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Regional Job Growth and Wage Trends in 1998

by Gregory DeFreitas and Lonnie Stevans

As the national economy registered its longest peacetime expansion in December, the New York metropolitan area achieved historical records of its own. Private sector job growth in New York City for all of 1998 was the highest in the 47 years that such data has been kept. The city's unemployment rate dropped from 9.4 percent in 1997 to an annual average of 8 percent last year – a percentage point decline nearly three times that of the nation as a whole. The Long Island jobless rate also fell faster than the U.S. average, and hit a new low of 2.5 percent in December. Private sector jobs in Nassau and Suffolk Counties jumped by 21,800 (or 2.3 percent) over the 12-month period since December 1997. This was the island's best job growth in a decade. Throughout the region, low-wage workers, particularly minorities, finally began to experience sizable improvements from the tightening labor market, as reflected in both their falling unemployment rates and rising wages since 1997.

While the overall figures for the past year were markedly better than in 1997, the final months of 1998 showed some clear signs of strain in the region's expansion. New York City's jobless rate bottomed out in August at a seasonally adjusted 7.4 percent (the lowest since 1990), then rose steadily to 8 percent by December. The city's jobless count swelled by 11,300 in the year's last quarter, reversing a one and one-half year downward trend. The fourth quarter also saw initial claims for unemployment benefits increase and the number of help-wanted ads decrease from their levels one year before.[1] New York still hasn't regained all the jobs lost in the last recession, and its unemployment rate is nearly double the national average and ranks as the highest of any large city in the country.

Job Growth

New York State ended 1998 with a monthly rise in the number of private sector jobs for the 22nd time in the past 23 months. Both New York City and Long Island shared in this expansion and managed to outpace the state's 2.1 percent annual job growth. In December 1996, the monthly establishment survey recorded 3.063 million private sector jobs located in the city, over 100,000 more than in the previous December. This represented a 3.4 percent increase – a full percentage point higher than the rates of either Nassau-Suffolk or the state. After taking into account the continuing decline in the public sector, the growth rate of total nonagricultural jobs was a lower but still robust 2.8 percent in New York City and 2.1 percent on Long Island.

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[1] NYC Office of the Comptroller, *Economic Notes* (February 1999).

Table 1
Number of Nonfarm Jobs (in thousands) by Place of Work: 1997-98

	Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997	% CHG
U.S.	127976.0	125123.0	2.3%
NY State	8332.9	8192.1	1.7
New York City	3584.4	3486.8	2.8
Nassau-Suffolk	1174.2	1149.8	2.1

Source: Establishment data (not seasonally adjusted) from NY State Dept. of Labor.

Even with this welcome increase in job opportunities, the city has still not yet restored the more than 360,000 jobs lost in the 1989-1992 recession. In contrast to the much more rapid recoveries on Long Island and nationally, New York remains nearly 100,000 jobs short of where it was almost a full decade ago.

The most rapidly growing industry in the city was construction, where low mortgage rates and vacancy rates contributed to the addition of 7.9 percent more jobs over the year through December (Figure 1). But the huge service sector generated 68,000 more jobs over this same period, which alone accounted for 70 percent of the city's entire job growth. Within services, the fastest growing areas were motion pictures (17.1 percent), followed by business services (8.5 percent), engineering and management services (6.7 percent), and museums (6.5 percent). The 23,700 new positions in business services represented over one-third of the service sector's expansion. Some of this new hiring was the direct or indirect result of activity on Wall Street, which itself added another 5600 positions in securities and commodities brokerages.

The New York City industry hardest hit by job loss was government, which shrank by 3500 or 0.7 percent. Nearly half of the positions cut were in local government. Another 1200 were in federal offices and most of the rest were in state hospitals and other institutions. In contrast, Nassau and Suffolk Counties added another 2600 public sector jobs over this same period. While the federal sector and state-run hospitals contacted, this was more than offset by an extra 700 state positions and 2200 new teachers and other school personnel.

Like the city, Long Island's leading growth industry was services, though its 12,800 new jobs accounted for a smaller share of total job growth (52.5 percent). The strongest hiring here was in health services, which grew by 1.8 percent to a total of 116,000 positions. The construction boom generated 3300 new jobs, up 6.5 percent over the year. Manufacturing was flat, with small declines in durable goods matched by a weak uptick in nondurables. But the wholesale and retail trade job total expanded by some 3000.

Unemployment and Underemployment

New York City's unemployment rate was close to 10 percent at the beginning of 1997, but it declined sharply that fall to end the year at a seasonally adjusted 8.4 percent. This downward trend continued in the first half of 1998, and the rate bottomed out at 7.4 percent in August.[2] As Table 2 shows, the number of labor force participants officially counted as unemployed decreased by 6500 city-wide in the 12 months beginning December 1997. Both the jobless counts and the unemployment rate fell in all five boroughs. The 9 to 9.3 percent rates in Brooklyn and the Bronx are, however, still far higher than elsewhere in the city.

Despite the improved unemployment numbers, New York City's rate is nearly twice the national average. Even among the country's largest urban areas, New York ranks worst in unemployment. Figure 2 reveals that, in contrast to the New York metro area's 7.6 percent last December, jobless rates were under 3 percent in Boston, San Francisco, and Washington, and not much higher in Chicago and Philadelphia.

It is also important to look beyond the highly aggregate figures published monthly to try to determine the infrequently reported unemployment rates of racial minorities and other important subgroups within major cities. The relatively small sample size of each such group in the cities surveyed by the Census Bureau each month makes detailed analyses difficult. So we have pooled the three monthly surveys for the last quarter of 1998 to increase sample size and the statistical reliability of our estimates. Our findings are reported in Table 3.

Within each racial, ethnic, and gender grouping in the table, New Yorkers are less likely to hold a job. For example, the white non-Hispanic unemployment rate is 4.9 percent in New York City at a time when it averages 3.5 percent in the largest 20 cities nationwide. Only 53 percent of African Americans, half of Latinos, and one-fifth of teenagers in New York have a job. – all far lower employment-population ratios than elsewhere. Racial and ethnic disparities within the city's remain stark: black and Hispanic unemployment rates are twice the white non-Hispanic level. Unemployment is considerably lower on Long Island, but is over twice as high among blacks, Latinos, and immigrants as it is for whites.

The official unemployment rate has long been criticized for understating labor market slackness. We used the raw CPS data files to calculate a broader "underemployment rate" that counts "marginally attached workers" (discouraged labor force dropouts still wanting work plus part-timers wanting full-time jobs) together with the official unemployed. The estimates in the bottom rows of Table 3 reveal that underemployment is roughly twice as common as the narrower unemployment measure. Among New Yorkers ages 16 and over, 16.1 percent are underemployed, compared to 12.4 percent in other cities and 5.2 percent in Nassau-Suffolk. Racial differentials are quite wide: over one-fifth of the city's blacks and Hispanics are undeemployed. More than two out of five youth in New York are underemployed, compared to just over one in three in other cities.

[2] For monthly statistics over the past two years, see "Key labor Market Indicators" later in this issue.

Table 2
Civilian Labor Force, Employment & Unemployment:
New York City, Nassau-Suffolk & All U.S., Dec. 1997 - Dec. 1998

	Labor Force		Employed		Unemployed		Unemp. Rate	
AREA	Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997	Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997	Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997	Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997
U.S.	138297.0	136742.0	132732.0	130785.0	5565.0	5957.0	4.0%	4.4%
NYC	3385.1	3326.7	3126.7	3061.8	258.4	264.9	7.6	8.0
Brooklyn	959.3	941.1	872.9	854.8	86.4	86.3	9.0	9.2
Bronx	459.3	452.3	416.5	407.8	42.8	44.5	9.3	9.8
Manhattan	808.4	794.0	754.5	738.9	53.9	55.1	6.7	6.9
Queens	969.6	953.3	905.6	886.8	64.0	66.5	6.6	7.0
Staten Island	188.5	186.2	177.2	173.6	11.3	12.6	6.0	6.7
Nassau-Suff.	1406.0	1403.3	1370.4	1355.9	35.6	47.4	2.5	3.4
Nassau Co.	694.0	692.0	678.5	671.3	15.5	20.7	2.2	3.0
Suffolk Co.	712.0	711.3	691.9	684.6	20.1	26.7	2.8	3.8

Source: CPS household survey data (not seasonally adjusted.) from NY State Department of Labor, 1998

Table 3
Unemployment, Employment, & Underemployment Rates by Sex, Age, and Race/Ethnicity:
New York City, Nassau-Suffolk, and Other Large U.S. Cities and Suburbs, 1998:IV

Unemploy. Rate	All, ages 16 & Up	Males	Females	White, non-Span.	Black, non-Span.	Spanish Origin	Teens, 16 - 19	Foreign Born
NYC	7.9	7.8	8.0	4.9	11.2	10.9	24.6	6.9
Big Cities	6.0	5.8	6.1	3.5	9.8	7.7	20.8	6.5
Nass/Suff.	2.2	2.1	2.4	1.6	4.3	6.8	5.6	4.8
Suburbs	3.4	3.3	3.4	2.8	5.8	5.9	11.4	4.3
% of Pop. Employed								
NYC	54.1	62.9	46.2	54.8	53.2	50.6	20.0	56.7
Big Cities	63.5	71.1	56.4	67.8	55.8	63.3	35.8	63.2
Nass/Suff.	68.1	76.6	69.8	67.2	70.3	77.2	55.1	61.6
Suburbs	66.7	74.7	59.2	66.7	68.5	66.2	45.8	64.6
Underemp. Rate								
NYC	16.1	14.6	18.1	10.0	23.0	21.8	42.6	15.2
Big Cities	12.4	11.2	13.7	7.8	19.2	16.0	35.8	13.0
Nass/Suff.	5.2	4.4	6.2	4.4	9.9	9.7	12.5	8.0
Suburbs	7.4	6.8	8.2	6.3	10.7	12.7	21.9	9.9

Source: Authors' calculations from Oct. - Dec. 1998 Current Population Survey. The "underemployment rate" is here measured as the total officially counted as "unemployed," plus those "marginally attached" to labor force who want a job now plus persons employed part time for economic reasons, expressed as a percent of the official labor force plus those counted as marginally attached.

Wages

The effects of a tighter labor market and of the minimum wage hike were finally felt by the lowest-paid New York workers last year. In retail trade, 1997 saw average hourly wages inch up just 2.1 percent, barely keeping pace with inflation. But by the 4^{th} quarter of 1998, the retail average had jumped 5.5 percent (to $10.21) over the same quarter a year earlier. Construction wages also improved, if less sharply, by 3.5 percent. But in the stagnant manufacturing sector, hourly pay crept up by an average of just 1.5 percent (to $12.19).

Despite several months of earnings growth in low-wage industries, earnings inequality between workers at the top and those at the bottom remains unusually wide in this region and has worsened over the 1990s at a rate much faster than elsewhere. New research has shown that the growing earnings disparities in the New York Metro area reflect both above-average raises for the best-paid 10 percent of employees and steep real wage drops for the lowest paid. Among year-round, full-time male workers in our region, the ratio of average annual earnings at the 90^{th} percentile to that at the 10^{th} percentile jumped from 4.6 in 1989 (identical to the national ratio) to 6.8 in 1996 – over one-third higher inequality than for the nation as a whole.[3]

The latest poverty estimates for the city reflect the continuing impact of years of shrinking real wages among the working poor. In its annual analysis of Census Bureau survey data, the Community Service Society found that, on average, 24.6 percent of New York City residents were poor in 1997.[4] While slightly lower than the 26.2 percent rate in 1996, the current poverty rate is twice the national rate. Among important population subgroups in the city, poverty rates are still startlingly high: 27.3 percent of blacks, 38.1 percent of Hispanics, and 38.1 percent of all children (under age 18) live in poverty.

Moreover, the same report found a dramatic decline in the public benefits available to cushion poverty. The proportion of poor New Yorkers receiving public assistance payments fell from 54.2 percent in 1996 to 41.7 percent just a year later. The fraction obtaining Medicaid or food stamps also dropped sharply, from about two-thirds to one-half of the poor.

Sectoral Dependence or Diversification?

While few economists expect to see job growth in the New York metro area to end in the coming year, most are predicting a marked slowdown in growth for both the region and the nation. The continuing recession in much of Asia, particularly Japan, helped produce the nation's worst-ever trade deficit last year, as well as considerable volatility on Wall Street. The disproportionate and growing impact of the latter on the city's fortunes was re-emphasized in a much -discussed report last August by the State Comptroller's Office.[5] Though the securities industry employs just 5 percent of the local work force, the report found that it accounted for 56 percent of real earnings growth between 1992 and 1997. This was over twice as large a share of the city's real earnings gain as Wall Street represented in the 1980s boom. Recognizing recent job growth in tourism, construction, and new media, the report

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[3] Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Research and Market Analysis Group, "Earnings Inequality: NY-NJ Region," *Current Issues in Economics and Finance* (July 1998).

[4] Community Service Society of New York, Poverty in New York City: An Update (New York: 1999).

[5] NY State Office of the Comptroller, *New York City's Economic and Fiscal Dependence on Wall Street*, Report 5-99 (Albany: August 13, 1999).

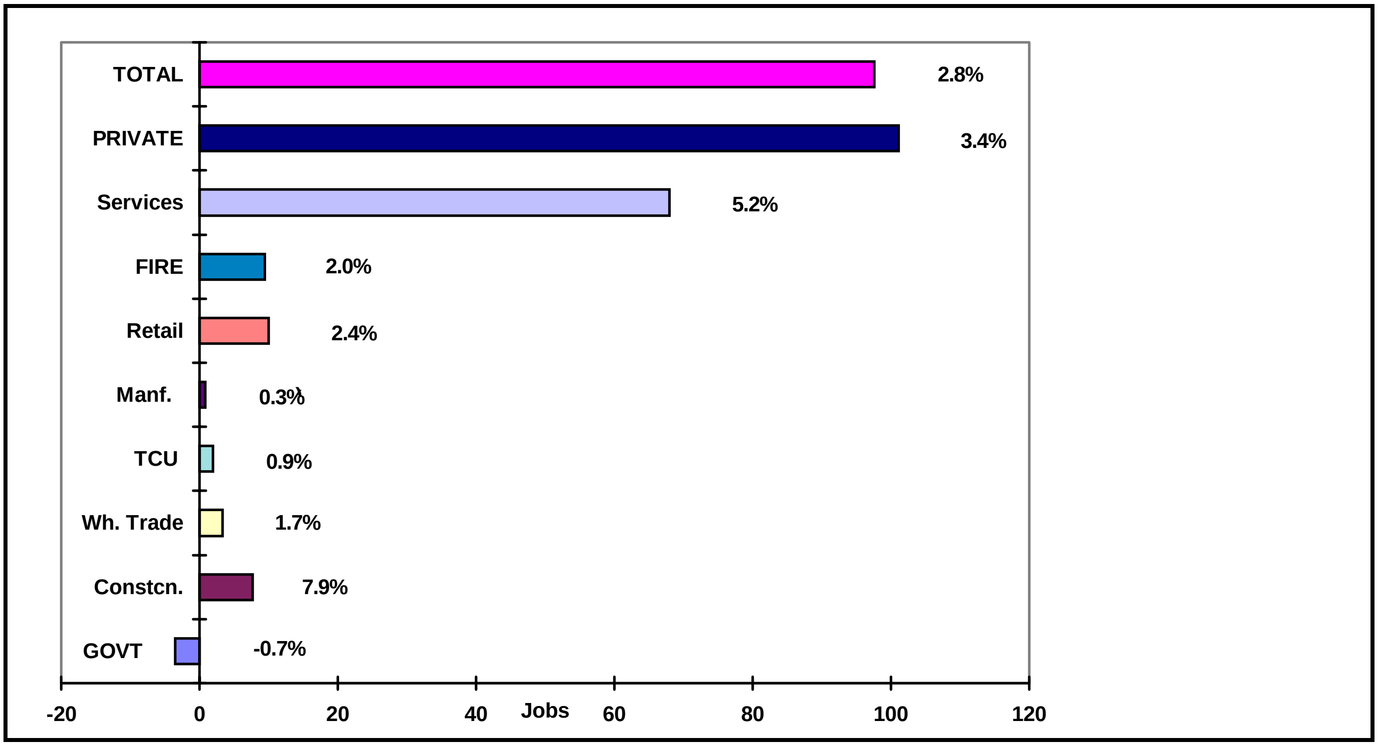
nonetheless predicted sharp losses following a sustained market downturn. Local politicians and economists were thus especially relieved that the 10 percent slide in stock indexes last summer was ended by a sharp rebound. Independent forecasters now estimate that, without that rebound, the city's job growth would have been cut in half.

New York's worsening economic dependence on Wall Street in a period of skyrocketing real estate prices has also dramatically hiked the price of taxpayer-financed "corporate retention" deals. Although Rudolph Giuliani criticized such deals when running for mayor in 1993, from 1994 through last November he handed out $445.4 million in tax subsidies to 20 securities firms.[6] Last year closed with the city and the state offering nearly $500 million in cash and $100 million in tax breaks to the New York Stock Exchange to build a new trading complex in lower Manhattan. The subsidy was over twice as large as any offered to a single company. Meanwhile, garment, printing, and other manufacturing firms threatened with displacement by soaring rents have complained about receiving far less attention or assistance from City Hall.

In Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the 1990s recovery from the shrinkage of local defense manufacturers like Grumman has raised hopes for a far more broad-based, diversified economy. But, a sizeable share of new employment may be even more dependent than in decades past on Wall Street's unpredictable fortunes. Moreover, a closer look at the latest data reveals some potential problems when the employment situation by industry is analyzed. As may be seen in Figure 3, employment in service producing industries far exceeds employment in goods producing industries on Long Island -- by an average factor of six to one! Employment in both industries has grown by about two percent since December 1997.

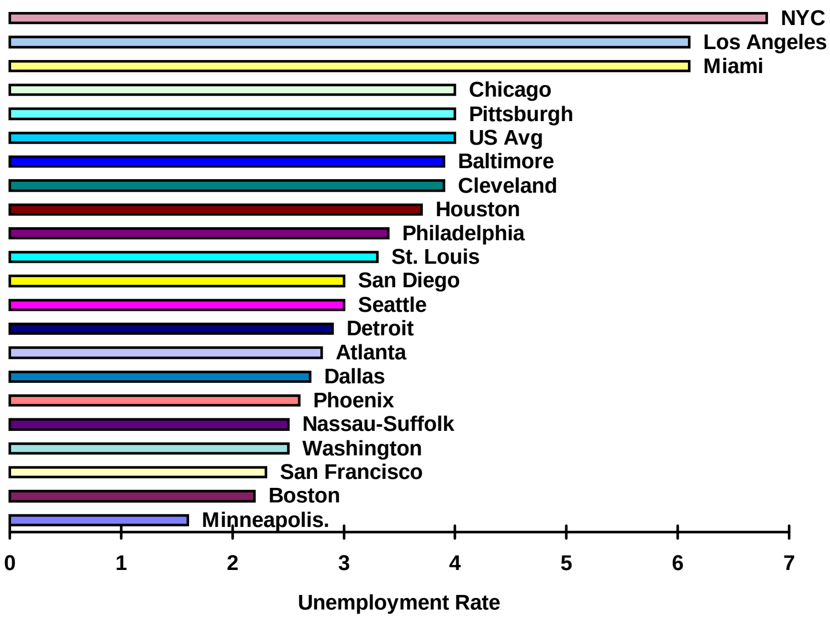
[6] C. Bagli, "Wall Street Plays Relocation Card and City Pays," *NY Times* (Nov. 8, 1998): p. 39.

Figure 1
NYC Job Growth by Industry: Dec. 1997 - Dec. 1998
(in thousands of jobs, and percent change)



Source: NY State Department of Labor, 1998. FIRE = Finance, Insurance, Real Estate; TCU = Transport, Communications, Utilities.
Year-to-year changes, not seasonally adjusted.

Figure 2
Unemployment Rates in NYC, Nassau-Suffolk,
And Other Largest U.S. Metro Areas, Dec. 1998



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment: December 1998*.

Delineating industry employment even further yields differences that signify the nature of the job problem in the region. In Figure 4, the share of total employment in each industry is depicted. For all of 1998, employment in wholesale and retail trade has been second only to employment in services, while government employment was in third place and employment in the goods producing sectors was among the last. While the relatively large employment in the service sector is not particularly a problem for Long Island, considering that many of the jobs in this sector are in health, education, and legal services and are high paying with benefits, the same may not be said of employment in wholesale and retail trade. This sector includes many jobs that are low paid and part-time.

The average monthly growth of employment in each industry sector may be found in Table 4. The largest growth occurred in construction, followed by services, and then wholesale and retail trade. Although construction has realized the highest job growth, it would have had to increase by 460 percent on average during 1998 in order to “catch-up” to total employment in trade! During 1998, the share of construction, trade, and services of total employment increased slightly, while the shares of the remaining industry categories declined (Table 5). While employment growth rates are important, their significance in this case is masked by the underlying structural problems associated with the Long Island labor market.

Table 4
Nassau-Suffolk Monthly Employment Changes by Industry

Industry	Average Monthly % Change in Employment
Total Employment	.55
Goods Producing	.60
Service Producing	.54
Construction and Mining	1.6
Manufacturing	.19
Transportation and Public Utilities	.50
Trade	.56
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	.29
Services	.66
Government	.46

Table 5
Nassau-Suffolk Industry Employment Share Changes

Industry	Average Monthly % Change in Employment Share
Construction and Mining	1.0
Manufacturing	-.35
Transportation and Public Utilities	-.05
Trade	.008
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	-.25
Services	.11
Government	-.10

The large share of wholesale and retail trade in total employment remains a problem for the Long Island economy, given the nature of the jobs in this sector. This is in fact evidenced by the responses given to some of the labor market questions in the December 1998 Newsday/Hofstra Poll. It was found in this survey, that Long Islanders work an average of 40 hours per week, while the national average in 1998 was 35. In addition, eight percent of Long Islanders stated that they hold two or more jobs: the national average was approximately six percent in 1998. There was also an increase in the December 1998 proportion of households, (relative to 1992), who responded that they do not have enough income left over to pay bills. Given the large share of Long Island workers who work in the trade sector, these results are not surprising.

