



SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS WEEKLY SUPPLEMENT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE



WASHINGTON, D. C., DECEMBER 14, 1939

SUMMARY OF BUSINESS TRENDS

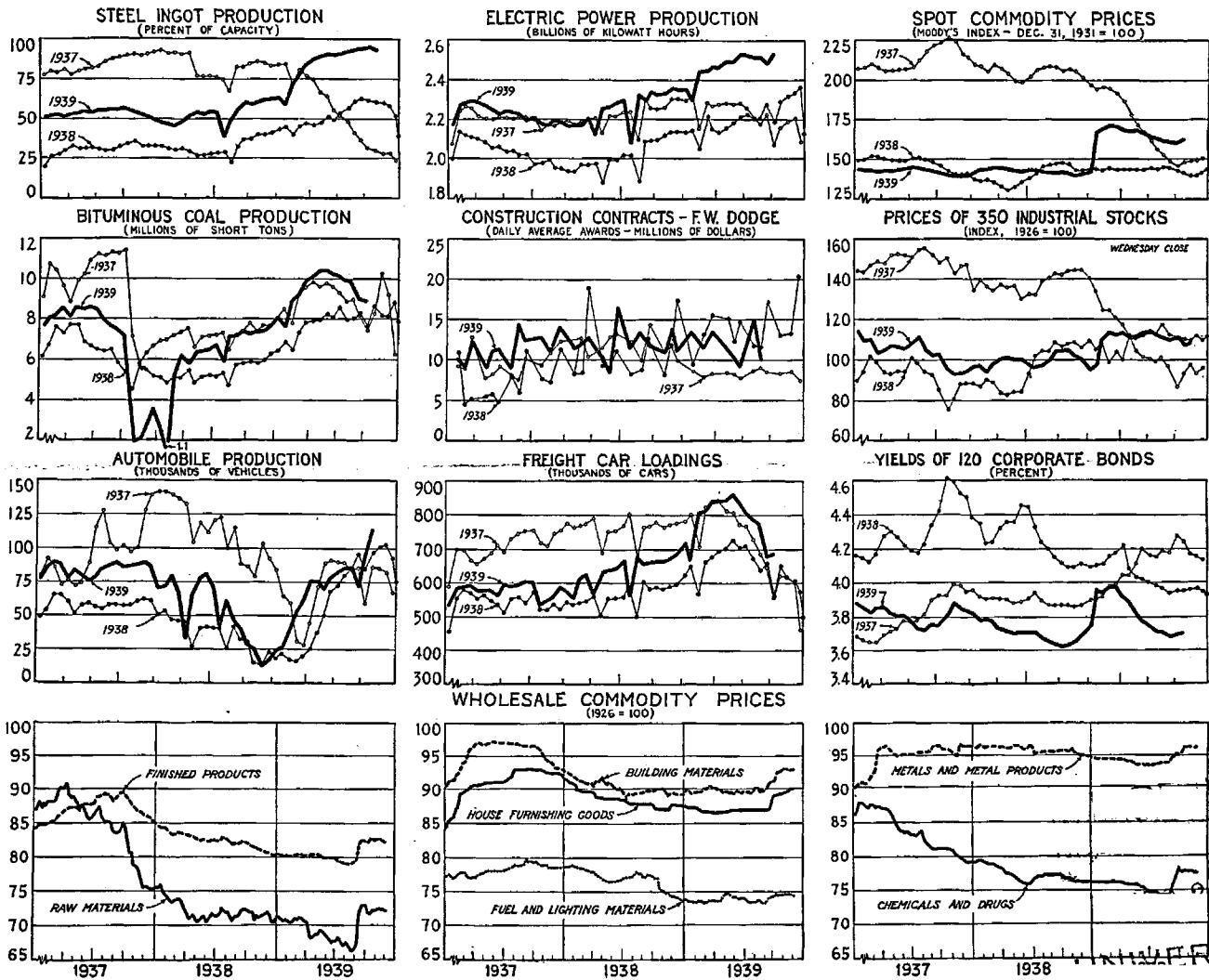
THE marked rise of income payments to individuals since August, resulting from expanded industrial activity and higher farm prices, was reflected in increased consumer purchasing during November. Retail trade expanded more than seasonally in November and volumes in all major lines were well ahead of a year ago. The adjusted index of department store sales reached 94 (1923-25=100), a gain of 4 points over October, and only 1 point below the peak in 1937. As prices are somewhat lower now than in 1937, the indicated volume of department store sales is correspondingly larger at this time. Variety store sales also increased more than seasonally in November and showed the same gain over a year ago as department store sales, roughly 6 percent. Retail sales of automobiles increased sharply in November as the new models became available in large volume. Retail deliveries of the industry, apart from the company whose plants were shut down, were larger than in any month of the past 2 years.

Industrial production, according to the Federal Reserve adjusted index, recorded another sizable increase in November to 125 (1923-25=100), a gain of 5 points over October. The index was as high as the 1929 peak, owing in part to the high

level of steel ingot production. Two changes in productive activity have been reported thus far in December. Steel ingot output has declined from the record level at the end of November of 94.4 percent of capacity to 92.8 percent for the week ended December 9 and a further reduction to 91.2 is scheduled for this week. Automobile assemblies were increased to 115,500 units last week as Chrysler plants swung into production—the preceding week's figure was 93,600 units.

Wheat prices, partly influenced by reports of severe droughts in the winter wheat belt, have increased sharply over the past fortnight. The May future closing at 95 cents per bushel on Saturday was up 9 cents over this period and 5 cents above the recent high in September. Cotton prices have also advanced considerably; the average price in 10 spot markets was 10.18 cents per pound on Saturday compared with 9.34 cents 2 weeks earlier. Aside from these changes and continued weakness in hog quotations, prices of farm products generally have held steady. Wholesale food prices have declined somewhat further. Industrial commodities on the average have shown little change though there have been declines in such items as steel scrap and zinc.

SELECTED BUSINESS INDICATORS



WEEKLY BUSINESS INDICATORS*

[Weekly average, 1923-25=100]

Table with columns for ITEM, 1939, 1938, 1937 and sub-columns for Dec 9, Dec 2, Nov 25, Nov 18, Nov 11, Dec 10, Dec 3, Dec 11, Dec 4. Rows include Business activity, Commodity prices, Construction contracts, Finance, and Production categories.

*Data do not cover calendar weeks in all cases. †Computed normal=100. ‡Daily average. §Weekly average, 1923-30=100. ¶Seasonally adjusted. @Index for week ended Dec. 16 is 166.7. ††For description of these indexes, see p. 4 of the Dec. 16, 1937 issue.

WEEKLY BUSINESS STATISTICS*

Table with columns for ITEM, 1939, 1938, 1937, 1936 and sub-columns for Dec 9, Dec 2, Nov 25, Nov 18, Nov 11, Nov 4, Dec 10, Dec 3, Dec 11, Dec 4, Dec 12. Rows include Commodity Prices, Finance, Production, Construction, and Distribution categories.

@Rate for week ended Dec. 16 is 91.2. †Daily average. *Data do not cover calendar weeks in all cases. §No longer strictly comparable; for an explanation, see the corresponding data on p. 30 of the July 1939 issue of the SURVEY. ††SOURCE: Ward's Automotive Reports.

