

Republican Perspective

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Newspeak

Newspeak was the official government language of George Orwell's "1984." Merriam-Webster defines Newspeak as "speech or writing that uses words in a way that changes their meaning especially to persuade people to think a certain way." Dictionary.com defines it as "an official or semi-official style of writing or saying one thing in the guise of its opposite, especially in order to serve an ideological cause while pretending to be objective, as in referring to 'increased taxation' as 'revenue enhancement.'"

Orwell was prescient: the technique is widely in use today.

Here are some examples of Newspeak which have successfully invaded the language: pro-choice (which means pro-abortion and is therefore not used in relation to any other issue such as *school* choice); reproductive rights (abortion, contraception); women's health (abortion, contraception); investment (government spending); anti-immigrant (anti-*illegal* immigration and pro-border control); hate speech (a statement you disagree with); safe space (a place on campus where dissenting opinions are not allowed); health care (health insurance); access to health care (health insurance); single-payer (socialized medicine); sensible gun safety laws (gun control); helping those less fortunate (welfare); fetus (unborn baby); and so on.

But not all attempts at Newspeak are successful. Here are a couple of examples so egregious and convoluted that they flopped: overseas contingency operation (combat) and man-caused disaster (suicide bombing). And hardly anyone buys into workplace violence as a cover-up for terrorism.

Two interesting Newspeak applications cropped up just recently. I offer them here.

□ An alliance of Ivy League students petitioned the Library of Congress to drop the category "illegal aliens." They argued, among other things, that there is no such thing as an illegal person, and that the term "alien" conjures images of extraterrestrials. The Library of Congress had earlier rejected a petition to replace "illegal alien" with "undocumented immigrant," but now has agreed to use the term "non-citizen" instead. I guess if you're going to use Newspeak you might as well go all the way. Using language to erase the distinction between those here legally and those here illegally is an important step toward removing the distinction from thought as well. As intended, of course, by the petitioners---and perhaps by the government. Voila...no mas illegals.

□ In his recent White House meeting with President Obama, French President Francois Hollande referred to “Islamist terrorism.” In the administration’s public rendition of Holland’s speech, that reference was removed. Caught in the act, they later restored the missing words and blamed a “technical issue with the audio.” It isn’t surprising that the administration would recoil in horror that their guest would link the terms “Islamist” and “terrorism.” But it is incredible that they would brazenly resort to erasing facts already on record---a trick commonly associated with totalitarian regimes such as the USSR and Orwell’s Ministry of Truth.

Of course there’s no official Ministry of Truth presiding over Newspeak in our America. None-the-less, the language-control/thought-control nexus exists, as you can see from the examples above and, if you are observant and analytical, from your daily diet of news and information. Without the Ministry of Truth, how is this possible? Easy.

First of all, the bully pulpit of the presidency belongs to an uber liberal who has tried to feed us such linguistic contrivances as “man-caused disasters” and so on. In addition, academia, the press, and the entertainment industry collectively control most public discourse. These institutions---with rare exceptions such as FoxNews and Hillsdale College---are overwhelmingly liberal, and they self identify as such in every survey. (For example, a study reported by Campus Watch, surveying 1643 faculty members at 183 four year schools reported that 72 percent of professors self identified as liberal, 15 percent as conservative. Another study of 32 major universities by David Horowitz and Eli Lehrer found the political affiliation of faculty members was over ten-to-one Democrats-to-Republicans. Other studies report similar results---never the opposite.) By-the-way, the impact of this imbalance is particularly important in college, where failure to conform can adversely affect outcomes.

No, we don’t actually have an official Ministry of Truth. But we surely do have Newspeak.