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THE NEWSDAY/HOFSTRA POLL

Trends in Earnings, Employment, and Economic Attitudes:

Findings from the Newsday/Hofstra Poll, 1997-98

by Lonnie Stevans

The Newsday/Hofstra Poll has been an ongoing venture of *Newsday* and the Hofstra Business Development Center for over a year. Each March, June, September and December, a scientific sample of 1,400 households is selected from Nassau, Suffolk, and Queens. While survey questions do vary across each quarterly poll, there are some topics that are addressed on a regular basis: consumer sentiment, the state of the local labor market, and the stock market. Some of the more salient issues involving these three topics over 1998 will be analyzed and discussed. It is important to remember that since the data is self-reported, caution should be exercised in drawing definitive conclusions from the survey results.

Consumer Confidence

The Index of Consumer Expectations (ICE), Current Economic Conditions (ICC), and Consumer Sentiment (ICS) were computed from the Newsday/Hofstra poll and the University of Michigan Survey Research Center. Between September 1998 and December 1998, consumer confidence for Long Island increased by 3.7 percent. In fact, over the period since the beginning of these surveys, (September 1997 to December 1998), the average rate of increase has been about 0.6 percent. The average rate of growth of consumer confidence at the national level has also been 0.6 percent over this same period. Relative to their national counterparts, it is clear from the above figures that our sample of Long Islanders has historically felt better about the future than the current economy: the index of consumer expectations has been consistently above the national index while the index of current economic conditions has been below the national figures. Moreover, it appears that the confidence of Long Island consumers approximately "mirrors" the national trend in each of the indices.

Between December of this year and December of last year, there has been no significant difference in the ICS for Long Island. This is due to the 5.6 percent increase in the ICC along with the three-percent decline in the ICE. As in previous survey results, Long Island respondents are apprehensive about the future, albeit no more so than consumers in the rest of the U.S.

Overall, the proportion of respondents stating that there will be "good times" and "good times qualified" within the next twelve months has not changed significantly since the December 1997 survey (58 to 56 percent). However, the proportion of Long Island respondents expecting "bad times" or "bad times qualified" over the next twelve months has risen from 23 to 29 percent. All of this points to a degree of pessimism regarding the long-term performance of the local economy.

Consumer confidence increased by 5.1 percent in Queens between September 1998 and December 1998, with the average rate of growth since September 1997 being about .3 percent. This rate of growth is lower than the national rate of .6 percent over this same period. However, the index of consumer sentiment that was computed for our sample of Queens residents was about four percent below the national index in December 1998. All of the Queens indices are consistently below the national values for each survey month (with one exception for the December 1997 index of consumer expectations). The index of current economic conditions has increased by 5.5 percent between the December 1997 and December 1998 surveys, while the index of consumer expectations declined by 4.4 percent.

Queens residents have not appreciably changed their perceptions about the New York City economy. The proportion of those stating that they expect "bad times" or "bad times qualified" has remained approximately the same between December 1997 and December 1998 (54 percent). These results are probably indicative of the slightly improving economic conditions in New York City. The unemployment rate in New York City appreciably lower than it was a year ago. Yet, the current and future economic expectations of Queens residents have been consistently below both that of Long Island and the U.S.

Wages

According to the December 1998 survey, the median pay increase for households in Long Island and Queens last year was five percent. The national figure was 3.4 percent for 1998 (up to November), so local households appear to be above the national average.[7] Moreover, a large majority of respondents in Long Island and Queens also expect a raise next year. It is also interesting to note that pay increases for respondents in Long Island and Queens tend to increase with income level; that is, higher income respondents received the larger pay increases.

The percentage of Long Island households who can “pay bills" and "live comfortably" is slightly larger in the December 1998 survey than in 1992. The proportion of respondents who do not have enough left over to pay bills in December 1998 is also at the same 1992 level. These results clearly coincide with the necessity of holding more than one job in the Long Island labor market.

Employment

Hours worked per week for survey respondents are higher than the national average. In Long Island and Queens, the average number of hours worked per week is 40, while the national figure is 35.[8] Thus, workers in Long Island and Queens work 14 percent more on average than their national counterparts.

There is no clear trend in the proportion of full-time versus part-time workers on Long Island. The proportion of full-time workers in 1998 (55 percent) is less than it was in 1997, while the

[7] http://www.bls.gov.
[8] ibid.

proportion of part-time workers (10 percent) is at its lowest point since 1989. The percentage of part-time workers nationally was about 16 percent in November 1998—this is higher than the local statistics according to the survey: 10 percent part-time in Long Island and 11 percent part-time in Queens. However, given this "good" news, the survey profile of a typical part-time worker in Long Island and Queens is indicative of the presence of a secondary labor market:

1. African American and/or Hispanic,
2. income less than $30K,
3. single,
4. in a clerical or labor occupation,
5. between the ages of 18 and 29,
6. and has a high school degree or less,

Eight percent of the respondents in Long Island and Queens have more than one job. The national rate in November 1998 was six percent. The difference between the local and national rate illustrates the local cost of living and therefore the need to supplement family income. This may also be seen by examination of the survey profile of a typical respondent who is working more than two jobs. Again, it appears that there is a secondary labor market in Long Island and Queens:

1. African American and/or Hispanic,
2. income less than $30K,
3. in a clerical or labor occupation,
4. has a high school degree or less,
5. between the ages of 30 and 49,
6. and has one to three children.

Investment Behavior – Long Island and Queens

In a February 1997 poll by Time/CNN/Yankelovich, 76 percent of the respondents stated that they would “stand pat” in the event of a 10 percent decline in the market. In a poll of mutual fund investors done by the Investment Company Institute, two-thirds said that they would not sell even if the market declined by 15 percent over the next three months. In this current survey, about 72 percent of Long Island investors and 69 percent of Queens investors stated that they would “stand pat” if the stock market were to fall by 10 percent tomorrow. These proportions are both up the December 1997 survey results and they are higher than the values in the last survey (September 1998). This may appear strange, given what has transpired in international financial markets over the last few months, but these results indicate rational responses by Long Island and Queens's investors--given the long-term movement of the market and the superiority of the inflation-adjusted returns of stocks versus other investments. In Long Island, a smaller proportion of respondents in the December 1998 survey stated that they would buy (12 percent) and a higher percent said that they would sell (two percent) in the event of a 10 percent drop in the market.

A typical "buyer" has the following characteristics or profile:

1. has income greater than $75K,

2. has a college education,

3. and is a male.

Future Directions

Investors in Long Island and Queens are tempering their optimistic about the future course of the market. About 57 percent of Long Islanders believe that the market will be up by more than ten percent or up somewhat, versus 24 percent who believe that the market will be down by more than 10 percent or a by a lesser amount. In Queens, the proportions are 51 and 26 percent, respectively. Note that these figures are down from a year ago (December 1997) and are less than the figures for September 1998. These future expectations have no doubt been effected by the "slump" in stock prices since Thanksgiving.

The survey profile of a typical Long Island/Queens investor who believes that the market will increase by 10 percent is:

1. a college graduate,

2. White or Hispanic,

3. works in a professional occupation,

I. and male.

Stock Ownership

One of the most contentious issues regarding stocks and other financial instruments has been the ownership distribution of these assets by households. One study of this has been accomplished for 1992 U.S. data by researchers Kennickell, McManus, and Woodburn.[9] In 1992, the top one percent of households in terms of income owned 39 percent of the stock owned by individuals and 42 percent of the bonds. If, instead of income, the figures are analyzed in terms of stock ownership, the top 5 percent of stockowners held 94.5 percent of all publicly traded stock.[10]

The skewed ownership pattern of financial assets by income has also been clearly evident in Long Island and Queens according to the results of the Newsday/Hofstra surveys. About 86 percent of households in Long Island having an income greater than $75K own stocks or mutual funds. This is in contrast to 32 percent ownership of those having income less than $30K. Stock ownership on Long Island is also dependent upon education and occupation. About 74 percent of college graduates own mutual funds or stocks compared with 50 percent of those with a high school degree or less. Moreover, 81 percent of those who classified themselves as in a professional/managerial occupation own mutual funds or stocks, as compared to 41 percent of those who were laborers. While not reported, examination of the survey for households in Queens yielded similar distributional results.

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[9] Arthur Kennickell, Douglas A. McManus, and R Louise Woodburn, *Weighting Design for the 1992 Survey of Consumer Finances*, unpublished technical paper, 1996, Federal Reserve Board.
[10] James M. Poterba and Andrew A. Samwick, *Stock Ownership Patterns, Stock Market Fluctuations, and Consumption*, Brookings Papers on Economic Activity 2, pp. 295-372.

The skewed ownership pattern of financial assets is also evident by examination of the profile of a typical survey respondent who owns stock:

a. has income greater than $75K,
b. has less than two children,
c. is a Republican,
d. has a college degree,
e. is White,
f. works in a professional occupation or has no occupation (retired),
g. is over 50 years of age,
h. and lives in Nassau County.

Summary

While households in Long Island and Queens have felt more optimistic about the current state of the economy over the past year, this degree of optimism is not necessarily shared by all survey respondents. For example, the following are survey observations over the past year about consumer sentiment by race:[11]

1. African Americans feel worse about their current economic conditions than Whites or Hispanics,

2. in Long Island, African Americans and Hispanics are not as optimistic about future economic conditions as are Whites,

3. In Queens, expectations about future economic conditions as perceived by African Americans are grim: 17 percent below Whites and nine percent below Hispanics.

Households in Long Island and Queens have moved toward increasing income by working more hours. Whereas the proportion of part-time workers in Long Island and Queens is below the national average, we are still above the national average when it comes to the percentage of workers who are multiple jobholders. There appears to be a real need to hold more than one job in order to supplement household income, which is evidenced by those households who stated that they do not have enough income left over to pay bills: the response proportion in the December 1998 survey is the same as it was during the recession of 1992.

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[11] *Index of Consumer Sentiment by Race*, Newsday/Hofstra Poll, 1998.

A New Union Movement for the New Economy: A Conversation with Joe Alvarez

Since November 1996, Jose "Joe" Alvarez has been the AFL-CIO's Regional Director in the Northeast. Based in New York City, he is responsible for implementing the federation's programs in 12 states stretching from Maine through New York to Maryland and West Virginia, as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. He has thus far focused on promoting local unions' organizing efforts, revitalizing central labor councils through the "Union Cities" program, and mounting support for pro-labor political campaigns.

