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PATRICK KEANE

# Joseph Howe and Adult Education

The centenary of Joseph Howe's death naturally prompts some reassessment of a few facets of his varied career. The Victorian apprentice, who became lieutenant governor of his native province of Nova Scotia, earned broad recognition in the political arena.<sup>1</sup> A concomitant part of his political philosophy was the development of an educated and informed electorate, and he implemented this belief as an employer, as a writer and publisher, and as a member of more than one voluntary society. His own formal schooling ended at the age of thirteen, when he was apprenticed to a printer in a newspaper office, but even earlier, the role of teacher had been performed more by his father than by anyone else. Joseph owed him much for encouraging the extensive reading that was to contribute to his own self-education. Throughout his life, Howe never doubted that the self-education which he had attained was equally open to others.

After ten years in the publishing business, in 1827, Joseph became a joint owner with James Spike of the *Weekly Chronicle* newspaper, the name of which was then changed to the *Acadian*. In its prospectus, the new editors asked their readers' indulgence as "none of our years have been devoted to the calm retirement of a college, or to the systematic acquirement of knowledge and information . . ."<sup>2</sup> The efforts by which others sought to acquire "knowledge and information" were however to be brought to the readers' attentions, and a variety of adult education ventures in Britain were noted in the newspaper's columns. These ranged from a public lecture on the steam

1 Howe's career has attracted the attention of many writers, and is to be the subject of a two volume work by Professor J. Murray Beck of Dalhousie University. Earlier biographies include G.E. Fenety, *Life and Times of the Hon. Joseph Howe* (St. John, N.B., 1896) and James A. Roy, *Joseph Howe: A Study in Achievement and Frustration* (Toronto, 1935), but neither of these treat adequately Howe's work as an educator. Source material may be consulted in Joseph A. Chisholm, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of Joseph Howe* (Halifax, 1909); D.C. Harvey, *The Heart of Howe* (Toronto, 1939); J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Voice of Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1964).

2 *The Acadian and General Advertiser* (Halifax, N.S.), 5 January 1827.

engine: a speech by the pioneer of popular education, Henry Brougham<sup>3</sup>; and mention of such new bodies as the Liverpool Institution and Brighton Mechanics' Institute. The mechanics' institutes, in particular, were to be associated with that "acquirement of useful knowledge" which so many reformers stressed as being a prerequisite to broader social emancipation. The *Acadian* also published American views on the "dignity of the mechanic arts", and mentioned the American Lyceum, which was endeavouring to coordinate adult education activities. At home, the *Acadian* publicized the reduced subscriptions of Mrs. Cuff's Halifax Circulating Library, and spoke of the desirability of having libraries for apprentices. Howe's concern for the education of apprentices came in a period when few Halifax masters were said to be really interested in their welfare.<sup>4</sup> He himself expressed a wish "to inspire by precept and example. For many years", he continued, "I devoted the Sabbath evenings to the instruction of my apprentices, and the result has been that many of them have grown up, and are growing up with cultivated and vigorous minds, befitting them for every station . . ."<sup>5</sup>

In December 1827, Howe relinquished his share in the *Acadian* and purchased the *Novascotian* or *Colonial Herald* from George R. Young, the son of a Scottish merchant, who had achieved fame, under the pseudonym 'Agricola', for his advocacy of agricultural reforms.<sup>6</sup> In his first edition of the following month, Howe issued a prospectus of his publishing intentions. In it he remarked that "for many years, the newspaper press must be the great medium of instruction to the people, and every essay on morals or manners, science or literature, which breathes a sound and healthy tone, will be gladly welcomed . . ."<sup>7</sup> Howe was now in his element as an educator. He dipped liberally for material into British and American newspapers, travelled extensively over Nova Scotia, and published his impressions.<sup>8</sup>

3 Henry Peter Brougham, Lord Brougham and Vaux (1778-1868), was the leading advocate of popular education in Britain, after Samuel Whitbread's death in 1815. An able and controversial Whig politician, Brougham wrote in 1825 a pamphlet entitled *Practical Observations Upon the Education of the People, &c.* which ran to twenty editions in its first year. This work constituted the contemporary manual of adult education, and heralded Brougham's rise to international eminence in that field. By 1837, Brougham was proposed as the president of an International Lyceum by American adult educator, Josiah Holbrook. Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum; Town Meeting of the Mind* (New York, 1956), p. 108.

4 See, for example, a letter to fellow apprentices in *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax, N.S.), 18 January 1834.

5 *Novascotian* (Halifax, N.S.), 30 December 1841.

6 See J. S. Martell, *The Achievements of Agricola and the Agricultural Societies, 1818-1825* (Halifax, Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1940); and J. S. Martell, "Agricola: A Pioneer of Adult Education," *Journal of Education*, Halifax, N. S. (April, 1941), pp. 332-335.

7 *Novascotian*, 3 January 1828.

