## Prefatory Note

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## MONETARY POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Prepared for the Federal Open Market Committee
By the staff Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

## MONETARY POLICY ALTERHATIVES

## Recent Developments

(1) Open market operations since the last Comittee meeting have continued to be directed toward maintaining unchanged pressures on reserve positions, and the federal funds rate has remained in the area of $8 \mathbf{- 1 / 4}$ percent. Federal funds have tended to the soft side of this level since late April, however, reflecting a more abundant supply of nonborrowed reserves than expected, as shortfalls in tax receipts have shown through to the Treasury's account at the Federal Reserve. Adjustment borrowing has been around $\$ 100$ million throughout the intermeeting period. Total adjustment plus seasonal borrowing, which has trended up over the period with the normal rise in seasonal borrowing, reached $\$ 257$ million in the most recently completed maintenance period. In the current period, adjustment plus seasonal borrowing is averaging $\$ 291$ million. In recognition of rising seasonal credit needs, the borrowing allowance was raised from $\$ 150$ million immediately after the March meeting to $\$ 200$ million in late April and then to the current level of $\$ 300$ million.
(2) Responding to shifting sentiment on the strength of the economy, inflation prospects, and the likelihood of a near-term tightening of monetary policy, other market interest rates first rose in the intermeeting period and then fell sharply. On balance, bond yields have risen 15 to 25 basis points, while short-term rates are down a like amount. The largest decreases were registered by Treasury bills; despite this
widening, quality spreads remain low by historical standards. The structure of short-term rates had suggested strong expectations of a near-term firming of monetary policy part way through the period, but these expectations dissipated after release of the April data on employment, retail sales, and producer prices, and market yields now embody expectations of an essentially unchanged policy in coming months.
(3) The dollar's weighted average exchange value has declined about 3-1/2 percent since the last FOMC meeting, with much of the drop occurring as interest rates in the United States began retracing earlier increases following the release of April employment data. The dollar was weak against the mark, which strengthened against most currencies following publication of the plan for German monetary unification and prompt conclusion of an important labor negotiation, both of which appeared to relieve some concerns about the outlook for inflation. Very late in the period the dollar dropped sharply against the yen as well. Foreign interest rates showed mixed movements over the intermeeting period. Both short- and long-term rates in EMS countries other than Germany moved lower, prompted in some cases by cuts in central bank lending rates as those countries reacted to the earlier weakness of the mark in the EMS. The Japanese stock market rebounded substantially from its low in early April.
. The Desk sold $\$ 100$ million against yen prior to and immediately following the April G-7 meeting, with half for the System account.
(4) M2 growth slowed to a 2 percent rate in April, well below the 6 percent path set for the March-to-June period at the last FOMC meeting. Part of this weakness owed to declines in the wholesale components of M2: overnight RPs ran off, likely associated with a contraction in government securities held in comercial banks' trading accounts last month, and demand deposits declined at a $6-1 / 2$ percent rate. ${ }^{1}$ Growth of the retail components of M2 also slowed, dropping to a 3-1/2 percent rate from around 6 percent over the first quarter. M2 has been restrained by the rise in intermediate- and long-term rates since late last year, and by the unusually slow adjustment of rates on retail deposits. ${ }^{2}$ The conservative pricing stance at thrifts, which has accompanied a shrinkage of the industry and supervisory constraints on brokered deposit rates, has tended to deflect deposit flows toward banks. Banks also have held down deposit rates, as retail deposit inflows at those lower rates have been more than sufficient to fund credit growth. With their attractiveness diminished, small time deposits continued to increase sluggishly in April while noncompetitive tenders at bill and note auctions surged. Slow credit expansion at banks in April, along with an apparently steeper contraction of the thrift industry, held down overall needs for funds at depository institutions, and M3 grew at only a $1-1 / 4$ percent rate in April as large CDs continued to decline.

