
Editorial

British Politics (2010) 5, 1–2. doi:10.1057/bp.2009.32

Welcome to the first issue of Volume 5 of *British Politics*. We start off this volume with a special tribute, from Peter Hall, to the life and work of Samuel Beer, who sadly passed away in April last year. Hall's tribute explores the overall unity between Beer's academic and personal contribution to the discipline and considers the enduring influence that this has had on the field of British political studies.

The second offering, and the first of our four main original articles for this issue, comes from Justin Greaves and Wyn Grant. In this, the authors examine the issue of underperforming policy networks through an analysis of the biopesticides policy network in the United Kingdom. It argues that this network is characterised by a lack of integration between its constituent parts, and that this provides one of the main reasons for its lack of success at the policymaking level. Our third piece, from Hugh Pemberton, stays with the policy theme. This provides an historical comparison between New Labour's recent proposals for pensions reform with the proposals put forward by Labour in 1957. As a means of demonstrating some of the contrasts between 'old' and 'new' Labour, Pemberton's comparative analysis highlights the move from a state centred, collectivist and redistributive approach to one based upon a private sector solution in which risk-taking and investment are transferred to the individual.

Staying with the Labour Party, our fourth article in this issue, from Tim Heppell, Andrew Crines and Robert Nicholls, examines the Labour Party leadership election of 1976. In this, the authors take issue with orthodox interpretations that view the battle to succeed Harold Wilson as one pitched between a majority social democratic right and a minority socialist left within the parliamentary party. Instead, they maintain that the notion of a clear ideological divide between left and right is misleading, and that Callaghan's victory over Michael Foot was largely because of his ability to appeal to Labour MPs that did not necessarily share his ideological commitments. Remaining with this period, our final article, from Cillian McGrattan, examines the development of the British government's policy towards Northern Ireland during the 1970s. Offering a critique of consociational accounts that emphasise gradualism and policy learning, this article draws on recently released archive material to argue that policymaking was driven by a



multiplicity of factors, and that, rather than a gradual process towards conflict resolution, the ambiguities of British intervention in Northern Ireland should be viewed, in itself, as a key factor in the entrenchment of inter-communal division.

Last but not least, our Beyond the Mainstream article for this issue, from Jonathan Grix, urges scholars of British politics to give more attention to the study of the politics and governance of sport. This article demonstrates the centrality of elite sporting achievement to policymakers, both in a contemporary and historical context, while emphasising the utility of sports policy in highlighting broader trends in British governance. Drawing from official government documents, the author also questions the extent to which contemporary sports policy in the United Kingdom can be considered 'evidence-based'. Finally, it is also our pleasure to announce that the 'Best Article' prize for Volume 4 has been awarded to Michael Foley for his article in our Special Issue 'Britain in Crisis', entitled 'Gordon Brown and the Role of Compounded Crisis in the Pathology of Leadership Decline'. The article can be freely downloaded throughout 2010 from our website at www.palgrave-journals.com/bp/index.html.

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