

## MR HOWE AT ST. JOHN.

[We copy from the *Freeman* Mr Howe's Speech at the Mechanic's Institute, Saint John, in reference to the Railway.]

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to say, that in rising in the city of Saint John for the first time in my life, to address a public audience, I would wish to bring to my aid all the powers nature and cultivation have given me; but unfortunately I am suffering with a bad eye and a severe cold, and therefore I must crave at your hands an indulgence beyond what I would even ask on other occasions and under other circumstances. I feel that the subject which has brought me before you, will plead in excuse for my imperfections, and that the hospitality which, as a stranger in the Province, you will be ready to extend to me, will secure me a patient hearing. However short I may fall either in argument or style, I trust you will attribute such imperfections to the weakness of the flesh, and not to the fault of the spirit. The subject we have now to consider is the proposition of the Imperial Government to these Provinces. I believe it is the desire and design of all parties to come to some agreement by which they can secure for these provinces an internal inter communication. I felt from the first, and invariably expressed that conviction, that if those great improvements are to be effected, party and faction must be laid aside; and I am every day more convinced, that to carry out this great scheme requires union in all the Provinces. Look at my own Province; it has there been forced on our attention that without union we cannot succeed, and it is the same in N. Brunswick. There are one or two explanations I feel due to the audience, and these I shall make in perfect good humour. Some persons have not dealt fairly with me nor with the opinions I entertain. My back was scarcely turned when an unfair insinuation was circulated respecting my motives. I have not yet seen the explanation I thought it my duty to give. It is now in print and may be seen. I will now make another observation and pass to the general question. Since I came to the city it was said "that the aristocratic people of Halifax wished to dictate to the tradesmen of St. John." Such arguments as these will not succeed, and the parties who desire to convince by such means, will find themselves compelled to have recourse to some more powerful mode of reasoning. I am not an aristocrat. I was not an aristocrat. I was born and bred up a mechanic, and for years laboured with my hands; and for many years past I have laboured with head and hands for those great principles that now pervade the governments of these Provinces. Another charge has been reiterated; it has been said the people of Halifax have broken faith with the people of New Brunswick and Portland. The people of Portland either invited the people of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to assemble for the purpose of building a Railroad, or they did not. It was said that the Government of Nova Scotia was represented there. I answer, that it was not. True, a member of the Government was selected, but he went there not as representative of the Government, nor of the people of Nova Scotia, but of the Committee which selected him. What were they called together for? To build a Railroad, if anything. Did they suppose that when we consented to my friend Mr. Uniacke's going to the Convention that if we could get the Railroad built for £35,000 instead of £60,000, that we pledged ourselves not to do so? I say Nova Scotia fulfilled every pledge she made to Maine or New Brunswick. We instantly pledged our revenues to raise the required amount, and instantly despatched a Delegate to England to raise the necessary capital with the assistance of the Imperial Government; that could be obtained, but if not, without it. Nova Scotia did for Maine and New Brunswick what neither did for her, and I can stand here to-day to assert this without feeling the blush of shame suffuse my cheek. Another charge is that England wishes to enslave New Brunswick and the Colonies. Let those who speak thus remember that only a few years ago England gave twenty millions sterling that slavery should not exist in a British Province. And is it to be supposed that they would now make a hard bargain that giving seven millions sovereigns they may burden down and oppress us. The whole policy of England has for years been different, and those who entertain such opinions have not read modern history aright. It was also said that Nova Scotia wished to burden and oppress New Brunswick for her own benefit. Nova Scotia does not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of New Brunswick. I did not even attend a single meeting on my way here to which I was not invited. The present meeting I also attend on an invitation of the people of this city, and I should not otherwise be here. The Blue Noses over the way do not wish to enslave this Province; the only time they interferred in its concerns was when they pledged every pound they possessed, and lent every bayonet to defend your territories from invasion. Having given these few explanations, allow me to state as succinctly and as distinctly as I can, how my mind arrived at those conclusions to which I desire to draw yours. Some years ago Railways began to attract public attention in the Provinces. For some time I took no part in the discussions going on relative to them, but left those matters in the hands of my personal and political friends, and did not interfere, as my hands were then full of other matters. Six years ago out came a friend of mine from England with a prospectus and company all ready to cut a railway for the colonies.

The name of great and distinguished men were attached to this; and they had president, directors, and secretaries. Our co-operation only was asked. Halifax was filled with enthusiasm. A committee of an hundred of the most wealthy and influential of our citizens was appointed, and what then took place? Why, we wasted five or six years in meetings, conferences, correspondence, and all that; and we had our share of the rivalries, jealousies, and bickerings that are sure to arise when a private company is organized for a great undertaking of this kind, and the officers are appointed. I had the honor of being appointed one of that committee. Six or seven years passed away and what was done? We published circulars, reports, and statistics, and I believe a great amount of useful information was collected and published by that committee as could be by any committee that could be appointed in either Province. We got an old gentleman to measure the line from Halifax to Truro, and I believe he is not paid yet. Our whole resources never amounted to as much as paid old Sam Ward's bill. You may easily suppose that my experience of what took place then did not strengthen my faith in a great English Company nor in a great Provincial Company to cut the North American and Portland railway. My experience in another case was also useful to me.

I long since stated that a Railway from Halifax to Windsor would prove a paying line, but the plan was then thought premature, and so the matter rested until the railway mania spread; then the excitement was at fever heat. I said then here is this Railroad, it is a short bit; we can see what it will cost, we can try this, and if we like it, then we can go to work and build more. How did I propose to build this? Was it by private subscriptions? No! I was satisfied that would not do. Would I hand this road, the great communication, one of the Queen's Highways, over to a company to be botched and blocked up. The people of Nova Scotia had always free roads and should continue to have them. I went to the Assembly and said I wanted only three hundred and thirty thousand pounds to make this forty five miles, give us the whole of the money; pass a law to enable us to raise the whole amount. I went on the floor of the House, and to the surprise of my friends announced my opinion that it was wrong to hand over the public roads to private companies. I convinced the House, and could have carried my motion by a small majority. Some of my friends were doubtful as to the results, and said "Howe take half." Rather than take so large a sum by a small majority, I consented, and took one hundred and sixty five thousand pounds. What next? I called the people of Halifax together, and they acted on that occasion in the most spirited manner, and pledged their city revenues for one hundred thousand pounds, so that there then remained only sixty five thousand pounds to be raised by private subscription. What took place next? I went to the rich agricultural country of Hants, and there met Mr. Johnson, the present leader of the opposition, and Mr. Fraser also of the opposition, who at once agreed to assist me, and by unanimous consent a meeting was held, and we prepared to receive the contributions of the agriculturists. Hants subscribed not quite six thousand pounds, King's, Annapolis, and Colchester subscribed nothing. So that after the entire summer we had the nominal subscription of six thousand pounds, but not one copper of the money. With this experience, when the Delegates came back from Portland, I resolved not to waste another day of my life depending on private contributions. I did not abandon the people of Maine or New Brunswick. I knew that if I held out to them the hope that the money could be raised in Nova Scotia that I would but deceive and delude them, and therefore I held out no such hopes. I did not proceed, however, without consulting the capitalists of the Province, and from them I learned that two hundred thousand pounds was the outside of what could be raised by such means out of a million currency. We could not aid you. You could not aid us; therefore I advocate the policy by which alone we can get inter-colonial Railroads. What policy? Borrow money on the guarantee of the Colonial Government, in the cheapest market in the world; pledge our revenues for its punctual and honorable repayment, and finish our work in three, four or five years. Influenced first by experience that Nova Scotia was not able to build a road of forty five miles; next by the desire to keep those roads in the hands of the people, to whom in future they should belong; and next by the consideration that if we were able to contribute the whole stock, the withdrawal of so large an amount from circulation would produce the same commercial calamities produced by the same cause in England. It is a common observation with us—for nothing is more common than for people who have no money to dictate to those who have—to say what will the capitalists do? Why don't they—to use the expression of my friend Dickiey—put the road through? What are capitalists doing with their money? Take the richest man in the city, or this house, and if they are business men and know what to do with money, do they keep it in an iron chest, or in an old stocking stowed away in a bureau. No, it is in the mortgage of the farmer and the stock of the small trader; it is spread over the country, employed in agriculture and commerce, earning not only the six per cent for the lender, but a comfortable living for those in whose hands it is. Take two and a half millions then out of the circulation—supposing the rich to build it—and where is the money to be got? The capital-

