Reliving the Past

In Wendell Berry’s article, *Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer,* we meet a man who at first appears to reject any and all new technology. Mr. Berry appears to be fixed and unmovable, wanting to remain in his current “old school” position of using paper and pencil versus a computer word processor. Mr. Berry gives insight that perhaps his feelings come from the bond he has formed with his wife as she does the job of the modern word processor. The modern woman, secure in her position in the society of today which assigns no preconcieved roles, might find this offensive. The majority of women today feel their role is far more valuable than that of someone who is tasked with the job of typing and editing words other than her own.

Upon further investigation of Mr. Berry’s passions in life, other than his wife, one would learn that he considers himself a staunch conservationist. He feels strongly about protecting our Earth from coal mining and returning to farming in a simplistist manner, as it was done in his youth. How can he hold this position and still reject the computer? With millions of trees destroyed in our demand for paper, Mr. Berry would still prefer this rape. This is a strong word but one he himself used in his article.

Berry stated that one of his standards for technology advancement is to have a more efficient power form. What he fails to understand is that with new forms of energy retention, it has become more common to see forms such as nuclear energy powering a home. This power source would then in turn power the technology in the household, such as computers. As previously mentioned in his article, Berry also states,”The new tool should be cheaper than the one it replaces”. Though computers are more expensive than using paper and pencil like Berry, he fails to reailze that there are many benetifts to utilizing a computer’s many features. Cheaper rarely means better. He states that protecting the Earth is important to him. In the long term point of view, using paper for writing works and poems might be less expensive but it takes time for trees to grow back. By powering computers using nuclear energy it might be slightly more expensive, however, nuclear energy is more reliable. Along with that, nuclear power is also a clean energy power source. Berry wants to protect the Earth, but he doesn’t realize that as he is cutting down trees to make paper for his work and he is removing something vital to the Earth’s ecosystem.

A quote from Berry stated: “The past is our definition. We may strive with good reason to escape it, or to escape what is bad in it. But we will escape it only by adding something better to it”. Berry’s typewriter is outdated technology. Once again, Berry is contradicting himself. He says we need a reason to escape the past, but sadly, he doesn’t realize he is living in it.