[^1](5) The growth of private domestic nonfinancial debt has moderated somewhat in recent months; the slowing appears to reflect a dropoff in credit demands, though tightening supply conditions likely have affected some specific credit categories. Most of the deceleration in overall credit usage reflected reduced borrowing by the household sector. Consumer credit expanded sluggishly in the first quarter and consumer lending at commercial banks weakened in April. The growth of real estate loans at banks also slowed in April; the higher cost of residential mortgage credit and softening real estate markets may be restraining demands, but survey data suggest that banks are tightening the terms of lending on many types of nonresidential loans. Reluctance of banks and other lenders to provide merger-related financing has continued to discourage net equity retirements. Abstracting from estimated merger financing, business lending at banks was weak in the first quarter, although it strengthened in April. Results from a May survey suggest that the weak C\&I loan growth since the turn of the year primarily reflects reduced demand, particularly from large and middle market firms, but middle market firms and small businesses also faced tighter credit standards and more stringent loan terms. However, comercial paper issuance has been strong and businesses continue to find receptive markets for investment-grade bond issues, sustaining overall expansion of business credit. Federal debt issuance has been boosted by RTC-related borrowing. From the fourth quarter to March, total domestic nonfinancial debt increased at nearly a 7 percent pace.

MONEY, CRHDIT, AND RESHRVE AGGREGATES
(Seasonally adjusted annual rates of growth)

|  |  |
| :---: | :---: |

Money and credit aggregates

| M1 | 10.0 | 5.1 | 3.4 | 4.9 |
| :--- | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
| M2 | 8.7 | 5.0 | 2.0 | 5.3 |
| M3 | 4.6 | .8 | 1.2 | 2.4 |
| Domestic nonfinancial debt | 7.6 | 7.5 | n.a. | $6.8^{1}$ |
| Bank credit | 8.4 | 9.2 | 4.1 | 5.6 |

Reserves measures

| Nonborrowed reserves ${ }^{2}$ | -3.6 | 16.6 | -1.6 | 2.6 |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Total reserves | 6.4 | 1.6 | -.6 | 2.0 |
| Monetary base | 9.2 | 8.7 | 7.0 | 8.4 |
| (Millions of dollars) |  |  |  |  |
| Adjustment plus seasonal <br> borrowing | 913 | 173 | 224 | -- |
| Excess reserves | 989 | 861 | 882 | -- |

n.a. - not available.

1. Through March.
2. Includes "other extended credit" from the Federal Reserve.

NOTE: Monthly reserve measures, including excess reserves and borrowing, are calculated by prorating averages for two-week reserve maintenance periods that overlap months.

## Policy Alternatives

(6) Three alternatives--containing the standard differences in associated federal funds rates--are presented below for consideration by the Committee. Under alternative $B$, federal funds would be expected to continue to trade around 8-1/4 percent, with an initial level of adjustment plus seasonal borrowing of $\$ 350$ million. The specifications of alternative A call for federal funds trading around 7-3/4 percent and a borrowing level of $\$ 300$ million, while those of alternative $C$ call for federal funds in the $8-3 / 4$ percent area, which is likely to involve $\$ 400$ million of borrowing. Judging from the experience of recent years, it is anticipated that seasonal borrowing will rise about $\$ 100$ million over the intermeeting period; the borrowing levels suggested above incorporate a \$50 million technical increase to take account of the expected rise in the next few weeks, but an additional increase in the borrowing path may be necessary under all three alternatives.
(7) Interest rates generally would be expected to show little net change under alternative B. Market expectations now embody federal funds continuing to trade around $8-1 / 4$ percent, as under this alternative. Similarly, incoming information on the economy consistent with the greenbook forecast would be roughly in line with the continued economic growth and moderation in measured inflation--though with little improvement in longer-term price trends--that market participants now seem to be anticipating. Rates on Treasury bills and notes, however, could be subject to transitory supply pressures if RTC activity accelerates appreciably and with it Treasury financing needs. A breakthrough in negotiations on the
budget between the Administration and the Congress in coming weeks would be likely to spark a rally in capital markets, which after a time might induce a downward adjustment in the foreign exchange value of the dollar. Absent such a breakthrough, the dollar likely would remain around recent levels on foreign exchange markets; with the dollar stable and German reunification impending, a tightening of monetary policy in Germany and Japan before the next FOMC meeting appears unlikely.
(8) Projected growth rates for the monetary aggregates from March to June are given in the table below for all three alternatives. (The table and charts on the following pages show more detailed data.) Under alternative B, growth in both M2 and M3 would pick up over May and June from the sluggish pace of April. This pickup results in part from a cessation of the runoff of demand deposits and RPs. In addition, the response of depositors to previous increases in opportunity costs would begin to wane. Moreover, opportunity costs have already narrowed from April and, with market interest rates stable, this narrowing could continue, buoying retail deposit inflows, as banks raise small time deposit rates, albeit slowly, in adjustment to increases in market rates on balance this year. To an extent, the strengthening of M2 and M3 under this alternative rests on a rebound in bank credit growth and associated funding needs in May and June--given the evidence that reductions in willingness to lend are limited. Again, the behavior of the RTC constitutes a major uncertainty in the outlook for money growth. To date in the second quarter, RTC spending still has been fairly modest. We have assumed progressively more resolution activity over May and June, but well below

