Editorial

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Welcome to the second issue of our third volume of *British Politics*. In this, we present a series of papers covering a wide variety of themes, all of which have a highly contemporary relevance within the current political context. We begin our collection of main articles with a timely analysis from Rhys Andrews and Andrew Mycock, who examine a number of themes pertinent to the overall agenda of the Brown government. In this, the authors provide an analysis of cultural values and identity in Britain and their relationship to education policy and citizenship. The paper sets out to explore the question of the extent to which it makes sense to continue talking of ‘Britishness’ in the context of a devolved polity. Following this, our second featured article, from Kai Oppermann, examines the salience, or rather the non-salience, of Europe as a key policy issue under New Labour. Here, the various strategies that have been deployed to prevent Europe from becoming a politically dangerous issue for the government are outlined, and some of the reasons for their success are discussed.

Our next paper, by Arturo Alvarez-Rosete and Nicholas Mays, turns attention to the issue of health policy in England. These authors examine two predominant narratives for understanding the development of policy in this area; either as a decentred and pluralised process, or one characterised by a top-down, centralised style of management. The paper sets out to contend that these alternative narratives are not, as is typically portrayed, mutually exclusive; rather, it is argued that the current pattern of health policy-making is being driven by elements of both types of approach. Our final main article for this issue comes from Wyn Grant. This paper analyses the changing nature of pressure group politics in the UK, exploring the dynamics of a three-stage process of transformation during the post-war period, while offering a critical take on the contemporary ascendance of single issue interest formation.

These main articles are followed, as is the case throughout this volume, by a paper examining aspects of environmental politics. In this, Neil Carter examines the political change, successes and prospects for the Green Party, set within the context of the party system and current discourses on ‘green’ issues. Finally, our Beyond the Mainstream piece comes from Vicki Squire, who provides a critical examination of cross-party responses to the issue of asylum in the UK. This paper suggests that the current Labour government have

continued to conduct asylum policy within a restrictive discourse of control, and that this approach to policy has been partially conditioned by inter-party dynamics rather than increased numbers of asylum applications or abuses to the system.

Steven Kettell and Peter Kerr