

Homework #4
CS & SE 3162
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What is a neo-Luddite?

A neo-Luddite is someone who opposes the advancement of technology. The name comes from a fictional character that is said to lead the movement, General Ned Ludd[1].

What is their origin?

Originally, the Luddites opposed factory work in England because there was a direct social impact from the replacement of manual jobs with a more automated workflow. The first Luddites were violent in nature, burning down factories and mills that they once worked in. This time frame of the Luddites started in 1811 or 1812[1]. More recently the movement has taken a new direction, one that is less violent and illegal, this branch is now called the neo-Luddites.

As a CS or SE profession, if you are in a discussion with a neo Luddite, what would you say to them?

To a neo-Luddite, I would say ultimately that technology must advance, or civilization tends to stagnate, regress and then collapse. And the only way for humanity to continue to advance, is to make sure society stays stable long enough for us to make significant progress. For stability, we must ensure that we listen and include various groups and movements into our decision making. I would want to make diplomatic efforts to include the neo-Luddite mindset into our technical advancement. Maybe there is some new common ground we can find together. I believe forging an ally from a moderate opponent is much easier than negotiating a truce after a war with a radical enemy.

Why would you say it?

I say technology must advance because I think we must continue to explore new planetary horizons as a backup for Earth. The only way to do that is with new technology. Having colonies on a few

planets would ensure human survival. This way if one planet gets destroyed, we can live elsewhere. I say this because it is feasible that someone with enough political clout could send us back into the pre-electric era with the push of a few buttons through nuclear blasts and electromagnetic pulses. In addition to this, there is recent evidence that the original Luddite movement is still alive as a tiny ember. In November 2017, a tech lab called La Casemate in France, was vandalized and burned [2]. In a completely different protest, anti-Uber believers set up road blocks in the streets of Colombia to protect their taxi jobs. The right half of image below shows a fire in Colombia, where two Uber vehicles were torched by angry taxi drivers, and 30 protestors were arrested. This anti-tech protest with larceny is eerily reminiscent of the original Luddites, who rebelled about job displacement. The left half of the image shows a tranquil garden, symbolically vacant of technology and fire. I would rather compromise and integrate the neo-Luddites instead of alienating them into becoming full on Luddites who have this violent streak.



[2]

References

- [1] <https://online.vitalsource.com/>. A Gift of Fire, 5th edition Sara Baase. [online] Available at:
<https://online.vitalsource.com/#/books/9780134615394/cfi/6/144!/4/2/4/8/2@0:0> [Accessed 24 Feb. 2019].
- [2] <https://www.theguardian.com> (2017). will-2018-be-the-year-of-the-neo-luddite [online] Available at:
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