

Argument of Grosvenor P. Lowery Esq
and the testimony of F. L. Pope Esq before
the Committee on Cities of the Assembly—
April 1st 1875.

Mr. Lowery arose and said;

Mr Chairman:

" " " If we believed that the public
convenience demanded the passage of
this bill as it is now we would be the
last to dissent from its provisions. But
we believe that no such convenience will
result if the provisions of this bill be
carried out as its advocates claim.
At least, sir, there is one thing inevitable
if this bill becomes a law on the other
hand, the destruction of the telegraphic
business in the city of New York, and
it is my purpose knowing perfectly
well that I address those acting for
the good of the state & who have a
profound regard for its highest
interests to show this before I close.

(Mr Daly)

Are you not aware that the
telegraph business in London is con-
ducted underground?

(Mr. Lowery)

Perfectly; I am going to tell you how it is managed, and I shall show you that there are reasons in this country which do not exist in Europe which would make it disastrous to the telegraphic interests not by mere statements but facts and I shall make them as short as possible; and I shall show you these facts from the testimony of men whose business it is to deal with matters which is very much like making a watch, business very complicated as well as very vital to the best interests of the country, and an interest which the Legislature should regard with peculiar attention. Now in regard to this underground system of telegraphing which the Honorable Chairman of this Committee has directed my attention to as regards the city of London, I should say that for twenty years past they have been trying to find out how to lay wires safely underground; the wires have lasted one, two or three years at the end of which time they would become unoperative.

(Mr. Daly)

How was it in the city of London? They have adopted that system which seems to work very well; so far the system has worked to perfection.

(Mr. Lowery)

Now in regard to these matters so well known to experts in the telegraphic art I shall make all my statements in the presence of gentlemen who are far more learned and skilled in these respects than myself. It is true they make use of this system in London; a system which works more slowly after a short distance. You are more or less familiar with the city of London. You will remember how her railroad and commercial centres are clustered together very unlike the city of New York. You come into the midst of the city of London as it were by rail; so that messages are sent by very short lines and in this way they are enabled to do it with sufficient speed. In the city of London there are about five thousand miles of telegraph wire; probably about three hundred miles of telegraph line in that five thousand miles the greater portion of which is used for sending messages out of

the city. There is some business done outside of the city but probably not more than two hundred miles and there must be five thousand miles belonging to the Manhattan Company, Police Lines and the Fire Alarm Lines. But there is a kind of line worked by an entirely different system not known in England as it has been introduced within the last year. It is known as the step by step system. They print the whole message, so that you do not need anybody to read it. But I will not go into details on this point. Now there is a law which is known as static induction. This law of static induction is a kind of obstinate imp in electricity which sets a reverse current going

(Mr. Daly)

After all you admit that wires are worked in the city of London; will you be kind enough to state why you cannot do it in New York?

(Mr. Sawyer)

It seems I have been unfortunate in expressing myself, I thought I had been giving the reasons and that the great business of the city of New York could not be done by a similar system.

(Mr. Campbell)

According to your statements a few moments ago the city of New York must have considerably more telegraph than the city of London.

(Mr. Lowery)

Vastly more. It is singular but it is true. There can be no doubt about it. But I wish to call the attention of the Committee to another point and that is this; that the proposed law is a perfectly useless one since an act of 1853 protects every telegraphic company in its rights. And it is perfectly analogous to the case of railroads. You have as much right to take up the tracks of the Central as you have the poles of the Telegraph Companies. But I think I will save time by giving Mr. Pope and General Lefferts as soon as possible a chance to testify. The Chairman will bear in mind that I was here a week ago with Mr. Prescott who was unfortunately taken sick on Sunday and when I telegraphed to him he was very ill.

(Mr. Daly)

We believe the Legislature are called upon to remove what we be-

lieve to be a great public evil and I think
in the city of New York this thing has got to
stop sooner or later: the people of the city of
New York cannot tolerate it.

(Mr. Lowrey)

I have never heard the objection
except from one or two newspapers whom
I suppose it is dangerous to attack as they
might retort on me.

(Mr. Daly)

I don't think any one would feel any
different to have one of these posts put
right in front of his door although I
suppose there are no objections on the
part of the company working their wires
under ground as regards dollars and cents.

(Mr. Lowrey)

The expense would be very con-
siderable, although we have not given
attention to the question of expenditures
still that of course would be very great.
I can show you that this work can-
not be done except with very great ex-
pense, and it will take about three
years time

(Mr. Daly)

Well, we would be willing to
allow cheerfully any time you may

desire.

(Mr. Lowery)

I assume that certain workmen are required for insulating the wires.

(Mr. Daly)

I understand there are competent men who can accomplish this work, and a plenty of them.