8 "Western Rambles", 1828; "Eastern Rambles", 1829-1831; and "Letters From the Interior", 1832. These have been edited by Professor M.G. Parks of Dalhousie University and are to appear shortly as *Western and Eastern Rambles: Travel Sketches of Nova Scotia*.

Along with Dr. William Grigor, Lawrence O'Connor Doyle, Judge Haliburton, and other friends who met in his house<sup>9</sup>, he also contributed a series of humorous and satirical newspaper articles under the pseudonym 'the Club' (1828-1831), whose banter provoked a new interest in the political scene, and led to their authors being offered the editorship of *Blackwoods Magazine*.<sup>10</sup> From July 1829, he commenced a series of "Legislative Reviews" to foster the growth of an informed public opinion on matters before the provincial assembly. He later contended that without the reviews the electorate "would have been about as incapable of judging the conduct of their representatives, as if they had assembled on the moon", and he hoped future generations would also benefit by gaining "very valuable data from which to judge of the character and sentiments of the present age, and of the early habits and conditions of the century".<sup>11</sup> From his printing press also came a number of the early works of provincial literature.<sup>12</sup> These were to prove but the opening moves in a career, which visualized only those Nova Scotians possessing an education as really deserving of responsible government.

The *Novascotian* tried hard to promote education and culture. In the course of a favorable comment on the establishment of new schools in Halifax, the editor commented that "a good schoolmaster is a valuable acquisition to the place of his location, and with modesty be it spoken, does nearly as much benefit as a good newspaper".<sup>13</sup> Not content with opening the door to knowledge, Howe sought to encourage people to enter with prospects of a career open to talent, while decrying others too idle and wasteful to take advantage of the opportunities afforded. In 1828, the *Novascotian* noted the existence of a Society for the Diffusion of General Knowledge in Spanish Town, Jamaica, and the membership there of a Halifax educated negro, Cuffy Montagu James, who "had attended the school at Preston, had mastered

9 Dr. William Grigor was Howe's physician, and Lawrence O'Connor Doyle was an attorney and vice president of the Charitable Irish Society. Thomas C. Haliburton was a lawyer and author, soon to achieve fame for his creation of the character, 'Sam Slick': Captain Kincade was an officer with the Halifax garrison, and his book *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade* had already achieved popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. Other, and more casual members of 'The Club' included S.G.W. Archibald, an attorney and later Master of the Rolls; Jotham Blanchard, editor of the *Colonial Patriot*, of Pictou; Beamish Murdoch, historian and author, and Thomas B. Akins, historian and later Nova Scotia's first provincial archivist. See Chisholm, *op. cit.*, I, p. 4; Fenety, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-63; and Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

10 J. S. Martell, "The Creator of Sam Slick", *Journal of Education*, Halifax, N. S. (January, 1937), p. 67.

11 *Novascotian*, 24 April 1834.

12 For example, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia* (1829), and *The Clockmaker, Or Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick of Slickville* (1836); Beamish Murdoch, *An Epitome of the Laws of Nova Scotia* (4 vols., 1832-1833).

13 *Novascotian*, 24 June 1828.

the alphabet, and almost learned the gamut of psalmody . . . .”<sup>14</sup> Conversely, Howe could later quote, favorably, American criticism of mechanics’ indifference to education: “They imagine that literature, science, and general information are unnecessary to them, and that if they are acquainted with the commonest rules of arithmetic, reading, writing, and the trade to which they are called, they have all the acquirements their business demands”.<sup>15</sup> The article went on to attack the contention that mechanics lacked the leisure time necessary for self improvement. In words which might have described Howe’s own youth, it estimated that each man must have at least one hour free for reading on each working day, and six hours free after even two attendances at Sunday church. Therefore, over a period of twenty years, he might devote more time to literature and the sciences than any of the “educated men”. By 1830, Howe was also to plan a scheme of self education for himself:

Read books from 5 to 8, or 7 to 9. Science and history chiefly . . . .  
 Business and newspapers till 3. Exercise and recreation till 6.  
 Write 2 hours. Read till 12.  
 Intellectual occupation. Revise with metre. French and grammar.  
 Read poetry more — speeches more. Scripture 2 hours on Sunday.<sup>16</sup>

While, on occasion, the *Novascotian* reprinted English articles critical of some of Henry Brougham’s educational ideas,<sup>17</sup> its editorials clearly supported his general advocacy of adult education. Thus, an article of 1828, recognizing the value of the scientific societies with which settlers had been familiar in the land of their birth, went on to comment on the difficulties of founding similar ones in new countries. It noted the problem found in applying much theoretical knowledge, and remarked that “the process of settlement and rude tillage, though laborious, is simple — it requires but little skill and much physical exertion, hence arises a disregard of the one and a firm reliance on the other”.<sup>18</sup> The editorial went on to praise such ventures as the Halifax Commercial Society and the Kentville Agricultural Society; but it noted the demise of earlier provincial agricultural societies, and urged both farmers and mechanics to establish societies for the diffusion of useful knowledge. While allowing that the scattered settlements could not emulate the educational provision of urban British institutes, it argued that both Halifax and St. John might establish “very efficient and useful societies”. Elsewhere, a beginning should be made, however humble, for “men wonder now that a library was not established in Halifax twenty years ago”. Later in 1828, the *Novascotian*, after discoursing on the London Mechanics’ Institution and

14 *Novascotian*, 13 March 1828.