Born in Havana, Cuba, he immigrated with his family to Miami at the age of nine. After graduating from Duke University, he joined the civil rights movement and became a rank and file activist in the southern textile and health care industries. He worked as an organizer and service representative with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), before being elected as a district manager, first in Georgia and Alabama, and then North Carolina. He went on to serve as the national Political Director of that union, before and after its merger with the ILGWU to form UNITE. As the first Political Director of UNITE, he became known for developing a program to generate membership activism around a broad workers' political agenda.

In early January, he was interviewed at the regional headquarters in Manhattan by Gregory DeFreitas.

Q: Organizing the unorganized has been given very high priority by the AFL-CIO since its leadership changed in 1995. You come to your current position with considerable experience at this. How did you first get involved in union organizing?

JA: I was working at a hospital in Durham, North Carolina as a psychiatric attendant. This was in the early seventies, when there was almost no organizing in hospitals and even less organizing in hospitals in the South. The employees became involved in an effort to organize the 10,000 people in the hospital, which we spent several years doing. But we failed by about a hundred votes. From there I changed jobs and ended up working in a textile mill in North Carolina, which was when I first became a member of what was then the Textile Workers Union. Eventually, after years in the union and trying to change that union as a member, I was hired in Georgia and worked as an organizer and union representative. I became manager of the joint board of our union covering Georgia and Alabama. By that time it was the

Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. I was involved in moving us to become an organizing force. I actually spent many years organizing, mainly in the South.

When I went into that position in ’92 –’93, before the changes in the AFL-CIO, it was with the view of changing the whole way that A.C.T. W.U. was doing politics. Taking it out of Washington and receptions and building the mobilization of our membership. So I prided myself, at that time, as being one of the only political directors who didn’t go to receptions. I was not in Washington, I was in shops around the country. So actually it’s that kind of breadth of experience both in terms of organizing and in terms of grass-roots political mobilization -- the kinds of people we are assembling in this part of the AFL-CIO tend to be people who are bringing in those kinds of backgrounds.

Q: Out of that, did you draw any conclusions for methods of organizing which have helped here?

JA: The main thing I would say that I have taken out of that whole experience, besides having a sense of the challenges and obstacles in organizing, was recognizing that one of our biggest problems in organizing is that as a labor movement we have basically stopped doing it. I have been surprised as I became involved in the broader labor movement of how little organizing there was. In fact, several years ago when we tried to make an assessment nationally, we concluded that there was something like 3% of all union resources that were in fact going into organizing. In contrast to the 1940’s and 1950’s where that figure was much closer to 50%.

Q: Why do you think that there was such a tremendous decline?

JA: There are probably a lot of factors. Certainly not a small one is that it has become much more difficult to organize. One of the main efforts that we’re involved is what we call a “Right to Organize” campaign. Trying to restore workers’ ability, workers who desire a union, to restore their ability to build unions and talking about how we change the environment to be able to do that. But, the other reason for the decline in the 70’s and 80’s is a lot of unions were finding themselves more in defensive situations where more of the resources were having to go into keeping what they had: into fighting plant closings, fighting efforts to privatize. Bargaining became more difficult as more and more unions lost density in their respective industries. In fact, the whole culture of the labor movement became much more concentrated on issues like negotiations, collective bargaining, arbitrations, the internal work, the representation activity of the shop floor. Even in many instances, unions that saw the need to organize were nevertheless absorbed by these kind of activities.

There are three key parts to the program of the AFL-CIO, and one is precisely the whole issue of shifting the focus of our internationals and of our locals back to organizing again. Once again trying to shift resources, trying to develop that capacity and trying to make the cultural changes inside our organizations to transform them into an organizing movement again.

Q: Since you moved to your present position as the Regional Director, do you see that beginning to happen?

JA: I should probably tell you a little about what we do in the Northeast Region of the AFL-CIO . Within the AFL-CIO, the Field Organization Department is that part that has the responsibility of implementing the program of the National AFL-CIO of implementing that program on the ground. And that program is focused on three main areas. First, political activism. Secondly, it is focused on our organizing program. And the third area is member mobilization, building the structures at the grassroots that are able to help us move forward into the other two areas: political activism and the support for organizing.

I think in the last couple of years the message that we have to become an organizing movement again has definitely begun taking hold. Actually, in 1997 (we don't have the full figures for 1998 yet), as a labor movement we organized 400,000 new members. Unfortunately, that was not sufficient to keep up with job loss and the growth in the economy, but it was the first year in decades that we were able to hold labor union density steady. It was the first year that we did not see another continuing decline in union density in our nation.

A key part of our organizing program, and one where state federations and central labor councils are involved, is to change the environment in which unions have to organize. There is a major civil rights issue in our nation right now that is hidden from view. The fact is that when workers do set out to try and organize a union they are met with an outrageous campaign of terror. In our society workers have a right to form, unions have a right to organize. But, this is the only right within our society that is exercised with fear. The fact is you can go to any worker who is unhappy with their job and ask them if they would like to have a union and they would tell you: "Certainly, it would be great to have a union here." As a matter of fact, something like 44% of unorganized workers say that they would like to see a union in their workplace. That is something like 48 million workers.

You ask the same worker if they would like to call together a meeting of some of their fellow employees to talk about forming a union and their reaction is to look at you and say: "Are you crazy? In my workplace? We are not allowed to talk about unions, to speak about unions." It is not enough for workers to have self-interest to form a union. It actually takes heroes and heroines that are willing to take uncommon risks. Common people that are willing to take uncommon risks for the common good. There is something like 10,000 workers a year who are fired for trying to organize a union. An effort by workers to form a union is basically met by a campaign of terror that tries to turn the question from one of "Would you like to be represented or not represented by unions?" turn that into a questions of "Would you like this job to stay here or not have this job stay here?"

Q: Do you think that is likely to change anytime soon through the NLRB structure? Do you think that unions have to go outside using corporate campaigns and the like?

JA: For a long time there was a debate in the labor movement in terms of this whole question of the right to organize. Do we first have to change the law and then organize? Or do we recognize we don't have the power to change the law so we first organize and then change the law? We have resolved that in terms of the programs we have in place. Our answer to that is that the first problem is that there is not a recognition that this is even a problem. And the second one is that, even to the extent that it is recognized as a problem, workers don't have the political voice right now to change the law so that they have some ability to be protected when they are trying to organize a union.

What we have done is we have launched what we call a "Right to Organize Campaign" that tries to put a spotlight on this terror that is created in the workplace, right in our communities, by educating our allies, people in the community, about what is going on, by involving elected officials -- not just whether they are going to vote or not on a piece of legislation -- but in using their authority and their presence to speak out and defend workers who are trying to organize unions. The federation at the national, state, and local levels is beginning to try to create an environment where that kind of activity by employers no longer goes unnoticed and where we look at what steps can we take to make sure that employers engaging in this kind of behavior are not receiving public funds, that they are not receiving public support, and in mobilizing union members in support of workers who are trying to achieve this basic right.

Q: That same issue of the right to organize has recently been taken up by the academic-labor organization, Scholars, Artists and Writers for Social Justice, that emerged out of the 1996 Columbia University labor teach-in. There has been much talk since October '96 of a revival on a national scale of the labor-intellectual alliance. What value do you think union members could find in stronger links with intellectuals, academics, colleges and universities?

JA: We look at the relationship with progressive academics, intellectuals as another critical relationship. Actually this organization you speak of, SAWSJ, we just recently, with their collaboration, put out a new publication called *Faculty at Work*. They actually worked with us on that, they're in the credits. We have been involved in conversation with academics about the role they can play, whether it's in educating the current generation of students and from the ranks helping us develop a new generation of union activists or whether it is in the work that they do in developing public opinion and joining us (as SAWSJ is beginning to do) in exposing the terror that exists in the workplace and raising public consciousness about this issue. Or whether it's in engaging their research and writing to help us explore and investigate the kinds of policy directions in our very quickly changing world and economy, to help us figure out in this new economy how do we make this work for workers. In any of those kind of ways this is a very critical relationship that we support and have supported. There is no question that there is a movement around the country. I don't know what the number is off the top but I do know that there were something like 40-50 teach-ins on campuses around the country. And in fact SAWSJ is getting ready to hold its second annual conference in New Haven, Connecticut and its focus is on this whole question of building support for workers' right to organize.

Q: The Columbia labor teach-in happened in the wake of a strike at Barnard, Columbia's women's college, in the winter, spring and summer of 1996 by the UAW. Today there are more university staff than there are steel workers in America. Do you think the notion of professionals like university staff as a major part of the work force that is ripe for organizing, do you think that is something that the labor movement as a whole is more and more accepting? That is, that the focus can no longer just be on the traditional sources of unionization?

JA: Absolutely. The logic of this new economy is working itself into all the different sectors. This is a story to illustrate: I was driving around in the middle of a political campaign in '94 at which time Secretary of Labor, Reich, was talking about how the solution to the low-wage economy was education. It was a call-in show and there was a professor, a woman, who called in and said: "Secretary Reich, I've received two PhD.s. For the last four years I've been working as an adjunct with no benefits earning $12,000 a year teaching what is considered a full load. Should I get a 3rd Ph.D.?" The fact is the logic of this economy is moving into every single sector so you see in universities more and more where faculties are made up of growing number of adjunct professors. They are the university temp workers, who work for significantly low wages often without benefits. There is no question that all the different sectors of this new economy -- without organization, without making sure the economic setup is one that is focused on the question of: how do people make a living, how are they able to attain some benefits for their work with some sort of security and expectation of stability, without organization --that is not going to happen.

These groups are starting to organize. There is an organization, in New Haven, Connecticut, for example, the Graduate Students' Employees Association, that is active precisely among those workers.

Right here in New York City, we've seen at the New School where the adjunct instructors in the music program who are jazz musicians just not only organized, but successfully just negotiated a historic first contract. I think these are harbingers of activities we will see spreading throughout our economy. Just in the same way some years ago, it wasn't that long ago, the organization of teachers at the elementary and high school levels was not viewed as a likely place for union organization and now it is almost commonly accepted. I think that we will see the same happening more and more in different sectors of our economy.

Q: What do you think about the potential for more involvement of community groups in organizing drives, like ACORN's recent efforts to organize thousands of workfare employees?

JA: There are many organizations that are dealing with the results of the new low-wage economy that's emerging. The new labor movement realizes it is critical to build alliances with other organizations today that are trying to address the same kinds of issues. Actually, we are working and many of our affiliates are working very closely with ACORN, not only in what I just described but also in "living wage" campaigns in cities throughout the nation. Organizing workers in sectors that don't yet lend themselves to organization. It's actually another way of dealing with the whole privatization system.

Q: In last November's elections, there was unusually high turnout by union members. In New York, over one-third of all votes were cast by union households. This surprised many people, that such numbers would come out to vote during an economic upturn. What concerns motivated union families to do this?

