

# EDITORIAL

In 2008 this journal will be celebrating its diamond jubilee.

It is an amazing achievement: *Political Science* has survived far longer than most marriages and considerably in excess of the length of the reigns of most monarchs (Queen Elizabeth II, for example, is Britain's oldest-ever reigning monarch, but even she has four more years to go to reach her 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary). As a result, this issue of *Political Science* has an air of celebration about it. Immediately after this editorial, a pair of linked announcements records the creation of two new political science prizes – one for the best undergraduate essay in New Zealand politics, and one for the best paper presented at a New Zealand Political Studies Association (NZPSA) conference by a student; and, as you will see on page 6, an NZPSA judging panel has already announced the names of the winner of the 2007 annual conference prize. That's a great way to start the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the journal of the New Zealand political science profession.

In a similar spirit, as the editors of this journal we sought contributions from amongst the papers presented to the New Zealand Political Studies Association's August 2007 conference, and are very happy that four have been published in this edition of *Political Science*: two from the field of public administration and two from media studies.

Long-standing University of Waikato politics specialist, Alan Simpson, has returned to an old favourite of his – to royal commissions and commissions of inquiry, an area he investigated for his Masters degree more than 30 years ago. Dr Simpson poses a question that many with an interest in New Zealand politics and public administration will informally have mused about during the past decade or so: whatever happened to royal commissions? At times it seemed as though a former editor of this journal, Professor Ralph Brookes, had an additional career over and above his lecturing commitments at Victoria University, namely, serving on royal commissions and similar inquiries. Many of the landmarks in social and constitutional engineering in New Zealand – such as this country's unique accident compensation system and, more recently, the decision to discard our very British voting system and adopt proportional representation instead – owe their existence to the men and women who served on royal commissions and such bodies. Alan Simpson's empirical study and thoughtful reflections on the causes of the data he discovered make for mandatory reading by all with an interest in New Zealand affairs.

Likewise, Norm Kelly's study of the Australian electoral commissions contains a great deal of factual material and food for thought for political scientists in New Zealand, a country with four electoral management bodies (the Chief Electoral Office, the Electoral Commission, the Electoral Enrolment Centre, and the Representation Commission). There have already been calls to rationalise the roles, powers, and duties of these four state agencies, and the experiences of the institutions created by nine separate governments in Australia (namely, the federal government, six state governments, and two territory governments) are worth reading on the eastern side of the Tasman Sea too.

Media studies were very well represented at the August 2007 NZPSA conference, and as the editors of *Political Science* we were keen to follow up on the work done for the special issue of this journal that our colleague, Dr Kate McMillan, edited two years ago devoted to 'Politics and the Media in New Zealand'. Thus we are delighted to be able to publish Gavin Ellis' article on the demutualisation of the New Zealand Press

Association (NZPA). Gavin Ellis draws on his unique background as a former editor of New Zealand's largest-circulation daily newspaper, *The New Zealand Herald*, as well as on his research as a postgraduate student at the University of Auckland, to examine why New Zealand's newspapers stopped cooperating in the way that they had for literally scores of years, and what the results of the breakdown in NZPA relations mean for the news media and for the country's newspaper readers.

From the other end of the country, Chris Rudd and a former University of Otago student of his, Scott Connew, also pose an important and intriguing question: how were the minor parties treated by the country's newspapers during the 2005 election campaign? Their conclusion is an important one: 'Overall, there seems to be no justification for any blanket condemnation of the metropolitan newspapers for their campaign coverage of the minor parties ...'. That is certainly something you are not likely to hear the minor parties themselves saying.

*Political Science's* 60<sup>th</sup> year will be an election year. As a result, we are pleased to publish two other articles, neither of which began life as an NZPSA conference presentation, but both of which pose especially relevant questions for those with a professional and personal interest in New Zealand politics. Connor Raso (a former US Fulbright Scholar to New Zealand now doing postgraduate degrees at both Stanford and Yale) examines the comparative levels of influence held by two minor parties and asks who had more power – the Alliance or the Greens – during Helen Clark's first government. Looking forward to the 2008 parliamentary election, the chances first of surviving the election and then, if it does, of influencing government policy after the election, are key questions for New Zealand's ACT Party. Geoffrey Miller's case study – significantly entitled 'Why Small Parties Fail' – thus relates directly both to Connor Raso's article about 'the policy influence differential in New Zealand', and to Chris Rudd and Scott Connew's article about minor parties and media coverage.

This issue of *Political Science* concludes with a review section devoted entirely to books about New Zealand, considering the country's role in world affairs; its social policy and the relationship between society and politics; the 2005 parliamentary elections; the evolution of the country's political status; and the perspectives of intellectuals towards New Zealand's identity and its values.

However, the final article of this issue returns to the matter of monarchy raised (at least parenthetically) at the outset of this editorial. French academic Xavier Cabannes looks at the significance – significant enough, historically, to fight over – between a 'King of France' and a 'King of the French'. Nomenclature matters, and in closing he raises the question of what, precisely, other monarchies, such as New Zealand, really mean by the language used to describe their Sovereign.

All in all, as we look forward to *Political Science's* diamond jubilee, this issue provides an appropriate mix of themes and ideas reflective of this journal's focus on New Zealand politics and political institutions seen in comparative perspective.

*Stephen Levine and Nigel S. Roberts*