

similar views have been expressed at every place where the Commission has held its sittings. The establishment of equitable principles of dealing does not depend upon the existence of a railway commission, with which it has no necessary connection. The experience of railway commissions, in the United States, is not reassuring; but such as it is, it has not prevented Congress from creating one to carry out the Inter-state Commerce Bill. This bill is the appropriate answer to those who argue that a railway company, acting as common carrier, may discriminate as it likes for and against individuals.

That insolvency laws should be uniform throughout the Dominion, Mr. Darling justly holds. But this opinion, it must be remembered, is not universally accepted. New Brunswick clings to preferences, which cannot be defended without a sacrifice of equity. To the Parliament soon to be elected Mr. Darling looks for a measure which its predecessor refused to enact. The question is one on which any appeal hat may be made to the electorate would probably be disregarded. The average elector takes little note of bankrupt laws, and his choice of candidates is, as a rule, determined on issues foreign to them. General consideration for the question is difficult to get. The decision of the question must depend upon the good will of Parliament, after it has been elected; and what that decision will be the wisest among us cannot foresee.

To the working of the assessment act Mr. Darling calls attention, and one of his suggestions has much to recommend it. His proposal is that all municipal taxes should be raised on real estate, supplemented by a classified business tax, based on the rental of premises, and a poll tax. A business tax would be a welcome substitute for an income tax; but it would be no more equal than the income bill now is, if indeed it would be as nearly equal. The inequality of the income tax, as hitherto levied, has been great and glaring. But the injustice of these assessments is perhaps much less than appears on the surface. Incomes are scaled down very low; but if the scaling is general, the inequality disappears. That there is a rough justice in the scaling need not be denied. It is only in the exceptional cases of a man's income being known that the benefit of the scaling is not got. And the scaling cannot be absolutely uniform, apart from these exceptional cases. This tax is more inquisitorial than some others; but, given the necessity of an income tax, the fault of the assessors has been that they did not take sufficient trouble to find out what the incomes were. Very frequently, the parties assessed were not even asked what their incomes were; and no means of any kind were taken to find out. And, after all, great as may have been the inequalities in the assessment of incomes, they diverged less perhaps from the true amounts than the assessment of real estate diverged from the true values; the inequalities in the assessment of real estate were probably quite as great as in the assessment of incomes. Ex-Alderman Turner, recently stated that, in one part of this city, real

estate was valued at half what it is worth and in another part at two-thirds. If any such proportion as this exists, it cannot be doubted that inequality in assessment is greater, in the case of real estate than in that of incomes. What these facts teach is not the rejection of this or that tax, but the equalization of the assessment.

"Where special benefit is conferred by the municipality," says Mr. Darling, "special taxation should be imposed." This is sound doctrine; but it is when he comes to apply it, that Mr. Darling fails. The capitalist living in Windsor, Quebec or Newfoundland, who sends his money for investment in joint stock enterprises, carried on here, "is not a proper subject of taxation." Mr. Darling argues, because "the city confers no benefit on him personally." But it cannot be said that in protecting his property, it confers no benefit on him. The question is not of the individual, but of the property. Personal property is liable to be stolen, and requires more police protection than houses and land which cannot be carried off by thieves. In this protection there is a municipal service, and a service greater than is rendered to other kinds of property. And that is a reason why it should be taxed. But it is not the less true that, on the whole, municipalities do more for real than for personal property.

"What is common to all, equally enjoyed by all and of equal benefit to all, should be paid for in equal measure by all," is another rule laid down by Mr. Darling; and the position which he assumes is unassailable. But the principle is nevertheless one from which we have departed. The public streets, more than anything else, answer this description: they are common to all, are equally enjoyed by all, though in different degrees; they are of benefit to all, but the benefit is enjoyed by some to a much fuller extent than by others. On Mr. Darling's principles, the public streets should be paid for by all. But this is contrary to the system which imposes a frontage tax, for the improvement of streets. But that common benefits should require equal taxes from all is a proposition which requires to be amended so as to make the contributions bear some proportion to the means of payment. A poll tax fails to meet this condition; and it will never be tolerated that all, without respect to their means, should be required to pay equal municipal taxes. If that were done, the greatest injustice would be perpetrated in the name of equality. The spirit of the times is not propitious for the making of such an experiment. When even Mr. Blake advocates a graduated income tax, it is quite certain that great inequalities in the distribution of municipal burthens, in a totally opposite direction are quite out of the question. It would not be wise, and might in the end prove disastrous to give socialism an excuse for saying that any form of property took means to avoid the payment of its just obligations in the form of municipal taxes.

That income and personal property taxes are highly objectionable we agree with Mr. Darling; but for that matter, all taxes are objectionable, though not in the same degree. The substitution of a business tax

would be welcomed by people engaged in business; and the experience of Montreal shows that this is a tax which is practically workable. The basis on which it should rest is a difficulty. Rent is no proof of ability to pay; it is no just measure of the extent of personal property protected by the municipality, which is not an unfair measure of contribution. Very frequently there is no rent to serve as a measure of assessment; the premises being owned by the occupiers. In that case it would be necessary to fall back on the rent which the buildings would yield; in which several guides, such as the rent obtained for similar premises, no doubt could be found.

The magnitude of the real estate transactions, in Toronto, during the last year, causes Mr. Darling to sound a note of warning. It cannot be denied that there is need for caution, though there is none for alarm. We are passing through one of those periods of activity, in real estate, of which some of us remember several. The most notable of the earlier of these periods within the recollection of living men occurred in 1854. The auctioneer's tent and the champagne lunch were then common accompaniments of the movement. But nothing like the frenzy of that period has been reached now. There is no mystery about the land sales of the day; the morning journal tells the whole story. Two results from these novel publications have already been produced. People who do not desire to have a needless inquisition made into their private affairs, put in a nominal sum as the consideration for the sale; and people who wish to make it appear that they are getting more than they are for their property, exaggerate the consideration. But the public understands this. The danger, if danger there be, is in spreading unduly beyond the city limits. Toronto is adding rapidly to its population, not less, perhaps, than ten thousand souls a year, and the price of land is steadily progressive. Even the North West speculation, which took some millions out of Toronto never to return, did not depress prices here; it merely retarded sales, while prices were maintained or steadily increased. A word of caution will, nevertheless, do no harm: serious danger there is at present none.

#### A PRETENDED DEATH.

A rascally conspiracy to defraud life and accident insurance companies, was that disclosed the other day by the test case of Dunseath vs. the Ontario Mutual Life and A. O. U. W. The evidence showed that Samuel J. Dunseath insured his life in 1885 for some \$15,500 in six companies, assigning the policies to his brother Richard. In January 1886 the companies were notified by the latter of the alleged death of Samuel by falling off a ferry boat on Detroit River. The proof of death consisted of the oaths of two companions of his that saw him leaning over the railing of the boat, ill, and afterwards saw his hat floating while he had disappeared. The companies refused to pay the claims made upon them by Richard Dunseath, and on production, at the trial, of certain evidence which went to prove that all three were bad char-