Editorial

British Politics (2013) **8**, 1. doi:10.1057/bp.2013.1

Welcome to the first issue in the eighth volume of *British Politics*. Our first contribution for this issue comes from Kirk Simpson, who examines Unionist strategies for dealing with the past in Northern Ireland. Considering some of the ways in which Unionists are currently dealing with issues of historical debate, the article argues that Unionists need to avoid a counter-productive position of non-engagement, and to adopt a more pragmatic approach more attuned to post-conflict political realities. Following this, our second contribution comes from Rosie Campbell. Here, the author examines a number of issues around the themes of social capital and political participation from a gender perspective. On the basis of an empirical study of data from the 2007 Citizenship Survey, the article finds significant divergences in the types of activities that men and women undertake for organised groups, and highlights their association to variations in levels and forms of political participation.

Our third main article for this issue is by Fiona Ross. Here, the author sets out a theoretically and empirically detailed exploration of political identity through an analysis of welfare reform in Britain and the United States. The article maintains that New Labour's success in being able to construct an imperative for reform and to legislate dramatic change was due in part to its political identity as a supporter of the welfare state, and finds similar, but much weaker effects for the United States. On a related theme, the final contribution for this issue, included as part of our *Forward Thinking* section, comes from Matthew Donoghue and provides a critical discourse analysis of New Labour's policies on welfare reform and community cohesion between 2001 and 2010. The article highlights the various linkages between the spheres of welfare and cohesion in terms of New Labour's overall political project, and calls for a combined approach to understanding notions of cohesion, both academically and politically.

Steve Kettell

University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.

E-mail: s.kettell@warwick.ac.uk

Peter Kerr

University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.

E-mail: p.kerr@bham.ac.uk