15 *Novascotian*, 2 September 1829.

16 Cited Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

17 For example, *Novascotian*, 10 July 1828 and 31 July 1828.

18 *Novascotian*, 20 August 1828.

on the London Literary and Scientific Institution, proposed the establishment of a Halifax Society for Mental Improvement.<sup>19</sup> This scheme envisaged some fifty members, each paying two shillings and sixpence per month, and contributing a few books, some readings, and a couple of lectures. Arguing that other towns, less suited than Halifax, had founded such institutions, the article urged Halifax to set a pattern for Nova Scotia.<sup>20</sup> But nothing came of the scheme.

Throughout 1829, the *Novascotian* continued to publicize local adult education ventures of various kinds. These ranged from an amateur theater, supported by the military garrison,<sup>21</sup> to a night school, conducted by John S. Thompson, father of a future premier of Nova Scotia and a future prime minister of Canada (Sir John S.D. Thompson).<sup>22</sup> There was also mention of chemistry lectures, delivered to a “respectable assemblage of ladies and gentlemen”, by Dr. Bayard in St. John, and of Dr. McCulloch, who was about to follow suit in Pictou.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, there came a series of articles on ‘Female Education’,<sup>24</sup> and a reference to the publications of Henry Brougham’s Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, “one of the grandest associations of the day”.<sup>25</sup> By December 1829, the editor could not but express “regret that we in the metropolis have no access to public lectures on scientific subjects”.<sup>26</sup> Later that month, he reiterated earlier proposals for the establishment in Halifax of “an association of the mechanics and tradesmen for the purposes of mutual instruction, and with a view to excite and keep alive among them, a spirit of useful improvement and intellectual emulation”.<sup>27</sup> He did allow that “some few — haply in this community we believe there are very few — may be so bigoted and illiberal as to deny the utility of raising the character and enlarging the capacities of the middling and lower classes of society”. Nonetheless, he believed that at least three hundred members for such an institute might be enrolled in Halifax — a six-fold increase in the proposal of fifteen months earlier. While assuming a

19 *Novascotian*, 4 September 1828.

20 *Novascotian*, 18 September 1828. In the fall of that year came the establishment of an Association of the Friends of Ireland in Nova Scotia. Founded to campaign for Catholic Emancipation, its constitution provided that when this goal was achieved, the members should re-establish themselves as a mechanics’ institute. However, on the Association’s dissolution in May 1829, it was resolved instead to expend the funds on the relief of the poor. *Novascotian*, 31 December 1829.

21 For example, *Novascotian*, 19 February 1829.

22 *Novascotian*, 12 February 1829. John S. Thompson was to be editor of the shortlived (1830-1833) *Halifax Monthly Magazine*, and secretary of the Halifax Mechanics’ Institute during the ensuing two decades.

23 *Novascotian*, 21 May 1829 and 17 December 1829.

24 *Novascotian*, 11 June 1829; 18 June 1829; 25 June 1829.

25 *Novascotian*, 17 December 1829.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Novascotian*, 31 December 1829.

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membership of working men. Howe sought also some middle class support, as a way of extending the benefits of such an institute, although, neglecting British experience, which he cited favourably in other matters, he contended that "a mechanics' institute can be organized without [the middle class]".<sup>28</sup> The aims of this venture were expressed as the formation of a library, the provision of lectures, and a system of awards for apprentices and inventors. Howe proposed that a selection of elementary scientific works be obtained for the library from the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in London. While a library and a program of lectures were the usual attributes of mechanics' institutes in Britain and the United States, the addition of "a system of awards" was less common. However, it typified a contemporary optimism that mechanics and apprentices needed but slight encouragement to make numerous and fundamental contributions to scientific and technological discovery.

Citing British and American examples was not in itself sufficient to stimulate the formation of a Halifax body with similar aims, although the press was generally sympathetic. A cautious support had been forthcoming from George R. Young, Howe's predecessor as editor of the *Novascotian*. While not then considering Halifax able to support a fully fledged mechanics' institute, Young at least commended a proposal to establish a mechanics' library.<sup>29</sup> Both Phillip J. Holland, editor of the *Acadian Recorder*, and Jotham Blanchard, editor of the *Colonial Patriot*, proved consistent supporters of a proposed institute. Nevertheless, it was not until October 1831 that the first practical step resulted, and the Halifax Mechanics' Library Association was formed under the presidency of John S. Thompson.<sup>30</sup> Management was vested in a body of shareholders, who had each contributed an initial ten shillings, and ordinary membership was then offered to quarterly subscribers. This arrangement did not suit a correspondent in the *Acadian Recorder*, who evidently felt it excluded mechanics from effective participation.<sup>31</sup> Howe, unwilling to consider the new library as the culmination of his endeavours, was soon gratified by the next step. In December 1831, the committee of the library association convened a public meeting, at which the Halifax Mech-

