

Howe had publicly urged the trunk railway to Canada and the West as early as 1835; under his influence the railways of Nova Scotia were constructed as public works and the private exploiter was kept at arm's length; and in 1851 his single advocacy, in pamphlets and speeches in England, had almost persuaded the British government to go ahead at once. In fact Lord Grey, the secretary of state for the colonies, had given through Mr. Howe his informal promise of the £7,000,000 loan asked, but afterward withdrew on the ground that New Brunswick proposed to apply a part of its share of the loan to building a road to Maine, and a route by the St. John Valley, instead of on the original survey away from the boundary. It is true that the imperial government had insisted on its route, but since the difficulty with New Brunswick could have been arranged, we must look for some other explanation. That explanation is to be found in the action of Sir Francis Hincks. Whether the £50,400 taken by Hincks was obtained by his black-mailing of the contractors or their bribery of him, the fact was that the amounts paid by the contractors to Hincks and others were recovered many times over through the liberties they were allowed to take in the prices charged and the character of the work done. But these embezzlements and frauds were committed at the cost of the people for whose service the road was supposed to be created and then the people had to pay for the reconstruction.

To many students of Canadian history it seems mysterious that Joseph Howe, after devoting his splendid gifts to the unification of the peoples of British America, and having so consistently advocated the Intercolonial to this end, should have become the strongest opponent of confederation and have roused an antagonism against it in his own province which lasted for more than a generation. In the light of these transactions it should no longer be a mystery, for Howe clearly foresaw the calamities that would overtake a country that surrendered the essentials of self-government into the control of men not of its own choosing.

The English contractors had sent an agent to Canada and to New Brunswick as an "expert" to advocate the advantage of construction and ownership by a private company. He was instructed to show the New Brunswickers the importance of a connection with Maine and the other New England states, and in Toronto he was