editorial comment

In his article of welcome for the new journal, published when *EPS* was first launched, Jean Blondel (2001) argued that if we believe that politics is important and that we have relevant things to say about what can and cannot be achieved, then we have to raise our visibility in the 'city' – a task to which *EPS* ought to contribute. Two of the ways in which this could be done, Blondel continued, was by inviting 'outsiders' to contribute to the journal to explain their doubts (and perhaps their hopes), and by reviewing the problems in relation to which the contribution of political science is essential. In future editions we shall seek to grapple with the first of these issues by, among other things, publishing reflections on the future challenges for political science – and on the main issues driving political-science funding – of decision-makers occupying key positions in national and international research funding regimes. Relevant to the second issue are the reflections of political scientists who have experience as practising politicians. How has their knowledge of political science influenced their practice of politics and what insights have they been able to bring to the study of politics from their experience as politicians? These matters too will be covered in future editions. In this edition, the contributors to our symposium take forward the task of reviewing problems to which political science can make essential contributions, by focussing on an issue of direct and immediate concern to those with responsibility for political restructuring processes in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan (but not only there, of course): the global trend towards the adoption of gender quotas and the historic leaps in women's representation that have recently been made in various countries of the world. As Judith Squires, in her introduction to the symposium implies, even established elites see the underrepresentation of women as problematic; quotas remain controversial; discussion of them is inseparable from debates in normative political theory. So, if there are research areas providing opportunities for political scientists to be more visible, gender quotas would certainly seem to be one of the most significant of them.

But if political scientists are to play the visible part currently played by other social scientists vis-à-vis private and public-sector decision makers, it is essential that the latter be willing to attend seriously to what we have to say about the significance of our work in relation to problems and reforms. Unfortunately, in too many countries in Europe that willingness is notable only for its apparent absence. This theme has been discussed in its various ramifications by large numbers of our contributors since the journal's launch almost three years ago. In this edition Anne Daguerre makes a further contribution to the discussion

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with her piece on the catastrophic state of the discipline in France, faced as it is with renewed budget cuts and appalling prospects for political science PhDs looking for an academic career in an increasingly difficult labour market. The problem, in seeking to tackle such issues, is that we have, as Blondel (2001: 5) noted, 'too little leverage with which to influence the authorities'. Daguerre points to what is undoubtedly a significant factor in this lack of leverage: the individualism of political scientists and their unwillingness to contemplate robust forms of collective action. Thus, we might add, do they perpetuate a depressing vicious circle whereby a lack of visibility deprives them of the resources they need in order to acquire that visibility in the first place.

Unless we are prepared to attempt to break out of this vicious circle – and this would call, among other things, for the national political science associations to be willing to take on a more nearly trade-union role in relation to their members – then there would seem to be little prospect, for the foreseeable future, of any relief from that dismal process of 'managerial reform', which in this issue is discussed – by Joseph Melchior – in its Austrian manifestation. This too is a theme that has featured prominently in previous editions of the journal, and the message that emerges from a number of the contributions on the topic is one that bears repeating: that its continuing advance is due, at least in part, to our own failure, as political scientists and as academics, to confront head on, the denial of intellectual and ethical integrity that lies at the heart of it.

To engage effectively in such a critique would mean taking seriously the implications of the argument advanced by Zappata-Barrero in his contribution to this edition, namely, that political reflection and theorising are *themselves* political activities, integral components of the contexts they seek to analyse. As political scientists, therefore, we cannot escape being committed, implicitly or explicitly, to one prescriptive position or another. The sooner we come to terms with and accept this inevitability, the greater the self-confidence we are likely to have in defending the interests of political science and in asserting our claim to the visibility that Blondel's reflections on progress in the discipline surely suggest we should have.

Reference

Blondel, J. (2001), 'Greetings for the New Journal', *European Political Science*, 1:1 3-9.

Jim Newell and *Martin Rhodes*

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