

We have paid a heavy price for our naïve acceptance of proposals sold under the banner of ‘progress’

To the Editor:

In the interest of balancing perspectives, I am responding to Mr. Matt Nelligan's letter to the editor in the April 18 issue of *The Enterprise*. Mr. Nelligan has strong opinions and I differ with most of them, so I wouldn't want his voice to be the only one heard on this issue.

Mr. Nelligan likens the McKownville Improvement Association to the Luddite movement that protested changes arising out of the Industrial Revolution. I am not offended by that characterization because I believe our country would be better off if we more rigorously inspected the “benefits” alleged by corporations and businesses before approving proposals that affect the character and quality of our neighborhoods.

As a society, I think we have done a poor job of anticipating the negative impacts of many forms of development. As a result, we have paid, and continue to pay, a heavy price for our naïve acceptance of proposals sold under the banner of “progress.”

I grew up in a New York sub-

urb, in the town of Clarkstown, where the town board members would probably have been considered exemplary by Mr. Nelligan. The overdevelopment they permitted in the name of progress was disastrous. The quality of life in the town spiraled downward as resident interests were ignored and developers called the shots.

I expect that Mr. Nelligan would have characterized the residents of Clarkstown who attempted to stop that trend as Luddites as well. Here in the Capitol Region he probably applied that tag to groups that questioned the “progress” of building Route 787 along the Hudson, cutting Albany off from its river asset and heritage, and to the folks who fought against companies dumping industrial waste into the Hudson River.

In other times, Mr. Nelligan might have labeled as Luddites the people who raised concerns about Hooker Chemical's waste handling in the Love Canal area around Niagara Falls. Also the people who fought against the opening of a nuclear power

plant on the Pacific coast in Fukushima. And surely the people who cautioned against the health risks of working in coal mines, or with vinyl chloride, or with luminescent radium paint, or with asbestos were Luddites in Mr. Nelligan's eyes.

If residents of McKownville have found a means to guard against the myopic interests of corporate expansion plans, I say — thank goodness. If participating in an organization dedicated to that purpose makes me a Luddite, I'm in. And yes (gasp), I care about losing trees and green space.

It's time town residents, especially in McKownville, offered a hearty thank-you to leaders like Don Reeb, who have shown that we can make ourselves heard over the din of corporate funded interests. And that, with an organization like the McKownville Improvement Association, we can lobby for services that benefit our lives, like effective stormwater drainage.

**Doug Smith
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