28 While working class initiatives certainly existed in the foundation of some British institutes, the demands of finance and administration of mechanics' institutes placed a premium on middle class participation, if not actual management. See, for example, Thomas Kelly, *George Birkbeck: Pioneer of Adult Education* (Liverpool, 1957), pp. 218-223; Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire Before 1851* (Manchester, 1957), pp. 61-63; John F.C. Harrison, *Learning and Living, 1790-1960* (London, 1963), pp. 58ff.

29 *Novascotian*, 16 and 23 August 1827.

30 The one hundred shares were sold quickly, and books were soon ready for circulation. *Novascotian*, 2 November 1831.

31 *Acadian Recorder*, 3 December 1831.

anics' Institute was born.<sup>32</sup>

The new body attracted that middle class support that Howe had sought.<sup>33</sup> A number of Howe's literary circle from 'The Club' were enrolled,<sup>34</sup> as was his fellow newspaper editor P.J. Holland, while other literary acquaintances of Howe's were to give their services as lecturers.<sup>35</sup> Howe's friend, Dr. William Grigor, became the institute's president; John Leander Starr, a member of Halifax's prosperous and influential merchant class, became a vice president; and Howe himself became a vice president. Howe also delivered an opening address at the institute's first meeting in a rented room at Dalhousie College on January 11, 1832.<sup>36</sup> In the address he spoke of knowledge as a source both of pleasure and power; of the individual and national benefits that could accrue from the study of science; of the lessons to be learned from older countries; and of the stress being placed on the education of the American worker. He warned his audience that, in inaugurating this venture, their first steps might be "assailed by the sneer of the ignorant and the ridicule of the idle". Reminiscing in later years, Howe was to recall that this prediction had indeed been fulfilled on that inaugural night. Among the audience, in the ill-lit room at Dalhousie College, had appeared a few such men.<sup>37</sup> Dismissing their opposition as the product of the 'ignorant' and the 'idle', Howe's oratory was to fasten repeatedly on these categories as the cause of many misfortunes. Thus, of Halifax, he commented that "the whole tendency of military society in a town like this is towards habits of idleness, dissipation, and expense", and he found the local people inclined to emulate the military in "their disregard of time, their habits of expense, and their contempt for the low pursuits of business".<sup>38</sup> One outcome was that "the industrious classes are assailed by temptations on every side", hence Howe's concern was for

32 Halifax Mechanics' Institute Journal [hereafter cited as Journal], 27 December 1831. Public Archives of Nova Scotia [hereafter cited as PANS]. John S. Thompson, president of the library association, was elected secretary of the mechanics' institute. For a further account of the subsequent development of Halifax Mechanics' Institute, see Charles Bruce Fergusson, *Mechanics' Institutes in Nova Scotia* (Halifax, Bulletin of PANS, 1960) and the present writer's "Two Decades of Adult Education in Halifax" to be published in Atlantic Educational Research Council, *Proceedings*, 1972.

33 For example, each of the members — Samuel Cunard, S.W. Deblois, John A. Berry, G.P. Lawson, James Tobin, and Jonathon Tremain — of the chamber of the Halifax Commercial Society, elected in 1829, was subsequently to be found a member of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute. *Novascotian*, 12 February 1829, and Membership Book of Halifax Mechanics' Institute, John S. Thompson Papers, Public Archives of Canada [hereafter PAC].

34 These included Dr. William Grigor and Lawrence O'Connor Doyle.

35 These included S.W.G. Archibald, Thomas B. Akins and Rev. Titus Smith, a scientist known as the 'Dutch Village Philosopher'.

36 "An Opening Address Delivered to the First Meeting of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute on Wednesday, January 11, 1832, by Joseph Howe". John S. Thompson Papers, PAC.

37 *Colonial Pearl* (Halifax, N.S.), 15 November 1839.

38 *Novascotian*, 30 July 1834.



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adult education to effect a moral reformation as much as to develop an interest in the sciences. To him, the potentialities appeared enormous for “most things that are valuable have had a humble origin. The mariner’s compass was invented in an obscure Italian town; the steam engine was constructed in a Scottish seaport; a town of no great likelihood gave birth to the art of printing . . . .”<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in defending a career open to talent, he was to mention that “Canning’s mother was an actress; Pitt was a cornet of hussars; Brougham commenced life in a Scotch garret; Sydenham in the counting house; Peel’s father was a cotton spinner”.<sup>40</sup> To the institute members, he declared:

There is a power in the human mind to control all outward circumstances, and raise itself up from the lowest depth of social degradation to the highest point of moral influence and intellectual renown. Need I refer you to the Franklins and Fergusons, the Johnsons and Fultons, to convince you that, even on the roughest roads of scholarship and science, those who would appear to have the greatest advantages may be distanced by the genius and perseverance of the most obscure.<sup>41</sup>

Howe was to play an active part in the formative years of the Halifax Mechanics’ Institute. In December 1832, he was elected first vice president and twelve months later its president.<sup>42</sup> While he declined nomination for a second term as president in January 1835,<sup>43</sup> perhaps because of a growing interest in a political career,<sup>44</sup> he was to remain active in many aspects of its work. In January 1832, he had been a member of one of its committees which petitioned the Nova Scotia legislature for an annual grant,<sup>45</sup> and both the institute and library association were to receive such a grant from 1833 until 1841. In March 1832, Howe presented the institute with a large map of North America and “five specimens of South Sea curiosities”.<sup>46</sup> Six months later he was asked to arrange a union between the institute and the library association,<sup>47</sup> but the scheme proved unsuccessful and the two remained separate entities to the end of their days. The institute had enrolled fifty-two members at its

39 D.C. Harvey, *The Heart of Howe*, p. 182. Unfortunately, the context of these remarks is not given.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

41 Joseph Howe to the Halifax Mechanics’ Institute, 5 November 1834, in Chisholm, *Speeches and Public Letters*, I, p. 11.

42 Journal, 26 December 1832 and 23 December 1833.

43 *Acadian Recorder*, 10 January 1835.

44 The *Novascotian* published a letter by his friend, George Thompson, signed ‘The People’, on 1 January 1835, which accused the Halifax magistrates of corruption. The ensuing libel action against Howe resulted in an acquittal and the magistrates’ resignation. This success was to facilitate his election to the Assembly as a representative for Halifax County in December 1836.

45 Journal, 23 January 1832.

46 *Ibid.*, 13 and 26 March 1832.

47 *Ibid.*, 10 September 1832.

inauguration, less than Howe considered acceptable, and in February 1833, he successfully proposed the establishment of a membership promotion committee.<sup>48</sup> During the ensuing decade, membership tended to remain above two hundred, but without reaching Howe's earlier estimate of "at least three hundred". Providing regular accommodation for the members, their growing museum and proposed laboratory, soon attracted attention, and in May 1833, Howe was deputed to negotiate with Dalhousie College for some of their vacant rooms.<sup>49</sup> Twelve months later, the institute inaugurated a building fund, with the intention of purchasing its own premises,<sup>50</sup> and in 1836, Howe chaired a committee which unsuccessfully sought a suitable building lot.<sup>51</sup> In 1840, the governors of Dalhousie College were contemplating establishing a museum and library, which would involve the use of the institute's accommodation. Accordingly, Howe was again deputed to serve on an institute building committee,<sup>52</sup> and a public meeting was arranged to solicit support. Some fifty people attended to hear pleas for a fitting home for the institute, in this era of 'improvement'.<sup>53</sup> Citing the "new vigor of the press", the increase in libraries, the establishment of a "society for discussion", and the opportunities presented by the new Atlantic steamship service, speakers urged the audience to emulate St. John in providing suitable public accommodation. The Halifax merchants, few of whom attended, were criticized for their lack of support, and were exhorted to share this public obligation in a place from which their wealth was derived. To a proposal for one building housing several educational and cultural bodies, Howe demurred, believing it impracticable, and there the matter was to rest. Fortunately for the institute, the tenure at Dalhousie was to remain undisturbed, but as the *Novascotian* pointed out, other adult education bodies were now developing, and so claiming a share of public support.<sup>54</sup>

As one would expect, Howe found ready expression for his oratorical gifts in the delivery of a multiplicity of lectures to the institute.<sup>55</sup> His topics embraced astronomy, commerce, education, eloquence, history, his beloved Nova Scotia, poetry, scientific exhibitions, and (following a visit to England)

48 *Ibid.*, 11 February 1833.

49 *Ibid.*, 7 May 1833.

50 *Ibid.*, 27 May 1833.

51 *Ibid.*, 2 May 1836.

52 *Ibid.*, 28 December 1840.

53 *Novascotian*, 31 December 1840.

54 Apart from Halifax, it cited the Truro Literary and Scientific Society (10 January 1839); Antigonish Mechanics' Institute (31 December 1840); and Colchester Literary and Scientific Society (*ibid.*).

