Editorial

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Welcome to the second issue of the 11th volume of *British Politics*. In this issue, our first original article is from Paul Cairney, Michael Keating and Alex Wilson. Examining the ‘social background’ of the UK’s ‘political class’ these authors provide a comparative analysis of Westminster, devolved and European parliaments to show that politicians in all three spheres struggle to mirror the social background of their populations. Our second original article comes from Stephen Cushion and Richard Thomas, and examines television coverage of second order elections. Drawing on a content analysis of EU and local elections, the authors explore a potential link between public service obligations and the range of coverage by various media channels, concluding that the BBC, with its extensive public service obligations, delivers the most comprehensive and policy-oriented coverage.

Our third offering comes from Stephen Barber, who interrogates the previously over-looked role of the shadow chancellor. Through a detailed examination of the various aspects of the role, the author argues that the shadow chancellor occupies a pivotal strategic position in UK politics, with key agenda-setting powers over opposition policy and other shadow portfolios. Our fourth article, from Stephen Farrall, Naomi Burke and Colin Hay, explores the extent to which Mrs Thatcher’s law and order agenda prompted a trend towards punitiveness in the criminal justice system. Examining various Acts of Parliament in England and Wales, the authors conclude that while a trend towards punitiveness is detectable under the Thatcher governments, this can be attributed largely to wider discourses and rhetoric from the New Right during the 1980s. Our final piece for this issue is from Mark Goodwin and Stephen Bates, who examine the legislative role of the UK parliament through a case study analysis of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, 2008. Contra the perceived wisdom that Parliament is a weak legislative actor, the authors show that, in this particular case, Parliament exercised agenda-setting powers and a significant overall impact on legislative outcomes.

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