 white...........</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.7857 @ 0.7955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats................</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour................</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>0.487</td>
<td>0.495 @ .50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean meal........</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley..............</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.315 @ 0.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat..............</td>
<td>0.425</td>
<td>0.400</td>
<td>0.415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BUILDING

Permits for new buildings in the five largest cities of the district during January showed a slight decrease under the corresponding month in 1923, but a gain of 38.2 per cent in number and 170.3 per cent in amount as compared with January, 1922. Low temperatures and storms interfered somewhat with construction operations during the period under review, but despite this handicap more than the usual amount of work for this season of the year was accomplished. Residential construction continues to feature new building enterprises particularly in the South. Building in the suburbs of the larger cities is on an extensive scale, and according to building material interests, farmers are planning to make more repairs and additions to their buildings during the coming spring than at any time during the past three years. Road work showed the usual seasonal slowing down, but will be resumed on a large scale as soon as weather conditions permit. No changes worthy of note took place in prices of building materials or wages, the latter holding firm at the peak levels of last fall. Production of Portland cement for the country as a whole totaled 8,788,000 barrels in January, which compares with 9,997,000 barrels in December and 7,990,000 barrels in January, 1923. Building figures for January follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Permits</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Permits</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New construction</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evansville 43 71 $82 $194</td>
<td>27 46 $12 $14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Rock 88 84 407 248</td>
<td>73 89 $36 $37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville 185 347 815 3,404</td>
<td>53 76 $34 $61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis 274 343 1,826 1,386</td>
<td>54 51 $34 $36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis 397 555 3,317 2,218</td>
<td>329 482 $264 $342</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jan. totals 987 1,390 6,147 7,450 $54 745 $380 $485
Dec. totals 1,015 918 6,305 9,267 $54 735 $390 $847
Nov. totals 1,092 1,266 6,384 5,380 $344 792 $547 433

*In thousands of dollars (000 omitted).

### FINANCIAL

Influences affecting the banking and financial situation during the period under review were virtually the same as during the preceding thirty days, and only minor changes occurred in this district. The demand for credits from commercial sources continues good, though somewhat spotted, but with loanable resources of the banks large, the trend of rates was slightly easier. A moderate volume of liquidation was reported, with settlements in the tobacco sections making a particularly favorable showing in this respect. Marketing of tobacco in all districts is making satisfactory progress, the demand being good and prices well up to expectations. Relatively little rice still remains in producers' hands, and loans based on that cereal have been substantially reduced. The increased movement of corn is reflected in heavier borrowings by shippers and the elevator interests, but these have been largely offset by payments which producers have been enabled to make with the proceeds of stocks sold. Millers, who had been carrying liberal stocks, have since February 1 received freer shipping directions and been able to cut down their banking commitments. Generally agricultural borrowings continue to decline as live stock and last season's crops move to market, and except in the South borrowings for the present crop year are still somewhat off. Deposits of reporting member banks showed a good increase. Stocks, bonds and other investments of the banks were virtually stationary. Between January 15 and February 15 accommodations granted by this bank to all member banks decreased $7,002,000. Between the same dates there was a decrease of $3,894,000 in Federal reserve note circulation of this bank.
Commercial Paper

Dull conditions featured the market for commercial paper during the greater part of the period under review. A reduction in rates served to reduce the demand from country banks, and city institutions with but few exceptions were finding ample outlet for their funds through regular line borrowers. Offerings at 4 1/2 per cent met with such indifferent response that paper bearing this rate was either withdrawn or the quotation advanced. Good to prime names bearing 3 1/4 per cent, however, found ready sale. January sales of reporting brokers were 8.8 per cent less than for the corresponding month in 1923, but 3.2 per cent in excess of December.

During the first two weeks of February, sales were about on a parity with the corresponding period last year. In the extremes, rates were quoted at from 4 1/2 to 5 per cent.

