Editorial

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Welcome to the first issue of Volume 4 of *British Politics*. The guiding theme of this issue centres on elections and political participation; or, perhaps more accurately, on voting and non-voting. The first of our main articles to address this theme is by David Denver, Robert Johns and Christopher Carman. In this, these authors provide a detailed empirical analysis of voters' reactions to the administrative problems that surrounded the Scottish Parliamentary Election of 2007, and consider, in light of an unusually high number of rejected ballot papers, the extent to which these are likely to impact on levels of trust in the electoral system and on participation in future elections. Our second main article, by James Rhodes, examines the recent rise in electoral support for the far right in Britain. In this, Rhodes provides a detailed and historical account of the complex interplay of factors that helped shape support for the British National Party in Burnley, and argues that political analysts need to pay more attention to the ways in which specific localised influences combine with national developments to provide concentrated pockets of far right support. Following this, our third main article comes from Ben Clements. Combining a number of methodological approaches, this argues that existing accounts of the typical 'europhile' and 'eurosceptic' in the United Kingdom are broadly accurate, and that younger, well-educated, middle-class voters are most likely to exhibit a pro-European disposition. This is based on a longitudinal survey of the sociological and psychological factors that influenced attitudes among UK citizens towards the European Union between 1983 and 1995, which provides a robust empirical foundation for these findings.

Complementing our selection of main articles for this issue, and continuing the theme of political participation and voter apathy, is a special section devoted to a roundtable discussion between Gerry Stoker, Colin Hay, Henrik Bang and David Marsh. In this, the respective authors critically discuss the merits of their recent work in this area, and outline some potential ways in which the debate on these issues can be usefully moved forward. The underlying argument here is that rescuing politics from its current state of malaise may be no easy task, but active steps in this direction are necessary if British democracy is to be revitalised in the twenty-first century.

The final paper for this issue, continuing our 'Beyond the Mainstream' series, breaks with the theme of political participation but addresses one that is

both topical and important. Here, Peter Squires offers a highly engaging and reflective analysis of the recent media attention devoted to the so-called knife crime epidemic in the United Kingdom, taking issue with the framing of this as a new phenomenon, and discussing some of the socio-economic factors which contribute to knife-related violence. And finally, with the first issue of each new volume providing us with the pleasure of revealing our annual prize for the best article published during the previous year, we conclude this editorial with an announcement. This time around, the prize goes to David Coates for his paper “Darling It Is Entirely My Fault!': Gordon Brown's Legacy to Alistair and Himself”, which was published in issue 3(1). This, along with all our other published papers can be found on our website: <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/bp/index.html>.

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