

Tony Blair's little tantrum

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Media feral and vicious, says Blair

A very ungrateful Tony Blair erupts over his perceived unfair treatment by the mass media. But not a mention of its support in promulgating his 45 minute lie regarding WMD and attack capability of pre-invasion Iraq. We also note that the media hasn't hounded Blair regarding his accountability for civilian casualties in the pre-emptive illegal invasion based on lies -- but who would expect integrity or gratitude from a prima donna? The following report is very revealing of a personality that should never have had influence over the lives of others. It is not the media that Blair should fear or berate, it is history that will portray him in grim detail and really expose the poodle who would have been a prime minister but for the very profound need to be a sycophant.



Tony Blair demonstrating his proficiency!

BRITISH Prime Minister Tony Blair has accused the media of behaving like a "feral beast" that "tears people and reputations to bits".

Mr Blair delivered a valedictory warning that the pursuit of controversy rather than accurate news was undermining politicians' "capacity to take the right decisions".

He said the "unravelling" of journalistic standards in favour of "sensation above all else" was a result of increasing diversity and competition in the media following the advent of the internet and rolling news.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that he was "complicit" in the problem for placing an "inordinate" emphasis on spin in the early days of New Labour.

In the land that produced *Scoop*, Evelyn Waugh's comic novel of journalistic mischief, it would seem unsurprising for politicians to let rip at reporters. But was it going too far to call the media a "feral beast"?

Up to a point, some reporters might have said, borrowing the expression from *Scoop* that mid-

ranking editors used to contradict all-powerful proprietors.

Mr Blair was not in an "up to a point" mood. He was in full-throated roar, using one of his last speeches before leaving office in 15 days to settle scores with a media corps he holds responsible for hounding, badgering, blustering and bludgeoning the nation's leaders since he came to power 10 years ago.

"The fear of missing out means today's media, more than ever before, hunts in a pack," he said in the speech. "In these modes, it is like a feral beast, just tearing people and reputations to bits. But no one dares miss out."

He quoted a past prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, who berated the news media for having "power without responsibility — the prerogative of the harlot through the ages", a charge that borrowed from Kipling.

Mr Blair also evoked the memory of prime ministers Gladstone and Disraeli to note that he was not the first leader to face "extraordinarily brutal treatment" in the newspapers.

"I've made this speech after much hesitation," he said. "I know it will be rubbished in certain quarters. But I also know this has needed to be said."

His targets were quick to respond. "I think by and large the British press is pretty good," said Trevor Kavanagh, the former political editor of top-selling tabloid The Sun. "I think it does its best to be level accurate and sensitive to the requirements of both the people it writes about and the people it writes for. This was a very strange speech."

Mr Blair's relationship with the British media has long been complicated. He became known for courting Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, whose British assets include The Sun, and for the aggressive media policies pursued by his onetime communications director Alastair Campbell.

Mr Blair admitted that, initially, his Government paid "inordinate attention" to "courting, assuaging and persuading the media".

Recently, British journalists have seemed to become increasingly aggressive in their questioning of the Prime Minister.

At a news conference with Mr Blair in Washington last month, even President George Bush seemed to reprimand British reporters for trying to "tap dance on his political grave".

PA, NEW YORK TIMES

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