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Gregory Baker Wolfe

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Gregory Baker Wolfe
"What Changes? A View of 1984"
March, 1969
Portland State University

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HOST: *[recording begins mid-sentence]* ...a real, new commodity over here, who hasn't had much exposure to the community as yet. You people are just darn lucky. I said, "Now that we know, and that's the biggest part of my speech introducing Dr. Wolfe, is that we were very happy to... when he accepted and he said he was intrigued by our title.

The president—the new president—is not only a new commodity, he also is not actually new to Portland. He's an alumnus of Reed College, which I found on the call sheet. And on the hotline, he's an activist. He likes to be where the action is. But this staff member said, "But don't be... just don't be misled by that statement, because he's one man who does his homework well and then takes his options and chooses the best one." I also discovered that he and his wife—and many of you, I'm sure, read the delightful feature on Mrs. Wolfe—have a great deal of empathy and understanding and social concern for the community. Our informant said, "He has a great deal of interest in this community. He has a greater difference in the university. He knows it's a big job; it's a challenge to him. But he's not going to ask the community, 'What can the university do for you, but what are you prepared to do for the university?' He knows that the community has great expectations for the university, but he also has great expectations of the community and its role in making Portland [State] University one of the outstanding universities in the country."

On the formal side, he has his undergraduate degree from Reed College, he has a master's and a Ph.D. degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. His professional record is great. He has taught at Pomona College in Claremont, California; at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge; at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts; he has many other things to his credit like the International Division of the Arthur D. Little Incorporated, Director of Boston Greater Economic Study; Director, Latin American Program Committee for Economic Development. Under government service, he was a Director of Research and Analysis for the American Republics, the Department of State; he was Federal Negotiator joint Transportation Commission of the White House. Under public service, he supported advisors on the Board of Advisors for the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy; Chairman of the School Committee in Medford, Massachusetts; and on the Governor's Science Advisory Board of the State of Maryland.

So you see, he indeed does have public concern. He's also done his homework well in the field of communication. And now it is a really great privilege for us and for me to introduce to you Dr. Gregory Wolfe, president of Portland State... of Portland University [*speaker and audience laugh*] I'm having trouble talking! [*applause*] Thank you, sir.

WOLFE: It's almost too much of an introduction to live down. And I won't even try. I feel in this group that one doesn't even need to come in pressed, because he's well-pressed by the ladies from it all around... and I'm married to a press woman—or who was a press woman—she says I've driven her out of it now by the demands of college administration on her. Not just holding me up when I get home at night, badgered from tides of concern. But putting our best foot forward as we occasionally have to do socially. Someone asked me why she didn't come this morning; she's really home planning the weeks ahead. I've been president here now since September, but they're only taking the risk of installing me next month. [*laughter*] How long we'll stay after that formal installation, of course, is questionable, because the mortality rate among college presidents is declining rapidly. That's one of the chief changes I think we'll see in the future that you've asked me to talk about today: a continued decline in the lifespan of college presidents. It's not that the pay isn't rising very fast, it isn't. [*laughter*] It's just that the demands of the diversified nature of the job are such that they frazzle you very fast, and I think that the retirement age should at least be around 45. Having passed that age some years back, I'm ready for the barn any time that the students decide that that's where I belong.

There's also the problem of wonderful letters that you get, and I'm going to ask that you delete this later, but I thought I'd share it with you. You get marvelous crank letters; I get at least, oh, 10 a month. I don't want to call them crank—the one I'm gonna read to you from says... this was written to the chancellor, and they're usually sent to the governor or the mayor and other

places, but this one went to the chancellor. "Dr. Gregory Wolfe, President of Portland State University, has been mouthing off too much of late," it starts. "His remarks have bordered on sedition and insurrection." [laughter] That's a nice letter. [laughter] After, it says further—kinda nice, "Dr. Wolfe intimates he would encourage student riots and all this implies if Portland State doesn't get all he asks for." [chuckles] It's the students that are asking for things. And then he goes on: "He should be fired. Is the board responsible for hiring him? At the very least, tell the man to keep his mouth shut." [laughter] Oh, I can't resist. "He is presumptuous in assuming he is free to expound his personal philosophy because he has of thousands of subsidized students backing him up." [laughs with the audience]