JA: Well, even though we are in the midst of an economic expansion, that expansion is hardly being reflected in improving wages. Nor is it being reflected in the way our public officials are dealing with public policies in areas like social security, education and health care. A lot of it has to do with the kind of approach that the AFL-CIO has been taking to how working families are going to get a voice in government, in the political system. The shift is recognizing that we're not going to defeat corporate interests based on our ability to spend more money than they spend. Even though in 1996 the labor movement spent in that campaign, with a great deal of success, $35 million, we were nevertheless outspent 11 to 1 by corporate interests. So, number one, our efforts are focused on our greatest strength of mobilizing our membership. They are not going to be mobilized because of individuals who happen to be running or allegiance to parties who happen to be competing. But they are mobilized because we are moving our members around issues that happen to be of concern to working families. Like health care, social security, retirement, education. That has been the focus of our efforts. I think that in the '98 election all of this was given further impetus, at a time where Congress was spending most of its time talking about everything but those issues. At that time, we were in the throes, well we still are, of the debate surrounding impeachment. But our message focused on: let's get back to talking about working family issues. Our members very strongly responded to this and turned out in tremendously large numbers.

Take a very specific example of what a union city central labor council was doing. In that election, the Central Labor Council had 3,000 rank and file volunteers out on the street in New York City on election day.   That's a very good example of what we are talking about, looking at what are the factors that lead to the fact that 1/3 of the voting households ended up being union households. There is an excellent example of what that effort actually looks like. In terms of our alliances with community organizations, a lot of the Labor Council's effort was particularly aimed at and in concert with the

African-American communities and Latino communities. There were 50,000 new Latino voters in this last election. So that's just further making the point of what the efforts look like in the local area.

Q: In New York, in that election an effort was made by third parties like the new Working Families Party, which managed to win a place on the next ballot, in large part due to union households. Do you see third parties as possibly a useful means in the future to get the labor message out, insofar as the Democratic Party isn't always reflecting the full set of labor concerns?

JA: First of all, let me say that the AFL-CIO is open to all kinds of different efforts to try and mobilize our membership and welcomes experimentation with those kind of efforts. Campaigns like the Working Families Campaign made use of the fact that in New York you can run on several party lines. So you have the ability to express your support for a particular agenda without giving up your ability to really influence the elections. Even though we were not officially involved in the Working Families Party, we had a number of our affiliates who were involved in it, and who see a need to experiment with different kinds of forms. And we view that as a positive development.

Q: Given the amount of time and resources that the AFL-CIO put into the elections, do you think that the unions will look back on this as money well-spent, in the sense the Clinton Administration has done as much as it could for labor? Or do you think the evaluation might be much more mixed?

JA: Well again, in this last election and in the Congressional elections we just held, we don't characterize our efforts as having been focused on getting a particular person into office. We viewed our efforts as mobilizing around the issues that are of concern to working families. And in that respect, we have been tremendously successful. The political debate back in '94 was completely dominated by wedge issues that had very little connection to workers being able to provide for their families and take care and educate their families. In the '98 elections, those were the questions that were being debated and focused on. In that sense, we think we are having a tremendous impact in redefining what is under discussion. In many ways, at the presidential level, Roosevelt was who he was because of the CIO, Kennedy was who he was because there was a civil rights movement and any president is who they are largely because of how much we have succeeded in mobilizing working families around an agenda in these elections. There is no question about it that we are moving in the right direction.

Q: In terms of the next election, John Sweeney has recently said that the AFL is going to make, "...the largest grassroots mobilization in its history to fight against efforts to privatize social security." Why is the AFL-CIO putting so much importance on this particular issue?

JA: Social Security is a good example of what happens in our society when a labor movement is not what it needs to be. It's probably the most successful social program in our history. And it is not just a program for retirement security, but also a program for family security in that it addresses disabled workers, it addresses families who have lost a breadwinner. Corporate interests have succeeded in creating a sense of crisis, as part of an effort to figure out how to dismantle this most successful of social programs. We disagree that there is a crisis. There is no question about it that, if labor is not out here weighing in in this debate, that there is no other voice in this society right now with the organization or resources to be able to weigh in to defend this critical program. So we have made it a priority to make sure that the debate is focused on what the actual situation is, what the actual interests of working families are. And in order to do that we have launched the campaign which you just referred to.

Q: What are some of the specific elements of that campaign going to be?

JA: Initially it is very much focused on internal education with our membership. Our membership is not immune to the main public information that has come out about social security. So there is an effort to do a lot of education internally. We, likewise, are also joining in with allies looking at the impact that some of the schemes that are being drawn up, like privatization, particularly would have on groups like minorities and women who are particularly going to be impacted with the kinds of proposals that are being floated here. Around the country right now we have forums in local hall after local hall. In the next few weeks, there will be community summits in 60 cities across the country. So we are doing both an internal education effort and weighing in in the public debate that is taking place, making sure that this critical element for retirement and family security is not dismantled and basically handed over to Wall Street in the next several months.

Q: For the future, if you had to guess where unionization will be in five years time, are you optimistic?

JA: There is no question for anybody who looks at history that workers will find a way to build self-organization, that they will find a way to make sure that their ability to exist and survive in our society will be achieved through self-organization. The challenge we have in the AFL-CIO is that, throughout history, there are points during major transitions of an economy where workers organizations came to a point where they represented the past economy. The only way the new economy and its concerns was achieved was through a new labor movement. We are now in the middle of an effort to change our current labor movement to be able to address the organization that is going to be necessary in the new economy. And that is something that really has not taken place before. In the 30's the new labor movement emerged out of the CIO, which eventually cam together with the previous labor movement in the merger some years later. Going back another 50 years when the AFL was founded, the Knights of Labor and the other organizations that existed before that basically faded away while the AFL emerged as the new labor movement in the new economy.

So the challenge before us is: are we going to succeed in this tremendous change effort? I am extremely hopeful that the officers of the AFL-CIO are courageously looking at the kinds of ways that we need to change ourselves. We say that the mission of the AFL-CIO is to be a voice for working families in our economy and for justice within our society. And that in order to achieve this, we must "build and change the labor movement." We are explicitly launched on an effort not only to try to grow a better labor movement, but to understand that we also need to change the labor movement. The fact that we are able to define our mission in this kind of way gives me great hope that working families will once again be able to have their voice in America.

Gregory DeFreitas is Professor of Economics at Hofstra University, and Director of the Center for the Study of Labor and Democracy.

Glued to the Tube: Labor's Unlikely Victory for Computer Safety in Suffolk County

by Vernon Mogensen

Eleven years ago, Suffolk County enacted the nation's first law protecting the safety and health conditions of office workers using desktop computers, known as video display terminals (VDTs). This represented an important legislative breakthrough for organized labor, which had been lobbying for such laws around the nation since the early 1980s. Suffolk County's VDT law, which had to overcome the vetoes of two county executives and intense business opposition, sent shock waves around the nation as VDT bills were introduced in many state and local governments. It seemed to give organized labor the political momentum that it needed to catapult the issue onto the national policymaking stage and overcome the Reagan administration's opposition to safety and health regulations. However, business interests appealed to the courts which overturned it on jurisdictional grounds. Although short-lived, organized labor's victory in Suffolk County still has important policy repercussions for America's office workers who remain unprotected from the safety and health hazards of working with VDTs.

The Safety and Health Problems of VDT Work

The office work process has been radically reengineered as VDTs quickly replaced typewriters, calculators and other office machines. Desktop computers have helped to make today's information economy possible, and it is inconceivable to think of today's information age economy without them. White collar industries, such as finance, insurance, real estate, banking and the service sector, which dominate Long Island's economy, are heavily dependent on VDTs to automate the information work process and provide a wide variety of services.

But the rising and unregulated use of VDTs has been accompanied by increased safety and health problems in the office. Vision-related ailments, which are the most commonly cited group of problems, affect ten million workers. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health found that VDT workers experience extremely high rates of stress. The routinization of tasks, work speed-ups, job insecurity, the lack of control and creativity, and computer monitoring contribute to stress-related health problems. Medical studies have documented that occupational stress contributes to psychiatric and heart-related illnesses in VDT workers. VDT workers are often expected to perform the same repetitive task for long hours, with little time for breaks. As a result, many suffer from musculoskeletal illnesses, such as repetitive strain illness (RSIs), including tendinitis which affects four million VDT workers, and carpal tunnel syndrome which afflicts two million computer users. Carpal tunnel syndrome is so debilitating that it results in more lost workdays (a median of 30 days per case) than any other occupational illness. RSIs, for example, affect millions of workers and cost the economy an estimated $100 billion a year in workers compensation claims and lost work time. RSIs have become such a pervasive problem among VDT workers that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) called it the "occupational illness of the decade."[1]

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the reported incidence of RSIs have skyrocketed from only 18 percent of all occupational illnesses reported in 1981 to 66 percent today. But even this dramatic growth underestimates the scope of the problem. Many cases of RSIs go unreported as workers try to "work through the pain" in order to keep their jobs, others are not reported by employers, and BLS data does not include self-employed workers or federal, state, and local government employees. The BLS put the RSI rate at 332,000 in 1994, but the American Public Health Association estimates that more than 775,000 workers suffered from RSIs in 1995. While RSIs afflict many types of workers doing repetitive tasks from postal workers using zip code sorters to automobile assembly line workers, OSHA acknowledges that much of the increase since 1981 is due to the proliferation of VDTs in the workplace.

The Legislative Battle Comes to Suffolk County

The labor movement and women's groups have lobbied the federal and state governments for regulations to protect VDT workers since the early 1980s. A few states, like New Mexico, established regulations to protect public sector workers, but well-funded corporate opponents were able to defeat every proposal to include private sector workers. So it came as quite a surprise when Long Island labor, supported by local women's groups and the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, persuaded the Suffolk County legislature to enact the first regulations protecting VDT workers in the private, as well as, public sector. The victory was all the more surprising given the fact that labor was outnumbered and outspent by the Long Island business community, and had to convince the Suffolk County legislature to overcome two vetoes of the VDT bill, one of which was signed by a county executive elected with labor's support.

In 1987, County Legislator John J. Foley (D-Patchogue) introduced a VDT bill in the Suffolk County legislature. Foley's bill included provisions for: initial and annual employer-paid vision examinations and lenses that might be required as a result; user-adjustable work stations, chairs, copyholder, computer terminals, and detachable keyboards; proper lighting and glare screens; noise filters for printers; flexible work breaks and three hour limits on continuous VDT work; and employee education and training. It would apply only to employees who did VDT work for more than twenty-six hours a week in businesses with five or more machines. For Foley, the VDT bill was an outgrowth of his long-standing interest in labor issues. His bill was supported by unions and affiliated groups including, the CWA (representing 4,000 VDT workers in the county), and the Civil Service Employees Association (representing 26,000 government workers in the county).

Opposing the measure were many of the county's corporate VDT users, including AT&T, New York Telephone (which employed 2,000 VDT operators in the county), Grumman Corporation (Long Island's largest private employer), Newsday, Inc. (a major VDT user), the Long Island Association (the region's chamber of commerce and largest business group with 3,600 members), the New York State Bankers Association, the Business Council of New York State, the Long Island Forum for Technology (LIFT), and the Association for a Better Long Island (ABLI), a group representing forty real estate developers.