Savings Deposits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting banks</th>
<th>Feb. 6, 1924</th>
<th>Jan. 2, 1924</th>
<th>Feb. 7, 1924</th>
<th>Jan. 20, 1923 pumpo to</th>
<th>Jan. 20, 1923 pumpo to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evansville, Ind.</td>
<td>$135,023</td>
<td>$134,823</td>
<td>$125,229</td>
<td>+ 0.1</td>
<td>+ 7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In thousands (000 omitted).

Federal Reserve Operations

During January the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis discounted for 264 of its 629 member banks, which compares with 229 of its 630 member banks accommodated in December. The discount rate of this bank remains unchanged at 4 1/2% per cent for all classes and maturities of paper.

Changes in the assets and liabilities of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis since a month ago and last year are shown in the following statement:

**RESOURCES**

*Feb. 20, 1924* | *Jan. 23, 1924* | *Feb. 21, 1924*
---|---|---
Gold with Federal Reserve Agent | $69,304 | $62,872 | $58,095
Gold redemption fund with U. S. Treasury | 2,487 | 3,055 | 2,058
Gold held exclusively against F. R. notes | 71,791 | 65,927 | 84,153
Gold settlement fund with F. R. Board | 14,366 | 15,056 | 15,056
Gold in gold certificates held | 6,787 | 4,779 | 6,787
Total gold reserves | $90,744 | $94,658 | $99,024
Reserves other than gold | 13,732 | 13,569 | 18,714
Total reserves | $104,476 | $108,227 | $117,738
Non reserve cash | 4,639 | 5,140 | 4,145
Bills discounted | 109,437 | 113,087 | 113,087
Secured by U. S. Government obligations | 10,883 | 14,680 | 8,431
Other bills discounted | 27,357 | 26,649 | 7,765
Total bills discounted | $136,240 | $139,426 | $120,852
Bills bought in open market | 2,740 | 655 | 920
U. S. Government securities | | | |
Bonds | 2,713 | 10,923 |
Treasury notes | 1,514 | 760 | 10,923
Certificates of indebtedness | 893 | 766 | 10,736
Total U. S. Government securities | $2,407 | $2,526 | $28,992
Total earning assets | $43,387 | $43,510 | $54,190
Uncollectable items | 43,720 | 12,573 | 54,190
Bank premises | 1,493 | 1,493 | 909
All other resources | 188 | 81 | 538
TOTAL RESOURCES | $189,413 | $191,020 | $214,439

**LIABILITIES**

F. R. notes in actual circulation | $69,223 | $70,850 | $68,594
Deposits | | | |
Member banks-reserve account | 69,815 | 69,281 | 72,681
U. S. Government | 1,899 | 2,238 | 3,696
Other deposits | 557 | 557 | 597
Total deposits | $72,088 | $72,576 | $76,970
Deficiency in available items | 11,389 | 11,289 | 11,289
Capital paid in | 7,055 | 7,003 | 7,003
Surplus | 10,972 | 10,972 | 9,665
All other liabilities | 576 | 577 | 721
TOTAL LIABILITIES | $189,413 | $191,020 | $214,439

MEMO—Contingent liability on bills purchased for foreign correspondents | 825 | 748 | 1,404
Ratio of total reserves to deposit and F. R. note liabilities combined | 73.9% | 75.5% | 72.0%

*In thousands (000 omitted).

Debits to Individual Accounts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount of commercial paper</td>
<td>$38,814</td>
<td>$40,021</td>
<td>$40,021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In thousands (000 omitted).

