Editorial

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Welcome to the sixth issue of *British Politics*. As ever, we are pleased to note that this offers up a rich and varied mixture of themes from a number of prominent authors within the field. Our opening paper, from Meg Russell and Maria Sciara, provides a critical examination and explanation of New Labour's defeats in the House of Lords, highlighting the fact that the make-up of political cleavages within the House provides Liberal Democrat members with a disproportionate amount of power in relation to other political groupings. Our second paper revisits the core theme of our previous issue, namely the state of the main political parties. In this, Philip Lynch provides a comprehensive overview of Britain's party political terrain at each of the local, regional and national levels.

The next three articles in this collection each offer distinct challenges to conventional scholarly wisdom on separate issues. The first of these, from Stephen Meredith and Philip Catney, questions the dominant assumption that New Labour policy is, in essence, driven by a highly centralised policy-making ethos. Instead, the authors highlight a number of ways in which New Labour strategy has, in part, been derived from long-held notions of decentralised, associational democracy. Following on from this, Nigel Bowles, Desmond King and Fiona Ross provide a comparative analysis of leadership studies in both the US and UK in order to challenge traditional assumptions about the nature of Prime Ministerial power in Britain. In what is likely to be a provocative argument, these authors contend that the conventional Westminster model provides an inadequate framework for grasping the complexity of core executive relations in the UK and that some of the tools and approaches used for analysing Presidential politics in the United States may prove to be more applicable to the UK than conventional wisdom suggests. Our main articles section concludes with some historical revisionism from Peter Burnham, who, with the use of original archive material, challenges the prevailing assumptions surrounding the politicisation of relations between the Treasury and the Bank of England throughout the postwar period until the decision to grant operational independence to the Bank following the election of New Labour in 1997. We end this issue with our final collection of papers in our series on Ten Years of New Labour. Here, Martin Smith, David Coates and Charles Kennedy provide diverse and critical commentaries on the legacy

of the Blair government, and raise some of the potential problems that lie ahead for the Premiership of Gordon Brown.

As a result of the positive feedback received for this year-long series on New Labour, we are currently planning to provide a series of similar commentaries on a diverse range of topics and themes throughout forthcoming issues of *British Politics*. In volume three this will cover a range of topics under the banner of 'Politics at the Margins', dealing with subjects that are considered to be at the fringes of political analysis in Britain. On a related note, we are also pleased to announce that from 2008 onwards, *British Politics* will become a quarterly publication, adding an extra issue per volume. Finally, as we conclude this current volume, we would like to place on record our thanks, as ever, to all those, especially our contributors and reviewers, who have helped to make this a successful year.

Steven Kettell and Peter Kerr