

2005: the July Review

As anyone who has been to a gas station lately will attest, the price of imports is having an impact on the American economy. According to the lead article by Kristen Locatelli, two of the factors leading to a wide range of substantial import price movements are the growth in international demand and a weakening of the dollar against the currencies of several major trading partners.

One of the forces behind the rise in international demand has been China. According to Locatelli, China's demand for raw materials has tightened supplies and the concomitant rises in prices for industrial supplies and materials have put additional upward pressure on prices for manufactured goods.

Given the increasing presence of China in international markets, Judith Banister's report on manufacturing employment in China is especially timely. This detailed look at China's manufacturing sector and its deployment of labor will be continued in a forthcoming issue by a report on its wages.

The next two articles explore the issues arising in retail trade output and productivity measurement. Marilyn E. Manser surveys the alternate concepts for measuring retail output—sectoral output or sales, gross margins, and value added. As concepts, these are quite different. However, Manser finds that, while productivity measures based on these alternative concepts also differ somewhat, they all show a large increase in productivity in the late 1990s, compared with the first half of the decade.

Marcel P. Timmer, Robert Inklaar, and Bart Van Ark explore an experimental output measure for retail sales, the double-deflation method which uses a retailer's sales prices and purchase prices to calculate a margin price, and from that a margin sales volume to use as the output term in productivity calculations. Although this method may help solve some of the theoretical

issues, the necessary purchase price data is, in practice, hard to find and often not of the requisite reliability.

H.O. Stekler and Rupin Thomas of George Washington University evaluate the employment projections BLS made in 1989 for the year 2000.

Daniel E. Hecker examines the matter of high-technology employment. While many readers will be looking at his methods for defining high-tech, it also is interesting to note that employment levels in several industries on his NAICS-based list are expected to grow relatively slowly. In fact, by 2012, employment is expected to decline in aerospace, semiconductors, computers, wired telecommunications, and instruments.

1915: the July Review

"With this issue the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor begins the publication of its MONTHLY REVIEW." Thus the editors began Volume I—Number 1 of this periodical 90 years ago. The first feature was a very short note, "Conciliation work of the Department of Labor," detailing efforts to resolve labor disputes during the year ended June 30, 1915. Of the 32 disputes the Department participated in, 22 were classified as amicably adjusted.

The other articles in our first issue covered immigrant employment, labor legislation, strikes and lockouts in the United States, regulations on women's employment, progress in a study of street railway employment, a summary of new studies the Bureau was engaged in, a note from Oregon on overtime in the packing industry, a note on child-labor laws in Connecticut, the effect of World War I on foreign food prices, the increase in coal prices in Britain, reports on increasing output in British coal mines and on British wage increases, employment in foreign countries, and strikes and lockouts abroad.

Mothers in the labor force

The labor force participation rate for mothers with children under age 18 was 70.4 percent in 2004, down by 0.7 percentage point from the prior year. In 2004, most of the over-the-year decline in the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 occurred among mothers with children under 6; their rate declined by 1.0 percentage point to 61.8 percent. The participation rate of mothers whose youngest child was 6 through 17 declined slightly. The labor force participation rate for mothers with children under age 18 has been declining since 2000. To learn more about employment and unemployment in families, see "Employment Characteristics of Families in 2004," news release USDL 05-876.

The World According to TED

What is TED? It's shorthand for our Web-based daily, *Monthly Labor Review: The Editor's Desk* (www.bls.gov/opub/ted). Each business day, TED brings you facts and figures from somewhere in the full range of BLS programs, highlights reports you might otherwise have missed, and provides links to more detailed analyses. *The World According to TED*, a paper publication featuring 40 of TED's best pieces from 2004, is now available in print. To obtain a free copy, send e-mail to ted@bls.gov with your mailing address included in your request; or send postal mail to the *The Editor's Desk*, Office of Publications and Special Studies, U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. 20212. □

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