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INDEXES OF RETAIL SALES IN FEBRUARY

Retail sales continued at a high level in February when consumer expenditures for merchandise were ten per cent greater than in February, 1946, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. The average gain in sales for the first two months of this year over last amounted to 11 per cent, January results having shown an increase of 13 per cent. These increases are in terms of dollar sales without allowance for price changes. The Bureau's retail price indexes indicate that prices were approximately nine per cent higher in the early months of this year compared with last. This suggests little change in the physical quantities of goods marketed in retail establishments between the first two months of 1946 and 1947. Unadjusted indexes of sales, on the base, 1935-1939=100, stood at 183.3 for February, 1947, 167.1 for February, 1946 and 181.1 for January, 1947.

The adjusted index of retail sales, in moving from 220.2 in January, 1947 to 233.6 in February of this year, was established at the highest peak yet attained. All groups, with the exception of drugs, furniture and jewellery stores, showed an upward movement in the adjusted index between January and February. Differences in numbers of business days and normal seasonal variations are taken into account in arriving at these results.

A flurry of buying activity in the various apparel trades which featured the January business was revealed as a temporary condition. February sales increases for these stores were of more moderate proportions. Jewellery store sales dipped sharply in February compared with the same month a year ago. Increases in sales for other types of retail outlets, while they varied widely in extent, were nevertheless fairly consistent with the characteristic pattern in recent months.

Sales volume increased in all five economic regions of the country, but the upward trend was more pronounced in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia than in the Prairie Provinces and the Maritime Provinces.

In the Maritime Provinces, sales for many trades, particularly those dealing in durable goods, marked up gains which compared favourably with increases elsewhere. The 13 per cent increase in sales of shoe stores was also quite impressive. However, sharp declines in certain specialty establishments, notably restaurants and men's wear shops, together with a moderation in the sales expansion of department stores in that part of the country, had the effect of reducing the average gain to three per cent.

There was a very marked disturbance to the recent pattern of sales movements in the Prairie Provinces. Department stores, food stores, and radio and electrical stores maintained strong increases which contrasted with declines in certain of the apparel trades and even in some of the durable goods stores such as hardware and furniture.

Chain candy stores reported an increase of ten per cent in sales for February, 1947 over the same month a year ago, and were up by the same amount in the January-February comparison. Sales of furriers increased 16 per cent in February, 1947 over February, 1946.

The review of sales by departments reveals that durables continue to show more prominent gains than non-durables. The gain in sales of ladies' apparel departments was reduced from 25 per cent in January to 14 per cent in February, and there was a corresponding reduction in the extent of the increase for footwear. Sales of piece goods and smallwares departments were substantially higher in February this year than last, increases being in the vicinity of 19 per cent in each case.

WHOLESALE SALES ADVANCED 11 PER CENT DURING FEBRUARY

Wholesale sales in Canada in February advanced 11 per cent in dollar volume over those for February 1946, but dropped slightly from the January level, according to statements received by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics from wholesalers representing nine lines of trade. The general unadjusted index for Canada, on the base, average for 1935-1939=100, stood at 232.5 for February this year, 210.4 for February 1946, and 237.5 for January, 1947.

Wholesalers' stocks were valued 29 per cent higher at the end of February, 1947, than at the same date last year. Increases were reported for all trades coming within the scope of the survey. Clothing and dry goods continued to record the largest increases over last year, at 52 per cent and 42 per cent respectively. Wholesale grocers' stocks were valued 41 per cent higher than at February 28, 1946, while the value of stocks on hand in the wholesale footwear trade was up 31 per cent. Other increases were as follows: automotive equipment, 27 per cent; hardware, 23 per cent; fruits and vegetables, 15 per cent; tobacco and confectionery, 14 per cent; and drugs, 10 per cent.

Among the individual trades, footwear continued to show the largest increase in dollar volume of sales over last year with a gain of 26 per cent. Dry goods and clothing, which reported less substantial gains over last year in the month of January than in preceding months, registered increases of 20 per cent and 18 per cent respectively over the February, 1946 dollar volume. Sales of wholesale grocers were 16 per cent above last February's level, while increases in other trades amounted to 14 per cent for hardware, 12 per cent for automotive equipment, and eight per cent for tobacco and confectionery. Drug wholesalers reported their sales volume to be three per cent below that for February last year, while wholesale dealers in fruits and vegetables indicated a drop of eight per cent in the dollar volume of their sales.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN FEBRUARY

Industrial production in Canada showed further expansion, allowing for seasonal adjustment, during the second month of the year, the index based on four main branches of commodity production rising from 187.5 in January to 190.8, an increase of 1.8 per cent. Productive activity in mining, manufacturing and construction recorded further increases, while the output of electric power was at a somewhat lower position, the latter index receding one point to 172.5.

