Editorial

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Welcome to the first issue of the sixth volume of *British Politics*. Following from our previous Special Issue on the 2010 general election, this issue takes on a number of more diverse themes. Our first contribution, from Adam Burgess, considers the role, character and increasing use of public inquiries by British governments. Examining these as an institution of the British regulatory state, and in the context of declining ‘club rule’ from the 1960s, the paper contends that public inquiries have become increasingly regarded as a mechanism through which public assurances of official action, and rising public expectations of risk elimination, can be addressed. Our second paper, from Hankivsky and Christoffersen, tackles the ascendant issue of gender mainstreaming. These authors present findings from a qualitative data set to demonstrate some of the limitations of gender mainstreaming in policy-making and the challenges posed to gender equality by broader issues of intersectionality.

The third paper in this issue is by Jennifer vanHeerde-Hudson. This examines the issue of party election broadcasts, and considers the extent to which these have become increasingly negative, or ‘Americanized’, from the 1960s. Taking issue with conventional perceptions about a rise in negative campaigning, the paper finds no evidence that this is actually the case, and, moreover, argues that key aspects of negative campaigning, in terms of the quality of information provided to the electorate, can be seen in positive terms. Following this, our fourth paper, from Kevin Theakston, analyses the issue of prime-ministerial leadership. Drawing on accounts of the US presidency, this provides a detailed examination of Gordon Brown’s leadership style, and contends, after consideration of the respective components needed for a successful Prime Minister, that Brown was ill-equipped for the highest office in terms of key leadership abilities, characteristics and skills.

Our final contribution for this issue, and a departure from our usual content, consists of a symposium on Eric Shaw’s *Losing Labour’s Soul*, an examination of the New Labour administrations headed by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Commentary and analysis are provided by the participants, Mark Wickham-Jones, John Kelly and Jenny Andersson, followed by a response from Eric Shaw himself. Finally, it only remains for us to conclude this

editorial with the announcement of our Best Article prize for Volume Five. On this occasion, and as a tribute to one of the leading figures in the field of British political studies, we would like to award this prize to Peter Hall for his Special Paper, *A Tribute to Samuel Beer: Samuel H Beer and the Possibilities of Politics* (Issue 5:1) which pays tribute to the life and work of Samuel Beer following his sad departure in April 2009.

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