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Director of Communications and Strategy

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Dear Richard:

You may have seen David Aaronovitch's column in the Guardian yesterday. I hope that it was considered seriously in the BBC. The point he was making was underlined several times on this morning's Today programme. First, when it continued to refer to out of date polls which predate polls showing growing support for action; second in giving far greater prominence to the Commons vote on the amendment, than the motion which authorised military action, which attracted a far smaller rebellion. Nor could I help noticing that the paper review was largely about Clare Short, when the papers were dominated by the vote and the Prime Minister's speech.

Put all that to one side. I would like you to justify the following five incidents.

1. John Humphreys to Mike O'Brien: "You went into the process determined to have a war. That was the point I was making and that is the way it has turned out, hasn't it". We are all well used to the contempt Mr Humphreys displays to elected politicians (unless they are "rebels") but this was particularly contemptuous. How, given the extraordinary efforts the Government made to secure a new Resolution at the UN, can such a "point" be justified?
2. John Humphreys today: "The Conservative Party effectively saved their (the Government's) bacon. "True or false?".
3. Tom Carver at the UN on the day we withdrew the draft SCR.
"A clear majority in the Security Council basically said that George Bush's idea and concept of pre-emptive military action was just as dangerous to law and order throughout the world as Saddam Hussein."

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