We're going through a bath of hate for education today, in some circles, and I think it's unfortunate. And I hope that the press, besides showing pictures of unrest and violence, will take some responsibility for modifying what someone termed "the culture of assault." Assault upon institutions, assault upon things we've loved and values we've cherished, and take a little responsibility, which you have not asserted of late, for talking to the significance of helping our institutions to endure and to grow. Now, that's the lecture on education... [chuckles] let me turn now to the subject: what changes?

What changes? I find one of the most exciting documents I read every week the *Wall Street Journal*. And many of the criticisms I've leveled in my seditious conversations around town comes from that radical journal of Wall Street. The big ads I enjoyed this week, which I thought sort of set a tone for our conversation together: one of them on March 26th, page 17 said, "If you know what's happening in fluidics, electro-optics, numerical control and infrared sensing, oceanics, adaptive..." I beg your pardon, "fiber optics, pattern recognition, adaptive control, microelectronics, photogrammetry, mass spectrometry, cryogenics, holography, laser technology, and so on, you know what's happening at Bendix. You also know a little bit about what's happening in the science divisions of our universities around the country." And the ad went on, "You know our industrial, commercial sales growth has been about three times that of our government business. That we are today a multi-industry corporation, committed to worldwide growth through technology."

Now in that ad, a lot is said about the direction America and the world is moving. Now, if that wasn't enough for you to learn in one commercial paid advertisement, turn to page 21. It says, "If you are a space-age industry (or man) with no space to grow, take a look at Colorado." The attributes are then listed as follows: "Space, utilities, good competitors, good labor supply with skills, plus four great universities within an hour's drive of Denver." The legislature in Oregon, you know, was worried about having *one* university in Portland of any great size. But they swallowed their concern and voted anyway. "Within an hour's drive of downtown, plus more

than a hundred research and development centers." And many of our leadership are concerned about whether research is a proper component of the economic and political climate. It is absolutely a given of modern civilization, and a *requirement* for survival in the 21st century.

On page 16 of the *Wall Street Journal* for March 26th, there was an editorial titled "Onward and Upward," and in it we learn of a New York housewife. Do you know what she's demanding? Equal rights. Do you know what she wants? To be admitted to the fraternity—I use the word advisedly—fraternity of baseball umpires. [*laughter*] Now... [*chuckles*] lady jockeys have arrived; she wants to know why lady umpires aren't admissible. Now, I happen to be married to an alumnus of the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor. And my preparation for this morning was largely spent with her and her ex-boss, also a woman, Mary Hilton, also an Oregonian, a graduate of the University of Oregon, deputy director of the Women's Bureau in Washington. We talked a lot last night about women's rights, and the development of access for women in a still prejudicial world. Now, that apart, of course I'm wondering when you're gonna have the first woman astronaut. Seems to me if you know how to cope with difficult conditions or you want people to learn to cope, you need a woman around!

In any case, going back to the *Wall Street Journal* and the ads, I think each of the items I've found there on the 26th drew attention to a major concern of our present and of our future. And that is what Robert Wood calls "the segregation of resources and needs." Robert Woods you know was the past secretary of Housing and Urban Development and a former colleague of mine at MIT. Most of our present and anticipated efforts in government, business, education, metropolitan planning, and social relations is to break down the various barriers we find between resources and needs. How one approaches the resource-need equation, as an optimist or as a pessimist, pretty much determines, I think, how he approaches the future. How he assesses the prospects for having a utopia or an anti-utopia. This problem of factoring the equation of resources and needs is the nitty-gritty of the outward reach of the next stage of the future in human affairs.

