

**Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh, *Days of Blue Loyalty. The Politics of Membership of the Fine Gael Party*. Dublin: PSAI Press (Political Studies Association of Ireland), 2002. xv + 287 pp. £16.00 (pbk), ISBN 0 951 97486 6.**

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It is well known that the political parties in Ireland are in many ways distinct from their counterparts elsewhere in Western Europe. Their historical origins, their ideologies and their social bases defy most 'normal' classification schemes. Of course, this does not make the Irish parties any less interesting – quite the contrary. Still, despite Ireland being included in undertakings such as the Katz and Mair projects on party organizations in Western Europe (1992, 1994), Irish parties have by and large remained an under-researched area. Gallagher and Marsh's in-depth study on one of the two main parties in the Republic of Ireland is an important step towards remedying this situation.

Following in the tradition of Seyd and Whiteley's research on party membership in Britain (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992; Whiteley et al., 1994), Gallagher and Marsh base their study on a 114-question survey mailed to a sample of 3,619 out of Fine Gael's 19,952 members. The response rate of 47.5 percent may be regarded as disappointing given that party members could be expected to be more politically interested than the public at large. The authors obviously cannot be faulted for this – indeed, response rates of around 50 percent are not uncommon in this field of political science. It is, however, a slight disadvantage that the tables do not display the numbers of cases, which makes it difficult for the reader to get a clear idea of the reliability of some of the results. Still, the authors are careful in drawing their conclusions.

The Fine Gael party organization has traditionally quite closely resembled the elusive cadre party model, which has had few other real life representatives. To some extent, the cadre characteristics remain, despite a period of organizational vitalization in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Certainly, the authors report widespread disappointment among members and activists with the leadership's lack of responsiveness towards the party grassroots. In fact, the party comes across as poorly organized for much of its history, something which appears to have been a liability in the struggle to overtake the more movement-oriented Fianna Fáil as Ireland's biggest party.

Indeed, it seems as if Fine Gael had to pay for its organizational deficiencies in the most recent parliamentary election, held in May 2002. The party held on to its position as the second biggest party in Ireland, but slid from 54 to 31 seats in the 166-member lower house, the *Dáil*. This is the lowest proportion of seats the party has ever held; it also registered its lowest proportion of first preference votes since 1948. The book was written before the election, but the findings presented by Gallagher and Marsh suggest that the election result may not have been a complete surprise. Although no negative trend is reported in terms of membership (pp. 56 ff.), activism has declined (pp. 90 f.). In addition, the level of activism is higher among members who joined before 1985 than among those who joined later (pp. 99 ff.). Thus, the party is finding it difficult to recruit new

blood (p. 222). This is hardly an advantage when it comes to building up an effective campaign organization – especially as the authors find a clear relationship between activism and election results at constituency level (pp. 135–8). As one Fine Gael member put it: ‘Fianna Fáil have the best organization machine for winning elections’ (p. 185).

The analysis also covers members’ and activists’ social composition, as well as their political attitudes. Several chapters contain a large number of quotes from open-ended questions, which adds qualitative flesh to the quantitative bones. On the whole, this is a very welcome addition to the growing literature on political party memberships. Its usefulness is not confined to those with a special interest in Irish politics. Much of the analysis is highly relevant in a broader context, and readers who feel the need to refresh their knowledge of Irish politics are catered for in Chapter 2, which offers a very readable historical background. It is to be hoped that this book will soon be followed up by a study of Fine Gael’s main rival, Fianna Fáil.

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## References

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Seyd, P. and P. Whiteley (1992) *Labour’s Grass Roots*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
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**Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections Without Order: Russia’s Challenge to Vladimir Putin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. × + 262 pp. £40.00 (hbk), ISBN 0 521 81609 2; £14.95 (pbk), ISBN 0 521 01644 4.**

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*Elections Without Order* is partly a consolidated report of the Strathclyde Centre for Public Policy’s recent *New Russia Barometer* public opinion surveys. These include two election surveys – carried out after the Russian Parliamentary elections in December 1999, and the Presidential election the following March – as well as regular annual monitoring studies up to the Summer of 2001. As such, it represents a unique and useful series of snapshots of the mood and political behaviour of the Russian people as they experienced the change from