55 On these gifts, see W.K. Thomas, "Canadian Political Oratory in the Nineteenth Century", Part III, *Dalhousie Review*, XXXIX (Autumn, 1959), pp. 377-389. "He was a master of factual detail and its skilful presentation: in his smooth and effective transitions he possessed the last touch in structural skill: his astounding adaptability allowed him to persuade . . . . As a result, in

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the peculiarities of London. The breadth of Howe's contributions (the natural outcome of the catholicity of his interests) fitted in well with the broad liberal education which the institute was developing, rather than with the more vocational and scientifically based education which his friend Dr. William Grigor had favoured.<sup>56</sup> Howe's early writings and lectures had stressed the public benefits of adult education. Thus in 1834, he had expressed his wish to the institute "to build up agriculture, commerce, and manufactures upon the surest of all foundations — the mental and moral cultivation of the people. If knowledge is power, let us get knowledge".<sup>57</sup> Addressing "an audience composed of all countries", he stated "the conviction that their children are already natives of Nova Scotia", a land worthy of pride and patriotism. If it lacked comparable academic recognition of some talents, it possessed opportunities for the development of others. Difficulties might be resolved by:

the resources of genius, aided by patriotic self devotion, and an ardent pursuit of knowledge . . . . In chemistry, geology, pneumatics, electromagnetism, optics, natural history, astronomy, and medicine, how many brilliant discoveries are to be made, and how splendid a reputation may not the assiduous pursuit of either or all of those sciences, even in this little colony, confer.

By 1845, one detects a lighter vein, when, in addressing the members, he was to couple "pleasure and improvement", "recreation and utility" as the outcome of their efforts, while seeking to recall the original purpose of the institute as a school of eloquence for working men.<sup>58</sup>

Increasingly, Howe was to be involved in other matters, which lessened the time available for institute activities. However, such was his interest that, in February 1835, while preparing for his defense in an impending libel suit, he had found the time to lecture on astronomy. Nor was he disinclined to promote the literary contributions of others. Thus, when George R. Young, whom the institute had commissioned to visit British mechanics' institutes,<sup>59</sup> transmitted a report, it was Howe who read it to the members, and subsequently published it.<sup>60</sup> Nor did Howe's duties as a member of the Assembly

arousing attention no matter where he went, in enforcing his arguments, in stimulating the imagination of his hearers and in exciting their feelings. Joseph Howe was supremely successful . . . ." (p. 389).

56 For Dr. Grigor's views, see Keane, "Two Decades of Adult Education in Halifax".

57 "An Address Delivered Before the Halifax Mechanics' Institute on the 5th of November, 1834, by Joseph Howe". John S. Thompson Papers, PAC.

58 See Joseph Howe, "Lecture on Eloquence to the Halifax Mechanics' Institute, September 11, 1845", in Chisholm, *op. cit.*, I, p. 568.

59 An account of these, by the present writer, is to be published in the *Journal of Education* (Halifax, N.S.), under the title "George R. Young and Comparative Adult Education".

60 *Journal* 23 October 1833, and *Novascotian*, 15 January 1834.

after 1836 lessen his concern for the institute. In 1839, he sought to stimulate the waning support of working class members. He praised the unexpected lecturing talents which certain members had displayed, and urged mechanics to come forth and lecture on the principles of their trades. Employers were likewise urged to present medals, which the institute might award to innovative apprentices.<sup>61</sup> Unavailing as were these overtures, the mechanics demonstrated a willingness to support recreational activities, and in 1843 one finds Mrs. Howe and Mrs. Grigor among the ladies managing a very successful institute bazaar.<sup>62</sup> During the 1840's and 1850's, Howe frequently held public office,<sup>63</sup> but he still found time to address the members. Confessing to his own poor attendance in 1845,<sup>64</sup> he assured members of his continuing support. Thereafter, along with fellow institute members, Lawrence O'Connor Doyle and George R. Young, he was to be a member of the Liberal administration around mid-century, and active in the reform program that followed the grant of responsible government. Nevertheless, he did not refuse the odd lecture, nor decline to assist in drafting an act for the institute's incorporation.<sup>65</sup> While the institute was to continue in operation throughout the 1860's, its heyday as a broadly supported adult education venture had passed, as had Howe's own regular association with it.

Predictably, Howe's own close attachment to the British connection found expression in the work of the institute. To develop further the contacts made by George R. Young, a liason committee was established under Howe's chairmanship in July 1834.<sup>66</sup> Halifax Mechanics' Institute had decided to repay, in like manner, the compliment of honorary membership bestowed on Young by a number of British institutes, and in August 1834 one recipient thanked Howe (as president) for the honour.<sup>67</sup> This was Richard Yates, president of Liverpool Mechanics' Institution, who had entertained Young in the previous year. Yates spoke gratefully of the compliment as being indicative of the mutual interests of the respective institutes, and of the tie now formed between them. In January 1835, Howe corresponded with Dr. George Birkbeck, president of the London Mechanics' Institution.<sup>68</sup> Thanking Birkbeck for a portrait of Lord Brougham, which was now adorning the institute museum, he enclosed a copy of his own introductory address for the current session, and

61 *Colonial Pearl*, 15 November 1839.

62 *Journal*, 10 May 1843; 10 July 1843.

63 1841-1843. Speaker of the Assembly: 1841-1842. Indian Commissioner: 1842-1843. Collector of Excise: 1848-1854. Provincial Secretary: 1854-1857. Chairman of the Railway Board.

