

reform the government of St. John the charter and the amending acts will have to be consolidated into a new charter. When this is done the first chapter of the Book of Knowledge of St. John will have been prepared.

Covered with dust and piled away in various obscure corners of the Common Clerk's vault there repose ancient and forgotten documents which are generally described as the city Bye-laws. Here again a blissful state of ignorance prevails regarding many of these. Some of them have not seen the light for half a century, but have never been repealed. This may be regarded as over stating the case but it is not so. Effort after effort has been made to get the Bye-laws of the city put into shape and printed but the civic year has never been long enough to admit of the work being completed, although several Councils have struggled manfully with the task and have actually succeeded in revising some of the more important of them. This work properly belongs to a legal expert and should be entrusted to the Recorder the result of whose labors could then be considered by the Council. The Assessment question has already been referred to a Commission to devise a plan for submission to the Council and afterwards to the Legislature. The same thing should happen with the charter and the amending acts.

While Commissions are preparing a new charter and a new Assessment law, the Council itself might take up the question of debt consolidation including also the Sinking fund. The management of the public debt of St. John could hardly be worse than it is. When St. John began to accumulate a debt it was the belief that the revenues of the city—not the assessment, bear in mind—would take care not only of the interest but also the principal of the debt. As a consequence the old city debt, some of which still exists and is falling due every year was made a mortgage on all the property, real and personal, then possessed by the city. When St. John was practically bankrupt the Common Council of the day solemnly pledged itself not to increase the debt of the city until the old bonds had been extinguished. Perhaps the pledge was honestly made, for St. John was in a genuine financial "hole" at the time, but history proves that time and again this pledge was violated. The manner of evading it was to

give a mortgage on some special work or property to cover every new issue of bonds. The interest of these bonds was either secured by the revenues derivable from the property they represented, or was made a charge on the assessment. All of these bonds had sinking funds, but the only sinking fund for the old city debt was the surplus revenues of the city or monies received from the sale of its real estate. As the general revenue of the city had no surplus for years the old bonds were retired by issuing new ones. Now that the city has a surplus revenue from its real estate that surplus should in common honesty be used for the purpose originally intended, the reduction of the debt.

Instead, it is used to pay the over expenditures of the aldermen on streets, fire, light and police. It is for this over expenditure—this reckless extravagance of the aldermen in the management of the civic departments that the Common Council is blamable. In the face of this they attempt to tell people that they are keeping down taxation by using the unexpended balances in the general revenue account to meet current obligations of the city. If they had said they were using money that properly belongs to the bond holders for the purpose of pleasing people they hope to vote for them in the next election they would be much nearer the truth. This is the more true because if the money was rightfully used for the reduction of the debt it would mean reduced taxation.

The method employed by the aldermen instead of reducing taxation increases it, for the interest on the new issues of bonds to take up the old ones is not paid out of the general revenue account but together with the sinking fund is made a direct charge on the assessment under the heading "Interest St. John City Debt." Yet the very gentlemen who are doing this thing say it would be unjust to the bond holders to consolidate the debt and the sinking fund, when in reality they are consolidating it piece meal—a little every year—and that little now amounts to a round million of new debentures issued since Union—to retire existing bonds most of which were special mortgages on something previously. As a matter of fact the special mortgages would be valueless if the time should ever arrive when the city of St. John were compelled to repudiate its debt. Of what use would Dorchester street be to the bond-