

# EDITORIAL

## CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN *POLITICAL SCIENCE*

From the mid-1970s, when New Zealand began to give more explicit emphasis to the country's 'Pacific identity', this journal has stated that its publishing priorities focus not only on New Zealand – a fairly obvious preference given its position as the country's sole journal of political science – but on the Pacific as well. An early expression of this commitment came in a special issue, 'Elections in the Pacific', which contained specially commissioned articles on elections in ten Pacific Island entities. Among the contributors to that issue, which was published in July 1983, was Donald R. Shuster, writing about elections in Palau – then a newly independent state though not yet admitted to the United Nations.

Since that time further developments in Palau (including its admission to the U.N. in December 1994) have been regularly chronicled by Professor Shuster, whose publications include annual 'political review' updates on Palau for *The Contemporary Pacific*. His interest in Palau's politics and culture reflect a professionalism, dedication and commitment to scholarship singularly impressive. Indeed, his research on Palau, and his enthusiasm for making its story better known – for Palauans as well as outsiders – extends beyond the realm of politics and electoral studies, as his remarkable publication, *Baseball in Palau: Passion for the Game – From 1925-2007* (Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, 2008), makes evident.

With this issue of *Political Science* Professor Shuster returns to a journal in which he first published 26 years ago. Now, as then, he analyses Palau's electoral dynamics, bringing into sharper focus the lively politics of a Pacific Island country – a member of the Pacific Islands Forum since September 1995 – with which New Zealand has had very little direct contact. The renewed attention gained by Palau in mid-2009 as a possible site for relocating some of the Uighur detainees captured in Afghanistan and held at the United States detention centre on Guantanamo adds further elements of timeliness to Professor Shuster's informative narrative.

Elinor Chisholm's article in this issue likewise involves the return to the journal of a previous contributor. In this case, however, and in sharp contrast with Donald Shuster, the author's most recent prior article appeared in the previous issue (vol. 60, no. 2, 2008) – six months, rather than 26 years, ago. It is, indeed, rare for a contributor to appear in successive issues of this journal; the last time that this occurred was in the issues of vol. 49, no. 2 (1998) and vol. 50, no. 1 (1998) when Simon Sheppard published articles on two entirely different topics – the Labour Party's candidate selection procedures in the late 1980s and early 1990s; and his highly influential and much cited survey-based study ranking New Zealand's prime ministers.

In like fashion Elinor Chisholm's two successive contributions focus on entirely different topics. In this issue she provides a New Zealand case study of globalisation, examining the involvement of a New Zealand company (Fonterra) in Chile, as the company strives to maintain and improve its competitive position in the international dairy industry. In the previous issue – a special issue devoted to 'New Zealand: Independence and Prime Ministers, 1947-2007', arising out of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of New Zealand's becoming a Dominion (in 1907) and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its ratification of the 1931 Statute of Westminster (in 1947) – Elinor Chisholm collaborated with Andrew Ladley in a study of the processes leading up to parliamentary acceptance of the U.K. statute. If there is a link between her two most recent articles (she also published on 'MPs, the media and the televising of Parliament' in another special issue, 'Politics and the Media in New Zealand',

vol. 57, no. 2, 2005), it is a serendipitous one, involving rigorous research into the realities and processes of New Zealand independence – legal / parliamentary in one case, economic in the other.

The third article featured in this issue, by Steven Barnes, follows explicitly in the footsteps of the research carried out by Simon Sheppard more than ten years ago. While there may be merit in periodic reassessments of a country's leadership – revised rankings of U.S. presidents are regularly released, reflecting new research and altered perspectives – what Steven Barnes has done is to look further at political leadership roles in a parliamentary context. Rather than replicate Sheppard's work, Barnes has instead expanded it, carrying out a study of New Zealand's *deputy* prime ministers.

This article, possibly the first survey-based ranking of deputy prime ministers anywhere in the world, invites emulation. Apart from the data – presenting the results of his multi-faceted survey – Barnes offers insightful observations about the leadership qualities associated with the position of deputy prime minister, rightly noting that these are not identical with those required of prime ministers. His article complements the data that he collected through his survey with a case study focusing on deputy prime minister J. R. ('Jack') Marshall, whose exceptional longevity of tenure in the deputy role (11 years, 5 months) was followed by an exceedingly brief tenure as prime minister (10 months).

Indeed, succession issues – the opportunities open to deputy prime ministers to succeed to the leadership (an ambition not held in equal measure by all occupants of that office) – are among those considered in Barnes' article. As the U.S. vice presidency has evolved over time, from the position of being 'the most insignificant office ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived' (in the words of John Adams, the country's first vice president) to becoming (during the post-World War II era) an integral part of the administration, there is, no doubt, scope for studies comparable to Barnes', identifying the pivotal attributes of first-rate vice presidents as well as of deputy prime ministers in other parliamentary systems, and assessing the performance of those who have held those offices against measurable criteria.

The distinctions between presidential and parliamentary systems with respect to executive leadership positions have their counterparts in their legislative assemblies. Indeed, the differences between Westminster-style Parliaments and the U.S. Congress may well be greater than those between a prime minister / deputy prime minister and a president / vice president. In parliamentary systems, whether considering election campaigns or subsequent government performance, it has become commonplace to speak of a 'presidentialisation' of politics, with prime ministers gaining power vis-à-vis parties and parliaments, and with the news media focusing attention on party leaders to the detriment of parliamentary colleagues as well as parliament as a whole. That there seems to be no comparable concept describing a 'parliamentarisation' of politics – a renewed focus on legislators, parliamentary debate and parliamentary institutions (such as select committees) – further strengthens the idea that contemporary democratic politics, perhaps influenced by media practice, focuses much more on leaders and chief executives than on parties or aggregations of politicians (as in a legislative assembly).

