Wendell Berry Argument

The late 1980s were a time of pride for the U.S. The nation had obtained victory in the infamous World Wars decades earlier, risen out of the largest economical depression in history, and was making huge milestones in technological advancement. However, not everyone believed the era was our nation’s greatest time. Wendell Berry, a former college professor of English turned farmer and writer, believed the nation was heading in the wrong direction with its improvements in technology. He claimed that many problems were arising, and that they needed to be addressed. While Wendell Berry pointed to many issues involving technological advancement, they do not justify the absence of technology.

Most of Berry’s magazine article, “Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer,” involves his reasoning for not buying a computer. One of his reasons was and still is a very good one: “technological innovation always requires the discarding of the ‘old model’…” (Berry 32). Part of that “old model”, in his case, is actually his wife, who was and still is his editor, business partner, and best friend. To replace her means to make a substitution of heart and soul for processors and memory disks. Berry also argued that our society was becoming too dependent on computers and technology. He claimed to not believe that he “or anybody else could write better … with a computer than with pencil” (Berry 32). This is true, in that the story comes from the writer, whereas the computer is simply used to type and proofread the story that it given. Even with these tools, however, people can become too reliant on the computer to fix their mistakes, causing them to become lazy. Such a case would not improve the story, only worsen it.

Although these are good points, there was several times where Wendell Berry almost destroyed his own argument. In his criteria for innovation, for example, he said “The new tool should be cheaper than the one it replaces” (Berry 32). This particular criterion is almost impossible to achieve simply because new technology is extremely expensive to produce. Other criteria are also near impossible, and many would require going **back** through innovation. His hardest blow, however, came at the beginning when he stated the real group he was trying to avoid. He said, “I am hooked to the energy corporations *which I do not admire*” (Berry 31). His solution to avoid these companies was to not only live off the grid, but to avoid any products the companies may have a part in. This can be viewed as quite extreme and highly unnecessary. Due to this part alone, many readers may not care about what he has to say.

While he provides good evidence, Wendell Berry does not justify the need to ignore technology. Some of his requirements seem nearly impossible, and his actions seem to go overboard. He is entitled to his own opinion. Just don’t expect these writers to be joining him anytime soon.