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Computers & Society Midterm

1.) Barlow would find Cybersyn unacceptable due to the control it gives to the government to make decisions. Barlow has a libertarian approach to cyberspace and thinks that the old government of the industrial world should be completely independent of cyberspace leaving it alone. Cybersyn makes it possible for the government to analyze different aspects of factories in order to make short-term predictions that would lead to decisions in changing how the government views a factory or specific individuals. Instead of these individuals working together to create a welcoming community in cyberspace, it is being used by a government using their powers to enforce different actions to aid the economy based on the predictions. "Cyberspace does not lie within your borders. Do not think that you can build it, as though it were a public construction project." (Barlow). Barlow clearly states that Cyberspace should not be dictated by the government and constructing networks in order to enforce power over individuals should not be done. Data collection on factories and individuals reduces them to numbers therefore not allowing a collaborative effort on the structure that's in play. The engineers designing the project can design in such a way that discriminates or enforces certain rules that can damage individuals in the structure. This is what Barlow does not want happening, a government reducing people to numbers and using their powers without justification can affect society negatively. Barlow would talk about how the government would fear factories and individuals creating their own ideologies through cyberspace, so they would employ a bureaucracy such as Cybersyn. Medina talks about how Allende reframed the project to reflect his ideological convictions which Barlow would definitely not agree with. Barlow would disagree with this project seeing it as a problem due to government imposition and the pushing of ideology on cyberspace through bureaucracy.

Beninger would agree with this project and see it as a norm in society unlike Barlow. Beninger is in favor of bureaucracies and even calls them the first "computer" because it divides tasks and eases the computation of said task. Throughout society there is a tremendous amount of data about individuals both in cyberspace and physically, which can help optimize a system to perform better. There has always been bureaucracies throughout the history of the government and Industrial world, computers have only sped up the process. Beninger talks about being reduced to numbers and treated like objects, which he agrees with because therefore it can place a human work objectively. Checking performance points or other measures of productivity can help a structure work more efficiently objectively. Cybersyn is an example of a bureaucracy treating workers as numbers and running short-term predictions that then decide which action to take. Competition will always create an environment where people are trying to best optimize their productivity in order to flip more profit than their competitor. This leads to data collection among workers and the interference of the government to insure that the economy is increasing. This project was also innovative at the time in the way that it recorded data and processed said data. Beninger believes in the cycle of innovation and how that one fix of a crisis can lead to innovation in another sector. This form of information processing where multiple factories would report to one centralized office fits Beninger's idea of innovation and is a good idea to him. The area of innovation will be targeted by necessity, in this case it was the economy transitioning in a manner consistent with Allende's socialist principles. Cybersyn was formed as a result of this and was very innovative at the time for the data it collected and the models it projected. Beninger would say this was a good outcome, but Barlow would not agree with Beninger because the government stepped in to regulate the economy with data. If a bureaucracy was not formed and Cybersyn was rather a collective effort of different ideas and innovation Barlow would have

agreed with it. However Beninger would say that it was innovative for the fact that it divided the labor to help compute the task, and optimized the predictions to help the economy transition.