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[1]. Quoted in Marvin J. Dainoff, "The Illness of the Decade," Computerworld, April 13, 1992, 27.

Opposition to Foley’s bill also came from the public sector. Concerned about the flight of corporate neighbors, such as Grumman Electronics Systems, Islip Town Supervisor Frank R. Jones testified against the bill. Threatening to veto Foley’s bill, Acting County Executive William A. LoGrande (R) complained that the bill would impose regulatory burdens on small firms. In a pragmatic move to secure passage, Foley responded to LoGrande's objection by limiting his bill's jurisdiction to companies that used more than twenty VDTs. Given that the worst safety and health problems among VDT operators were in smaller firms, Foley's concession weakened the bill's effectiveness considerably.

Foley's concession helped secure the support his bill needed to pass. On June 23, 1987, the VDT bill passed the Suffolk County legislature by a vote of thirteen to two with three abstentions. But LoGrande, who initially complained of its adverse impact on small business, vetoed it on the grounds that it was unconstitutional because only large employers were covered. The override attempt fell one vote short when two legislators who had supported Foley's bill were persuaded by opponents to vote against it.

Organized labor responded to LoGrande’s veto by throwing their support behind Democratic Assemblyman Patrick G. Halpin in the 1987 race for county executive. A co-sponsor of the VDT bill in the state assembly, Halpin promised to sign the VDT bill into law if elected. Labor's campaign efforts were rewarded when Halpin defeated LoGrande, making him Suffolk County’s first Democratic County Executive, and the Democrats won control of the county legislature.

When Foley reintroduced his bill in March 1988, it contained two new features aimed at addressing the business community's concerns. First, employers would be required to pay only eighty percent of the cost of vision exams and lenses. Second, to meet opponents criticism that regulations would freeze the technology in place when it was still evolving, Foley added a provision to create a five member board that would suggest state-of-the-art updates in the law's ergonomic standards every two years. Despite these concessions the business community continued to oppose Foley’s bill. They used both carrots and sticks to persuade county legislators to oppose the Foley bill: threats to move jobs out of the county if the bill passed and campaign contributions if they opposed it. In a last ditch effort to stave off mandatory VDT regulations, the LIA proposed a voluntary plan. But, on May 10th, 1988, the county legislature, passed Foley’s bill by the same margin as it had the year before. With their tremendous investment in and dependence on VDTs, the newspaper industry opposed VDT legislation. Decrying "the heavy hand of governmental regulation," the *New York Times* criticized Suffolk County’s VDT bill as being "bizarre" and "picky," and charged that its passage "would set a reckless precedent for other jurisdictions." [2]

Business opponents put intense pressure on Halpin to veto the measure, and he waited for the full thirty day period allowed under county law before vetoing the VDT bill on June 10th. Ultimately, the business community's threats of economic and job loss were decisive. "More than one business leader has told me bluntly they would move from Suffolk County ... or not relocate here" if the VDT bill became law, he said. In return for his veto, Halpin said that Suffolk County's leading businessmen had given him their "personal commitment" that they would maintain adequate VDT standards. James Larocca, the LIA's president, called the veto "an extraordinary act of courage by a guy who has matured very quickly

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[2]. "Suffolk's Reckless Screen Scream," [Editorial] *New York Times,* May 26, 1988, A34.

in the job.” Subsequently, business supporters bought tickets to Halpin’s $300 a plate reelection fundraiser.[3]

Despite intense pressure from the bill's opponents, labor’s legislative coalition held firm and overrode Halpin's veto by a thirteen to five vote on June 14th. The business community’s reaction was immediate and unfavorable. Northwest Airlines announced it was canceling plans to move 180 jobs into the County and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company said it would not hire an additional 200 employees. Real estate developers complained that clients, such as the Chubb Insurance Company, canceled deals when they learned of the proposed VDT law. The news stirred interest as far away as Wyoming, where Cheyenne proclaimed its willingness to provide a home for Suffolk’s businesses. New York Telephone announced a hiring freeze in Suffolk County, and said that it would close a directory assistance office in Babylon at the end of 1989. The Babylon office employed 125 people with an annual payroll of three million dollars. Thomas J. Calabrese, general manager for the company's Long Island operations, said: "We regret having to take these steps. But as we testified at various hearings this bill imposes unnecessary costs on our company, which ultimately will be borne by our customers." [4]

The flexibility of computer and communications technology (which makes it possible to transmit work across political boundaries) makes corporate flight a more potent threat than ever before. As New York Telephone spokesman Bruce W. Reisman said after Suffolk County passed its VDT law: "It is easy for us to put VDT jobs in an adjacent location... artificial geographic boundaries mean little." [5]

Despite the threats, few, if any firms actually moved out of Suffolk County when the VDT law was enacted. The decisions by New York Telephone and Metropolitan Life to curtail new employment in the county were actually made before the VDT bill's passage. Claiming that the VDT law would deter business investment was an effective lobbying tactic for pressuring legislators, but it alone was not enough for companies to leave. Hewlett-Packard went ahead with its plans to build a new facility in the county, as did Computer Associates, Inc. The County Legislature's legal counsel, Paul Sabatino, reported that many firms asked his office for advice on how to comply with the law, and that a survey by the county found that the vast majority of firms were complying with its requirements. [6] This is not surprising given that business decisions to leave are usually due more to a multitude of factors such as the rising cost of supplies, labor, real estate, and traffic congestion, than the estimated costs of complying with a single regulation.

Organized labor's victory did not bring an end to the battle over VDTs in Suffolk County. Instead, the fight continued in the executive and judicial arenas. Despite their legislative victory, proponents of VDT regulations were now confronted with the dilemma of enforcement. In light of Halpin’s promise to

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3. Rick Brand, "Halpin Vetoes Suffolk VDT Legislation," *New York Newsday*, June 11, 1988, 13. Rick Brand, "2 GOP Leaders Get Gift From 'Grandpa,'" *Newsday*, August 12, 1988, 20.

4. News Release, New York Telephone, July 5, 1988.

5. Philip S. Gutis, "Video-Display Terminal Law Blocked," *New York Times*, July 14, 1989, B2.

6. "Businesses Sue to Void Nation's First VDT Law," *VDT News*, September/October 1988, 2-3.

"do my best to implement this law so that it has the minimal impact on our business community," how vigorously would he enforce it? [7] Halpin gave the VDT regulations a low priority; he assigned only one person, who also handled housing and sanitation problems, to oversee the implementation of the VDT law.

Nevertheless, opponents preferred no regulations to weakly enforced ones. Moreover, Suffolk's law was a dangerous precedent that the rest of the nation might follow. On June 23rd, four local businesses challenged the legality of the law in court. They charged that the County overstepped its constitutional bounds by mandating that employers pay for eighty percent of VDT workers eye exams and lenses, a function reserved to federal and state governments. "We want to give the Suffolk County Legislature a message that they shouldn't tread in areas where they have no jurisdiction, especially when their acts create unnecessary negative impacts of [sic] the Long Island economy, said Gary Neil Sazer, the LIA's counsel." [8] On October 5th, the day before the VDT law was to go into effect, State Supreme Court Judge John Copertino issued a preliminary injunction stopping Suffolk County from implementing its eye care provision. The judge stated that the VDT law may interfere with state and federal rules regarding workers compensation, interfere with interstate commerce, and impose "financial hardship" on employers by making them pay eighty percent of employee eye care costs.[9] Judge Copertino officially overturned the VDT law's eye care provision on December 27, 1989. His decision turned on the technical question of state and local jurisdictions, not on the substance of the law's concerns. In a decision that was upheld on appeal, Judge Copertino said that "though the legislation is well-intentioned and ultimately may be proved an important first step in bringing the worker health concerns addressed in the law to the attention of the public, the Suffolk County Legislature lacked the authority" to pass it. He added that "[i]n an era of almost daily revelations about workplace health and safety, it would be better to allow the state to continue its traditional oversight and control." [10]

As Halpin's vetoes demonstrated, public dependence on corporate-generated jobs and tax revenue tends to create a community of interests between elements of the business sector and government. In an era of tightening budgets, the Islip Town Supervisor didn't need to be lobbied by Grumman executives to understand that he, too, should oppose the VDT bill. Rather, his concern that Grumman might leave the region was sufficient to insure his opposition to the VDT bill. The loss of Grumman's considerable contribution (i.e., $616,000 in school, town, and county taxes; $403,000 in sales and use taxes; $66 million paid annually to 1800 employees; and $10 million worth of contracts it gives to other local businesses) would have a devastating impact on the area's economy.[11] Halpin's position on the VDT issue changed under the pressure of similar arguments made by business lobbyists.

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7. "Measure to Regulate VDTs Is Enacted in New York," *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1988, 10.

8. "Legal Challenge to be Mounted Against Suffolk VDT Law," Press release from the Long Island Association, June 24, 1988, 2.

9. "Video-Display Terminal Law Blocked on L.I.," *New York Times*, October 8, 1988, 31.

10. Eric Schmitt, "Judge Thwarts Suffolk's Video-Terminal Law," *New York Times*, December 28, 1989, B3. "Court Rejects Suffolk Law, County Appeal Likely," *VDT News*, January/February, 1990, 2.

11. *Testimony of Islip Town Supervisor Frank R. Jones: VDT Public Hearing of the Suffolk County Legislature, April 12, 1988*, 5.

Suffolk County's Shock Wave

The passage of a VDT law in Suffolk County created a legislative ripple felt as far away as California. Bills were introduced in thirteen states, and in localities such as New York City and San Francisco. Although New York City's bill did not apply to the private sector, both the business community and Mayor Edward Koch (D) eyed it with suspicion. Paul Magarill, the New York Chamber of Commerce and Industry's legislative counsel, called the VDT bill "extremely dangerous. There's no question that they'd try to extend it to the private sector." [12] In reply to industry complaints that a VDT law would stifle business, Diane Stein, the VDT Coalition's spokesperson, told the City Council that the bill "does nothing more than adopt the recommendations of companies like IBM and Bell Laboratories and codify them." [13] Koch pocket-vetoed New York City's bill just before leaving office, claiming that the ten to thirty million dollars compliance cost would be bad for business. However, the City Council responded that the cost would be only three million dollars and that could be made up by savings from improved worker productivity and health. That the cost of compliance was not an insurmountable obstacle for the city to meet was shown in June 1990, when the Dinkins administration reached a collective bargaining agreement with DC 37 with virtually the same provisions. [14]

The passage of Suffolk County's VDT law also inspired labor strategists, who had been lobbying unsuccessfully at the state level, to shift their energies to the local level. The law generated tremendous interest nationwide with over 400 cities requesting copies of the legislation. San Francisco passed a VDT law, but it was also struck down on the grounds that it interfered with the state's power to set occupational safety and health regulations. Given that all the major cities in California were considering bills modeled on Suffolk County's law, the Court's ruling was an important victory for the corporate opponents.

