

Despite the predictability of result of such contests, however, there were important gains in terms of press liberty. For one thing, the authorities were finding, to their cost, that it did not pay to martyrize their newspaper enemies. They discovered that their harsh treatment of such men as Ferguson and Collins aroused bitter opposition to their rule, so that they were much more reluctant to punish Mackenzie when he levelled his strictures against their arbitrary acts. Of more critical importance still was Howe's momentous legal victory in a libel trial in Halifax in 1835. The court battle was precipitated by a letter of scathing criticism of the magistracy of the seaport centre which had appeared in Howe's newspaper, the *Novascotian*. Unlike John Peter Zenger in New York a hundred years before, Howe found no lawyers willing to represent him at his trial, so he undertook his own defence. Through his brilliant eloquence rather than his legal skill, he won a resounding victory. It was as significant in Canadian, if not in international, terms as such English precedents as the publication of Milton's *Areopagitica*, the triumph of John Wilkes, the *Letters of Junius*, the victories of Crosby and Oliver, and the ultimate vindication of Cobbett, Wooler, Hone and Carlile.

At the same time the Howe trial was no more consequential to the liberty of the press than were the achievements made in other British North American areas. As with England in an earlier age, many press-freedom victories were won in the political and religious arena. As the citizen of the new land gained the right to believe as he wished about God and about political matters, and as the granting of Responsible Government introduced a new climate of intellectual tolerance, journalism lost many of its shackles. Thus, topics that had been forbidden before were made proper subjects of free debate, and newspaper freedom increased accordingly.

MECHANICAL CHANGES IN THE PRESS

There were several improvements in newspaper production by 1858. The gradual clearing of the forests and the building of roads made news-gathering somewhat easier and faster. The introduction of the magnetic telegraph into the Canadas in 1846 and into the Maritimes in 1849 made it possible for journalists to take advantage of the speed-up of communications brought about by the conversion of ocean-going vessels from sail to steam after 1838. The full effect of new invention was not felt, however, until the third press period. The printing of newspapers gained from the change from wood to iron presses and from the increasing use of power presses after 1840. Another impetus was given by the first manufacture of paper in the Canadas in 1830, but the entire mechanical operation was greatly retarded by the time-consuming handsetting of type which continued to be the method used. What inventions were introduced had the effect of increasing the costs of newspaper equipment and hence of newspapers. Thus it required five annual payments of £210 each to purchase the *Novascotian* in the middle of the period.

The same development that accelerated news-gathering also aided newspaper distribution. In addition to better transportation and communication, a slow increase in literacy enlarged potential readership. At the same time two factors caused difficulties for the editor. High mailing costs made news-organs more expensive and restricted circulations. Then, too, the failure of editors to require payment for subscriptions in advance left uncollected and uncollectable debts owing to them that were often ruinous. Circulations of newspapers continued to be small. The *Novascotian*, which was a leader in its field, was considered to be doing very well when its subscribers reached 1,500.

Despite the introduction of the telegraph, the weekly news-organ was still more important than the daily. In 1833 the Montreal *Daily Advertiser* became the first paper of that frequency in British North America, but it was unusual for its time. It was not until 1849 that the first successful daily began to publish in Canada West, and not until the third press period that the daily newspaper began to surpass the weekly in importance.