Output of the mining industry was greater in February than in the same month of any other year except during the war period from 1942 to 1944. The increase in the index over January was 4.6 per cent. Gold receipts at the Mint were 213,245 fine ounces against 267,502 in January, however, and coal production was at a considerably lower level at 1,135,000 tons against 1,699,000.

The index of manufacturing production recorded a gain of nearly one point to 197.6. The raw cotton consumed by the textile industry rose from 11.9 million pounds to 13.3 million. The index of operations in the forestry industry rose about four points to 164. Output of newsprint was 341,368 tons compared with 370,000, and the exports of planks and boards and shingles were somewhat greater in February than in the preceding month.

On the other hand, the flour-milling industry was less active in the second than the first month of the year even after allowing for seasonal adjustment. Cigarettes released from bond numbered 1,209 million compared with 1,247 million, and the tobacco index dropped about six points to 250.7. Declines were shown in the operations of the meat-packing and dairy industries. The exports of canned salmon were at a higher level. The operations of the primary iron and steel industry showed recession in February even after seasonal adjustment.

New business obtained by the construction industry recorded a considerable increase in February, and building permits in 58 cities were at a slightly higher position.

As a decline was shown in the index of distribution based on railway traffic, external and internal trade, the index of the physical volume of business registered a decline of 3.2 per cent to 187.9.

WORLD PRICE MOVEMENTS IN SECOND HALF OF 1946

Commodity wholesale price levels continued to rise throughout the world during the second half of last year, states the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in its semi-annual review of world price movements, but increases were of widely differing amounts and there was no indication of any world-wide acceleration in commodity market advances as the year progressed. Increases in commodity wholesale price index numbers during the year ranged from one per cent to as much as 67 per cent.

Between June and December, the United States Bureau of Labor wholesale index rose by 24.8 per cent. Farm products prices rose 20 per cent and prices of other commodities 26.3 per cent. In Canada, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics index showed a June-December rise of 2.5 per cent.

In the United Kingdom the rising cost of imported raw materials had a marked effect on price levels and wholesale prices showed greater activity than in any year since 1940, when price regulations went into effect. Industrial materials and manufactures rose 6.5 per cent between June and December, while the food group, including commodities still heavily subsidized, declined 1.4 per cent; the general wholesale index rising 3.7 per cent. Among European countries, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland showed a resumption of upward movements which had been interrupted by declines in 1945 and the first half of 1946, but price levels for these countries, with the exception of Denmark, were still below the levels prevailing at V-J Day.

Among cost-of-living series in the period under review, the United States consumers' price index recorded a gain of 15 per cent, which brought the December index 2.6 per cent above June, 1920, the peak following World War I. Series for Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom showed small increases, in no case exceeding three per cent. The Swiss index reached a new level in November, slightly above the previous high at V-J Day, and the index of retail food prices in Paris rose 49.2 per cent between June and December.

TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Dollar volume of wholesale grocers' sales in February was 16 per cent in advance of February 1946, but declined six per cent below the January 1947 level, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Sales of wholesale dealers in fruits and vegetables continued below last year's dollar volume, the decline being eight per cent; sales, however, were three per cent higher than in the preceding month.

February sales of chain store units in the food retailing field were 15 per cent higher than in the corresponding month of last year, with all regions of the country participating in the advance. Independent stores did seven per cent more business during the month, gains ranging from three per cent for the Maritimes to 11 per cent for Alberta.

Stocks on hand at the end of February in the wholesale grocery trade were valued at 41 per cent higher than at the same date last year and were only two per cent lower than at the end of January. Inventories at the beginning of February are normally 66 per cent in excess of sales during that month. Stocks at the beginning of February this year were 42 per cent in excess of sales.

FREIGHT TRAFFIC ON CANADIAN RAILWAYS

Canadian railways carried 11,412,881 tons of revenue freight during December as compared with 10,793,680 tons in the corresponding month of 1945, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Loadings increased from 7,633,829 tons in 1945 to 8,096,177 tons, imports declined from 1,651,952 to 1,618,662 tons, and freight between foreign stations increased from 1,507,899 to 1,698,042 tons. Total freight carried during the year amounted to 138,526,856 tons, a decrease of 5.7 per cent from the 1945 total of 146,952,096 tons.

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES

Registrations of births in cities, towns and villages with a population of 10,000 and over again showed a sharp advance in February over the corresponding month last year, numbering 14,045 as compared with 10,697, an increase of 31 per cent, according to figures compiled by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Deaths decreased five per cent, numbering 4,939 as against 5,186, and marriages were three per cent lower at 3,979 as compared with 4,089 in February last year.

EMPLOYMENT AND PAYROLLS AT FEBRUARY 1

Industrial employment showed a small increase at the beginning of February, representing partial recovery from the year-end losses indicated at January 1, 1947, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics monthly survey of employment and payrolls. The 17,266 firms in the eight leading industries furnishing data had a combined working force of 1,859,719 persons as compared with 1,858,314 a month earlier. This was a gain of 1,405 persons or one-tenth of one per cent. The improvement, though slight, compared favourably with the general decline noted at February 1 in 1946 and immediately preceding years. Prior to the war, however, employment had frequently though not invariably shown an upward movement at the first of February.

Weekly salaries and wages distributed at February 1 by the co-operating establishments in the eight leading industries totalled $64,984,768, a sum which exceeded by 7.1 per cent, the disbursements of $60,657,630 reported at January 1 for the holiday week. The latest average earnings were $34.94; as compared with $32.64 at January 1, there was a rise of $2.30, a sum which did not greatly differ from the advance of $2.05 indicated at February 1, 1946. The average then, however, was decidedly lower, standing at $31.97.

The index number of employment, based on the 1926 average as 100, showed a minor gain, rising from 181.0 at the first of January, 1947, to 181.1 at February 1, when it was 8.3 per cent above that of 167.2 at the same date a year ago. The seasonally-adjusted index, at 188.1, was unchanged from the January 1 level.

The resumption of work on a more usual scale following the interruption occasioned by the year-end holidays, together with the payment of higher wage-rates in some industries and establishments, resulted in a rise of 7.1 per cent in the amounts disbursed in weekly payrolls at the beginning of February. This percentage increase exceeded that of 5.9 per cent which had been indicated at February 1, 1946, over the preceding month.

Employment in manufacturing showed considerable recovery at the date under review, when the gain of some 17,560 persons, or 1.8 per cent from January 1, was not equal to the average increase at mid-winter in the years since 1920. On the other hand, the latest advance was larger than that at February 1 in the years 1943 to 1946. Improvement was reported in many branches of manufacturing, that in the textile and iron and steel divisions being most noteworthy. There were important seasonal losses in animal food processing, while activity in fur and chemical factories was also reduced.

Taken as a unit, the non-manufacturing industries showed curtailment which in many cases was seasonal in character. The largest reductions were those of 4,332 persons in construction, and 15,594 in trade, in each of which the percentage decline was below-average. The trend was also unfavourable in transportation, while heightened activity was indicated in logging, mining, communications and services.

SHIPMENTS OF PRIMARY IRON AND STEEL SHAPES HIGHER IN JANUARY

Shipments of primary shapes by Canadian steel mills during January advanced to 268,313 tons as compared with 228,981 tons in December and 246,547 tons in November and were also substantially above the total of 243,245 tons for January, 1946.

January shipments included 50,492 tons of semi-finished shapes, 15,613 tons of structurals, 18,163 tons of plates, 20,029 tons of rails, 54,505 tons of bars, 12,406 tons of pipes and tubes, 24,220 tons of wire rods, 21,903 tons of black sheets, 6,342 tons of galvanized sheets, 559 tons of tool steel, and 6,026 tons of castings.

SALES OF RADIO RECEIVING SETS IN JANUARY

With continued sharp gains in all provinces, sales of radio receiving sets in Canada in January totalled 66,041 sets, more than double the January 1946 total of 31,659, according to figures released by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Inventory figures show that 23,035 sets remained in the hands of producers at the end of the month.

Substantial gains were recorded in the imports and exports of radio receiving sets in January, exports showing the most pronounced expansion. During the month, 8,338 sets were exported, as against only one set in January 1946, and imports, 3,749 sets as against 391. There were 319,318 radio receiving tubes imported as against 104,687 a year ago.

Producers' sales of radio receiving sets in January were as follows by provinces, totals for January 1946 being in brackets: Maritimes, 5,511 (3,030) sets; Quebec, 12,643 (5,615); Ontario, 29,638 (13,767); Manitoba, 4,565 (2,432); Saskatchewan, 3,079 (1,546); Alberta, 4,456 (1,994); British Columbia, 6,149 (3,275).

PRODUCTION OF AUTOMOBILES HIGHER IN FEBRUARY

More automobiles were manufactured in Canada in February than in any month in recent years, according to figures released by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. During the month, 20,810 units rolled off assembly lines, compared with 19,045 in January, 17,348 in December and 7,484 in February, 1946. With substantial gains both in January and February, the two-month total rose to 39,855 units from 15,979 in the similar period of 1946.

Of the automobiles produced in February, 13,550 units were passenger cars and 7,260 were commercial vehicles, bringing the two-month total for passenger units to 24,966 and for commercial cars to 14,889. Of the passenger cars made in February, 9,012 were intended for sales in Canada, and 4,538 were for export; similar totals for commercial vehicles show that 4,594 units were for sale in Canada, and 2,666 were for export.

