

creased. Worst of all an enormous debt has been fastened on to the city which it will not shake off for two generations. Money has been spent for public conveniences without the slightest care as to whether they would yield adequate returns or otherwise. But of what use is it to lament over those things now. They are of the past. The only course for the citizens to pursue now is to resolve themselves into an organization, and decide what is best in the interests of the city as a whole and go to work manfully to undo the evils of the past. It is no use to ask the citizens generally to elect a Board of Aldermen to examine into existing conditions and improve them. Such a Board will never be obtained for if 15 gentlemen of the highest standing and integrity were elected to the Council tomorrow it would take many weeks of study and labor to reach conclusions that would result in reduced taxation. What was done in 1879 might be repeated in 1905. A new Board might be elected that would stop all expenditures, while they were considering how they would improve the government of the city. But it must be remembered that the Councils from 1879 to 1882 when the reform movement swept, like a tidal wave over the city, were not wholly composed of "reformers" but contained several representatives who had held offices before 1879 and held it after 1882. As a matter of fact the good work effected in these years was due largely to the financial standing of Aldermen, afterwards Mayor Jones and to the persistent labors of Alderman, the late George F. Smith. As chairman of the finance committee Ald. Smith kept a watchful eye on his fellow "reformers," as well as the other fellows, and when an expenditure was proposed that had not been provided for in the estimates he invariably asked the question how it was proposed to pay the bill. As this question could not be answered in a satisfactory manner, the expenditure was not made, and as a consequence the accounts showed a credit instead of a debit balance, their usual condition for years previous. But where is the man in the Council today or the prospective man, who will take upon himself such a thankless task? It is much easier and much more popular to spend money than to withhold its expenditure, and the man who holds up expenditures may expect the same reward as that meted out to Alderman Smith—defeat on some side issue

and thanks after death, if at all. Such is the usual fate of reformers who reform.

If civic methods are to reform, and if St. John is to continue a good place to live and do business, in there must be a radical change in the method of government. This can only be effected by a volunteer organization backed by citizens. Men must be elected to the Council with a defined purpose in view—and if they fail to make good their pledges the organization must be strong enough to punish them by refusing a re-nomination. There have been men in the past who have gone into the Council for the purpose of reducing the taxes of citizens generally who fondly believed they had done their full duty to the citizens when they got their own taxes cut down. There was another who was heralded as possessing all the qualities of a simon pure reformer who was glad, very glad to except an office at a higher salary than was considered enough, when occupied by another party. St. John has had enough of this jug handled reform, and it is because of these weak brethren that many persons today hold aloof from the reform movement which is agitating the public mind. But to withhold support from a movement in favor of a change for such reasons cannot be regarded in the light of good citizenship. The proper course is to pitch in and help along the movement, keeping a watchful eye for weak brothers at the same time.

The chief difficulty in the way of reform is that most people have only an elementary idea where reform should commence in St. John. The answer to this is that it should commence with the beginning—the charter of the city of St. John. This historic document, about which a halo has been cast, and which is regarded by some as a thing of almost divine origin, is really a very common place document, yellow with age, and carefully preserved in a tin box in the vault of the Common Clerk's office. Only the very privileged have ever seen the original but printed copies are easily obtainable. How much of the original charter now remains as mentor and guide for the people of St. John only God and the Recorder know—and there are some who are profane enough to say that God alone knows what sections of the charter remain without amendment and operative today. But be this as it may be, before we can