

railway that the imperial government was brought to the point of making a loan for the line.

The man who in pre-confederation days had more personal influence than all others in creating the atmosphere of confederation and in urging the railway of which it was the instrument was Joseph Howe, the great Nova Scotia statesman and orator. He had a prophet's prevision of the control which the railway was to have over the physical life of the whole people, and he saw more clearly than anyone its power in nation-building. In a speech in 1851 he said: "I believe that many in this room will live to hear the whistle of the steam engine in the passes of the Rockies and to make the journey from Halifax to the Pacific in five or six days." Although the world was still young in railway experience when his public life began, he saw from the first the true relation of the state to its railways. He was not awed into a slavish submission to a bad precedent; but as early as 1850 he foresaw what troubles would arise in Great Britain and the United States from private ownership. In a speech advocating the appropriation of £330,000 of public money for a railway from Halifax to Windsor, Nova Scotia, he said:

There are things that they [the government] should not control, but the great highways, the channels of communication, should claim special consideration, and when I am told that we should hand over for all time to come this great western railway to a private company, I have to such an assignment a serious objection. All our roads in Nova Scotia, made by the industry and resources of the people, are free to the people at this hour. The toll bar is almost unknown, and this railroad, which will be the Queen's highway to the western countries in all time to come, should be the property of the province, and not of a private association. The roads, telegraphs, lighthouses, the standards of value, these are the topics with which a government is bound to deal. There was a time in the feudal ages when every baron administered law to his tenants and retainers according to his own will; but the progress of civilization swept this system away, because men found it to be inconsistent with liberty; and because they found that all those modes of dealing with that which belonged of right to the state led to tyranny. . . . The government of Great Britain erred when it surrendered to private companies the control of the highroads of England. The little state of Belgium acted in a far wiser manner. In Belgium the railways, radiating from a common centre, reached every section of the country. They are all owned and have been constructed by the government. In my judgment, of all the nations of Europe not one has shown more wisdom in the construction of railways than this little state. . . . There is greater unity of action, greater power for good, in a government than in a private company.