RTC's announced goal of 141 resolutions involving $\$ 50$ billion of assets for this quarter. A surge in RTC activity could damp M3 growth as thrift assets end up on the government's balance sheet. And it could affect M2 as well, if large volumes of retail deposits are transferred to comercial banks without accompanying loans and investments, reducing bank needs to raise deposit offering rates. On balance, M2 growth is projected to strengthen to a 5 percent pace on average in May and June, in line with average growth over the first four months of the year. M3 growth would remain quite sluggish as thrifts continued to shrink--through RTC resolutions and through action to meet capital requirements--but would pick up a little to about a 3-1/2 percent pace from growth of around 1 percent in March and April.

|  | Alt. A | Alt. B | Alt. C |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Growth from March to June |  |  |  |
| M2 | 4-1/2 | 4 | 3-1/2 |
| M3 | 3-1/4 | 3 | 2-3/4 |
| M1 | 4-3/4 | 4 | 3-1/4 |
| Growth from Q4'89 to June |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| M2 | 5-1/2 | 5-1/4 | 5 |
| M3 | 3 | 2-3/4 | 2-3/4 |
| M1 | 5 | 4-3/4 | 4-1/2 |
| Associated federal |  |  |  |
| funds rate ranges | 6 to 10 | 6 to 10 | 7 to 11 |

