



# Rachel Stroud

EVERYONE LOVES A conspiracy theory. The enduring mystery surrounding the death of JFK is positive proof of this, even as it is fuelled anew by internet site *JFK Reloaded*, which demonstrates the 'evidence' that the US president was killed by shots fired from the weapon of a single gunman. Add to this the discovery of a diary and pocket watch supposedly belonging to James Maybrick, bearing inscriptions and a confession that some believe to be proof that he was Jack the Ripper, and you begin to see a morbid fascination with mysteries surrounding ugly events that has become embedded in our culture. The mythical status evolving from the perpetuation of such "legends" sees to it that terrible events become trivialized. Those who were ordinary - or even less than decent - people are hailed as icons, and villains such as the Ripper attain a particular kind

of heroic status. Home Office, this enthusiastic first attempt at convincing us our paranoia is justified seems to have been turned on its head. Instead of persuading us all that we remain in grave danger from the elusive Osama Bin Laden and his Evil Hordes, the story seems to have prompted many to wonder - shock, horror - if our government might be not averse to telling us the odd little fib in order to get its way without having to resort to ugly scenes and tantrums (Gordon). Could it be that Tony and his friends are telling the odd little white lie to scare us into hanging on to the Labour security blanket at the polling stations? If this is true, where on earth did they get such an idea? Who else would start a war and exaggerate a terrorist threat in order to get himself re-elected?

The problem with lying, as any seasoned Pinocchio will tell you, is that you have to



of heroic status.

Now say what you like about New Labour, but it does have an eye for a trend, and it has caught on to this one big time. Recognizing our fondness for mysteries and conspiracy theories, Tony and the gang have considerably turned their almost-two-terms in power into one giant game of *Cluedo* for the delight and entertainment of the British public. Just in case fixed A-Level results, Weapons Of Mass Destruction, dodgy party funding deals, sacked spin doctors and rumours of a Blair-Brown leadership "pact" weren't soap-opera enough for you, the Home Secretary has thrown in one more pre-election scandal to get us salivating for more scintillating scandal: yes, that's right folks - this time Al-Qaeda pilots had their beadies on Canary Wharf and Heathrow Airport. Thank God for those on the on-the-ball heroes at MI5 who, we're told, thwarted the evil designs.

Meanwhile, back at the

keep up with what lies you've told to who. You also have to make sure that those people who know the truth understand that mum's the word on this particular topic. This seems to be how our hero at the Home Office has come to find himself on a bit of a sticky wicket. Oddly enough, anti-terrorist officials claim that switching on one particular channel's news programme, or picking up a certain daily newspaper (strangely only two news sources ran this story about what surely constitutes a Major Threat to National Security) was the first they'd heard of it.

Coincidentally, the release of this information occurred shortly before the Queen revealed government plans to introduce tighter anti-terrorism controls such as the issue of ID cards. Funny that. If you're still playing, here's my hot tip for this week's game, especially for you: Colonel Blunkett, in the press office, with *The Daily Mail*.