The Technical Fix

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Education, Computers and Industry

Kevin Robins and Frank Webster

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For Danny and Joe, Frankie and Isabelle

'I turn my eyes to the Schools and Universities of Europe
And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose woof rages
dire,
Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation: cruel Works
Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs
tyrannic
Moving by compulsion each other, not as those in Eden,
which,
Wheel within Wheel, in freedom revolve in harmony &
peace.'

William Blake, *Jerusalem* (1804–20)

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Newcastle

KEVIN ROBINS

Writing a book of this sort is unavoidably an isolating affair. At a time of acute economic anxiety, when education is called upon to do its duty by helping industry escape recession by training the young in appropriately technical (and other) skills, undermining 'computer literacy' initiatives is not likely to make one popular. We did not expect approval and anticipated the Luddite labels. In such circumstances it is important to have colleagues, near and far, who may deflect criticism, absorb pressure, and from whom one may draw strength.

I am fortunate to work at an institution that is both supportive and academically stimulating. From the commencement of this book early in 1986, I have had nothing but encouragement, even if sometimes quizzical, from col-

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Oxford

FRANK WEBSTER