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JOSEPH HOWE:

MILD TORY TO REFORMING ASSEMBLYMAN

"THE PICTOU SCRIBBLERS . . . have converted me from the error of my ways."¹ In this statement, purported to have been made in 1830, Joseph Howe admitted to a very considerable change in his political thinking early in his adult life. The purpose of this article is to examine this change, particularly as it unfolded between 1828 and 1836.

Who was the young man Howe, who in January, 1828, at the age of twenty-four, became sole proprietor and editor of the *Novascotian*? The qualities which distinguished him from other men undoubtedly came from his father. They were, in Principal G. M. Grant's words, "the great heart and open hand . . . , that milk of human kindness . . . which no opposition could permanently sour; his poetic nature which if it inclined him to be visionary at times, was yet at the bottom of his statesmanship; [and] his reverence for the past."² To his father Howe himself attributed his fondness for reading, his familiarity with the Bible, and his "knowledge of old Colonial and American incidents and characteristics."³ It was his father too who led him to believe that the people who governed the Province were able, intelligent, well-intentioned men, and that imperfections in the governmental system were minor.

Having had little formal education, Howe tried to satisfy his thirst for knowledge by reading; yet, when the supply of books failed, he consoled himself that "the world is before me—a library open to all—from which poverty of purse cannot exclude me."⁴ In particular, "he welcomed association and collision with highly cultivated minds as a means of trying out what was in himself and making it more fit for use."⁵ His self-education proceeded rapidly while he was joint proprietor of the *Acadian* in 1827, and it continued apace after he took over the *Novascotian* in 1828.

To Howe his native province was the best of all possible worlds. It was not,

he admitted, a second El Dorado with streets of gold, but what people, he asked, have more of the real solid comforts of life—fewer taxes to curtail them—laws which form a more impenetrable bulwark of security—a government which sits lighter on the people, or under which they may enjoy more of rational freedom?⁶

Yet Howe was still not satisfied; Nova Scotians, he felt, should work even harder if the province's resources were to be developed to the full. The son of a father whose religion regarded idleness as a sin, Howe himself had developed habits of industry which can only be described as astounding. Hence, when he started to publish his celebrated "Rambles" in the summer of 1828, he showed a profound interest in the qualities of the people. And what he saw did not always please him.

The soil of Kings and Annapolis counties, for example, yielded an abundant harvest with less than ordinary labour. Its farmers ought, therefore, to be moderately independent, but instead they were abnormally encumbered with mortgages. It made Howe's gall rise to see lazy, slow-going fellows spending their afternoons during harvest in the taverns or wasting their evenings in debating about a horse race over a tumbler of brandy. There were better occupations for the evenings. "Let every farmer gather the youngsters about his knees at night, and spreading a volume of some kind before them teach them all he knows himself . . . Let each man labour as though the character of the Province was his individual concern."⁷ But in a new country like Nova Scotia the education of the adult was equally important. Let the farmers establish agricultural societies, which would foster a thorough knowledge of the latest principles of rural economy. Let the mechanics establish Institutes which would follow the practices of their English counterparts. Let the rich, the intelligent, and the influential assist in both these developments.

What is surprising was Howe's lack of interest in the political education of the people. Yet there was a reason. In 1828 he stood for "the Constitution, the *whole* Constitution, and *nothing but* the Constitution."⁸ But obviously he had reflected little on the existing form of government. He held that since men were prone to abuse their powers, the opportunity of any group to do evil should be strictly limited. This, he felt, correctly described the state of affairs in Nova Scotia. On the one hand there was the Council of Twelve, the nominees of the Governor, acting both as his advisers and as a second branch of the Legislature. Yet any authority they possessed because they occupied the major public offices and were in daily intercourse with the Governor was more than counterbalanced by the Assembly's being the depository of the people's confidence.

