

NE had poor job growth in '70s

NEWARK, Del. — Employment grew about half as fast during the 1970s in the Northeast as it did in the rest of the nation, according to a recent University of Delaware Agricultural Experiment Station study. Steven E. Hastings, the specialist in resource economics and rural development who supervised the study, says it's too soon to tell whether the trend has continued into the '80s. Job growth rate is one measure of economic growth.

"Our objective was to compare employment growth in the Northeast with the U.S. as a whole to get an idea of how, during the 1970s, this region and the states within it fared relative to the rest of the country," Hastings says. The study was done as a master's thesis by Jeffrey White, former graduate assistant in the department of agricultural and food economics. White's manuscript is now being prepared for publication as an Experiment Station bulletin.

His analysis showed that between 1970 and 1979, jobs increased in the Northwest by only 9.6 percent compared to the 22.47 percent national average. Each of the three subregions in the Northeast also had a poorer record.

Mid-Atlantic is low

Employment grew by 15 percent in New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont), and by 4.39 percent in the Middle Atlantic states (New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania). With an increase of 20.25 percent, the southern Middle Atlantic area (Delaware,

Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia) was the only subregion to approach the national average.

Of all the northeastern states, only New Hampshire (37.47 percent) and Virginia (26.74 percent) and greater employment growth than the U.S. average. One state, New York, actually suffered a very slight decline.

How did Delaware fare? With an employment growth rate of 13.73 percent, it ranked higher than the Northeast as a whole, but still fell well below the rest of the nation.

According to Hastings, these employment figures parallel national population trends during the same decade. For example, in the 1970s population grew much more in the West and South than in the Northeast or North Central U.S. It also grew much faster in rural than in urban areas.

Data used in the study were collected by the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis and included all types of jobs.

Service growth

"Service-type industries contributed the most to employment

growth in the Northeast," Hastings says. "For years, manufacturing was the primary source of jobs in this region, but over the last couple of decades, services have emerged as a greater source of growth."

As in other parts of the country, there were more new rural than urban jobs in the region — reflecting the exodus from cities which characterized the decade.

"It's interesting to note that preliminary analysis of recent population trends indicates that rural growth may have been just a one decade occurrence," the economist says. "But that hasn't been fully documented yet." One point to remember is that much of the population growth in the South and West during the 1970s occurred in rural areas.

Though the University of Delaware study indicates the Northeast did not keep pace with

the rest of the country in overall employment growth between 1970 and 1979, Hastings says some individual industries obviously did better than others.

Also, though the Northeast had a poorer record than other parts of the country over the last decade, there's no guarantee these trends will continue. "The region might do very well this time around," he says. Another point to remember is that in this analysis we made no attempt to explain why these trends occurred. We simply reported them."

Rural development

The study was conducted as part of a long-term Agricultural Experiment Station research project aimed at evaluating factors which affect economic development in rural areas of Delaware. According to Hastings, the main value of such research is that it

provides policymakers, analysts and others with insight into what has occurred in the past and so indicates potential future problems.

"Obviously, if you could argue that these trends would continue, the Northeast would have some real problems in terms of future employment," the economist says. "And such findings are likely to generate additional studies to explain why firms might locate in the South and the West rather than in the Northeast."

"Anybody concerned about general trends in the individual northeastern states or the region relative to the rest of the U.S. would find the bulletin useful, since what's happened in the past often gives some indication of what's likely to occur in the future." The bulletin should be available late this summer.

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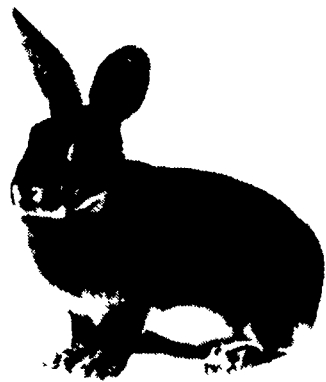
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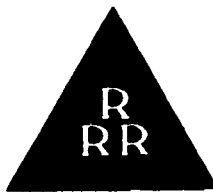
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