Editorial

British Politics (2010) 5, 389–390. doi:10.1057/bp.2010.26

Welcome to a Special Issue of *British Politics*. In this, we examine a variety of issues on and around the theme of the 2010 General Election and the emergence of a new, Coalition Government in the UK. Our first paper, from Colin Hay, examines the key backdrop to the election, namely the economic context of 2010. In this, the author provides a review of the types of factors that led to the bursting of the economic bubble whilst also presenting a speculative preview of the potential consequences that this might have for the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition. Overall, it is argued that 2010 is likely to be remembered as a transformative moment in the development of British politics, with lasting consequences for Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the general model on which future economic policy is likely to be based. Our second contribution, from Peter Dorey, provides a detailed examination of the Conservatives' election campaign. In this, the author argues that, despite facing favourable electoral circumstances, particularly in light of Labour's unpopularity, the Conservative Party failed to convince sufficient numbers of voters that it had significantly changed since the 1980s and 1990s. In particular, the party struggled to provide a persuasive political narrative with the result that the rhetoric around the Big Society failed to resonate with large sections of the electorate.

Our third paper, from Andrew Russell, focuses on the role of the Conservatives' partners in the Coalition, the Liberal Democrats. In this, the author provides a summary of the Liberal Democrat campaign, highlighting that the so-called wave of 'Cleggmania', which emerged directly after the first televised leaders' debate, failed, in the end, to provide the type of electoral return that many commentators had anticipated. In addition, the paper also explores a number of problems and challenges that the party faces if it is to benefit in the longer term from the Coalition deal. Our fourth paper, by David Deacon and Dominic Wring, focuses on the influence and role of the national press. In the context of a revival in the stridency of the 'Tory press', the article considers some of the reasons why certain newspapers switched their allegiances from Labour to the Conservatives, and how this subsequently impacted on the political reporting of the press and on the voting of newspaper readerships. Our fifth paper, from Jeanette Ashe, Rosie Campbell, Sarah Childs and Elizabeth Evans, examines the impact of the general election on the

gender composition of Parliament. In this, the authors analyse the differences between the parties in terms of their processes for electing female candidates, and explore the ways in which these were shaped by debates about a need for greater gender equality in political representation.

The sixth paper for this Special Issue comes from Charles Pattie and Ron Johnston. This examines the theme of party electioneering, with a particular focus on the impact of the local campaigning efforts of the main parties, and on some of the ways in which this has changed in recent years. In our final article, Richard Jobson and Mark Wickham-Jones examine Labour's transition from office to opposition, and analyse the ways in which the leadership contest to find a successor to Gordon Brown was shaped by the party's internal conceptions of nostalgia, and its particular understanding of the past.

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