Indeed the Assembly should on no account be given additional power. Had he himself not watched the disgraceful scenes which occurred whenever it divided

the road monies? If the existing checks were removed, the expenditures on roads would, he feared, soon devour all the provincial revenue. So when Thomas Chandler Haliburton sought to prevent the Council from approving or rejecting each vote separately, Howe contended that the Council should not be denied the right to defeat outrageous measures for the expenditure of money without threatening the entire Appropriation Act. Thus there is justification for labelling the early Howe as a mild Tory. There is also justification for alleging that the Pictou Scribblers forced him to re-examine his political attitudes.

The District of Pictou—a part of the county of Halifax until 1836—was divided into two uncompromising factions based on the divisions within the Presbyterian Church, namely the Kirk of Scotland and the Secession Church. At this time they were quarrelling over the provision of a permanent legislative grant for Pictou Academy. A newcomer to Pictou, Jotham Blanchard, had recently founded the *Colonial Patriot*, and he and two or three Academy boys had perturbed many Nova Scotians by their writings.

One person perturbed by these Pictou Scribblers had been Joseph Howe. He was outraged when Blanchard published a letter in the *Canadian Spectator* which accused the Nova Scotian Assembly of being servile. To Howe, who had himself witnessed first-class constitutional debates in the Assembly, this was sheer heresy. What he did not appreciate was that the outpourings of a few intellectuals on one or two unconnected issues were relatively unimportant. At this stage he had barely an inkling of the manifold ills which Blanchard perceived were inherent in the governmental structure.

Howe resented even more Blanchard's comments on the servility of the press and particularly his remark that the *Acadian* was "conducted by a man connected with the Post Office, and, of course, tied by a party." Indignantly he challenged Blanchard to quote one servile statement from his columns. Yet the *Novascotian* of 1828 leaves the distinct impression that Howe altogether exaggerated the fearless character of his writings. The reason seems obvious. One who finds the *status quo* eminently satisfactory tends to regard even a small criticism as a highly radical pronouncement. For the moment Howe simply heaped ridicule upon the "windy Patriot" Blanchard and remained smugly satisfied with the conduct of the *Novascotian*. Had he not adopted a firm and liberal tone, and assimilated his paper not to "the wild and reckless blast" but to "the healthful and invigorating breeze"? Had he not cut down his reliance on foreign material and published 500 to 1000 columns of original material?

Already Howe had become enamoured of the Assembly; he "love[d] to hear

the free and thrilling tone of debate ringing in [his] ears, and to mark the clash of minds stirred by astute discussion."⁹ Yet the session of 1829 brought little to stir him other than the celebrated Barry affair. John A. Barry was an intransigent Assemblyman who, for refusing to apologize for insulting a fellow Assemblyman, was imprisoned in the County gaol at Halifax. At one stage the Assembly appeared likely to take action against the newspaper editors who were criticizing its conduct. According to Howe, he immediately raised his voice "in a tone of warning and defiance." But on this occasion the criticism levelled at him for timidity seems justified. Later, however, when the Halifax mob heaped abuse upon the Assemblymen for imprisoning Barry, he supported them to the hilt.

In July, Howe published the first of his legislative reviews. As an introduction, he inquired into the relations between an editor and his public. From the people an editor got support; they in turn looked to him for counsel. Because he had the people's esteem, he could not be awed by the powerful or the wealthy, nor did he need to fear sudden ebullitions of popular feeling. The reviews which followed demonstrated Howe's complete mastery of the laws passed during the session. But they also provided an inkling of where he would make a determined stand later. On the Act to provide for the Custom House Establishment, he welcomed the British Government's desire to relieve the province from exorbitant fees, and to give it the right to regulate its commerce. Yet he wondered if, in protecting the vested rights of the incumbent customs officials, it had insisted upon an altogether lavish scale of salaries. And did this not diminish the funds available for useful public works, and induce luxurious and baneful habits among the people?

In the same reviews Howe also gave his first general estimate of the Assembly and the Council. These were cold, dispassionate opinions based on largely theoretical grounds. The major flaw he found in the Assembly resulted from "the formidable array of Lawyers by whom its benches [were] lined."¹⁰ No matter how high-principled professional men might be, they would occasionally overlook the general interest to further their own interest. As for the Council, Howe refused to "trace more evils than ever sprung from the Box of Pandora, to the defects of [its] constitution."¹¹ Yet, since public officers and judges constituted a majority of the Council, he considered its structure to be clearly defective. Public officers should at all costs be subject to the scrutiny of both branches of the Legislature. Nevertheless, he was willing to admit that "traces of oppression and bad government [were] no where to be discerned" in Nova Scotia.