Public perceptions aside, however, there are differences in the independence and vitality of legislative assemblies from one country (and system) to the next. It is widely understood that the U.S. Congress has an institutional life much more separate from the presidency than is the case for a Westminster Parliament in respect of a Cabinet or prime ministerial style government. Members of the U.S. Congress – and, for that matter, members of state legislatures in the United States – have much more frequent and substantial opportunities to exercise initiative as lawmakers and contributors to public policy, with the executive much more limited in its capacity to restrict or inhibit the expression of independent and legislatively significant activity by legislators.

The position of New Zealand Members of Parliament in this regard can be considered to be much less enviable. Most legislation introduced into Parliament and enacted into law originates from the executive. There are few opportunities for individual MPs to introduce their own legislative proposals – so few, in fact, that Raukura Spindler has been able to provide an article analysing the frequency with which a ‘member’s bill’ is introduced, referred to a select committee and subsequently passed into law. The principle that MPs should have the right to introduce bills into Parliament, and to have those bills receive at least some consideration, however perfunctory, would seem to be a precious one – a synonym for a member of a legislative body is, after all, a ‘lawmaker’ – but there is little evidence in New Zealand that this is a principle that has occasioned much struggle.

One of the purposes of MMP (New Zealand’s mixed member proportional electoral system) was to change the country’s Parliament in one way or another. In some ways, of course – the diversity of representation; the rise of minority and/or coalition governments – there has been significant and conspicuous change. While parliamentary processes have altered somewhat – revised Standing Orders were introduced to accommodate the realities of a multi-party Parliament – inevitably there has also been much continuity as well as a degree of change. Raukura Spindler’s article considers the extent to which MMP has altered pre-existing patterns relating to the introduction, consideration and fate of legislative proposals presented by individual MPs – that category known in New Zealand as ‘members’ bills’.

This issue of *Political Science*, too, reflects the ongoing realities of continuity and change. As noted, the contributing authors include two scholars whose work we have previously published (Donald Shuster and Elinor Chisholm) and two newcomers (Steven Barnes and Raukura Spindler). A brief ‘research note’ offers an overview of the contents of the journal over three decades. The article (by a colleague at the University of Canterbury, Alexander Tan, and two of his political science department’s M.A. students) introduces an original and creative way of visualising the evolution of academic interests in respect of *Political Science* over a significant period.

As for the book review section, as has been the case since June 2005 (vol. 57, no. 1), it is the work of our book review editor, Janine Hayward. Her superb efforts, cheerfully and competently accomplished, have allowed us once again to present a range of perspectives on a number of new publications, with works on New Zealand politics, as usual, leading the way.

As this issue goes to press in Palmerston North, arrangements have begun in London for the entire back run of this journal – from vol. 1, no. 1 (1948) through to the present – to be digitised. The process of digitisation is the most important development to occur in the publication of this journal since its inception. As far as we can determine, at no time has there ever been more than several hundred copies of each issue published. Although distributed to institutional libraries around the world, inevitably the scholarly reach of this publication – like any other – has been restricted by the limited physical availability of its issues.

Yet the purpose of this journal has always been the same – to disseminate the research of its contributors. It is expected that the principal users of the journal will always be other researchers – academics and their students – and in this respect access to the contents of the journal archive is crucial. With digitisation, 60+ years of *Political Science* will become available, via the internet, to anyone, anywhere in the world. This process will certainly bring about some surprises, with discovery made of virtually unknown and long neglected contributions: of articles, and of authors, whose presence in *Political Science* has been forgotten or overlooked, but whose work will now be restored, available once more to new readership.

The process of digitisation now underway commences a partnership being begun with SAGE Publications. From mid-2010 future issues of this journal will be published and distributed by SAGE. Further details about internet access will be released in the future, both in *Political Science* and on the SAGE website.

The agreement with SAGE – to digitise the journal’s contents and to begin a new publishing and distribution relationship for *Political Science*, which will still be published in hard copy twice a year – was achieved by the editors with the full support of the owner of the journal, namely, the political science and international relations programme at the Victoria University of Wellington. This achievement takes *Political Science* to a new position among journals published in this discipline. As a truly international journal, with a worldwide reach through its digital content, we expect this publication to gain a significantly higher profile in years to come, bringing about a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, political developments in, and political science research about, New Zealand and the Pacific.

This issue of *Political Science* marks the beginning of a transitional period in another sense. With this issue one of the editors, Professor Nigel S. Roberts, concludes his term. He began as a co-editor of *Political Science* in 2001, with vol. 53, no. 1, and thus has served in this capacity for the past nine years, sharing responsibility for the publication of 17 consecutive issues. This is the longest period of continuous service by any editor in the history of this journal.

During this period there have been several special ‘theme issues’ – issues focusing on the themes of ‘Political Leadership in New Zealand’; ‘Politics and the Media in New Zealand’; ‘The Politics of Climate Change – Issues for New Zealand and Small States of the Pacific’; and ‘New Zealand: Independence and Prime Ministers, 1947-2007’ – as well as issues such as this one with a range of scholarly contributions and book reviews. Professor Roberts retires from his position at the Victoria University of Wellington – having presented an inaugural lecture entitled ‘Grand Designs: Parliamentary Architecture, Art, and Accessibility’ in August 2008 that could (had it been given a year later) been a valedictory address at the same time – and his departure from his position as co-editor of *Political Science*, with this his final issue, is part of that process.

His co-editor takes this opportunity in the final three paragraphs of this editorial to salute and farewell his departing colleague – an inveterate and energetic mountain climber who has scaled many peaks, both physical and intellectual. To say that he will be sorely missed is to say too little and yet, at the same time, to say it all ...

*Stephen Levine and Nigel S. Roberts*