Ultimately, advocates for VDT safety and health legislation did not prevail at the state and local levels of government. In 1989, Maine required private sector employers with five or more VDTs to provide education and training for their workers, but its law was "whittled down" to the point where it cost business an "insignificant amount of money to implement," said a spokesman for the Maine Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Eight states: California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin adopted voluntary training and/or purchasing guidelines for state

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12. Alan Bresnick, "City Thinks VDT Bill's a Pain in the Neck," *Crain's New York Business*, July 25, 1989, 2.

13. N.Y.C. Video Display Terminal Coalition, *Testimony of Diane Stein, Coordinator,* Civil Service and Labor Committee, New York City Council, May 19, 1989, 5-6.

14. Arnold Lubasch, "Koch, in Veto, Discounts Risks In Computer Use," *New York Times*, December 27, 1989, B3; DC 37 bargains for all civilian city employees on the non-wage issues to be contained in the citywide contract. Matthew Tallmer, "City Agrees to Protect VDT Users: Under Accord With DC 37," *The Chief-Leader*, June 15, 1990, 1.

employees, but none developed regulations governing the private sector where the vast majority of VDT users work. [15]

Conclusion

Suffolk County's VDT Law represented an important breakthrough for organized labor for two reasons. It was the first legislative victory for the labor movement which had been trying to get such laws passed at the federal, state and local levels since 1981. In addition, unlike many bills which proposed to regulate only public sector workers, it was notable for its regulation of private sector workers. While Suffolk County's VDT Law was short-lived, it inspired workers in other regions to lobby for their own VDT laws, and stands as an example of the significant victories that can be achieved at the local level.

Suffolk County's VDT Law illustrates the difficulties inherent in trying to achieve policy with nationwide implications at the local level. Although organized labor was able to overcome tremendous opposition, business interests prevailed in the courts which maintained that only state and federal governments had jurisdiction over occupational safety and health policymaking. The competition between the states and localities for the high-tech investment dollar also gave the corporate community a tremendous advantage in shaping the safety and health debate. These factors increased government officials' fears that imposing VDT regulations on business will result in a loss of economic investment, jobs and tax revenue. The failure of state and local governments to protect the occupational safety and health of VDT workers illustrates the need for national standards enforced by a strong OSHA. The battle that was once fought in Suffolk County continues today in the Republican-controlled Congress as OSHA's proposed ergonomics standard to help prevent repetitive strain injuries is opposed by a national coalition of 300 corporations and trade associations.

Vernon Mogensen teaches American Politics at Kingsborough Community College, CUNY. He is the author of Office Politics: Computers, Labor, and the Fight for Safety and Health *(Rutgers University Press).*

[15]. "Maine Governor Signs Legislation Setting Strict Limits On Drug Tests," *Daily Labor Report*, July 13, 1989, A9. Title 26, Chapter 5, *Maine Revised Statutes*, 1991.

BOOK REVIEW

American Dreaming: Immigrant Life on the Margins

Sarah J. Mahler. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995. 268 pages.
reviewed by Sharryn Kasmir & Lisa Beneventano

During the 1980s, when many regions of the United States suffered severe recession, Long Island's defense industries moderated the local effects of economic crisis, and a low-wage labor market in ancillary industry and in services flourished. In *American Dreaming: Immigrant Life on the Margins*, Sarah J. Mahler focuses an ethnographic lens on the Central and South American immigrants who filled these low-paying jobs in Long Island's affluent suburbs. Their experiences are filled with dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

Mahler understands migration as resulting from a combination of push and pull factors, and rather than simply telling the stories of her informants' experiences in the U.S., she sets out the circumstances in their home countries that led them to make the expensive and dangerous decisions to emigrate without visas (Introduction to Chapter 3). From this vantage point, we see important differences among immigrants despite their shared undocumented status: Salvadorans left their country to escape a terrible civil war (1979-1992.) For the most part, the Salvadorans settled on Long Island came from peasant communities, and their passages to the U.S. were harrowing. Borrowing money from family and community members, they made their way overland to Mexico where they paid *coyotes* hundreds and even thousands of dollars to guide them across the border. Many were cheated by their guides and arrested by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and some died in transit. The costs and brutality involved in arriving on Long Island transformed them. The Colombians, Chileans, and Peruvians Mahler studied were more likely to come from cities and to be educated, and their motivations for emigrating were different. They left soaring inflation and plummeting real wages that denied them economic opportunity. These chapters are gripping and show the human toll of the U.S.' restrictive immigration policy.

These stories of border crossing were told to Mahler during her anthropological fieldwork on Long Island. After collecting 350 questionnaires and conducting 42 extensive interviews, she took up residence in a town on the north shore's "Gold Coast." She lived for six months among Central and South Americans who worked in the peripheral factories spawned by defense industry sub-contracts; who cleaned the houses, cared for the children and tended the gardens of middle-income and wealthy families; and who did construction or landscaping as day laborers for Long Island contractors.

In Chapters 3 through 9, Mahler analyzes the expectations and disillusionment that shape immigrants' lives. Prior to emigrating, her informants heard the dollar amounts of U.S. wages and translated this into purchasing power. Salvadorans imagined that after a period of hard work in the U.S., they would save enough money to secure a stable future for their families and would return to their villages. South Americans imagined the middle-class lives that eluded them at home. None had figured how inadequate their incomes would be given the high cost of living on Long Island. Though they shared overcrowded housing and spent little on themselves, they were hard pressed to repay those who financed their journey to the U.S. and to send money home. The strain of these impossible commitments is a constant feature of their lives. Yet they send home snapshots of themselves posing on the expensive cars of strangers and hide the realities of their impoverishment, thereby encouraging others' American dreams. Mahler's informants feel alienated from American society, but they see their exploitation as distinct from the "real America."

Mahler's most important finding is that, due to their social marginalization, immigrants turn their resentments on each other. In their effort to meet all of their financial responsibilities, they have little money for sharing, socializing, or mutual aid among their fellow migrants. Their passage to America means the loss of customs of reciprocity and sense of community that characterized their lives across the border, especially in rural El Salvador. Moreover, they do not think that their compatriots are *unable* to give but believe they are *unwilling* to give. A major source of their disappointment with life in America is what they interpret as others' jealousy and competitiveness. The few opportunities they are able to create are within the immigrant community; the enterprising among them buy a used car and run a taxi service, rent an apartment and sublease rooms for profit, and, at the high end, open immigration-related businesses, such as shipping and remittance services. This means that profits are made at the expense of other immigrants.

Mahler argues that these facts must be understood in the context of a two-tiered economy in which Central and South Americans' undocumented status limits them to low-wage, precarious, under-the-table jobs. She also shows how the immigration reform legislation of 1996 further marginalizes them and makes them vulnerable to exploitation by employers. However, this is not how immigrants understand their situations. They blame each other. As Mahler points out, finding fault within their own community echoes the American cultural theme of "blaming the victim" and ironically reflects their assimilation of American values. Although these are significant and stark insights, one criticism of the book is that by assigning them so much relative weight — indeed, at the expense of exploring other dimensions of immigrants' experience, including their relationships with employers — Mahler offers too narrow a range of interpretation.

Nonetheless, *American Dreaming* is a very good book that provides a valuable case study of immigrants and the low-wage economy on Long Island. Apart from a moderately difficult section on models of immigrant economic integration in the Introduction, it is highly accessible to a general audience and has rich detail for specialized readers. Anyone interested in labor issues on Long Island will appreciate this thoughtful book.

Sharryn Kasmir is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Hofstra University. Lisa Beneventano is a Hofstra student majoring in Anthropology.

DATA FILE

Key Labor Market Indicators

New York City -- Civilian Employment, Unemployment,
& Initial Claims for Unemployment Benefits (seasonally adjusted estimates)

	Employment (1000s)	Unemployment (1000s)	Unemployment Rate (%)	Initial U.I. Claims (1000s)	% Change in U.I. Claims
1997					
January	3037.7	326.8	9.7	33.2	0.20
February	3048.6	325.7	9.7	32.3	-2.63
March	3055.3	323.9	9.6	30.5	-5.58
April	30580	326.8	9.7	32.1	5.26
May	3058.3	330.0	9.7	33.9	5.69
June	3061.8	330.8	9.7	31.3	-7.65
July	3067.2	323.2	9.5	33.3	6.22
August	3067.4	318.9	9.4	31.1	-6.67
September	3065.2	312.7	9.2	32.7	5.39
October	3058.6	303.9	9.0	32.6	-0.30
November	3050.1	292.5	8.7	28.9	-11.26
December	3042.2	279.5	8.4	31.0	6.97
1998					
January	3058.4	283.9	8.5	29.9	-3.32
February	3075.0	293.9	8.7	31.0	3.67
March	3069.3	283.1	8.5	30.8	-0.77
April	3076.2	269.1	8.1	33.7	9.50
May	3085.9	258.9	7.8	28.1	-16.58
June	3092.3	252.3	7.5	30.4	8.11
July	3102.3	264.0	7.9	31.2	2.63
August	3097.9	248.8	7.4	28.6	-8.20
September	3102.6	261.2	7.8	31.3	9.34
October	3104.3	266.5	7.9	30.3	-3.25
November	3107.9	269.1	7.9	32.4	7.05
December	3108.4	272.3	8.0	35.1	8.01

Source: NY State Dept. of Labor. Seasonal adjustments by *RLR*. The Dec. 1998 U.I claims estimate is preliminary and may have been inflated by technical factors, according to analysts at NY State Dept. of Labor in Albany.

Nassau-Suffolk -- Civilian Employment, Unemployment, & Initial Claims for Unemployment Benefits (seasonally adjusted estimates)

	Employment (1000s)	Unemployment (1000s)	Unemployment Rate (%)	Initial U.I. Claims (1000s)	% Change in UI Claims
1997					
January	1326.8	52.8	3.8	11.3	2.96
February	1329.5	53.8	3.9	11.1	-1.10
March	1334.6	52.5	3.8	10.4	-7.05
April	1337.9	50.2	3.6	11.1	6.47
May	1336.9	53.4	3.8	11.1	4.41
June	1333.0	54.2	3.9	10.9	-1.92
July	1340.5	56.6	4.1	11.3	3.43
August	1340.9	55.9	4.0	10.8	-3.64
September	1342.8	56.1	4.0	11.1	0.93
October	1346.3	56.6	4.1	12.0	9.19
November	1345.8	55.8	4.0	9.9	-17.29
December	1350.6	53.8	3.8	11.1	11.72
1998					
January	1356.5	50.6	3.6	9.3	-16.27
February	1352.5	52.4	3.7	10.7	15.76
March	1352.6	51.7	3.7	9.7	-9.26
April	1349.7	50.6	3.6	10.7	9.78
May	1357.3	50.9	3.5	8.0	-24.98
June	1356.5	46.8	3.3	10.1	25.68
July	1353.4	41.6	3.0	9.5	-5.18
August	1354.2	44.0	3.2	8.9	-6.60
September	1358.5	44.5	3.2	9.6	7.50
October	1362.0	40.8	2.9	8.9	-6.98
November	1365.8	41.5	3.0	9.5	7.21
December	1365.5	40.5	2.8	11.3	18.51

Source: NY State Dept. of Labor. Seasonal adjustments by *RLR* , using Census X-11 program. The Dec. 1998 U.I claims estimate is preliminary and may have been inflated by technical factors, according to analysts at NY State Dept. of Labor in Albany.

