

THE POODLE'S PREVARICATIONS

Tony Blair testified today at the Chilcot inquiry into the Iraq war, and while it sounds like he didn't admit any huge lies, his answers were riddled with inconsistencies. As the Times points out, for example, Blair told Parliament Saddam's WMD programs were growing.

His weapons of mass destruction programme is active, detailed and growing. The policy of containment is not working. The weapons of mass destruction programme is not shut down; it is up and running now.

But today he used the same excuse Bush has since used—that the alleged WMD programs hadn't changed, but rather the significance of them in light of 9/11.

But as part of that analysis Mr Blair conceded that the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's purported programme to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD) had not actually grown – only the understanding of that threat.

"It wasn't that objectively he had done more," he said of the Iraqi leader. "It was that our perception of the risk had shifted."

Here's how Blair tried to explain away his assertion that he would have taken Saddam out even if he had known he didn't have WMD.

Mr Blair sought to play down his comments in a BBC interview with Fern Britton in which he said he would have thought it right to remove Saddam, even if he had known that he did not have WMD.

"Even with all my experience in dealing

with interviews, it still indicates that I have got something to learn about it," he said.

"I didn't use the words 'regime change' in that interview and I didn't mean in any sense to change the basis. Obviously, all I was saying was you cannot describe the nature of the threat in the same way if we knew then what we know now.

"It was in no sense a change of position. The position was that it was the approach of UN resolutions on WMD. That was the case. It was then and it remains."

As to the question of whether Blair agreed to go to war in April 2002? He claimed, at least, not to have gotten into specifics.

Mr Blair confirmed that he had discussed the issue of Iraq when he met Mr Bush for private, one-to-one talks at his Texas ranch at Crawford in April 2002, 11 months before the invasion, but he insisted that they did not get into "specifics".

Of course, none of it has any credibility. But Blair might have skated through the most obvious risks of perjury at the inquiry.