Within months, however, Howe's attitude towards the Council had hardened. The reason was the Revenue Dispute of 1830. When the Assembly tried to correct

an error in the Revenue Law by adding 4d. a gallon to the duty upon brandy—an amount which both branches of the Legislature had previously accepted—the Council turned down the measure although it meant the defeat of the entire Appropriation Act. Every Assemblyman stood firm in the crisis except Uniacke, Hartshorne, and Barry; in Howe's opinion "they . . . acted like men, . . . and stand justified in the eyes of the people."

Now Howe had to reconsider his previous opinion. Could the power possessed by the Assembly during the few weeks it was in session really counterbalance the patronage and influence of the Council which were daily at work in its support? The Revenue Dispute led Howe to believe that there should be entrusted

as little power to do evil to the Council as to the House, because the great principles of human nature operate as invincibly in one end of a stone building as in the other; making men . . . singularly indulgent to measures which deeply concern themselves.¹²

Subsequently he lost no opportunity to record the ills resulting from the loss of the Appropriation Act. The roads, he pointed out, were becoming so bad through lack of maintenance that trade was being hampered. Everywhere on his "Rambles" he found the Assembly warmly applauded; the Councillors, he said, would find themselves beaten in the constitutional argument by every farmer upon the road.

In the general election which followed Howe advised the electorate to return the old members because of their stand on the Revenue question. None followed more closely than he the campaign in the Township and County of Halifax. The sitting members for the Township, Charles Rufus Fairbanks and Beamish Murdock, had both opposed the Council on the Revenue question. But in contrast with Fairbanks, Murdock had been altogether outspoken in his condemnation. The outcome was his defeat by merchant Stephen DeBlois, the nominee of the Council. Howe duly noted that Murdock lost because he "had to contend with the whole weight . . . of the Government, which was exerted against him through all sorts of channels."¹³

In the County election Howe supported the four sitting members, even Hartshorne, who had defended the Council on the Revenue question. But in this instance the electorate had other ideas. It linked Hartshorne with the three Council nominees, and coupled Jotham Blanchard with the other three sitting members as anti-Council men. Howe himself did not support Blanchard, yet more and more he had begun to respect the Pictonian's opinions and talents. Certainly Blanchard's comments on power were not lost on him:

Power is of various kinds; there is the power of wealth and the power of office, and when these are combined with executive power and the power of legislation, any one may see that there is a dangerous and unconstitutional combination Against

such a state of things I have contended and shall still contend; for where great powers are coupled with irresponsibility, there can be no security—no good government. Such a government cannot and ought not to exist.¹⁴

In Halifax itself all the pro-Council candidates secured substantial majorities. But when polling moved to the District of Colchester, matters were quite different. Almost unanimously its voters rejected the Council's candidates. Later the freeholders of Pictou divided fairly evenly on religious grounds, thus ensuring the return of Blanchard and his colleagues.

To Howe the election of 1830 was a glorious victory. He was elated that of twelve new Assemblymen only DeBlois was pledged to support the Council. Yet despite Blanchard's instruction, he was still naïve enough to suppose that an Assembly which had opposed one outrageous act of the Council would be similarly exercised in less extreme cases; he was sanguine enough to believe that the British government would hearken to the people's representatives, whenever they disagreed with the Council; he still considered parties to be nothing more than factions operating in their own and against the public interest; he wanted to belong to only one party, "the party of Nova Scotia."

