

ALPHABET SOUP:



1984, and All That

By GYLES BRANDRETH

In George Orwell's prophetic novel "1984" — which was published in 1949, and which Orwell had wanted to call "1948" — the country is controlled by four ministries whose very names belie their roles:

Minipax, the Ministry of Peace, deals with war; Ministue, the Ministry of Truth, deals with propaganda; Miniluv, the Ministry of Love, deals with law and order, including torture; and the Ministry of Plenty deals with scarcities.

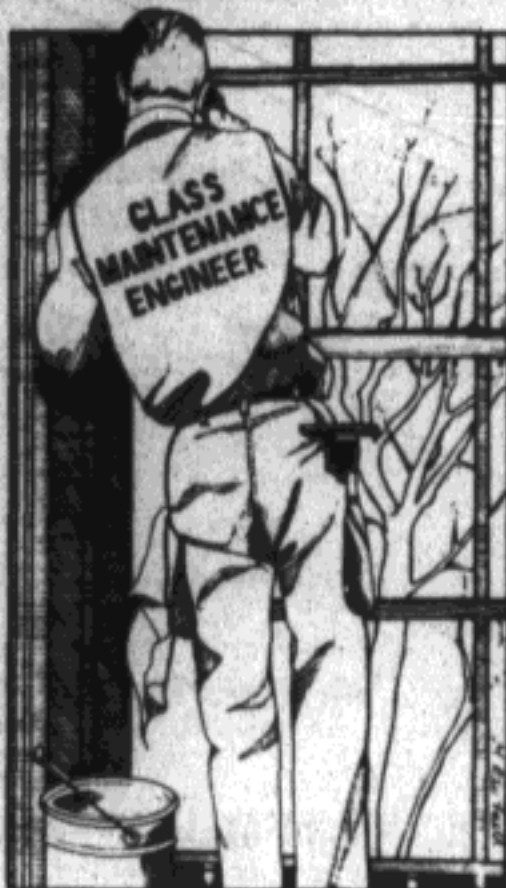
Newspeak, a language discussed at length in "1984," contains a special vocabulary of words constructed for political purposes, words intended not only to deceive the user but "to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them."

Well, 1984 (the year) is almost upon us, but instead of Newspeak, we have Doublespeak. Here are 10 words and phrases that in 1983 win the Alphabet Soup Doublespeak Award:

What Is Said	What Is Meant
money-motivated	greedy
relocate	move
low-cost	cheap
has an alcohol problem	drinks
manipulative methods	bribery
correctional therapeutic communities	prison
clinic for the emotionally disadvantaged	mental hospital
socially disadvantaged underachiever	backward kid from a poor background
word-processing unit	typing pool
negative deficit	profit

If you're looking for a job, let Doublespeak describe it for you:

English	Doublespeak
elevator operator	member of the Vertical Transportation Corps
window cleaner	glass maintenance engineer
chimney sweep	scandiscopist
gardener	landscape technician
tax collector	revenue agent
film projectionist	multimedia systems technician



dogcatcher canine control officer
* * *

A recent National Education Association study states that in many classrooms half of the words used by the teachers are not understood by the students. With more and more teachers calling themselves educators and talking about "multimode curricula and empirically validated learning systems," I'm not surprised.

Other teachers, happily, are aware of the dangers of lapsing into incomprehensible Pedagogue, among them members of the National Council of Teachers of English, who for years have been pointing a sharp, accusing finger at deceptive language. Since 1974 the council has been giving out annual Public Doublespeak Awards. The honored recipients have ranged from the State Department and the

CIA, to Yasir Arafat and the Hannemann Hospital in Philadelphia.

The first-ever award "in the category of misuse of euphemisms" went to U.S. Air Force Col. Opfer, a press officer in Cambodia, who, after a U.S. bombing raid, told reporters: "You always write it's bombing, bombing, bombing. It's not bombing. It's air support."

The council's second award "in the category of gobbledygook" went to President Nixon's press secretary, Ronald Ziegler, for a 99-word response to a question from reporters about whether a batch of Watergate tapes were all still intact. The question would seem to require a yes or no answer, but this is what it got:

"I would feel that most of the conversations that took place in those areas of the White House that did have the recording system would in almost their entirety be in existence but the special prosecutor, the court and, I think, the American people are suffi-

ciently familiar with the recording system to know where the recording devices existed and to know the situation in terms of the recording process, but I feel, although the process has not been undertaken yet in preparation of the material to abide by the court decision, really, what the answer to that question is."

If I have a personal favorite among the many worthy Doublespeak Award winners I think it must be the Illinois Board of Higher Education, which approved a \$168,000 project with these immortal words:

"The purpose of this project is to develop the capability for institutions of higher learning and community agencies and organizations to coalesce for the development of community services and create a model for the coordination of such services that would maximize the available resources from a number of institutions and provide communication and priority needs and the response of the educational needs of a given community."