## Alternative Levels and Growth Rates for Key Monetary Aggregates



## ACTUAL AND TARGETED M2

Billions of dollars


Chart 2

## ACTUAL AND TARGETED M3

Billions of dollars


Chart 3
M1

Blilions of dollars


## DEBT


(9) Even with the projected strengthening in money, growth of both M2 and M3 over the March-to-June period would be noticeably below expectations at the time of the last meeting. Moreover, growth of M2 would be appreciably below the 6 to 7 percent rate of expansion of the previous several quarters, leaving this aggregate only a little above the midpoint of its annual range at mid-year. As noted, the moderation in both M2 and M3 has resulted in part from the weakness in credit growth at banks as well as thrifts. To a considerable extent, this weakness seems to represent a rechannelling of credit flows involving assets, such as mortgages and consumer receivables, that are easily securitized and absorbed by other lenders, without materially raising costs to borrowers. The lack of serious disruptions from this process can be inferred from continued narrow yield spreads between mortgages and Treasury securities. In addition, weaker bank credit growth reflects some tightening of terms and reduction in availability of loans--including those to small business and for construction--that are not easily transferred to other lenders. In the staff forecast, however, the "credit crunch" does not deepen and, while important in certain locales and for selected uses, does not have a major effect on aggregate borrowing and spending. In these circumstances, the slower money growth now forecast for the second quarter would not signal the approach of underlying weakness in the economy, since it would be offset by an upward shift in velocity. M2 velocity in the staff forecast is projected to increase at a $2-1 / 4$ percent rate in the second quarter, following a $1-1 / 2$ percent rise in the first quarter.
(10) Consistent with the notion that credit remains generally available, growth in the debt of private domestic nonfinancial sectors is expected to continue close to the 6 percent average pace of recent months, about in line with spending. While the less hospitable attitude of lenders toward $L$ BOs will continue to restrain corporate restructuring activity and associated credit usage, credit availability difficulties elsewhere in the business sector are expected to have only relatively modest effects, and borrowing by nonfinancial businesses should continue around its recent rate. Credit availability effects likely will continue to be more noticeable in the construction and development area, and the rise in mortgage rates that has occurred this year will continue to restrain household mortgage borrowing as well. Consumer credit growth is expected to remain subdued as spending on durables is projected to be sluggish. Considerable uncertainty surrounds the outlook for Treasury borrowing--both the amount and timing--owing to RTC financing needs. While Treasury borrowing for RTC working capital purposes would end up boosting the debt aggregate, such borrowing would not be expected to put underlying pressure on the general level of interest rates: federal government liabilities simply would be replacing those of private intermediaries, which are not included in the debt aggregate, leaving unaffected the volume of saving available for investment. Assuming a substantial pickup in RTC-related borrowing in the second quarter, federal government debt would increase at about an 8 percent pace over the March-to-June period. Total domestic nonfinancial debt is projected to expand at a 7 percent rate over the three months and
by June would be 7 percent at an annual rate above its fourth-quarter 1989 base, at the midpoint of its 1990 monitoring range.
(11) The easing of reserve conditions under alternative A would tend to strengthen money growth over May and June to something more in line with rates incorporated in the Committee's expectations at the last meeting. Opportunity costs would narrow even more, boosting M2 growth to nearly a 6 percent rate over May and June, leaving this aggregate noticeably above the midpoint of its annual range. M3 growth would firm to a 4 percent annual rate, keeping this aggregate a little above the lower bound of its range. The easing of policy under alternative A would come as something of a surprise to most market participants, and money market rates would decline by the full 50 basis point drop in the federal funds rate. The dollar would come under downward pressure, and, absent incoming information pointing to a weaker economy or a distinct improvement in underlying cost or price trends, the decline in bond rates would be limited, resulting in a steeper yield curve. If, however, evidence suggested a softening in economic activity, perhaps reflecting more powerful credit restraint than now seems apparent, the drop in short-term rates would feed through to bond yields. The decline in market rates would tend to buoy borrowing and spending by those with market access, helping to offset the effects of tighter credit availability on spenders dependent on depository intermediaries.
(12) The tighter reserve conditions under alternative $C$ would be expected to keep money growth damped. M2 would be at the middle of its range by June and M3 just above the lower end of its range. Short-term
rates would increase by about the $1 / 2$ percentage point rise in the federal funds rate, and the dollar would tend to firm. Banks would raise the prime rate, and could further tighten other credit terms. Bond yields also would rise, at least initially, in response to the reversal of the previous trend in Federal Reserve actions. However, in the context of only moderate growth in the economy, the higher short-term interest rates and slower money growth would be seen as a policy response to inflation pressures, implying additional emphasis by the Federal Reserve on its price stability objective. In this context, the credibility of that objective could be enhanced, to the benefit of bond prices.

## Directive Lanquage

(14) Draft language for the operational paragraph, including the usual options, is shown below.

