Too Early to Call: Response to “Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer”

When I read Mr. Berry’s essay, I was dumbstruck by his vehement rejection of modern technology and its main power source. While reading his essay, the theme of modern human development without computers reverberated in my mind. In addition, Berry details how his tenets are met without computers and would only be hurt by the introduction of computers into his life. In spite of today’s current expensive gadgets, technology will soon improve even more, thus allowing him to better fulfill his relationships and improve his work**.**

Mr. Berry’s primary arguments are based on a flawed premise. He assumes that using a computer will instantly line the pockets of businessmen in coal. Since it is 1990, if one is determined, he or she can obtain and use solar cells on their home. This can lead to the untethering of the person from the coal company, thus eliminating environmental concerns. Also, a change to the mechanics of a relationship does not lead to the destruction of said relationship. If Berry’s wife no longer has to type his handwritten manuscripts, this does not mean that she no longer can have input. In fact, it can lead to more time for reflection on the work in question.

The problems brought up at the end of the essay can easily be remedied by development over time. Judging by the rapid forward advance of the personal computer, soon enough all of Berry’s requirements could be fulfilled in their entirety. Computers of the future will surely cost less than the typewriter and definitely be more space efficient. Even now, the work a word processor can do is better work than the mindless machine of the Royal Standard. Simple typographical errors are instantly detected, and the writer is alerted. This major leg up can save Berry’s wife quite a load of stress and time, and this enormous amount of time can be used to further develop Berry’s relationship with his wife and community or simply work on his farm. Because the same advances for computers also apply to solar technology, it is not farfetched to consider that a family could run a household solely on the power generated on their own property harnessing only by the sun.

Although technology is still limited mainly to the upper echelon, it will soon improve and help Wendell Berry in his relationships and his writing. As demonstrated by this quote, “I do not see that computers are bringing us one step nearer to anything that does matter to me: peace, economic justice, ecological health, political honesty, family and community stability, good work.” Mr. Berry is set in his ways, but these goals can be achieved better through computers. Finally, Berry’s ideals, while important, can be attained better by maximizing the efficacy of alternative and renewable energy sources, such as solar energy or wind energy. Wendell Berry is a magnificent author, but his views on computers are irrational because they do not fully acknowledge the numerous potential benefits of computers.