

## What the Net Means to Me:

The Net means personal power in a world of little or no personal power (of those other than on the top - who are called powerful because of money, but not because of thoughts or ideas.)

The essence of the Net is Communication, of personal communication between individual people, and between individuals and those who in society who care (and do not care) to listen. The closest parallel I can think of are several fold:

- Samizdat Literature in Eastern Europe.
- People's Presses - The Searchlight, Appeal to Reason, Penny Press, etc.
- Citizen's Band Radio
- Amateur or Ham radio.

However the Net seems to have grown farther and be more accessible than the above. The audience is larger, and continues to grow. Plus communication via the Net allows easier control over the information - as it is digitized and can be stored, replied to, and easily adapted to another format.

The Net is the vehicle for distribution of people's ideas, thoughts and yearnings. What commercial service deals with the presentation of ideas? I do not need a computer to order flowers from FDT or clothes from the Gap. I need the Net to be able to voice my thoughts, artistic impressions, and opinions to the rest of the world. The world will then be a judge as to if they are worthy by either responding or ignoring my contribution.

Throughout history (at least in the USA), there has been a phenomenon of the Street Corner Soapbox. People would "stand up" and make a presentation of some beliefs or thoughts they have. There are very few soapboxes in our society today. The 70s and 80s wiped out public expression to the public via the financial crisis and growing sentiment of put your money where your mouth is. In the late 80's and early 90's, the Net has emerged as a forum for public expression and discussion. The Net is partially a development from those who were involved with the Civil Rights, Anti-war struggles and free speech movements in the 60s. The personal computer is also a development by some of these same people.

Somehow the social advances rise from the fact that people are communicating with other people to help them undermine the upper hand other institutions have. An example is people in California keeping tabs on gas station prices around the state using Netnews. More examples of people reviewing musics - rather than telling others, you should really go buy the latest issue of Magazine X (rolling stones, etc) as it has a great review. This is what I mean by people power - people individually communicating to present their take on something rather than saying go get commercial entities' X view from place Y. This is people contributing to other people to make a

difference in people's lives. In addition, people have debated commercial companies' opposition to the selling of used CDs. This conversation is done in a grassroots way - people are questioning the music industry's profit making grasp on the music out there.

The industry definitely puts profit ahead of artistic merit, and people are not interested in the industry's profit making motive, but rather great music.

Representation of two things:

- Way of expressing one's voice - when that voice generally does not have a place in the normal political order.

- Way of Organizing and questioning other peoples experiences so as to have a better grip on a question of problem.

Someone regaining control of one's life from society.

These are all reasons why I feel so passionately about 1) keeping the Net open to everyone, and having such connections being available publically, and 2) Keeping the Net uncommercialized and unprivatized. Commercialism will lead to growing emphasis on serving oriented rather than sharing oriented uses of the Net. Like I said before, it is NOT important for me to be able to custom order my next outfit from the Gap or any other clothing store. Companies should develop their own networks if they wish to provide another avenue to sell their products. In addition, commercial companies will not have it in their interest to allow people to use the Net to realize their political self. Again let me reemphasize, when I say politics, I mean power over one's lives, and surroundings. And this type of politics I would call democracy.