The field of interchange with other nations: that to be independent for the comforts of
life we must fabricate them ourselves. We must now place the manufacturer by the side
of the agriculturist. The former question is suppressed, or rather assumes a new form.
Shall we make our own comforts, or go without them, at the will of a foreign nation?
He, therefore, who is now against domestic manufacture, must be for reducing us
either to dependence on that foreign nation, or to be clothed in skins, and to live like
wild beasts in dens and caverns. I am not one of these; experience has taught me that
manufactures are now as necessary to our independence as to our comfort . . .

Thomas Cooper Against Factories, 1823

To take advantage of machinery.—If capital, employed in commerce, bring 15 per
cent. and capital, employed in machinery, bring 15 per cent. there is nothing gained by
converting the one into the other.

Oh, but a cotton mill will perform the work of a thousand hands—Will it so?
What then, if it brings me no higher than common profit? But it will bring much
greater profit—Will it so? Then so many people will have cotton mills, that in a year
or two, the profit will decrease to the common level, and I shall be no gainer.

The machinery of England, is, in many instances, a dreadful curse to that country;
and the British manufacturing system would be so to this. The works usually
go night and day, one set of boys and girls go to bed, as another set get up to work.
The health, the manners, the morals, are all corrupted. They work not for them-
selves, but for the capitalist who employs them; they are employed on the calcula-
tion of how small a sum will subsist a human creature: they are machines, as much
so as the spindles they superintend: hence they are not calculated to turn readily,
from one occupation to another: they are the most discontented, the most ignorant,
the most turbulent of the British population. The whole system tends to increase
the wealth of a few capitalists, at the expense of the health, life, morals, and happiness
of the wretches who labour for them. I would rather see treaties on the sources of
national happiness, than national wealth. We want in this happy country, no in-
crease of proud and wealthy capitalists, whose fortunes have accumulated by such
means. It is not the careful, skilful superintendent of his own business, living fru-
gently, but plentifully on reasonable profits, who expresses discontent at the present
state of things—no, it is the would-be great man, anxious to acquire wealth speedy-
ly, by means of an extorted monopoly, who is most forward in petitioning, for an
increase of prohibitory duties. Neither the prophecies, the promises, or the state-
ments of these men, are to be trusted. They may pledge themselves to any thing, for
they know they cannot be called on to redeem it. They calculate the imposition will
last their time. Well meaning and good men, have been over persuaded by the bold
assertions of those who are intrusted; and we stand now actually on the very brink
of the precipice to which they have urged us. It is impossible to shut our eyes to the
wonderful superiority in permanence of capital invested in agriculture, over capital
invested in machinery.

From Michael B. Folsom and Steven B. Lubar, eds., The Philosophy of Manufactures (Cambridge, MA: