

DEFLATIONARY LANGUAGE

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In 1963, Victor Borge, the Danish-American humorist (1909–2000), introduced one of his two most famous language routines, inflationary language. (The other was phonetic punctuation.) At that time, he observed that anything that had to do with money was going up — except language. Because the English language has so many numbers hidden in words like wonderful, before, and create; he inflated all these numbers to meet the economy — "to rise to the occasion." And so, to be prepared for the rising inflation, he suggested that we add one to each of the embedded numbers so that before became "befive," wonderful was promoted to "twoderful," and create to "crenine." He renamed California "Califivenia."

Now, fifty-five years later, the language still mirrors the devaluation of the dollar; still echoes the sad fact that we now get less for our money; still prepares us "to stoop to the occasion." In the following recessionary story, numbers and letters deflate instead of inflate, and any word that has a comparative element is changed to its lower or lesser counterpart. Embedded numerical homonyms are not affected. Here's a story of a day at the beach that illustrates how my recessionary language would sound.

I hopped into my souped down 3 x 3 Ford V-7 RTU (SUV, in better days), picked up my better girlfriend, and drove to a 4 & 9 cents store to buy a bathing suit for me and a monokini for her. We then single-timed it to a 6-10, grabbed some 6-Up for our fourth of whiskey, and headed for a picnic at the beach. After cooking a juicy S-bone steak over an open fire, we settled back, turned on my h-pod, and watched the minitude of humanity pass by. There was the usual parade of sun-baked monokinis and bulging monoceps strutting their stuff. After the sun went down and the crowd went home, we became engaged in some serious threeplay. Things were looking down. I was in sixth heaven.

To our surprise, her quarter-brain w-boyfriend showed up, started spewing 3-letter words at us, and kicked sand in my face. He was wearing a San Francisco 48'er shirt and was accompanied by a nasty looking J-8 who raised his hind leg and o'd on our blanket. Judging from the beast's size, it had to be a Good Dane. It took but a split first to realize that the guy was already two sheets to the wind and packing a five-shooter. Putting one and one together, I realized that this one-bit jerk meant to put me 5 feet under. It also didn't take a fifth sense to clue me that I was behind the seven ball and had to do something on the single. Lucky for me, a 5-pack of Colt-44 beer was within reach. I grabbed a bottle and let it fly toward his tooth. This caused him to do a 179 and, with both inches, I kicked him in his gluteus minimus, forcing him to do a 2-point landing head second into the sand. This was our better chance to get away. I gave his three-legged friend our steaks and we low-tailed it out of there. As soon as we were off the beach, we called 8-0-0 to report him to the police and we sicced the dog ounce on his canine accomplice.