(Mr. Lowery)

Notwithstanding there are only three men in this country and fifteen in England who are competent to do that part of the work. In Paris these wires are extended very particularly in the catacombs; they have a ~~system of sewers~~ system of sewers which you go through in about where they are able to suspend their wires where they can always get to them. So it is in London and all other cities that are not laying out new streets like New York. Now then I shall merely say that having in view the directions, I may say, the express directions of the gentleman who is to be regarded as my distant President of the Western Union that there should be attention given, careful, judicious, candid attention to this subject by this Committee which has never been given to any

legislation of this character, I have prepared much of the testimony since I was here last which will save time. Witnesses have written down their answers to the questions proposed them. Perhaps it may be proper for me to say just a word here, about what we think we have a right to expect from the state of New York. She sustains peculiar relations to the telegraphic cause. Here was the home of Robert Fulton. Here also was the home of Morse. Let it not be hereafter said that anything was ever done by the legislature of the state of New York to disgrace the home of Morse.

Now then I shall be done with what I have to say, calling the attention of this committee to the bill which is fatal, entirely fatal in this country to the rights which are called vested rights. You are all familiar with the nature of a vested right. You know that no such right can be done away with. The railroad companies of this state when they have obtained a right of way lay down their tracks is a vested right. No such thing was ever heard of as the right of a railroad company to run its railway in cities, yet you would be greatly sur-

surprised if somebody should introduce a bill directing the Central Railroad Company to remove its track from Albany at once. The public might say it is a thing very desirable. but we cannot do it.

It is the same thing with Telegraph Companies. It is competent for the Legislature to forbid any more poles to be raised there.

But allow me to read to you a few decisions in this state relative to this question.

This is a case against a railroad Company.

Mr. Looney then reads Exhibit "A".

(Mr. Chairman)

" I have read you these decisions which I think clearly show the position in which the Company are placed, whom I have the honor to depend here to day. I thus state the reasons why this bill should not pass, and that if it passed it would not be considered by the courts as binding, with all due respect to the members of this committee who are soon to act upon its provisions. Still further I ask the Committee to hear Mr. F. L. Pope to whom I will put a few interrogatories.

Mr F. L. Pope examined by Mr. Lowrey.

Q Mr. Pope, what is your profession or business?

A. I am a telegraphic engineer and electrician.

Q How long have you been telegraphic engineer and electrician?

A About 13 years.

Q. Are you the author of any standard works?

A. I have written one work on telegraphic practice which is generally considered. I believe.

Q. Have you been the editor, and are you still the editor in part or in chief of any telegraphic or electrical journal?

A. I was for a long time editor of the Telegram in New York; I am still connected with it as scientific adviser when they have any scientific matter which requires thorough investigation.

Q. Have you been engaged in the construction and working of lines?

A. I have for many years.

Q. Have you laid lines under water and through the air?

A. Yes Sir; I have laid over ground and cable lines.

Q. Are you familiar with the business of insulating lines?

A. I am.

Mr. Lowery then exhibited some wires to the committee which could no longer be used for telegraphic purposes. They had been underground for various lengths of time, Mr. Lowery;

" Now, Mr. Prescott intended to explain about these wires, and how useless this system of telegraphing underground is. These wires get charged with static induction, you cannot send a message fast enough. They have sent by one system a thousand words per minute. Now this Atlantic Cable sends a message with great difficulty and feebleness four words per minute. But slow as this is this underground telegraph would be slower still. If you can send four words per minute by this think of the instrument that tries to send a thousand words per minute.

Q. Gen. Lefferts how many pulsations have, they?

A. It depends upon the kind of instru-

ment, from ten twenty, to forty pulsations on some are required, while on others are required five hundred. Those boxes spoken of must necessarily be square boxes. It never occurred to you before probably that they would be as great an obstruction or inconvenience as a telegraphic pole and those are necessary.

(Mr. Daly) Not if the wires are sufficiently deep.

(Mr. Lavery) They must stand above ground but I don't know the form of them.

(Mr. Daly) Telegraphic poles in the city of New York are not much of an ornament.

(Mr. Lavery) They are very beneficial sometimes I have seen men hold on to them. There appeal to what large class who require telegraph poles at night.

(Mr. Daly) The chairman respectfully suggests that their places can be filled by the boxes.

(Mr. Lavery) Now, Mr Chairman, Mr Prescott whose attendance I very much desired is ill at his house with a serious disease. If you can grant us an adjournment that will afford us some chance. If we can come hereafter it will be very desirable for you and for me.

(Mr. Daly) The Committee are desirous of doing what is right; we also wish to be enlightened in reference to these matters. We will give you a hearing this day week if satisfactory.

(Mr. Lowery) It will be satisfactory to me to be here this day week. I would be perfectly willing to make it final on this day or any other day you may see fit to name.

(Mr. Daly) Then, the question is settled and we will hear you at that time.