Condition of Banks

Changes in the condition of banks in this district are reflected in the following statement showing the principal resources and liabilities of reporting member banks in Evansville, Little Rock, Louisville, Memphis and St. Louis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of banks reporting</th>
<th>Jan. 16, 1924</th>
<th>Feb. 14, 1924</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loans and discounts (incl. rediscounts)</td>
<td>$9,279</td>
<td>$11,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secured by U. S. obligations</td>
<td>14,991</td>
<td>14,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
<td>25,146</td>
<td>25,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury bonds</td>
<td>6,824</td>
<td>7,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory and Treasury notes</td>
<td>16,714</td>
<td>17,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates of Indebtedness</td>
<td>7,461</td>
<td>8,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other securities</td>
<td>89,584</td>
<td>86,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total investments</td>
<td>$158,538</td>
<td>$158,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash in vault with F. R. banks</td>
<td>4,698</td>
<td>4,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net demand deposits</td>
<td>364,079</td>
<td>384,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government deposits</td>
<td>4,186</td>
<td>4,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills payable and rediscounted with Federal reserve bank</td>
<td>2,227</td>
<td>2,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other resources</td>
<td>14,108</td>
<td>19,039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In thousands (000 omitted).

COST OF LIVING

Cost of living in the United States on January 15, 1924 had decreased two-tenths of one per cent from the level of December 15, 1923 according to the National Industrial Conference Board. In the month from December 15, 1923 to January 15, 1924 there was an increase in the cost of clothing and decreases for fuel and food. These changes were each less than one per cent. Between July, 1920, when the peak in the cost of living since 1914 was reached, and January, 1924, the cost of living decreased 19.5 per cent. The increase since July, 1914 was 64.6 per cent.

Detailed changes are shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Relative importance above average prices for July, 1914 to June, 1923, from average prices in family budget in</th>
<th>July, 1914 to June, 1923, from average prices in July, 1924</th>
<th>Percentage of increase in the cost of living in January, 1924 over the preceding year</th>
<th>Percentage of decrease in the cost of living in January, 1924 over the preceding year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food*</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>-1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel and Light</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fuel)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>-25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Light)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>-25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>-55.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Increase.

The purchasing value of the dollar based on the cost of living in January, 1924 was 60.8 cents as contrasted with one dollar in July, 1914.

(Compiled February 21, 1924)
BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Production

The Federal Reserve Board's index of production in basic industries increased 8 per cent in January and was at approximately the same level as a year ago. This increase followed a downward movement which had been under way since May, 1923. The increases over December, which occurred in most industries, were particularly large in the production of steel ingots, lumber and bituminous coal and in mill consumption of cotton.

A small but general reduction of working forces at industrial establishments resulted in a slight decline in the index of factory employment. The largest decreases occurred at plants manufacturing food products and tobacco.

Contract awards for new buildings in January were slightly higher in value than in December and were 26 per cent above a year ago.

Index of 22 basic commodities corrected for seasonal variation. Latest figure, January = 120.

Trade

Railroad shipments, particularly of miscellaneous merchandise, increased during January, and total car loadings were somewhat above the high level of January, 1923.

The index of wholesale trade increased 11 per cent during January and was slightly higher than a year ago. Sales of groceries, meat and drugs were larger than in January, 1923, while sales of dry goods and shoes were smaller.

Retail trade in January showed the usual seasonal decline. Compared with a year ago, department store sales were 7 per cent larger, and stocks of merchandise at these stores, after declining in January, were 6 per cent above last year's level.

Sales of mail order houses in January exceeded those of a year ago by 11 per cent.

Price

The wholesale price index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics remained unchanged during January and was at a level 3 per cent lower than a year ago.


Bank Credit

The volume of borrowing for commercial purposes at member banks in leading cities, after an almost continuous decline for more than three months, increased considerably during the latter part of January and the first two weeks in February. This increase was accompanied by a decline in loans secured by stocks and bonds.

Weekly figures for member banks in 101 leading cities. Latest figure, February 13.

Total loans and investments of the reporting banks are now slightly larger than a year ago. Commercial loans and loans on stocks and bonds are larger, but investments are smaller.

At the Federal reserve banks the total volume of earning assets fluctuated within narrow limits during February. The large return flow of currency and the repayment of discounts, which characterized the early weeks of the year, did not continue after January.

Since the first week in February the volume of discounts for member banks has been about $500,000,000 and the holdings of securities purchased in the open market about $400,000,000.

The easier money conditions of January were followed in February by slightly firmer rates of acceptances and on short term government securities. Commercial paper rates in the New York market remained unchanged at 4½ per cent.