ist must be down on Tom first and he must sell his house; and on Dick next, and he must sell his farm: one vessel is getting to sea, and another about to be launched. The business of the country would thus be cramped, and the country injured more, if it were practicable to build it by this means, than it would be benefitted if the Railway were built. In 1847 the railway mania prevailed in England, and all the roads were undertaken by private companies. If all the Railroads were made by Government, fifty millions of pounds would have been saved that was squandered in competition and extravagance. What happened?—These companies drew more from circulation than England, rich as she was, could afford. In the fall of '47 there was bankruptcy after bankruptcy in England, and you must all remember that Willmer and Smith came out then by the weekly mail, with lists of bankrupts filling whole columns—that was the effect of making too many Railroads even in England, and a similar result must follow if the amount required for this undertaking is drawn from the circulation of Nova Scotia. Therefore you see I adopt this policy because I believe the roads should be in the hands of the people: because the withdrawal of so much capital must cramp the commerce of the country; and because I believe that no company can raise the necessary funds to cut the European and North American Railway. I did not believe it when I went to England, and I am now better satisfied of this truth. It was said the road would cost each Province but little. I will tell you a little more of my Nova Scotia experience; and you must remember that if we sometimes pretend to be a little wiser than you are, that this wisdom is the result of dear bought experience. There is the Shubenacadie Canal, commenced years ago. Talk of excitement now, it is nothing to what existed then. I remember Halifax then; it boiled like a pot; the enthusiasm now is nothing like it was then, and I believe St. John itself was enthusiastic. We beheld in perspective ships passing through from the Bay of Fundy and the Basin of Mines, and were highly elated. A company was formed with president, directors and secretary; yes, a secretary too, poor fellow, I cannot speak of him without a tear of sympathy, for it killed him; he is long since in his grave, and Nova Scotia has lost a fine intellect and a first-rate man. They were too much excited to wait for the money; they got some twenty five or twenty six thousand pounds—they too thought a government never could do anything properly—and they set to work to dig ditches, and make locks, until they spent the money, and then they came to a stand still. There was a great deal of talk about the necessity of further exertions, and they then asked for a Facility Bill, to enable them to proceed. They got this, and then set to work with renewed vigor to dig the ditches a little wider, and erect a little more of the locks, until this money too was spent. Still there was no Canal in which you could float an Indian canoe. Our experience goes to this, that though they may not trust the Legislature to do the work, they are all ready to trust it to give the money. They next asked for a guarantee on the interest of £25,000 they wanted to spend, and the House in one of those good natured fits to which Assemblies are liable, gave the guarantee; the secretary went home and brought out the money; this too was spent; not a lock was finished; the fifteen years of the guarantee is expired; the Province pays the interest no longer, and the people are cheated out of their money, besides the £25,000 advanced by the British Government. And for all this we have nothing but a Shubenacadie Canal Company with its President and Directors. I give these facts because by these I have been brought to the conclusion that the only way to build these roads is by making them public works, and pledging our revenues to procure the necessary capital, either with the help of the Imperial Government or without it. We sent a despatch immediately after the convention to Earl Grey to borrow £500,000. Perhaps it may be said we broke faith by asking it. This was refused. We felt more could be got by sending a delegate, and that course being decided upon, I had the honor to be chosen. Some misapprehension exists respecting this mission. When sent to England I would have been glad to have had the assistance of a delegate from New Brunswick; but there had been elections lately, and we believed in our country that parties were pretty equally divided, or that the administration would be overthrown. We felt then that Sir E. Head was not in a position to send a delegate, and that no party could take on itself the responsibility of such a step—precisely as we would feel under similar circumstances. We therefore sent the Governor a copy of the Minute of Council, but did not ask him to send a delegate. You will allow me to say that I felt all the responsibility that attached to the mission I had undertaken, and knew all the difficulties that awaited me—difficulties that can only be estimated by one who has been a delegate under the same circumstances. I trust that before any one judges how I executed the task, he will look through my published correspondence. I did not assume to represent either Canada or New Brunswick, nor did I exceed my commission which authorized me to borrow the money. But when I found myself in the metropolis, and in communication with the ministry, I felt it to be my duty to state what were the feelings not only of Nova Scotia, but of New Brunswick and Canada also. I trust I said nothing that could offend the people of New Brunswick, but I could not plead our own cause without pleading yours also. I urged particularly the importance of an inter-colonial