The year 1831 added little to Howe's political thinking. But it did provide one of those "breathers" which he always welcomed as respites from the consideration of complex problems. While events in Europe especially intrigued him, he found time to expatiate on his first love, his native province. Once he turned vehemently upon William Cobbett, whose *Rural Rides* had given him the idea for his own "Rambles". Cobbett's fault had been to describe Nova Scotia as "heaps of rocks, covered with fir-trees, for the greater part, with a few narrow strips of clear land in the bottoms of the valleys." This was altogether too much for Howe; in his opinion Cobbett's "shameless disregard of truth—his want of fixed principles . . . would have made shipwreck of even a more commanding genius."¹⁵ Howe pointed out that unprecedented fruitfulness presently crowned Nova Scotian agriculture, while commerce had so expanded that every wharf in Halifax from the Lumber Yard to the Dock Yard was being repaired or extended.

By 1832 Howe had established what was to be his normal pattern of publication. Early each year he would exult in the success of the *Novascotian*, especially because "the effusions of our Henrys, Edwins, Albyns, and Alvars, would often have done credit to a London periodical." Just before the Legislature opened he would present his own views on public affairs. During the sessions he would personally report between 150 and 200 columns of debate. By 1834 he could boast that he had written as much manuscript as he could carry and that without it the people would

have been "about as incapable of judging the conduct of their Representatives, as if they had assembled in the moon."¹⁶ The session concluded, he was delighted to be "no longer constrained like a Tanner's horse, to one unvarying round. . . ." With zest he would turn to the books, magazines, pamphlets, and newspapers which had been accumulating on his desk. Then, following a short respite, he would review the past session, singling out its shortcomings.

In 1832 the Legislature gave Howe comparatively little to complain about. In fact, he showed as much interest in the courts as in the Legislature. He was utterly contemptuous of the Court of Chancery, "where neither party receives justice [and] where enormous costs accumulate, until the whole cause of action is swallowed up." Against Simon Bradstreet Robie, who as Master of the Rolls presided over the Court of Chancery, he levelled the harshest criticism he had ever accorded any public functionary. Earlier, as Speaker of the Assembly, Robie had denounced petty abuses; yet for seven years he had kept up a body of costly absurdities without making a single effort towards reform. Others, said Howe, might be equally guilty, but unlike Robie, "*they never pretended to be reformers.*"¹⁷

Despite this occasional vehemence, however, the impression left by the *Nova-scotian* during these years is one of general satisfaction with matters governmental. Howe's suggestions to the Assemblymen before the session of 1833 certainly made no reference to any deep-seated ills. But the session utterly disappointed him, and thereafter a new severity crept into his tone. Much more, he reminded the Assemblymen, had been involved in the election of 1830 than a duty upon brandy. They themselves had begged to be returned to deal with gross defects in the constitution. Admittedly the Council had, of late, been circumspect in dealing with the appropriations and the revenue. But who "would sleep by Vesuvius, merely because some former explosion had for the moment abated its force"?

It was the currency issue, however, which completed Howe's political education. Like no previous issue it laid bare the complex forces at work in Nova Scotian society. For years an important medium of exchange had been the provincial Treasury notes, which had often been redeemable for specie. When the Halifax Banking Company was formed without legislative sanction in 1825, it was looked upon with suspicion. But it conducted its operations circumspectly, and frequently it would redeem its own paper. Nevertheless, Howe had long noted that five of its directors were Councillors and wondered if the public interest would suffer as a result. In 1832 he had welcomed the legislative incorporation of the Bank of Nova Scotia because it would divide the monied influence. But he was annoyed when the Assembly accepted the Council's demand that the new Bank redeem its notes in

specie. It perturbed him to see Jotham Blanchard acting in concert with Stephen DeBlois on this matter. Some Assemblymen, he noted, were moved like puppets by wires from the other end of the building.

The new Bank soon had its own innings; it made a run on the old, forcing it to suspend the redemption of its notes. The outcome was a depreciated currency. In 1833 the Assembly tried to force both banks to return to cash payments, but the Council objected. By this time many Assemblymen had returned home, and those who remained eventually accepted what Howe described as a disgraceful solution: they permitted both banks to issue non-redeemable paper. The result was to destroy the little sound currency which remained. In no uncertain terms Howe told the Assembly what the country expected of it. On its return it should forthwith "restore the currency to a just and sound condition, *though [it] should have to sit till mid summer, and even though another year's revenue should be the necessary sacrifice.*"¹⁸

The economic distress was considered at a public meeting in Halifax on January 16, 1834. To a major resolution Stephen DeBlois proposed an amendment which would have provided an "out" for the Assemblymen who had opposed sound monetary principles. This prompted Howe to deliver his first political address. He willingly admitted that a debased currency was not the only reason for the economic difficulties; certainly "there had been too much of idleness and extravagance in the community"; but the first step towards improvement was a sound currency. So he strongly and successfully opposed DeBlois' "red herring."

