

12th April 1972

Exmo. Sr. Salvador Allende
Presidente de la Republica de Chile

Dear Companero Presidente

I was sorry that there was no opportunity to report to you personally again when I was in Chile last month. However, I am deeply aware of the problems you confront, and I know that you are kept well informed of the progress of our work.

This goes swiftly and smoothly, and I do want you to know my high opinion of the scientific ability and dedication of the men whom Fernando Flores has gathered around him.

Please accept this copy of my latest book; I feel sure that a quick look through the diagrams will remind you of the discussion we had about the nervous system as a model of effective organization, which we have begun to realize at Corfo.

I am proud to be of service to you, and send my warmest good wishes.

Very sincerely yours

Stafford Beer

30th May 1972

Exmo. Sr. Salvador Allende
Presidente de la Republica de Chile

Dear Companero Presidente

May I formally thank you for your letter of April 28th asking me to spend more time in Chile, in a more executive role, to work on the cybernetic projects we have mounted.

On receipt of your letter I at once began to rearrange a new programme, in conjunction with Sr. Fernando Flores. I cancelled all my engagements for the remainder of this year, except for those in Canada and Italy. Although my work in those countries is on a far less significant scale, I believe it should be kept alive in both cases; not least because what I am doing there is supportive of the Chilean work.

As a result of this rearrangement, I shall spend nearly half my time in your country, which I feel much honoured to do. You have heard that I spent the last two weeks in Santiago. That explains, although it does not excuse, this belated reply to your letter.

May I thank you most warmly for the personal interest and support you have contributed to our project, which I believe is of critical importance to its success.

Very sincerely yours

Stafford Beer

2nd August 1973

Exmo. Sr. Salvador Allende
Presidente de la Republica de Chile

Dear Companero Presidente

We last met on July 26th, just before I was due to leave again for England. Please accept my profound condolences on the shocking death of Arturo Araya, which ensued that same night.

It did not seem to be the appropriate moment to rush to you the list of points, bearing on our project at Corfo, for which you had asked me. Moreover, when I came to compile that list, I realized that many of the details in my mind at the time of our meeting were not matters with which I ought to recommend that you concern yourself personally. There is I consider just one major issue on which your guidance would be critical ; therefore I would like to explain this alone, mentioning other matters only insofar as they bear upon the central point.

We have created, as we set out to do, a new approach to the regulation and management of the economy. The initial application was directed to the social area, within which the whole work has so far been done. Then the central issue is the extent to which the workers themselves will now participate in the development of this system. May I remind you that it was designed explicitly for the workers to use. The whole conception and implementation of the operations room in particular stands for a denial of outmoded bureaucratic procedures and profit-oriented managerial norms.

The basic input to the entire system derives from models of the enterprises and sectors. The initial models were created by the technical people in the team. But we took every possible step to develop an approach to model-building which the workers could understand after a very brief explanation. The idea was that these models should be handed to them for development. This however is not happening, even in the enterprises where the initial models exist. Still less can it happen in newly-nationalized parts of the economy where the workers have seized control, or in newly-developing aspects of the economy (such as the industrial belts, or the direct-distribution centres) where the workers are inventing their own approach as they go along. They are doing all this without benefit of the general cybernetic approach which was prepared for them.

In order to advance the work already done, I recommend that three kinds of activity are needed. There should be some sort of training scheme for the workers, some sort of information dissemination directed to the workers, and a very direct participation in the regulation of development by the workers. There are many ways of doing these things ; I do not want to press my own solutions upon you, since other solutions may be more realistic for Chile. Suffice it to say that those with whom I have worked over the last two years know very well what my own proposals are.

The point of this letter is to say, however, that unless some set of solutions to these questions is adopted fairly soon I think that all we have achieved may well be wasted. This could happen in the sense that what was intended to be a wholly new approach to management on behalf of the workers may degenerate into an elitist set of sophisticated tools reserved for technocrats. I do not think, as do critics in the capitalist countries, that this makes the work a danger to freedom ; but I do think it would be a grievous loss of opportunity for the Chilean process.

With the deepest good wishes to you and to the people of Chile,

Very sincerely yours,

3rd August 1973

Dear Raul

It has taken some time for me to deliberate the enclosed letter to the President.

I have said in it only those things which my professional conscience dictates must be said.

Therefore I am relying on you to explain the necessity of the letter to Fernando, since after all a statement was demanded of me by the President ; and then to transmit the letter with an appropriate translation.

Yours ever