

sought to ease English fears that the development of industry in America would result in colonial industrial self-sufficiency and loss of market share for English manufacturers. Britain had no reason to fear that its colonies would become its industrial competitors because manufacturing depended on cheap labor. Men turned to such grueling and low-paying jobs only when agricultural opportunities were exhausted. Restricting the development of industry in North America was unnecessary because "Labour will never be cheap here," as no land shortage could be anticipated in the foreseeable future. In 1764, shortly after the conclusion of the French and Indian War, Franklin turned to mockery to protest the British restriction of American industrial development. Writing to the Englishman Peter Collinson, a close scientific associate, he reported the "discovery" of a beach in which all the pebbles were "in the form of buttons, whence it is called Button Mould Bay." Alas, Franklin would not disclose the location of this magic beach "lest some Englishman get a Patent for this Button-mine as one did for the Coal mine at Louisburgh, and by neither suffering others to work it, not working it himself, deprive us of the Advantage God and Nature seem to have intended us. As we have now got Buttons, 'tis something towards our Clothings; and who knows but in time we may find out where to get Cloth?" Turning serious, Franklin argued that it was "Folly to expect" that "your little Island" would continue to be the sole supplier of the rapidly growing North American colonial consumer market. "Nature has put Bounds to your Abilities, tho' none to your Desires. Britain would, if she could, manufacture and trade for all the World; England for all Britain; London for all England; and every Londoner for all London. So selfish is the human Mind!"⁵ A few years later, while representing the colonies in London, Franklin warned that attempts of the metropolis to restrict colonial economic growth might backfire. The regulations would undermine the colonies' meteoric demographic boom, thereby checking American demand for

British manufactures. It was in the interest of the Empire to allow its colonies to import the industrial technology of the mother country. Rather than rejecting European political economy on account of the tyranny and social polarization it generated, Franklin believed that the future development of North America depended on its ability to acquire and apply European industrial know-how. He was wholly committed to the ethos of technological emulation.⁶

Franklin distinguished between the piracy of innovations by individuals belonging to the same jurisdictions and the diffusion of technology across jurisdictional boundaries. In taking over the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1729 he set out to communicate and advertise innovations that "may contribute either to the Improvement of our present Manufactures, or towards the Invention of new Ones." In 1743, in arguing for the establishment of an Association for the Promotion of Knowledge in Philadelphia, he wrote that "many useful Particulars remain uncommunicated, die with the Discoverers, and are lost to Mankind." The proposed association set out to facilitate communication about, among other things, "New Mechanical Inventions for saving Labour." Franklin's past as a printer conditioned him to think of information in such a manner. American newspapers, including his *Pennsylvania Gazette*, routinely reprinted news stories from European papers without acknowledging the sources. The need to circulate information in the colonial setting superseded all notions of intellectual property.⁷

Franklin backed up his rhetoric with action in favor of free dissemination of technology. In 1740 Franklin designed a wood-burning stove that was supposed to fit inside a fireplace. The new design consumed far less wood and generated more heat than existing stoves. The governor of Pennsylvania offered Franklin exclusive rights to sell the stove he developed provided he registered it as a patent. For ideological reasons Franklin declined to capitalize on his invention. "As we enjoy great Advantages from the Inventions of