The session of 1834 further increased Howe's irritation with the Assembly. The British government had proposed to commute the quit rents in return for a suitable establishment for the public officers and the judges. Howe's own position was unequivocal. Quit rents ought to be commuted unconditionally; Nova Scotia was prepared to do justice to its public servants. But in five days of debates he saw no evidence of "those honest views of *justice and economy*, which the *circumstances*, and *feelings*, and *prospects* of the country ought to prompt."¹⁹

So strongly was he aroused that he embarked almost immediately on a vigorous discussion of the state of the province. In his opinion "gentleman merchants", "gentleman mechanics", and "gentleman farmers" had no place in Nova Scotia. Yet the whole tendency of a garrison society like Halifax was towards habits of idleness. The high salaries of the public officers were equally pernicious; even at the hazard of bankruptcy the industrious classes tended to imitate their style of living. Unfortunately, each village also contained a little knot of traders, lawyers, and public officers, through whom the fashionable follies of the capital were reflected upon the surrounding country where even the most affluent farmer was lucky to clear £100

a year. Yet this was the society upon which the British government sought to impose salaries which were double those of comparable officials in England. Howe told the people that the outcome of this issue depended upon themselves. Until now, he said with satisfaction, he had rarely found them to fail in their duty when they were properly informed. This faith in the ordinary Nova Scotian he was to retain throughout his life.

A more and more belligerent Howe had his worst fears of the prevailing system confirmed early in 1835. For publishing a letter which alleged that during the preceding thirty years "the Magistracy and Police [of Halifax] ha[d], by one stratagem or other, taken from the pockets of the people, in over exactions, fines, etc.—etc., a sum that would exceed in the gross amount £30,000,"²⁰ he was prosecuted for criminal libel. Through his own unaided efforts he secured an acquittal. "The Press of Nova-Scotia", he proudly proclaimed, "is free." He hoped that, with the light of day permitted to penetrate the municipal institutions, the work of reformation might begin. But that was not to be. The Council appointed a man of such dubious reputation as Custos of the County of Halifax that any prospect of reform was doomed from the beginning.

Hence, when Howe discussed "Halifax and Its Prospects" in August, he painted a thoroughly bleak picture. Look at the faulty structure of the Council! Look at the oversized judicial establishment! Look at the great string of public officers, who took so much of the revenue that they were "in truth our masters"! Look at the Assembly, in which the lawyers led a time-serving and obedient majority! The only remedy was an energetic and public-spirited Assembly which would bring "the sentiments of the Country . . . to bear upon the rottenness of Denmark." This was not possible unless the people lost their supineness. In future let the freeholders assemble and select candidates on the basis of qualifications and principles; let these candidates be told that if they abandon these principles they will be replaced.

Howe expressed himself in a similar vein to Jotham Blanchard. The letter is interesting because it indicates a reversal in the positions of the two men since 1828. For some time Howe had been expressing doubts about Blanchard's political conduct; "there was good reason", he said, "to suspect you of becoming if not a covert enemy to popular measures at least a very suspicious and languid supporter of the principles you had always professed." Hence he felt relieved to discover that it was the state of Blanchard's health which had deprived him of the energy which the times demanded. No reforms, Howe continued, could be effected "without a majority pledged to the people, and kept in salutary awe of them in the Assembly."²¹

A by-election for the Township of Halifax late in the year permitted Howe to

develop these ideas further. In Halifax itself, he pointed out, past elections had often been decided by a few public officers and wealthy merchants over their wine. Howe begged the ordinary voter not to succumb this time to their sinister influence or to their rum and porter. Before the by-election Howe's opponents interpreted his every act as motivated by a desire to get into the Assembly. "I could not go out to shoot a partridge in the woods or catch a Trout in the streams", he said, "without being suspected of canvassing for the next election." For the moment he expressed his satisfaction with the candidature of Hugh Bell, but it had become quite evident that he would not long delay an attempt to get into the Assembly.

As the year 1836 advanced, Howe had good reason for elation. No longer did he feel as if he were addressing strangers. "We sit in our Editorial chair", he said, "as if in the midst of a family." Public opinion, he felt, was finally beginning to act upon the Legislature. Had not the Council commenced printing its Journals? Had not the Assembly resolved that the fees exacted by the Chief Justice were unconstitutional? It also pleased him, as the dissolution of the Assembly became imminent, that election cards were no longer short documents in which the candidates made vague promises to behave well if elected; almost without exception the new-style cards stated the broad principles which would govern the candidates' conduct. Furthermore, in more than one county candidates were proposed at public meetings. It was three such meetings in the Musquodoboit Valley which endorsed Howe as a candidate for the County of Halifax because of "his known political principles."

Thomas Chandler Haliburton had already warned Howe about the perils of going into the Assembly:

I do think you won't advance your own interest or influence by going there. Why does a Judge's charge have more influence than an Attorney's speech? Because he belongs to *no side*. I fear your paper (always enough on one side of politics) will be thought after your election (for that I take for granted if you offer) a party paper altogether. I fear you will hurt it, and it will hurt you, like a gig that runs over a cow, it kills the animal and breaks the carriage.²²

But as Howe told his sister,

conceiving certain improvements to be essential to the welfare of the country of our birth, I ought to strive to get them introduced—and being under great obligations to many thousands who have aided and protected me in my designs, I ought not to shrink from any sacrifice of time and labor to pay the debt.

Furthermore, the Legislature would be "an admirable school" for his own development.

When Howe announced the dissolution of the Assembly on October 27, he reminded his readers that for more than five years he had tried to create "a virtuous and enlightened public sentiment." Now it was their duty to choose well. Those Assemblymen who had invariably followed reform principles should be returned; otherwise let genuinely public meetings propose suitable candidates.²³

At a meeting endorsing his own candidature on November 9, he admitted that his position as Assemblymen would engross "all the little leisure" which his occupation permitted. Yet he did not wish to grow old and leave the redress of grievances to the next generation. All his efforts to arouse the people would prove useless "unless a majority [was] formed in the Assembly which will follow out a system of rational reform. . . . If suitable materials for combining that majority were more abundant, I should not have ventured out of the ordinary paths of my profession." Some were worried that he might neglect his business; at that he laughed: "one who has been accustomed to labor from boyhood . . . is not very suddenly likely to become negligent of his private affairs." And what if he were defeated? "I shall return to my books—and spend the little leisure which business affords, with the Poets, Philosophers and Historians; who, as they delighted and informed my youth, I trust have a chance to cheer and solace my old age."

For what were he and his friends contending? Simply the free institutions of Britain:

In England, one vote of the people's representatives turns out a ministry. . . . Here, we may record five hundred votes against our ministry and yet they sit unmoved. . . . In England the people can breathe the breath of life into their government whenever they please; in this country the government is like an ancient Egyptian, wrapped up in narrow and antique prejudices—dead and inanimate, but yet likely to last forever

Gentlemen, all we ask for is what exists at home—a system of responsibility to the people.²⁴

In these words Howe stated more clearly what he wanted than in any previous utterance.

Howe ended his speech on a note of warning. Let the reformers not split up into parties like their counterparts in England. That could result only in a disastrous wasting of their strength.