We are now just 15 years from 1984, and it seems to me the closer we get, the less horrible it seems. Maybe it's just the advance of old age that makes you feel more comfortable and adjusted with the future, but I wonder how many of us in this room really believe the Orwellian implications that totalitarianism will take over by 1984, or 15 years from now. That man's life will be shorn of its dynamic possibilities; that the end of life is, after all, completely predictable in its beginning. That the beginning is merely a manipulated preparation for the end. If you did, would you be in journalism? Would I be in education, a practically virgin college president? Would Bendix continue to diversify, to multiply its private sales over government business? If

Orwell's future is indeed that which we are planning on, would Colorado offer itself for development instead of some sort of bomb shelter, alongside the Strategic Air Command? Would the hardy souls of Nova Scotia take a full page in last week's *Wall Street Journal*?

You know I used to work for the ministry of trade and industry in the province of Nova Scotia, and I know just how bony and resourceless that place is. They can't even dig coal at pit head as cheaply—of course there's a labor cost—as you can deliver it from the coast of Venezuela to Nova Scotia. Nevertheless, I remember the day 15 years ago when the minister of trade and industry had a cabinet crisis over a full-page spread we were able to arrange in *Newsweek* magazine, which described the economic development program. Hope springs eternal, even in Nova Scotia.

Now, more importantly, from the platform yesterday—well, I'll get to that in a minute, but the platform at the University of Portland, but it could be from any platform—is the whole future of race relations, and what's going to happen between races between now and the year 2000 or 1984. If the anti-utopia outcome were accepted as prologue, 16 years or even 35 to the 21st century, would Julian Bond at the University of Portland have parried his young questioner about his 1972 presidential aspirations? With “Not that year, I'll be too young. Forget it. Forget 1976. Try 1984,” he said.

Now here's the first sensible proposal to close the generation gap, or the color gap, I've heard in some while: the young Black community is already showing me and showing many others, Black militants and white on our campuses, the importance of having a non-futility program to offer other people. They want history to add to its completeness. They want psychology to add to its dimension. They want economics to add to opportunity. Now this is getting faster and more direct action from faculties and administrations than proposals for tearing down the walls. Like angry infants, smashing their cereal bowls. But that's yesterday's speech; I gave it in Salem. Today you're asking, what changes? Not now, but tomorrow.

Now when the Northwest has grown from its nearly 2 million people in 1960 and reached its projected 4,130,000 in the year 2000, is what we're going to talk about for a little while. When Henry Holbrook's nostalgic description comes to pass and highways line the valleys and reach for mountain peaks, when timber is grown to order in tree nurseries, when homes or mills or motels or factories dot every other acre, then the country out back of beyond and the people of it will have disappeared, Holbrook says. Holbrook also predicts there being no room and no place for the bearded or grizzled lads who live on bear and elk meat. That may be, I say, but I predict the bearded grizzly lad who lives on my campus on beer and delicatessen delicacies in Portland may be downright camp to the students of 1984.

"Hippieness is a warm poppy," I read on a sign yesterday. *[laughter]* Man of the year 2000 will find his hippiness in three great megalopolises. And this presents us with the first great image of the future I wish to leave with you: megalopolis. Urban change. The United States in the year 2000 will probably see at least three huge megalopolises; sounds like an animal, doesn't it? We've labeled them, half-frivolously, Boswash, Chipitts, and San-San. Boswash refers to the megalopolis that will extend between Boston and Washington, and might contain almost one quarter of the US population, about 80 million people. Chipitts is another developing megalopolis; it's concentrated around the Great Lakes, which stretch from Chicago to Pittsburgh and possibly also north to the Toronto region of Canada, thereby including Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, Akron, Buffalo, and Rochester. This will contain upwards of 40 million people. San-San—not to be confused with Sen-Sen, which we used to take to disguise liquor and tobacco—will be the Pacific megalopolis (we took it at Reed College in the early days) that would presumably stretch initially from San Diego to Santa Barbara, and ultimately San Francisco, and should contain well over 20 million people.