CALENDAR

Local & National Events: Spring - Summer 1999

NY METRO

February 23 - March 21 -- "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives," an exhibit of 120 photos and oral history texts about New York City working people over the past 100 years. At Teamsters Local 237, 216 West 14th St., Manhattan. **March 22 - April 15 –** the exhibit moves to UNITE headquarters, 1710 Broadway. For information call NYU Wagner Labor Archives at 212/998-2649.

March 4 – "Latino Immigrants on Long Island: Struggles, Achievements, and Prospects." A conference and community dialogue at Hofstra University, Axinn Library (10th floor): 12:15 - 6:30. See schedule in this issue. For info, call 516/463-5838 or 516/463-5040.

March 8 – International Women's Day. "Working Harder, Earning Less: 40-hour Fast for NY Working Poor," sponsored by Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition. For info, call: 212/406-2156, ext. 237.

March 10 – "Human Rights in Colombia," a lecture by Gloria Flores (MINGA), as part of the series, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 50: Making the Rhetoric Real." At Hofstra University, Student Center Theater, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. For info, call 516/463-5828.

March 11 – Industrial Relations Research Association, Long Island Chapter Meeting. Guest Speaker: Paul D'Onofrio, labor lawyer and former NLRB agent. Weeping Willow Restaurant, 25 Smith St., Farmingdale, 6:60 p.m. For info, call 516/472-2796.

March 20 – "Women Fighting Poverty Conference," at Cooper Union, Great Hall, 7 East 7th St., Manhattan, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Invited speakers include: Alexis Herman, Nydia Velasquez, Frances Fox Piven, Josephine LeBeau. Workshops on: workplace and community organizing; part-time & temp job problems; access to quality health care; affordable housing; and welfare rights. For info, call: 212/662-3207.

April 8 – Equal Pay Day.

April 13 – "College Students and the New Union Movement," a talk by Yolanda Medina Nelson, AFL-CIO Northeast Region organizing representative. At Hofstra University, Business Development Center, rm. 215, 2:20 - 3:45 p.m. For info, call 516/463-5040.

April 16 - 18 – Scholars, Artists, and Writers for Social Justice, Annual National Meeting: "Union Cities, Universities, and the Right to Organize." At Yale University, New Haven, CT. Confirmed speakers include: Kate Bronfenbrenner, Maria Durazo, Barbara Ehrenreich, Tony Mazzocchi, David Montgomery, Frances Fox Piven, Adolph Reed, Andrew Ross, John Wilhelm. For info, call 413/545-3541; email: sawsj@lrrc.umass.edu.

May 8 – "Stories of Activism in New York City Communities," A conference organized by NYU's Program in Public History and the NY Labor History Association. Panel discussions and multimedia exhibits on social activism in public sector unions, the Catholic Workers Movement, public art, and other topics. At the Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Avenue and 103rd St., Manhattan, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. For info, call 212/534-1672, ext. 257.

May 20 – Industrial Relations Research Association, Long Island Chapter Annual Conference: "Labor Relations As We Approach The New Millennium." At DeSeversky Conference Center, NY Institute of Technology, Old Westbury, 8:45 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Speakers include: Stanley Aronowitz, Jack Caffey, Linda Chavez-Thompson, Tom Kochan, William Lindsay For info, call 516/472-2796.

May 21 - 23 – AFL-CIO Organizing Institute for Latino Recruitment (conducted in Spanish), 3-day training session in New York City. Applications are due May 13. Union-sponsored applicants must attach a completed sponsorship form and fee. For application form or information, contact: AFL-CIO NE Region, 211 E. 43rd St., #300, NY, NY 10017, tel. 212/661-1555, ext. 17 or fax 212-661-5213.

June 25 - 28 – AFL-CIO Organizing Institute (conducted in English), 3-day training session in New York City. Applications are due June 17. Union-sponsored applicants must attach a completed sponsorship form and fee. For application form or information, contact: AFL-CIO NE Region, 211 E. 43rd St., #300, NY, NY 10017, tel. 212/661-1555, ext. 17 or fax 212-661-5213.

June 26 – Town of Hempstead Employees Solidarity Picnic, CSEA Local 880, at Lido Beach (Mushroom Picnic Area), 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. For info call: 516/868-0880.

NATIONAL

April 8 - 11 – Annual Labor Education Conference: "Forging a Labor-Community Agenda: Race, Class and Gender and the Fight for Economic Justice." Co-sponsored by AFL-CIO and the University and College Labor Education Association. At Hyatt Hotel in Atlanta, GA. For info, call Kate Bronfenbrenner at 607/255-7581.

April 23 - 25 -- Labor Notes' 20th Anniversary Conference: "Democracy is Power: Building Labor From Below," in Detroit, Michigan at Marriott (formerly Westin) Hotel, Renaissance Center. Scheduled Speakers include: Kit Costello; Tom Hopp; Saladin Mohammed; Kim Moody; Daniel Singer; Jerry Tucker. Workshops include: Contract campaign strategies; Fighting racism on the job and in the union; Running your local effectively and democratically; Organizing low wage immigrant workers. For info and registration: Labor Notes, 7435 Michigan Ave, Detroit, MI 48210,(313) 842-6262.

June 17-19 -- Industrial Relations Research Association's first National Policy Forum: "National Strategies for Employment Policy: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century." in Washington, D.C., at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill. For info: 608/262-2762

RELEASE DATES FOR LABOR MARKET INDICATORS

National employment & unemployment report for previous month, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Tel: 212/337-2400; Internet: http://www.dol.gov: March 5; April 2; May 7; June 4; July 2, 1999.

State & Regional Employment and Unemployment report for previous month, BLS: March 19; April 16; May 21; June 18; July 16, 1999.

Metro Area Employment & Unemployment report for previous month, BLS: March 17; April 28; June 2; June 30; July 28, 1999.

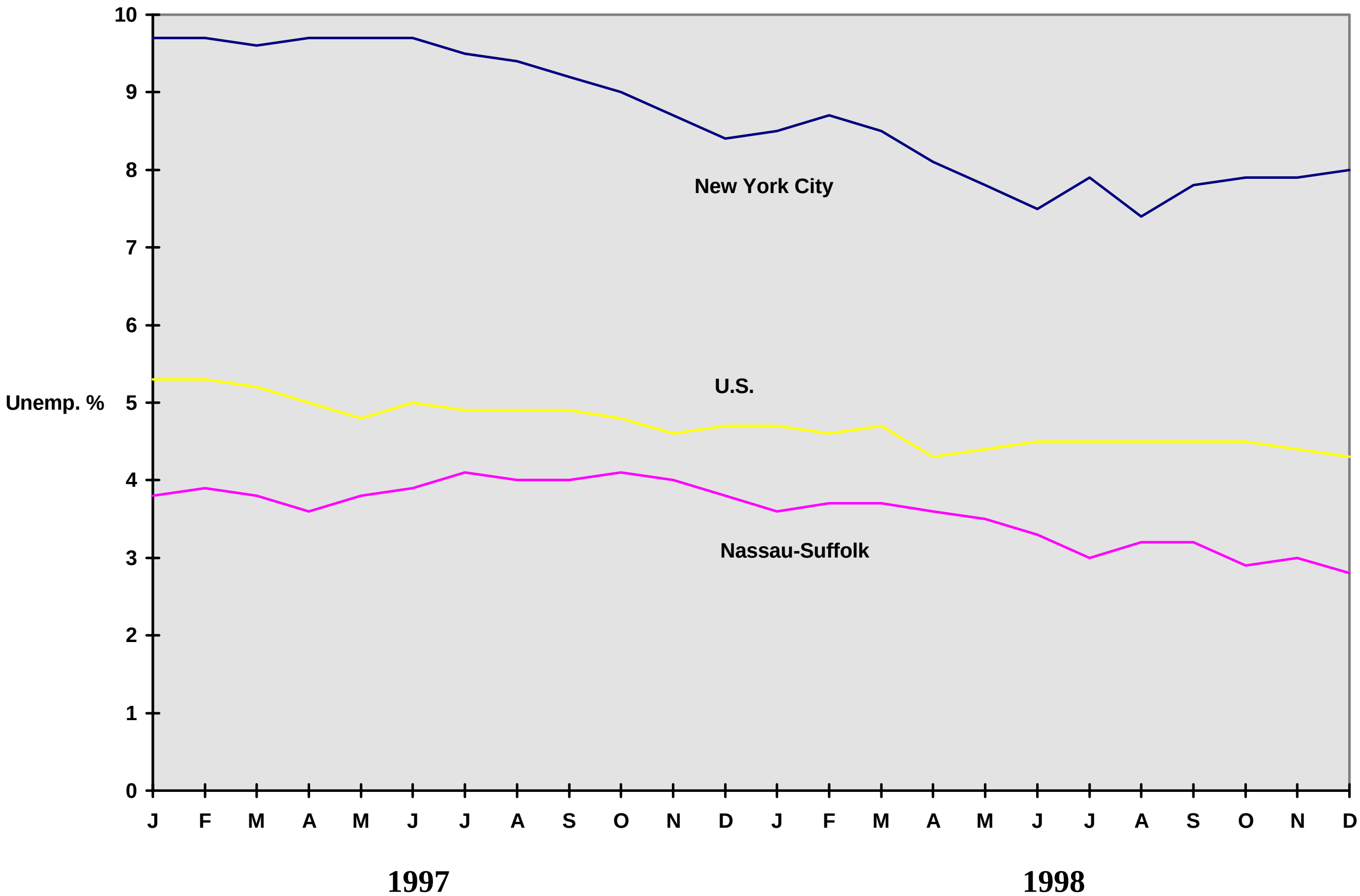
Real Earnings report for previous month, BLS: March 18; April 13; May 14; June 16; July 15, 1999.

NY State Employment Estimates for Metro Areas and NYC, for previous month, NY State Dept. of Labor. Tel: 516/934-8559; Internet: http://www.labor.state.ny.us: March 18; April 15; May 20; June 17; July 15, 1999.

NOTE TO READERS

If you know of upcoming labor-related meetings or conferences, collective bargaining contract expirations or renewals, or other events you would like considered for our next Calendar, please send us a brief description, together with the time, place, contact person, and their telephone number. Either fax this information, with a cover sheet addressed to *Regional Labor Review,* to fax # 516-463-6519; or email us at: laborstudies@hofstra.edu

Unemployment Rates in NYC, Long Island, and U.S., 1997-98
(Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: NY State Dept. of Labor. Rates seasonally adjusted by *RLR*.