In the actual voting Howe was an easy victor. On being declared elected, he gave a pledge that "truth, and open and candid dealing"—his guides of the past—would be his guides in the future. Above all, he would follow the teaching of his recently deceased father; he would respect his fellow creatures and do them good.²⁵

The years 1828 to 1836 coincided with the latter part of the so-called "intellectual awakening of Nova Scotia." For rousing his countrymen out of their political lethargy no one was more responsible than Howe; by the mid-thirties he was well on his way to becoming the educator in public affairs of his native province. But it would be wrong to regard him as the typical colonial Reformer of the 1830's. Until the mid-thirties he conceived the basic task of Nova Scotians largely in non-political terms. The qualities needed to make Nova Scotia the model colony were industry, frugality, and a thirst for knowledge. Circumstances made him a supporter of the *status quo*, and the label of mild Tory is an apt one.

By 1830 the Pictou scribblers had forced him to recognize a few political imperfections even in the happy land of Nova Scotia. The conduct of the Council on the Revenue question was something of an eye-opener to him; yet the specific issue was solved so readily that he failed to appreciate the forces which were operating in Nova Scotia. It required a whole series of incidents, starting with the currency issue in 1833, to make him realize that the merchant office clique which controlled the Council could pull sufficient strings to manipulate all the provincial institutions as they pleased. By 1835 he had fully grasped the nature of the power complex in Nova Scotia. He concluded that, although the physical resources of the province and the generally sound qualities of its citizenry assured continued progress, yet the defects of the governmental structure would inevitably slow it down.

What was the remedy? It was to introduce the responsibility of the British system, although not necessarily an exact copy of British institutions. For the moment Howe felt that the setting up of an elective Legislative Council would do the trick; apparently two elective Houses would constitute an adequate check upon the advisers of the Governor and the provincial bureaucracy.

How was this remedy to be achieved? The first step was to elect the right type of Assembly. Let the freeholders assemble in public meetings and propose candidates on the basis of the principles they professed. The assumption was that the ordinary Nova Scotian freeholder would speak almost as one for liberal principles and against an entrenched oligarchy. Thus the curious feature about Howe at this stage was his attitude towards political parties. In the manner of Halifax, Bolingbroke, and George Washington, he still regarded them as selfish factions. Somewhat like Charles de Gaulle, he was in 1836 advocating a rally of the Nova Scotian people which would stand entirely above faction. Because there was a scarcity of persons who had the capacity to persuade the reforming Assemblymen to combine for the public good, he was induced to enter the Assembly.

Once there, and face to face with practicality, the untypical reformer saw the

basic problem through entirely different spectacles. So when the Durham Report recommended a responsible executive on the British model in 1839, Howe welcomed the proposal. It took somewhat longer for him to agree on the only possible method of effecting this remedy. Not until the breakdown of a coalition with the Tories in 1843 did he accept the absolute necessity of a disciplined Reform Party as the prerequisite to reform. Thus, step by step, he had been induced almost against his will to don all the trappings of the typical colonial reformer of his day.

NOTES

1. George Patterson, *A History of the County of Pictou* (Pictou, 1916), p. 235.
2. George Johnson, Manuscript biography of Howe (P.A.C.), p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
4. Extract from a letter to his sister in 1837; in George Johnson Papers (P.A.C.).
5. J. M. Beck, "Joseph Howe", in *Our Living Tradition* (Series 4), p. 4.
6. *Novascotian*, Jan. 17, 1828.
7. *Ibid.*, Nov. 26, 1828.
8. *Ibid.*, Jan. 2, 1828.
9. *Ibid.*, Feb. 5, 1829.
10. *Ibid.*, Jan. 28, 1830.
11. *Ibid.*, Jan. 21, 1830.
12. *Ibid.*, May 27, 1830.
13. *Ibid.*, Sept. 23, 1830.
14. *Ibid.*, Sept. 15, 1830.
15. *Ibid.*, Sept. 28, 1831.
16. *Ibid.*, April 23, 1834.
17. *Ibid.*, Sept. 19, 1832.
18. *Ibid.*, Dec. 11, 1833.
19. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1834.
20. *Ibid.*, Jan. 2, 1835.
21. Howe Papers, VI, Howe to Blanchard, Oct. 26, 1835.
22. Haliburton to Howe, Nov. 15, 1835.
23. *Novascotian*, Nov. 17, 1836.
24. *Ibid.*, Dec. 21, 1836.
25. *Ibid.*