

A CHECK TO SPECULATION?

During the war years and the year which has elapsed since the armistice a tremendous inflation occurred all over the world. In the war years this inflation was primarily for the purpose of providing the governments with what they needed. Since the conclusion of the armistice the inflation has gone on and its purpose has been the booming of prices both for commodities, real property, securities and practically everything else. There has undoubtedly been some real anxiety among expert observers for a long time past concerning the prospect of bringing on an ultimate commercial crisis, due to the over-inflation of credit, with the resulting disorders in the field of prices or production as well as of consumption. The needs of the case were noted by the committee of investigation which was appointed by Great Britain some eighteen months ago, and which reported about a year ago in favor of an early effort to check inflation. As the committee did its work before the close of the war, it naturally directed its attention toward the checking of war inflation, and it pointed out methods toward the attainment of that end. It would, however, have applied its remarks with even greater force to the peace inflation which has come to pass since the armistice. And its views have been echoed and adopted not only in the United States but elsewhere ever since they were first made public. The whole question has been, both here and in England, when the time would come that the conditions of government financing and the power of endurance of the community would permit the action and adoption of a contraction policy. Now that the determination has been reached to try to check speculation, a turning point has apparently been arrived at, and the principal remaining question is how effective a check to speculation has been administered and whether it will result in an actual and direct contraction of credit.

BANK MERGERS IN ENGLAND.

How bank amalgamations are viewed in England is told by Mr. Nutting in his report to the Department of Commerce at Washington. "It is not surprising that many people viewed these gigantic amalgamations with concern," he writes, "and feared they might ultimately result in the formation of a money trust for, in their opinion, the evils which would attach to such a trust could scarcely be exaggerated. This the banks concerned admitted but they claimed to be strenuously opposed, now and in the future, to anything in the nature of a money trust and held that competition was keener than ever before. Further, they stated they were confident that this condi-

tion would remain so long as even five great banks, each represented in every town of importance throughout the country, continued to exist. Ultimately, after much discussion, a committee was appointed by the Treasury to look into the whole matter.

"This committee, in its report on the subject, recommended that in future all banking amalgamations, before being carried through, must first be approved by the government and that such approval may be withheld if the proposed consolidation in any case involves an appreciable overlapping either of interests or territory. The banks in defending their policy of amalgamation, maintained that it was an essential part of their programs for the provision of the fullest banking facilities for the trade. They realized that the country's recovery depended upon an immense increase in production and that a greater proportion of such production must in future be destined for foreign parts, because of the reversal of the position from that of a substantial creditor almost to that of a debtor nation."

PERSONAL LIABILITY FOR FIRES

The amendment to the Criminal Code passed at the last session of Parliament, which makes indictable offences, negligence which causes a fire and failure to make improvements recommended to prevent fires from occurring, is now being utilized. Fire Commissioner Latulippe, of Montreal, had before him last week, two men charged under this amendment, one with causing a fire by smoking in a garage, while using gasoline in cleaning chains, the other for having caused a fire by striking a match and using it to look into a barrel of gasoline. Both were committed for trial before the King's Bench.

The amendment to the Criminal Code under which these charges were brought is as follows:

"Everyone is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to two years' imprisonment, who, by negligence causes any fire which occasions loss of life or loss of property. The person owning, occupying or controlling the premises in which such a fire occurs, or on which such a fire originates, shall be deemed to have caused the fire through negligence, if such person has failed to obey the requirements of any law intended to prevent fires or which requires apparatus for the extinguishment of fires or to facilitate the escape of persons in the event of fire, if the jury finds that such fire, or the loss of life or the whole or any substantial portion of the loss of property, would not have occurred, if such law had been complied with."

A further amendment makes an indictable offence failure to comply with requirements imposed by a fire prevention officer or authority.