Editorial

British Politics (2008) 3, 425–426. doi:10.1057/bp.2008.27

Welcome to the final issue of volume three of *British Politics*. As usual, the papers contained herein deal with a rich and diverse set of issues from across the field. Our opening contribution, from Paul Webb, examines the management of the European question by the Conservative Party between 1997 and 2005. This shows that the potential divisiveness of the issue has been disarmed through a process of absorption, but warns that the prospect of renewed discord on European matters cannot be ruled out, and that any return to power contains the potential for a re-opening of the old divisions. Following this, Alan Finlayson and James Martin provide a comprehensive and reflective piece on the insights to be derived from the analysis of political speech and rhetoric. Reminding us that this type of study has thus far been underutilised by British political analysts, these authors use Tony Blair's final speech to the Labour Party conference as an illustrative case study with which to demonstrate the use of conceptual tools for deconstructing and interpreting political speech. Remaining with the theme of political discourse, our third main article, from Kirk Simpson, turns our attention to Northern Ireland. Drawing on original ethnographic research, this paper examines various untold narratives of Unionist grievance in the region, and claims that a full resolution of the conflict can only be achieved by bringing such stories into the open as part of the political peace process.

The next main article for this issue, a comprehensive summary of Gordon Brown's first year as Prime Minister, is presented by ourselves. In this, we maintain that the downturn in Brown's electoral fortunes since assuming office cannot simply be explained by the usual factors for governmental decline, but stem largely from his overall failure to measure up on two key values of contemporary political leadership in the UK; namely the discourses of 'Westminsterism' and 'modernity'. Continuing on from this, our fifth contribution, from Alistair Clarke, Karin Bottom and Colin Corpus, shifts the focus from the large to the small with a comparative analysis of two of Britain's most controversial minor parties: the BNP and Respect. Assessing their trajectory and ideological underpinnings, these authors claim that while the two parties may occupy diametrically opposing ends of the political spectrum, there are nevertheless a number of important similarities to be found between them.

Our penultimate contribution, the fourth in our series of pieces on green politics in the UK, comes from Emma Foster. This offers a Foucauldian perspective on the shift in environmental discourse since the 1970s, and a sceptical account of the ways in which the environment, as a political issue, has been used as a means of merging 'green' concerns with market-based objectives. In this, Foster contends that such merging has led to a process of governmentality which shapes political identities and behaviours in ways that are more conducive to a neo-liberal rather than an 'environmental' agenda. In the final paper, our Beyond the Mainstream piece for this issue comes from Angela Smith. This examines the way in which 'fatherhood' has been utilised by party leaders for political gain in Britain, and considers Gordon Brown's reluctance to follow suit as a 'new man' father figure. Last but not least, we would like to conclude this volume by once again placing on record our thanks to all those, especially our contributors and reviewers, who have helped to make *British Politics* a success.

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