

Labour Party. For example, you will remember when the key division on the war took place in the House of Commons in March you wrote to me to suggest that we had given too much prominence to the vote which recorded the largest backbench parliamentary revolt in modern history.

During the war you again accused us of unfairness - in particular criticising our reporting from Baghdad. You know that we strongly dispute that charge and the BBC's Board of Governors, after detailed discussion both during and after the war, have expressed their complete satisfaction with the impartiality of BBC News coverage.

In your evidence to the Select Committee you extended your attack on our journalism suggesting that we have been animated by a rationale "that the Prime Minister led the country to war on a false basis". It seems you have missed the many reports we have filed from Iraq about mass graves, torture and political repression - evidence which has been used to justify the war.

2. The February Dossier

It is impossible to discuss our reporting of the September 2002 dossier without seeing it in the context of what we knew by then of the February 2003 dossier - the dossier which even the Foreign Secretary described as "a complete Horlicks" earlier this week.

What was by then clear was that your department had plagiarised an article from the internet, based on an old University thesis, changed crucial parts of it and then used it unattributed to strengthen the case for Britain going to war. That was the provenance of the February dossier - which might still stand were it not for the intervention of a Cambridge academic.

The discrediting of the February dossier inevitably influenced questions asked about any similar dossiers. In these circumstances any decent journalist would inevitably question whether similar tactics had been used when writing the earlier dossier.

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