

The methods pursued in reaching a valuation of the property of the city can scarcely be described as up to date, and the result is a lack of uniformity in the valuation, particularly of real estate. There is no doubt that for a quarter of a century the real estate market in St. John has been greatly depressed. The city was over built after the fire and the owners of much of the real estate of the city had to be content with small earnings. Conditions are gradually changing. Real estate has shown an upward tendency and while there is still much unprofitable property in St. John yet there are but few unoccupied buildings, and within a few years there have been many notable additions to the mercantile buildings of the city while the structures vacated have obtained other tenants. This is a hopeful sign and the fact that the supply no longer exceeds the demand is evinced in the fact that rentals have been advancing for the past two years. The depression in real estate has led to an undervaluation of property generally, and it is this undervaluation that admits of abuse. The assessors are not charged with wilfully rating two similar properties—yielding exactly the same rental and costing about the same—at different values but there are many such instances within a stone's throw of the City Hall, and others in every section of the city. It is these errors of judgement which render necessary an infusion of new blood into this important department of the civic government. In a previous article, where in I pointed out the complete absurdity of the present water assessment, showing there was decreased valuation of the stocks in trade in the water dis-

trict of St. John amounted to \$1,029,450 between the years 1889 and 1904. I inadvertently laid the blame for this remarkable condition of affairs on the assessors. I now wish to explain that while in making up the water assessment, the officials of the water department are bound to take the real estate valuations of the assessors; the value of the stocks in trade are made up by the water officials themselves. The assessors have many sins to answer for, but not this one. The new assessment law should contain as few provisions as possible consistent with the public welfare and be so framed that all classes will contribute as nearly as possible according to their means. Small incomes should be exempt from everything but a poll tax, while those who enjoy special privileges should pay for them. The majority of the people of the city of St. John do not want an assessment law that merely shifts the burden from the shoulder of one fellow to the other. They demand an equitable law which is not the case with that at present in force. With the charter revised and a new assessment law, the city would have made a decided step in advance in the direction of the improved methods of government which would be the beginning of genuine reform. Neither of these would reduce taxation, but they are both essential elements tending in the direction of better government which in the end would bring about a reduction of taxation.

The only way to reduce taxation in St. John is to stop expenditures. There are certain expenditures which must be made, but there are others which may well be delayed indefin-