64 Chisholm. *op. cit.*, p. 568.

65 *Journal*, 7 November 1849; 10 February 1850; and Harvey. *op. cit.*, p. xxi. for a lecture in December 1855.

66 *Journal*, 28 July 1834.

67 Richard V. Yates to Joseph Howe. Liverpool, 13 August 1834. John S. Thompson Papers. PAC.

68 8 January 1835. Joseph Howe Papers. VI. I. MG24. B29. PAC.

mentioned a collection of Nova Scotian minerals which was being sent to the London Mechanics' Institution.<sup>69</sup>

Howe was to spend most of the year 1838 on his first visit to Britain and continental Europe. Before his departure, the Halifax Mechanics' Institute presented him with a letter of introduction to British mechanics' institutes, stating that:

Any facilities afforded to Mr. Howe, in his desire to obtain information respecting the parent institutes, and to benefit the institute established in this part of the British Empire, will be considered an evidence of the readiness of old country institutes to spread the blessings of popular education, and a particular favour to the society . . . .<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately, his diary does not record whether he indeed followed up this matter, as his predecessor George Young had done so well. While referring to the "letter to institutes" to a few educators,<sup>71</sup> and to the publishers William and Robert Chambers, the diary is more concerned with his general impressions of the English scene. He sailed to Cornwall in company with Thomas C. Haliburton, the Nova Scotian lawyer and author, who in later years was to represent a Cornish constituency in the British parliament.<sup>72</sup> Landing at Falmouth on May 21, 1838, Howe found his attention drawn to "girls selling radishes and water cresses, boys breaking stones . . . printers . . . selling the *Teetotal Gazette*". Commenting that there was "not much trade but [the] pilchard fishery, mines and timber," he visited the Tresavean copper mine and found some twelve hundred men, women, and children at work. Aside from their appearance and wages, he was to note a "want of education". However, there is no mention of the Falmouth Mechanics' Institute, nor of other mechanics' institutes in this mining area, although some extant correspondence might suggest a contact being made with the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society in Falmouth.<sup>73</sup>

69 The Halifax Mechanics' Institute had also received some books and a portrait of Dr. George Birkbeck from the London Mechanics' Institution, together with a diverse collection of reports from other British institutes visited by George R. Young. In return, collections of Nova Scotia minerals were dispatched to them at this time.

70 Letter dated 23 April 1838 to the Officers of Institutes in Great Britain and Ireland. John S. Thompson Papers. PAC.

71 For example, Professor Christisson, Edinburgh; Professor Lindley, London University; Charles Creed, University College, London; and Diary, 1838. Joseph Howe Papers, vol. 45. PAC.

72 Thomas C. Haliburton, who received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University in 1858, was to become M.P. for the Cornish constituency of Launceston in the following year. Martell, "The Creator of Sam Slick", p. 67.

73 John S. Thompson Papers. PAC. and Journal, 9 March 1837. Lieutenant William Pringle Green, R.N., master of a packet boat on the Falmouth to Halifax route, had lectured on naval architecture to the Halifax Mechanics' Institute in 1837, and the institute subsequently awarded him honorary membership. In 1837 also, Green wrote to Sir Charles Lemon, president of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society in Falmouth, in connection with some atmospheric phenom-

Similarly, Howe's subsequent journey records a visit to Plymouth dockyard, but not to the Plymouth Mechanics' Institute; while in Bristol, he notes Colston's Charity School, but not the Bristol Mechanics' Institute. In London, he may have followed up a diary note and visited the Royal Institution, but he does not mention the London Mechanics' Institution. Nevertheless, either during this visit, or in subsequent ones, Howe appears to have contacted some British adult educators, for in his 1866 visit to England, he was sending anti-Confederation pamphlets to such men as Lord Brougham and William Newmarch and seeking their support. To Brougham, now a venerable eighty-eight years, Howe was to write that "the oppressed everywhere naturally turn [to you] for council and protection,"<sup>74</sup> but there is no indication of the response elicited. From Newmarch, a statistician and former honorary secretary of the York Institute of Popular Science and Literature, came an acknowledgement and an invitation to visit him.<sup>75</sup> These visits to England, associated with such matters as a proposed steamship service to Halifax, railway development, and Howe's opposition to Confederation, also contributed material for some lectures to the institute, besides enabling him to exercise his oratory in Southampton on the need for a broader colonial policy.<sup>76</sup>

For a *bon vivant*, to whom critics ascribed a certain coarseness in manner and speech, the role of Victorian adult educator might seem to lack credibility. But through his editorials and lectures, Howe was a publicist of 'self-improvement', a concept in which he believed passionately. He also gave practical application to his principles, and here the example of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute might be supplemented by those of the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society<sup>77</sup> or the Halifax Literary and Debating Society.<sup>78</sup> His

ena witnessed on an Atlantic crossing. Those letters to Green and Lemon are both included with the papers of the secretary of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute, and suggest a later, perhaps personal contact. Robert Were Fox, a local ironfounder and promoter of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society, is embraced in Howe's 1838 diary note: "Foxes — rich Quakers", although it is doubtful if any meeting took place between them at this time.