These three megalopolises will contain roughly half of the total of the United States population, including the overwhelming majority of the most technologically and scientifically advanced prosperous, intellectual, and creative elements of our society. Any study of the United States in the year 2000 may largely be a study of Boswash, Chipitts, and San-San. There's one other mini-megalopolis, which I call Vanport. It stretches from Vancouver, BC, to Portland, including Eugene, which by then will, of course, be only a suburb of greater Portland. *[laughter]* I mean that. The three megalopolises will contain, as I told you, all these great resources, and our little mini-megalopolis will have the cream of it all. Such structures as these will be typical of other countries as well. Thus, most of southeast England will be one megalopolis; Japan will want to find a word for Tokyo-Osaka; I thought of "Tosaka" and then later I thought it oughta be called "Saka-to-me." *[laughter and some groans]* Most people in the world, however, whatever we call ourselves, will still live in more traditional urban areas. Most of the population, perhaps 80 to 90 percent, will be urbanized; and suburbia, then as now, will be a special kind of low-density, urban living easily distinguished from rural patterns, which will be vanishing. They'll be left to do the things Bucky Fuller... Buckminster Fuller and I have talked about; these big machines that just reach out and pick the grapes, which will probably be served again *[laughter]* and the cotton, and the wheat and so on. That's already on the way.

This suggests the other thing I want to talk just briefly about. That's the changes in the rate of change, and the significance of getting used to a faster rate of change than we used to have. In 20 years, Tex Thornton, head of Litton Industries, said not long ago that we have seen more technological change than in all recorded history. It took 112 years for photography to go from

being discovered to becoming a commercial product. 56 years for the telephone, 35 years for the radio. 15 years for radar. 12 years for television, but it took only 6 years for the atom bomb to become an operational reality, and 5 years for transistors to find their way from the lab to the market and your radios and other products at home. By the year 2000, computers will likely match, simulate, or surpass some of man's most humanlike intellectual abilities. Eventually, there will be computer consoles in every home. We have one now in my academic home; it connects us with Corvallis and Eugene, and we can square-root two and do all kinds of things just by pressing buttons and asking questions in our console in Portland and the question is answered [*snaps*] and flashed back in moments from Corvallis, that little exurb of Portland.

Eventually, there'll probably be computer consoles in the home; now can you beat that? Perhaps linked to public utilities, and permitting each user his private file space in a central computer for such uses as consulting the Library of Congress, getting medical diagnostic advice, keeping individual records, and preparing even—speaking seasonably now—your tax return from these records. Obtaining consumer information and so on.

Now, as I mentioned and I want to stress, the computer is already being used as a teaching aid in our schools. Not just the colleges, but even the high schools. Knowledge of computer programming is considered so important by the dean of our business school that he instituted a program two years ago for all incoming freshmen being required to take a course in problem-solving on the computer. Our own computer center is already all full of people day and night by students of economics, sociology, psychology, as well as math and the hard sciences.

Now, in the realm of communications. Of course, I don't know how long we're going to keep reading; people are wearying of reading, it seems to me. I've been interested that radio is enjoying a little comeback, but reading is still going out of style, and this bothers me. It bothers me the other day to hear in Albina, at a meeting I attended, that *The Scarlet Letter* and *Evangeline* are considered out of style; and I would like to argue with that principle, but nevertheless we'd probably get it in different ways than we used to; maybe we'll see it enacted on the screen. But in the realm of communications, the president of the United States may easily have command and control of systems that involve many television cameras in a future Vietnam or domestic trouble spot. And since he would have multiple screens he would be able to scan many TV cameras simultaneously. Some screens would be quite small to save space, while others will be quite large to allow examination of detail.

There are foreseeable problems hereabout—in this question—about who gets to watch the screens? And who controls them? And how available they should be to the general public. Now this is a question that's just going to magnify the whole security problem that we've suffered

with for many years. I'm reminded of when President Johnson had his stomach operation. I happened to be flying west with one of the doctors that had been flown in to be the anaesthetist. And President Johnson is a very... was a very media-conscious man, and he always had televisions on, more or less like I've just described them to you, although he didn't have all this refinement that we'll have in 1984 and beyond. And as he was... I asked the doctor, "What's it like to be around the president going under surgery and preparing him for it?" He says, "Oh, I'm really not at liberty to say much, but there's one thing I'll tell you, it's about the president's love to keep the news on. He had all these televisions at the foot of his bed in the hospital. All on the major networks, all tuned into one of them. And all going simultaneously." [chuckles] And he said, "As we began to inject him—early in the morning, or late at night, I forget which—with a needle and slowly putting him off, we thought he was gradually tapering down, so I couldn't stand the noise any longer. I went down and turned the volume and the president said, [loudly] 'Who turned that volume?'" [laughter] That's sort of a reverse Big Brother story.

