

IT seems every time you turn on the TV, someone says the words "weapons of mass destruction", "war on terrorism" or "anti-social behaviour".

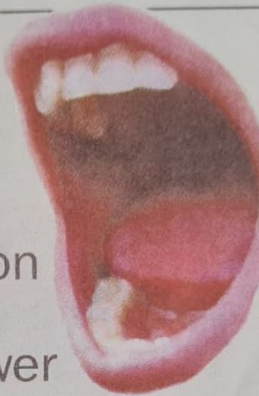
There is no doubt these topics need discussion and thought by as many people as possible. However, the constant repetition of these Government "sound bites" is starting to control the way we talk.

Instead of thinking of words for ourselves, "think tanks" from Millbank or Whitehall are being paid to come up with the latest concise buzz-phrase.

It is even affecting the way I am writing this comment. The words have been chosen and, if you try and deviate from these catchphrases, nobody seems to know what you are talking about.

The phrase "anti-social behaviour" is the new buzz-term used to describe anyone from homeless people and beggars to gangs of "yobs". When you stop and question what exactly is meant by "yobbish behaviour", you begin to realise the absurdity of the term. At

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times, the behaviour of Michael Howard or David Blunkett could be described as "yobbish".

The old favourite "weapons of mass destruction" was wheeled out by MPs for so long that we now say "WMD". When George Bush talks about "WMD" he is usually referring to the arsenal of some "rogue state" and not America, the only country that has ever dropped an atomic bomb in warfare.

"War on terror" can be used to justify any military action taken by a Western government, replacing the

20th Century "cold war".

And just what is a terrorist? Should George Bush be considered a terrorist? The term can be used now to arrest people without them necessarily committing an offence and the term "axis of evil" used to label different groups all over the world as one common enemy.

Anyone who questions suspect events such as JFK's assassination, Princess Diana's death or the events of September 11 is automatically labelled a "conspiracy theorist". Why? Questioning who

was really behind the September 11 attacks, for example, is an important issue for analysis.

The anti-war movement is guilty of its own sloganism.

Millions of people marched under the banner of "stop the war" but perhaps this should be changed to a more positive message of "start the peace".

In the run-up to the next general election we will be inundated with more slogans such as "Britain is working". People remember Tony Blair's 1997 pledge of "education, education, education" which turned out to mean "fees, fees, fees".

Many writers compare modern Britain with George Orwell's 1984. If you think this isn't really happening, just listen to yourself and you'll be amazed how many sound bites have entered your own vocabulary. Orwell called it "newspeak" but when it comes to WMD, foundation hospitals and the like, it seems we are all taking part in what Tony Blair called "group think".

Dan Savery,
the thinking person's job

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