

Recession (Continued)

In 1949, just the reverse was true. Farm prices skidded more than 20 percent, but the post-war boom in new cars skyrocketed automobile production—and prices—more than 30 percent.

And here's a contradiction within a contradiction: automobile production now is off about 35 percent, yet some of the highest-priced cars of all—Cadillacs and Thunderbirds—are selling as well as ever.

More contradictions: while millions continue jobless, many large working groups—including postal workers and members of the Armed Forces—are getting substantial pay hikes. Prices aren't coming down noticeably, and the cost-of-living index keeps going up steadily.

SO "IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO" that everyone suffers during a recession, although it's inevitable that some must. That's the nature of things.

But even those who don't suffer are inclined to forget that, despite temporary setbacks, the basic economy is still healthy. It has had a long record of growth and expansion, and there is every reason to believe that, after readjusting or pausing to get its breath, it will go right on growing—and emerge healthier than ever because of the readjustments.

The current unemployment figures are not even

percent in both cases.

Compare this with 1933, when nearly 13 million—about 25 percent of the working force—had no work. And in 1941, when we were presumably well out of the depression, nearly six million—about 10 percent—still had no jobs.

What this means, of course, is that, in spite of unemployment, there are more jobs today—about 15 million more than in 1939—and a greater percentage of people filling them than during many of our previous periods of prosperity. And further, we now have cushions under us—price supports, steady Government spending, more savings, unemployment benefits—that make any recession easier to take and any depression harder to make.

On the positive side, it's no secret that our standard of living has increased steadily over the years. The average family, after taxes and taking into account the change in prices, has 60 percent more to spend today than it did during the boom days of 1929, and it has much better products to spend it on.

Electronics, chemistry, automation, and medicine are only a few of the fields that have created altogether new products and industries in the last 20 years, spending millions of dollars and employing hundreds of thousands of people. Electronics alone

housewife's chore almost a push-button operation, creating so much leisure time that it has produced a whole new concept in social thinking.

Woman's role, in fact, has changed so drastically in a generation that today millions of them have flooded the labor market, filling jobs that didn't exist for their mothers and grandmothers. This fact is often overlooked in unemployment statistics.

But perhaps this whole business of the recession and its relationship to the basic health of the economy is best summed up in a current joke. During the depression, so the story goes, people walked miles to stand in bread lines. Today they drive their own cars to pick up unemployment compensation.

BUT ENOUGH of that. The future of the economy is more relevant than any Monday-morning quarterbacking about its past or present. And frankly, I can't see anything ahead but more expansion. In fact, I feel it's not only a certainty, but a necessity. Perhaps this requires explanation.

Let's first take the factors that make it a certainty. They're fairly well known, but would bear repeating.

Our population is continually growing, and at a continually accelerating rate. It has doubled in the last 50 years, and last year we recorded more births

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as serious as many think. At worst, we've had slightly more than five million persons out of work. Again, this is no consolation to the five million, but actually it's not as bad as it sounds. At the peak of the 1949 recession, for example, we had slightly more than four million out of work. Yet, because our population has grown, the percentage of unemployed was about the same, approximately 7

has been responsible for the phenomenal television boom, the mushrooming hi-fi industry, and the predicted growth of FM-radio. All this in addition to its remarkable contributions to defense weapons.

Closer to home—and with a brief pause to allow housewives from coast to coast to cry aloud in pain—modern improvements in household equipment, with nearly everything automatic, have made the

(4,302,000) than any year in our history. Add to this the fact that we're a healthier people, thanks to medicine, and aren't dying off as fast as we used to. By 1960, our population will be close to 180 million; by 1970, we'll be over 200 million!

With population, of course, comes more demand. In America this has always meant more production, more jobs, more income. Our prosperity



Employed

% Unemployed



38,760,000

1933

25%

50,350,000

1941

10%

58,710,000

1949

7%

62,311,000

1958

7%