A compelling necessity for life in the future is long-range planning. I've mentioned urban affairs; I'm talking about the rate of change and living with the problem of urban affairs, space use, resource use, factoring of needs. Learning to live with technology is also the problem of planning. I was once told when I was at MIT by a visiting communist Yugoslav; she came to spend a day in the urban field with us. We were doing some research, and at the end of our day discussion of planning she said, "You know, you people over here in the free enterprise society know so much more about planning than we're ever going to learn." Planning is a compelling necessity of life in the future as I see it. At the end of World War II, America experienced an unprecedented boom in housing. Everyone wanted a house of his own, on his own plot of land. Unfortunately, little forecasting was done as to the cost of roadways, the networks of services, utilities, schools, water, police, and so forth. Alternative plans are now being developed in many areas; cluster-type zoning it's called, or concentrated high-rise densities with large open spaces, and all these suggest the development and refinement of efforts to plan alternative futures as a condition of making policy choices.

Changes in housing are going to require vast changes in the methods of construction. Pre-fabrication, the use of new and light materials. Plastic manufacturers are already using plastic materials for furniture, walls, floors, exteriors, and so on. The aluminum industry is using aluminum in a host of new ways. Even the steel industry, the heavyweights, are expecting a revival in the use of steel in prefab and all these things. Inside your house, besides, something I didn't mention earlier: a robot to do the housework. Programmed to do the dusting and certain chores you don't like. [murmuring from the audience] You will have ultrasonic—your daughters will—ultrasonic sound waves that wash the dishes and clothes; part of that robot I mentioned.

At least they can be done; these things can now be done. I think that someday they'll be worked out.

Now, there are costs. You remember Betty Furness the other day brought out the fact that it's one thing to advertise and promote; it's another thing to know there are differences in costs. She discovered that some of the costs of some of her equipment was more variable and it depended a lot on what it was doing. So you'll have to watch that, and I advise you to advise your consumers to watch that, if we live that long. You'll buy clothing—you're already buying it—of new synthetics. Some of your dresses will be, like some my daughters' already have, paper, and when they get tired of them they just throw them away. You won't even have to call the Goodwill, and that may be too bad unless we can do something about poverty, by the way. And you'll be buying different kinds of food products. I still enjoy just the idea of having—as I had this morning—those dehydrated strawberries with dry cereal; it does worlds of good for dry cereal. Life is really better than Grandma used to have it, it seems to me. There'll be money, by the way, to buy all these things, and time to enjoy them.

In fact, in the affluent, leisure-oriented society of the year 2000, one could spend 40 percent of his days on vacation. 40 percent. 20 percent, or more than one day a week on neither, just relaxing. You don't have to work or be on vacation; just do nothing. The four-day week will be normal to the worker, and work itself will be far less demanding. It already is in many ways, else why would the housewife have a job outside, as so many wives do? This leads to serious questions about leisure economics and leisure morals, which I think will become the theme of the 21st century. We're gonna have whole curricula built on what to do with the leisured class, and the leisured class will be the masses.

John Maynard Keynes, that Rasputin of my profession of economics, long ago dealt with this dilemma and predicted it. "The economic problem, the struggle for subsistence, has already been hitherto the primary, most pressing problem of the human race," he said. "If the economic problem is solved, mankind will be deprived of its traditional purpose. Will this be a benefit?" asked Keynes. "If one believes in all of the real values in life, the prospect at least opens up the possibility of benefit. Yet I think with dread of the readjustments and the habits and instincts of the ordinary man, bred into him for countless generations, which he may be asked to discard within a few decades. Thus for the first time since his creation, man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem: how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares. How to occupy his leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him to live wisely and agreeably and well."