74 Joseph Howe to Lord Brougham, 17 September 1866. Joseph Howe Papers, vol. 9. PAC.

75 William Newmarch to Joseph Howe, 12 November 1866. *ibid.*

76 Speech of 14 January 1851, cited in William Annad, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of Joseph Howe* (Boston, 1858), II, pp. 33-51.

77 The *Novascotian* (24 August 1836) contended that "we have few or no professional gardeners", and rely on unsuitable English treatises. Citing the Massachusetts horticultural societies as examples worth emulating, it urged that public gardens would "promote an exercise of domestic affection, and create a more refined taste for social pleasures". Five years were to elapse before the society established its gardens in Halifax, and in 1857, these were transferred to the city.

78 Howe and John S. Thompson participated in this venture. It was said to consist largely of "shop lads, clerks, law students, and others", and met in another of the vacant rooms of Dalhousie College. John A. Bell, "Dalhousie College and University" (unpublished typescript, Dalhousie University Library, 1887).

early leadership of the mechanics' institute was popularly accepted, and his talents were welcomed in institutions as diverse as the St. George's Society of Halifax, or the Young Man's Christian Association of Ottawa.<sup>79</sup> Adult education, of course, represented but one strand of his broader concern with educational and cultural development, but it was one in which he was deeply and personally involved. Fond of citing the careers of self-made men, and increasingly critical of a political system in which patronage hindered merit, he was alive to the scientific and technological possibilities of his age, and anxious that Nova Scotia should benefit from them. He supported and commended his fellow adult educators:

To Titus Smith we owe the first dawning of natural science in this country, and to Dr. McCulloch, we are indebted, not only for some knowledge of chemistry, but for lessons of thrift conveyed to our agricultural classes in a homely style, at once quaint and attractive.<sup>80</sup>

On balance, he had little patience with those less committed than himself: "Canada cannot afford to have one drone in the intellectual hive . . . . The idler and the vagrant are simply traitors to the land of their birth".<sup>81</sup> Howe's character embraced great zeal, broad ability, and persuasive oratory, beneath which lay an almost puritanical contempt for those he regarded as insensible of the opportunities available.

A recent writer has suggested that such Halifax liberals as Howe sought to benefit an elite rather than the population at large, and were motivated by self-interest in their promotion of education.<sup>82</sup> Certainly, the Halifax Mechanics' Institute was typical of the international mechanics' institute movement, in being formed for the benefit of literate skilled mechanics — an elite among working men — and in gradually assuming a more middle class character. Similarly, neither the Halifax Literary and Debating Society nor the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society were calculated to enroll the really poor, any more than Howe's editorials were addressed to them. This phase of adult education was directed at those who already possessed more than basic literacy and numeracy, and were able and willing to participate in further 'improvement'. The poor and illiterate adult, then as now, was unlikely to participate in institutional ventures where his inadequacies would be made manifest. Howe was certainly conscious of the many people who had not

79 For example. Lecture on tercentenary of Shakespeare's Birth. St. George's Society. Halifax. 23 April 1864. Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-66; Lecture to the Young Men's Christian Association, Ottawa. 22 February 1872. Chisholm, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 638-640.

80 Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

82 Judith Fingard, "Attitudes Towards the Education of the Poor in Colonial Halifax", *Acadiensis*, II (Spring, 1973), pp. 15-42.

benefited from formal education,<sup>83</sup> and had the 'improvement' of others consisted in a narrow vocational program of instruction, then the self-interest of its promoters would indeed be in question. Instead, the institute displayed lethargy in attempting to sustain its only attempt at systematic class instruction (in geometry). Rather, it displayed constant zeal to attract capacity enrollments, and this dictated a program in which literature jostled with the sciences, and even recreation ultimately found a place. While contentious matters of politics and religion were excluded from the lecture program, as being potentially disruptive among members and supporters of diverse persuasions, the program was otherwise untrammelled by the self-interest of any one group. Indeed, the successive managements' concern to achieve the greatest possible consensus led to disillusionment and/or withdrawal by those with more specific objects in view. Joseph Howe's concern with a career 'open to talents' was coupled with a concern for the development of man as man, and the breadth of his contributions to adult education (as a writer, publisher, promoter, lecturer, and institute official) would seem to have transcended self-interest. Doubtless the mechanics' institute and other ventures would have developed without him, but his initial drive and convictions encouraged others to participate, and enabled him to undertake an active political life. Thereafter, as an elder statesman, he retained a watching brief, and displayed a readiness to help whenever the occasion demanded. If not exactly critical, his contributions to adult education appear to be substantial enough to merit recognition and commendation.

83 Thus in speech on free schools, on 22 March 1841, Howe asked "whether the people shall be universally educated, or one third be allowed to remain in lamentable ignorance?" Chisholm, *op. cit.*, 1, p. 373.



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