communication, of a close communication between the colonies and the mother country, and the great importance of building up large commercial cities and seaports in British America, as rivals to those that exist in the great neighboring country. I expressed the views and opinions the leading men of the Provinces entertain, and assured the minister that we wished not to sever the connection, but to elevate the colonies to a position and status far above their present position. No one who has read the correspondence will believe that I betrayed the trust reposed in me in advocating the line from Halifax to Quebec. It has been said, "Howe betrayed his trust—he went home as the advocate of our line." I was not the representative of the Portland Convention, but of the Government. I did not abandon the Portland Convention. If I did, I would be amenable to you—but I put it in the best light, and argued as strenuously for it as any one could have done, but that was not the whole of my argument. I felt that when we have this, there are other interests, and other lines. When we have made a thoroughfare for strangers, do we want no more than that? Halifax harbour has been a thoroughfare for the Cunard steamers; but for promoting the trade and commerce of Nova Scotia, I would prefer a dozen clippers from Margaret's Bay, laden with fish, to the whole of them. This is not the only object we have at heart. It is time we had higher objects in view, a nobler ambition, and higher aspirations. We should prepare the public mind to advance rapidly to a higher position than it has yet occupied. My habits have brought me much into intercourse with the talented public men of the Provinces, and I have mixed much with my own constituents. Is the longing in every man's mind only that we should have a road on which Englishmen, Americans, and other people may ride over the country. Is there not a higher desire? When we came to Liverpool on a Sunday, a gentleman from Boston, who went as a messenger from the great people of the neighbouring States, bearing despatches, demanded leave to land at once as the bearer of despatches from his State, and the permission was instantly given him. Well, thinks I, I too am bearer of despatches, and will try if the same privilege does not belong to me. So I told the officer that I too bore despatches, and besides that from one of their own colonies, and wished to go ashore at once. The man appeared astonished, and expressed his regret, but stated that he had no instructions; so that I and my despatches had to remain as we were. (Laughter.) In the House of Lords I saw a respectable old gentleman from a neighboring State—possessing to be sure the highest qualities of head and heart, but still no better than five hundred others, respected and honored as the representative of a great nation—while I, though I represented a loyal colony, was compelled to feel that I was but a colonist after all, the representative of little Nova Scotia, and it would have been the same had Mr. Chandler or Mr. Partelow, or any other colonist, been there, from Canada or Newfoundland. We have many men in the colonies of great ability and surpassing talents, who, confined to their present narrow sphere, are utterly lost. Take Mr. Chandler, for instance, who could not be induced to undertake the administration of justice in this petty little Province—not little in extent—with its population of 200,000, preferring the enjoyment of his ample fortune, the comforts and happiness of his family circle, and his quiet homestead. There is Mr. Wilmot: no one in New Brunswick was more delighted than I was to hear that he had gone to Portland, to astonish and delight the Americans there. Where is he? Shelled on the bench of this thinly-peopled Province, just when his splendid mind was becoming matured. Then there was Moses Perley—he begged pardon for speaking of him if he were present. (A titter.) Perhaps you do not know and appreciate his worth; certainly he does not fully know it himself. (Great laughter.) With his talents, industry, and his capacity of explaining his ideas, either on foot or with the pen, his knowledge of the country and pliability of mind, he would soon eminently distinguish if his sphere of action were widened. What would I do with these? I would send Wilmot to dispense justice over a North American Empire, and would tempt Chandler with a seat on the bench of the United North American Provinces.

I would open up a field and a sphere for the young men of the colonies, in which they would find ample scope for the exercise of their abilities. How would I do this? By violence, rebellion, and bloodshed? I live under the old flag, and under it I desire to continue to live. I believe a separation from the old country would be bad policy. But with the approbation and acquiescence of the sovereign, I seek to elevate them all to a status and position higher than, separated, they can hope to occupy. You see I look to railroads after all. Is it to make money out of them? No sir! Make the railroad to Halifax, and the men to whom I have been all my life personally and politically opposed will make £100,000 of it, when I will not make £500. And yet for this I stake my position, prospects, and situation, the support of my family, and all that I hold dear.

It has been said also that there exist divisions in Nova Scotia on this question. True, there were some slight symptoms of division, and the telegraph wires were busily at work; but now we are exceedingly united. Halifax is united to a man; and I am sure I may say that in the metropolitan county no man could hold up his head and oppose the railroad. It has also been said that when I visited Cumberland on my way here, I created no excite-