

Document 1: Clement Wong, *economicstudents.com*, Sept 12, 2012

When was the last time you changed a light bulb? While a simple and menial¹ task, it is a job that technological innovation has solved to a large degree. Earlier this year, Philips released a LED light bulb with a life span² of 20 years. While deserving of recognition, it is not the tour de force in indoor illumination. The real marvel is the Centennial Light in Livermore, California – an incandescent light bulb manufactured back in the 19th century. The world's longest lasting light bulb still shines today uninterrupted after a century of use. Indeed, early light bulb innovators like Thomas Edison and Adolphe Chaillet had always pushed for products with the utmost³ longevity. So decades-lasting light bulbs existed in the early 20th century, and only now are we returning to form with the popularization of LED technology. Where did our ability to make long-lasting bulbs go?

[...] Light bulb manufacturers like Philips, General Electric, Osram and others across the globe decided to collude⁴ in the light bulb market. As technological advances improved and pushed out the life span of incandescent bulbs, sales volumes would be negatively impacted. Fewer, infrequently burnt out meant less needs for replacements – less demands for their products. [...] So] manufacturers actively lower the life span of light bulbs. The industry standard of 2,500 hours in 1924 would eventually drop to 1,000 hours by 1940. Light bulbs were deliberately made more fragile. [...] Stifling⁵ innovation and product quality was a feasible means of sustaining⁶ consistent consumption and profits.

Document 2: Aldous Huxley, *A Brave New World*, 1932

“Ending is better than mending⁷. The more stitches⁸, the less riches.”

¹ Needing no skills

² *Durée de vie*

³ Highest degree

⁴ Conspire

Document 3: Kai Löffelbein, *CTRL-X: a topography of e-waste*, Ghana, 2011



⁵ Discouraging

⁶ Maintaining

⁷ Repairing

⁸ Racomodage