

d) Late 19<sup>th</sup> century pen drawing Leeds**M2 Leeds Woollen Workers Petition, 1786**

This petition by workers in Leeds (a major center of wool manufacture in Yorkshire) appeared in a local newspapers in 1786. They are complaining about the effects of machines on the previously well-paid skilled workers.

To the Merchants, Clothiers and all such as wish well to the Staple Manufactory of this Nation.

The Scribbling-Machines have thrown thousands of your petitioners out of employ, whereby they are brought into great distress, and are not able to procure a maintenance for their families, and deprived them of the opportunity of bringing up their children to labour: [...]

The number of Scribbling-Machines extending about seventeen miles south-west of LEEDS, exceed all belief, being no less than *one hundred and seventy!* and as each machine will do as much work in twelve hours, as ten men can in that time do by hand, (speaking within bounds) and they working night and day, one machine will do as much work in one day as would otherwise employ twenty men. [...]

We wish to propose a few queries to those who would plead for the further continuance of these machines:

Men of common sense must know, that so many machines in use, take the work from the hands employed in Scribbling, – and who did that business before machines were invented.

How are those men, thus thrown out of employ to provide for their families; – and what are they to put their children apprentice to, that the rising generation may have some-

thing to keep them at work, in order that they may not be like vagabonds strolling about in idleness? Some say, Begin and learn some other business. – Suppose we do; who will maintain our families, whilst we undertake the arduous task; and when we have learned it, how do we know we shall be any better for all our pains; for by the time we have served our second apprenticeship, another machine may arise, which may take away that business also; so that our families, being half pined whilst we are learning how to provide them with bread, will be wholly so during the period of our third apprenticeship.

But what are our children to do; are they to be brought up in idleness? Indeed as things are, it is no wonder to hear of so many executions; for our parts, though we may be thought illiterate men, our conceptions are, that bringing children up to industry, and keeping them employed, is the way to keep them from falling into those crimes, which an idle habit naturally leads to.

These things impartially considered will we hope, be strong advocates in our favour; and we conceive that men of sense, religion and humanity, will be satisfied of the reasonableness, as well as necessity of this address, and that their own feelings will urge them to espouse the cause of us and our families –  
*Signed, in behalf of THOUSANDS, by Joseph Hepworth Thomas Lobley Robert Wood Thos. Blackburn*

From J. F. C. Harrison, *Society and Politics in England, 1780–1960* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 71–72. Taken from: *Modern History Sourcebook*: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1786machines.html>

**M3 Letter from Leeds Cloth Merchants, 1791**

This statement by the Cloth Merchants of Leeds (a major center of wool manufacture in Yorkshire) defended the use of machines.

At a time when the People, engaged in every other Manufacture in the Kingdom, are exerting themselves to bring their Work to Market at reduced Prices, which can alone be effected by the Aid of Machinery, it certainly is not necessary that the Cloth Merchants of Leeds, who depend chiefly on a Foreign Demand, where they have for Competitors the Manufacturers of other Nations, whose Taxes are few, and whose manual Labour is only Half the Price it bears here, should have Occasion to defend a Conduct, which has for its Aim the Advantage of the Kingdom in general, and of the Cloth Trade in particular; yet anxious to prevent Misrepresentations, which have usually attended the Introduction of the most useful Machines, they wish to remind the Inhabitants of this Town, of the Advantages derived to every flourishing Manufacture from the Application of Machinery; they instance that of Cotton in particular, which in its internal and foreign Demand is nearly alike to our own, and has in a few Years by the Means of Machinery advanced to its present Importance, and is still increasing.

If then by the Use of Machines, the Manufacture of Cotton, an Article which we import, and are supplied with from other Countries, and which can every where be procured on equal Terms, has met with such amazing Success, may not greater Advantages be reason-

nably expected from cultivating to the utmost the Manufacture of Wool, the Produce of our own Island, an Article in Demand in all Countries, almost the universal Clothing of Mankind?

In the Manufacture of Woollens, the Scribbling Mill, the Spinning Frame, and the Fly Shuttle, have reduced manual Labour nearly One third, and each of them at its-first Introduction carried an Alarm to the Work People, yet each has contributed to advance the Wages and to increase the Trade, so that if an Attempt was now made to deprive us of the Use of them, there is no Doubt, but every Person engaged in the Business, would exert himself to defend them.

From these Premises, we the undersigned Merchants, think it a Duty we owe to ourselves, to the Town of Leeds, and to the Nation at large, to declare that we will protect and support the free Use of the proposed Improvements in Cloth-Dressing, by every legal Means in our Power; and if after all, contrary to our Expectations, the Introduction of Machinery should for a Time occasion a Scarcity of Work in the Cloth Dressing Trade, we have unanimously agreed to give a Preference to such Workmen as are now settled Inhabitants of this Parish, and who give no Opposition to the present Scheme.

*Appleby & Sawyer, Bernard Bischoff & Sons, [and 59 other names]*

From J. F. C. Harrison, *Society and Politics in England, 1780–1960* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 72–74. Taken from: Modern History Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1791machines.html>

**M4 Comparative Data on Wool and Cotton in 19th century Europe**

a) raw wool output (000 metric tons)	1801	1850	1880	1900	1910
Great Britain	45	60	66	62	52
France	38	28.2	138.2	40.1	34.4
Germany	n.a.	66.6	30.1	154.7	175.7
Italy	n.a.	n.a.	9.6	10.8	14.6

Cipolla, Carlo M.: *The Fontana Economic History of Europe*, Bd. 2, 1976<sup>3</sup>, S. 783.