## OPERATIONAL PARAGRAPH

In the implementation of policy for the immediate future, the Comittee seeks to DECREASE SOMEWHAT/maintain/ INCREASE SOMEWHAT the existing degree of pressure on reserve positions. Taking account of progress toward price stability, the strength of the business expansion, the behavior of the monetary aggregates, and developments in foreign exchange and domestic financial markets, slightly (SOMEWHAT) greater reserve restraint (WOULD/MIGHT) or slightly (SOMEWHAT) lesser reserve restraint would (MIGHT) be acceptable in the intermeeting period. The contemplated reserve conditions are expected to be consistent with growth of M2 and M3 over the period from March through June at annual rates of about _ AND __ 6 and 4 percent respectively. The Chairman may call for Conmittee consultation if it appears to the Manager for Domestic Operations that reserve conditions during the period before the next meeting are likely to be associated with a federal funds rate persistently outside a range of _ $\mathrm{TO}_{\mathrm{O}} 6$ to $7 \theta$ percent.

SELECTED INTEREST RATES
(percent)



 $p--$ prellminery dena

MAY, 15, 1990


 3. Excludes IRA and Keogh accounts
p-preliminary denomination time deposits held by money market mutual funds and thrift institutions
p-preliminary

| Period | Treasury bilis |  |  | Treasury coupons |  |  |  |  |  | Federal agencies redemptions (-) | Net change outright holdings total | Not RPs ${ }^{3}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Net } \\ & \text { change } \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | Het purchases ${ }^{3}$ |  |  |  | Redemp- <br> tion: (-) | Net change |  |  |  |
|  | $\begin{gathered} \text { Net } \\ \text { purchases }{ }^{2} \\ \hline \end{gathered}$ | Redomp- $\text { tions }(-)$ |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Within } \\ & 1 \text {-year } \end{aligned}$ | 1-5 | 5-10 | over 10 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1984 | 11,479 | 7.700 | 3,779 | 826 | 1,938 | 236 | 441 | -- | 3,440 | 256 | 6,964 | 1,450 |
| 1985 | 18,096 | 3,500 | 14,596 | 1,349 | 2,185 | 358 | 293 | - | 4,185 | 162 | 18,619 | 3,001 |
| 1986 | 20,099 | 1,000 | 19,099 | 190 | 893 | 236 | 158 | -- | 1,476 | 398 | 20,178 | 10,033 |
| 1987 | 12,933 | 9,029 | 3,905 | 3,358 | 9,779 | 2,441 | 1,858 | 70 | 17,366 | 276 | 20,994 | -11,033 |
| 1988 | 7,635 | 2,200 | 5,435 | 2,177 | 4,686 | 1,404 | 1,398 | -- | 9,665 | 587 | 14,513 | 1,557 |
| 1989 | 1,466 | 12,730 | -11,264 | 327 | 946 | 258 | 284 | 500 | 1,315 | 442 | -10,391 | -1,683 |
| 1988--Q1 | 319 | 2,200 | -1,881 | -- | -800 | -175 | -- | -- | -975 | 155 | -3,011 | -3,514 |
| 02 | 423 | -- | 423 | 1,092 | 3,661 | 1,017 | 966 | -- | 6,737 | 130 | 7,030 | 5,220 |
| 03 | 1,795 | -- | 1,795 | - | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 77 | 1,717 | 1,393 |
| 04 | 5,098 | -- | 5,098 | 1,084 | 1,824 | 562 | 432 | $\cdots$ | 3,903 | 224 | 8,776 | -1,541 |
| 1989--91 | -3,842 | 2,200 | -6,042 | -- | -228 | -20 | -- | -- | -218 | 188 | -6,477 | -5,591 |
| Q2 | 2,496 | 2,400 | 96 | 172 | 1,361 | 287 | 284 | -- | 2,104 | 125 | 2,075 | 924 |
| 03 | -6,450 | 3,200 | -9,650 | - | -163 | -9 | -- | -7 | -172 | 99 | -9,921 | -893 |
| 04 | 9,263 | 4,930 | 4,333 | 155 | -24 | - | - | 500 | -369 | 30 | 3,934 | 3,877 |
| 1990--21 | -3,799 | 1,400 | -5,199 | 100 | 100 | -- | -- | -- | 200 | -- | -4,999 | -4,061 |
| 1989--June | -571 | 1,200 | -1,771 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -1,771 | 10,002 |
| July | -5,516 | 2,400 | -7,916 | -- | -13 | -9 | -- | -- | -22 | 45 | -7,983 | -5,152 |
| August | -934 | 800 | -1,734 | -- | -150 | -- | -- | -- | -150 | -- | -1,884 | 617 |
| September | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 54 | 54 | 3,641 |
| October | -1,414 | 1,400 | -2,814 | -- | -24 | -- | -- | 500 | -524 | 30 | -3,368 | 463 |
| November | 8,794 | 3,530 | 5,264 | 155 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 155 | -- | 5,419 | -453 |
| December | 1,883 | -- | 1,883 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1,883 | 3,867 |
| 1990--January | -1,065 | 1,000 | -2,065 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | - | -- | -2,065 | -8,435 |
| February | -3,277 | 400 | -3,677 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | - | -3,677 | 4,417 |
| March | 543 | 0 | 543 | 100 | 100 | -- | -- | -- | 200 | -- | 742 | -43 |
| April | 5,796 | 0 | 5,796 | -- | 100 | -- | -- | -- | 100 | 78 | 5,818 | -1,260 |
| Mar. 7 | 488 | -- | 488 | 100 | 100 | -- | - | -- | 200 | -* | 688 | 4,201 |
| 14 | -- | -- | -- | - | -- | -- | -- | -- | - | -- | -- | -5,353 |
| 21 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | - | -- | 3,112 |
| 28 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | - | -- | -- | -1,253 |
| Apr. 4 | 200 | -- | 200 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 200 | -29 |
| 11 | 4,833 | -- | 4,833 | -- | 100 | -- | -- | -- | 100 | -- | 4,933 | -2,362 |
| 18 | 290 | -- | 290 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | - | -- | 290 | 7,661 |
| 25 | 181 | -- | 181 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 78 | 103 | -7,458 |
| May 2 | 347 | -- | 347 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 347 | -84 |
| 9 | -- | - | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -97 |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { Memo: LEvel (bil. }{ }^{4}{ }^{6} \\ & \text { May } 9 \end{aligned}$ | -- | - | 107.2 | 25.5 | 58.1 | 12.6 | 26.3 | -- | 122.5 | -- | 236.2 | -5.6 |

1. Change from end-or-period to end-of-period.
2. Outright transactions in market and with foreign accounts.
3. Reflects net change and redemptions (-) of Treasury and agency securities

Outright transactions in market and with forelgn accounts, and
5. Includes change in RPs ( + ), matched sale-purchase transactions ( - ), and matched short-term notes accuired in exchange for maturing bills. Excludes
maturity shifts and rollovers of maturing coupon issues.
.
The levels of agency issues more
as follows:

| within <br> $1-$ year | $1-5$ | $5-10$ | over 10 | total |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2.3 | 2.9 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 6.5 |


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ In some cases, original copies needed to be photocopied before being scanned into electronic format. All scanned images were deskewed (to remove the effects of printer- and scanner-introduced tilting) and lightly cleaned (to remove dark spots caused by staple holes, hole punches, and other blemishes caused after initial printing).
    ${ }^{2}$ A two-step process was used. An advanced optimal character recognition computer program (OCR) first created electronic text from the document image. Where the OCR results were inconclusive, staff checked and corrected the text as necessary. Please note that the numbers and text in charts and tables were not reliably recognized by the OCR process and were not checked or corrected by staff.

[^1]:    1. M1 slowed to a 3-1/2 percent rate last month, despite continued strong expansion in currency and other checkable deposits. Reflecting the continued strength in currency, the monetary base grew at a 7 percent pace in April, a bit below the rate of the first quarter.
    2. From late last year to the end of April, the 1 -year Treasury bill rate had risen about $3 / 4$ percentage point; by contrast, over the same period, the rate on 1-year small time deposits had risen only about 12 basis points at banks and at thrifts had fallen slightly.