INDEX NUMBERS OF FARM PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Prices received by Canadian farmers for agricultural products at February 15 averaged higher than at the corresponding date in 1946, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. The index number of prices received for all products, on the base, 1935-1939=100, at 185.9 was 5.7 points above last year's corresponding figure.

By provinces, considerable variation exists in comparison with February last year. The index numbers for Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and British Columbia are lower than a year ago, due principally to marked declines in prices received for potatoes, fruits and vegetables.

The index numbers for Quebec, Ontario and the three Prairie Provinces have registered increases from February last year. Higher prices for live stock and dairy products are chiefly responsible for the increases in the index for each of these provinces. Grain prices, generally, remain at levels similar to those prevailing last year.

The quality of the 1946 western field crops was lower than in 1945, and this factor has been chiefly responsible for some decreases in the price of grains in the Prairie Provinces. However, these decreases are largely offset by somewhat higher grain prices in Ontario and Quebec.

RAILWAY ROLLING STOCK INDUSTRY

Reaching the highest figure on record, establishments occupied chiefly in making or repairing railway cars and locomotives or in making parts for same, such as wheels, brakes, tires, bolsters, springs, etc., had a gross value of production in 1945 of $181,249,842, or about eight per cent above the 1944 total and 43 per cent over the pre-war high of $126,487,037 in 1929, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

During the year there were 13,480 standard steam railway freight cars produced as compared with 9,251 in 1944, and 1,128 narrow guage cars for mines, quarries, etc., compared with 418. There were 378 new locomotives produced as compared with 190 in the preceding year. Value of the railway cars produced during the year was $47,570,897; new locomotives were valued at $29,498,706; repair work $47,702,977; munitions and armaments $6,410,490.

EARNINGS OF WAGE-EARNERS IN URBAN CENTRES OF THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES

Earnings of wage-earners in urban centres of the Prairie Provinces with population of 5,000 and over were considerably higher in 1946 than in 1941 according to Prairie census returns made public by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

While 42.49 per cent of all male wage-earners in these centres earned less than $1,000 in 1941 the percentage in this category in 1946 was only 22.81. In the $1,000 to $2,000 earnings group the percentage rose from 42.07 in 1941 to 48.45 in 1946, and in the group with earnings in excess of $2,000, the percentage increased from 12.77 in 1941 to 26.01.

The general pattern was the same for female wage-earners in these centres. In 1941, 84.77 per cent of female wage earners earned less than $1,000 whereas by 1946 the percentage had been reduced to 60.9. In 1941, 13.26 per cent earned between $1,000 and $2,000, rising from 35.18 per cent in 1946, while the percentage of those earning over $2,000 rose from 0.67 in 1941 to 2.07 in 1946.

FACTS OF INTEREST FROM BUREAU RECORDS

About three-fourths of the hardwood flooring produced in Canada consists of birch, according to figures on the hardwood flooring industry compiled annually by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Maple accounts for 15 to 20 per cent, the small remaining proportion being made up of red oak, beech, ash, elm, cherry and butternut.

Wire mileage of telegraph and cable companies in Canada was 391,476 miles in 1945, as reported to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. In 1936 it was 363,180 miles.

Canadian telegraph offices handled an average of 12,758,976 telegrams originating in Canada during the ten years 1936 to 1945, according to records of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Highest number in a year was 15,758,247 in 1945.

There were 2,270 dairy factories in operation in Canada in 1945, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics records, the total consisting of 1,130 creameries, 927 cheese factories, 184 combined butter and cheese factories, and 29 concentrated milk plants.

REPORTS ISSUED DURING THE WEEK

1. Railway Rolling Stock Industry, 1945 (25 cents).
2. Dealers' Monthly Report on Non-Ferrous Scrap Metal, January (10 cents).
3. Monthly Traffic Report of Railways, December (10 cents).
4. Radio Receiving Sets, January (10 cents).
5. Births, Deaths and Marriages, February (10 cents).
6. Primary Iron and Steel, January (10 cents).
7. Employment Situation, February (10 cents).
8. Earnings of Wage-Earners in Urban Centres of 5,000 Population and Over, 1946 -- Prairie Provinces (10 cents).
9. Index Numbers of Farm Prices of Agricultural Products, February (10 cents).
10. Wholesale Prices, Annual Supplement, 1946 (25 cents).
11. Current Trends in Food Distribution, February (10 cents).
12. World Price Movements, Second Half of 1946 (25 cents).
13. Indexes of Wholesale Sales, February (10 cents).
14. Automobile Production, February (10 cents).
15. Gold Production, December (10 cents).
16. Musical Instrument Industry, 1945 (25 cents).
17. Indexes of Retail Sales, February (10 cents).