Now Keynes was devoted to some curiosity about this most successful of all economies, the United States, and he thought a little bit particularly about us. "Thus," he concludes, "if the average American had an opportunity to live on the beach for 6 months a year doing nothing, he might have severe guilt feelings in addition to a sunburn." [laughter] "If an American wishes to be broiled in the sun, he usually must go through a preliminary justification such as the following..." and this is very timely. "He says, 'The system is corrupt. I reject it. Its values are not my values. To hell with these puritanical, obsolete concepts.' Only at that point can he relax in the sun. Unless the American has taken an ideological and moralistic stance against the work-oriented value system, he cannot abandon work." And I think that's why when housework becomes easy, you girls go out to work.

Is the present current among young people a harbinger of a growing culture change? The boding cry of the tree toad, that harbinger of storm that Washington Irving talked about? Education, of course, is going to have to play some role in helping students and society to live with greater leisure. That more people are pursuing liberal arts beyond baccalaureate degrees is an indication that they are already using education for that purpose, and education is responding. That older people are returning to school to continuing education programs is another indication that appetite for activity, for learning, for some kind of occupation is going on. There's already evidence, then, of the search for more fulfillment through exercise of the mind as well as the body.

At the other end, by the way, below college, if you will. The less skilled. Oregon's 60 thousand illiterates, and that's an estimate only, have to learn to read. The growing reservoir of unemployables in agriculture have to be upgraded in their skills, or this region will be unable to employ them productively and materially in ways that enable us to reduce the welfare loads already based at a 1950 index, which is an incredible thing alone. This is going to have to move up, and live up to standards we set for the average man, by the way, and moreover, these growing people in our population base simply must be able to earn enough to assume responsibilities of citizenship, of paying taxes for the services the state offers, and for living fuller lives, socially and responsibly.

Now, in addition to helping people plan their lives, as this is all part of the planning process, an urban university like Portland State has responsibilities to the community, to community planning, and to community standards. To this end in my own administration, I've taken a definite stand on improving the quality appearance of our buildings at Portland State, and saving some landmarks if possible. Along with many communities, our community has suffered what John Gardner has termed "the rage to demolish," which has succeeded beyond the fondest dreams of the dismantlers. They have brought everything tumbling down, and

threatened to bring more. In Portland, we still have the Skidmore Fountain and many other older buildings which can be saved, but only people like you who will involve themselves vocally and persistently will save them. A build-up must accompany the urge to assault and to bring down. A further way in which you as journalists and we as educators can involve ourselves is to become involved in a study of our institutions with their improvement as the goal. One of our problems, as John Gardner pointed out, is that man has come to demand more of his institutions, but the demands for instant performance have led to instant disillusionment. For while aspirations leapt ahead, human institutions remain sluggish. Less sluggish, to be sure, than at any previous time in history, but still inadequately responsive to human need.

In his farewell address to this nation, President Eisenhower spoke of the need for our nation and our people to guard against dominance over it by the military-industrial complex. I have found, since he said that, that the chief response to this warning of President Eisenhower has come from the youth of America, and principally from the youth in American colleges and universities. Along with their doubt and their fear of the dominance of what Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex, our young people are demanding changes in the ways our games are played, in the way our society is organized, and in a way their education for their participation in that society is conducted. Now some of us have been rather shocked by the display of our social concern among our students, even though this display and this concern is exercised in an academic playpen quite apart from the real world. In other words, very little can really be done where they're doing their thing. I'm wondering, however, if we won't be more shocked and more moved by the changes when these young people leave school, and take their place in the real world. And when they've had their hands on the throttles of production, distribution, government, and morals, for their silver twenty-five years, and sit where some of the rest of us will be sitting in retirement when they lay down their mantles. Where will they look? Back at some Orwellian column? Say that of the Ministry of Truth, thrusting through the smoke of the hydrogen cloud? Or will they look up to some monument of regeneration of a brave new world? First instructed by Mrs. Robinson and her generation of friends, but finally inspired and motivated by her daughter and the graduate, and all they promise to do for their world just ahead.

[*applause*]

HOST: Dr. Wolfe, I was very... [*program ends mid-sentence*]