

THE COMMERCIAL SITUATION

A TIME FOR WISE PREVISION. (THE TORONTO GLOBE.)

It is becoming increasingly evident that the coming winter will be far from a prosperous one for thousands of men engaged in the building trades and in unskilled outdoor work in Toronto. The great wave of immigration during the past two years carried thousands of people into this community who are ill-prepared for three or four months' idleness, and whose scanty savings will be dissipated almost before the winter is entered upon unless they can be reinforced by occasional employment. Practically the only normal outdoor work during the three winter months is snow-shovelling, and that is but a poor source when thousands of men scramble for it.

It would be wise for both public and private employers of labor who are not tied up by difficulties in financing their projects to so arrange their plants that all practicable outdoor work may be gone on with during the winter. The City Council might very well spend money freely on leveling and filling at the Island. Sand can be moved as readily in winter as in summer, and much soil could be carried across the ice cheaply. At the new Christie street park and in various other park works many unskilled workers could be employed. During the boom years there was a great deal of cellar excavation and reconstruction work carried on in winter. Much work of this nature still remains to be done, and it can probably be done more thoroughly and more cheaply during the slack season than after the rush starts again next spring.

There are also a number of big projects on hand that might be begun during the winter. Among them are the demolition of the building on the new General Hospital site, the construction of the civic switching line into Ashbridge's marsh, the continuation of the sea wall cribwork after

the ice forms, and the building of a relief street car track into the Exhibition grounds.

Every dollar that can judiciously be expended should be put into public works this winter. By spring the present financial stringency will be past, and the city will go ahead at the assured gait of the past few years, but we should see to it that spring does not find the spirit of the outdoor worker crushed by the hardships of a winter of unemployment. The Board of Control has no more important duty than to exercise a wise prevision over public works, and set them

THE BANK RATE RAISED.

While the United States treasury is filled to overflowing with gold, the reserve far exceeding the certificates in circulation, the Bank of England has been compelled to raise its rate of discount to prevent Europe being drained to meet American demands. Normally the United States is a gold exporting and not a gold importing country, and its tendency to accumulate the precious metal seems to be one of the results of its high tariff. It is a cardinal article of the faith of professors of political economy that imports are paid for by exports. As, however, the United States makes it very difficult to import manufactured goods gold must accumulate in the country or overseas trade must be reduced in volume. The abundance of gold in its turn raises prices, an evil which unfortunately is not confined to the southern half of the continent. Between the tariff and the trusts, indeed, trade in the United States has been forced into unnatural channels to the immense profit of the plutocracy. The system is one which enables the captains of industry and the masters of finance to take toll of the earnings of the ordinary citizen with a ruthlessness which would make the methods of a mediaeval baron merciful in comparison.

THE CROP MOVING QUESTION.

Very much has been said during the past week or ten days regarding the question of funds for moving the crops. Grain men continue to say that they cannot get all the money they want to handle their grains. The general opinion appears to be that the banks have plenty of funds, but that they wish to keep ample supplies in their vaults fearing that developments in the financial world might cause a "run" on the banks. Last year, and previously, grain brokers could draw for the value of a shipment to the Old Country and secure the cash from the banks here. New York would honor the drafts and furnish the necessary funds. This season, however, large grain merchants claim that they must wait until they get the money from the Old Country for the cargoes.

One would imagine that the bankers know their own business best, and that they were doing only what was wise for the safety of the institutions. It so happens, however, that the bankers' business is also the people's business, and the banks are chartered to accommodate the public. If they have plenty of money in their possession, it is a very critical time to hold it back from those upon whom the marketing of our crops depends. Wheat is good enough security for its value, and especially this year, when it is in great demand. It is the people's money that the banks have, and it is the people that demand its proper distribution, now at the season of the year, when the general business interests of the whole country depend upon the prompt marketing of the products of the soil.

If the banks were to curtail loans on grain after the close of navigation, one should not perhaps think so seriously of it, but when they do so at a time when we have only a few days left to ship grain over the lakes, it is more liable to be reckoned as a hold-up than anything else.