

American employment in services doubled during the seventeen year period from 1969 to 1986, versus a six percent decline in manufacturing employment.

While the trend toward service employment has had a positive impact upon retail, office and other forms of construction, the impact has not been directly correlated. Much of the growth in service sector employment has been absorbed through the operation of existing facilities for longer service hours and for longer work-weeks¹.

Service sector jobs in the United States are expected to expand by 16 million to a total of 76 million by the end of the century,² with long-term commercial construction being a main beneficiary. Environmental issues are also becoming increasingly prominent and testing, cleanup and construction services will be associated with this growing trend.

As in Canada, the American economic growth and construction activity has not been equally strong in all regions. New Hampshire, for example, with less than two percent unemployment, has had strong economic and construction activity during the 1980's, in line with the New England region's booming high technology and service industries. At the other extreme, Texas has seventeen percent unemployment, and has had poor levels of construction activity as a result of the slump in oil prices. While the population and economic clout has been migrating south and west during the past two decades, the "rust-belt" has been experiencing an economic renaissance and is expected to continue its strong economic growth during the next decade.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The population of the United States has not shown strong growth - expanding at about one percent annually in recent years. Total population is forecast to grow from 246 million in 1988 to 260 million in 1995, which suggests limited growth in new residential construction. The largest population region is the South with 34 percent of the total population, followed by the Midwest with 24 percent and the Northeast and West Regions each with 21 percent of the nation's population. Growth in population has been highest in the western and southern regions during the past decade.

¹convenience stores, fast food outlets, retail stores, financial institutions and other industries are increasingly offering their services on a 24-hour day and/or seven-day week basis.

²with the fastest growth expected in high skill occupations such as engineering, medical technology, computer programming, and systems analysis.