It is becoming more apparent all the time that the only thing that can effect a lasting improvement in money rates locally and internationally—is a decided improvement in industrial conditions. At present that does not appear to be in sight. Though recovery is going forward at a certain pace, it is very slow and is accompanied by the happening from time to time of discouraging events. For example the recent move of the U. S. Steel Corporation in shutting down plants of the Tennessee Coal & Iron Company seems to indicate that the steel industry is not as yet recovering as a result of the price reductions.

THE BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

Three-quarters of a century ago, a group of British capitalists "interested in the prosperity and commerce of the North American Colonies" organized the Bank of British North America. Such reference by Dr. Breckenridge, in his careful volume on The Canadian Banking System, well indicates the part which this institution planned to take in the upbuilding and development of Canada. The authority quoted dwells at some length upon the assistance that the Bank of British North America rendered to the early business interests of the country. The importance of its present position in financial and commercial affairs is a natural outcome of the services rendered during the Canadian business community's day of small things.

At the seventy-third annual meeting held in London early this month, the Chairman, Mr. C. W. Tomkinson, referred to the steady strengthening of the bank's rest fund, which in pounds sterling has now reached the round sum of half-a-million—the balance sheet in Canadian currency giving the amount as $2,433,333, or exactly half the paid-up capital. The chairman stated, further, that it is not the intention of the management to remain content with this figure, the hope being expressed that additions may continue to be made from time to time.

The year's net profits—lessened naturally by adverse trade conditions during 1908—were $417,669. Of this sum, after the addition of practically $100,000 to rest fund and the payment of dividends, together with provision for miscellaneous items, some $75,000 remained to be carried forward to profit and loss.

The balance sheet shows deposit and current accounts to have increased by about $4,500,000 to over $26,200,000. The same conditions which during 1908 contributed to such a showing had to do also with the falling-off in bills payable and other liabilities. These show a decrease of over $4,300,000—due largely, no doubt to lessened foreign exchange business during New York's slack months. The balance sheet shows assets of $45,445,496, as compared with $45,434,339 at the close of 1907—the total being thus practically unchanged.

The loyalty of the bank's staff throughout Canada, under the general managership of Mr. H. Stikeman, and "the keenness shown by them for the interests of the institution" were appreciatively referred to at the annual meeting. A conservative, but by no means gloomy outlook, was expressed as to the future. "With another good harvest," the chairman pointed out, "it is not unreasonable to assume that the evidences of improving business which now exist in Canada will develop, and that trade will once again become active.

THE INSURANCE BILL IN COMMITTEE.

The Insurance Bill has been under consideration this week in the Commons Committee on Banking and Commerce. Naturally, and rightly, the Life Officers' Association has been to the fore in the discussion of details. That the proposed bill is distinctly an improvement over the measure introduced a year ago, was freely admitted by Mr. J. K. Macdonald, the president of the Life Officers' Association, in the course of his statement before the Committee this week. But Mr. Macdonald holds—and his many years of successful managerial experience give force to his contention—that the bill is still in some respects revolutionary. More especially had he reference to provisions regarding policyholders' directors. As THE CHRONICLE pointed out, a week ago, there certainly seems reason in the objection that efficiency of management is likely to be endangered by the proviso that the directorate of a stock company must be composed equally of shareholders' and policyholders' representatives. If it is deemed necessary to have direct representation, provision for a minority of the directorate elected by policyholders should serve all needed purposes—without incurring the lively danger of sound business progress being checked by men who, on the average, must necessarily be less versed than shareholders' directors are, in insurance and financial matters.

Certain other points made by Mr. Macdonald had to do particularly with the bill's requirement for quarterly investment returns and a detailed annual gain and loss exhibit. There is no doubt that much time, labour and expense would be saved to the companies—ultimately to the policyholders—if, as suggested, half-yearly instead of quarterly returns were required regarding securities held, disposed of and purchased. Mr. Macdonald complained that a bill seeking to limit expenses should avoid making requirements which would unnecessarily increase expenses.

To the inclusion of an annual gain and loss ex-