

AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



MONEY TO BURN

WITH EUROPEAN and local elections fast approaching, many candidates to the right of Fine Gael are declaring their intention to stand with the Irish Freedom Party (IFP), Ireland First (IF), Independent Ireland, the National Party (NP), Irish People Party and a variety of right-wing independents. And there is no shortage of money swirling about in these circles.

A recent article by Alex Kaplan for US-based website Media Matters for America, which analyses conservative media misinformation, gives an insight into some of these candidates' fundraising activities. The article exposed how leading NP member Keith Woods (the pseudonym of Roscommon native Keith O'Brien) is raising funds online, as well as the white nationalist content and conspiracy theories that Woods has been publishing to generate this income.

Until recently Woods sought support for the content he was creating through donations to his account on crowdfunding platform BuyMeaCoffee. Kaplan revealed that Woods had raised more than €25,000 through that platform and cited some troubling comments accompanying such contributions, ie "hail victory". Another contributor thanked Woods for turning them into a "classical fascist".

For years Woods also ran a YouTube channel. He has made over €500 using a feature on YouTube called Super Chat, which allows viewers to pay content creators to highlight their comments during a livestream.

Days after Kaplan's article appeared, BuyMeaCoffee removed Woods's account, explaining: "This page has been removed due to inappropriate use of this service."

Woods didn't take this well, posting on his Telegram and X accounts that Kaplan was an "anti-white activist" and a "Jewish journalist" whose article had resulted in the closing down of his main source of donations.

Two of Ireland First's candidates for the European and local elections are also raising money on BuyMeaCoffee. Philip Dwyer, who is standing for IF in the Dublin constituency

for the European election and Tallaght Central for the locals, has raised €2,445 on the platform, with donations ranging from €5 up to €250. Over a quarter of the donations were from wholly anonymous donors who are described on the site as 'someone', while many others are only identified by first names or nicknames. It's also impossible to tell what country the donations come from.

The IF candidate for Ireland South in the European poll and Fermoy in the local elections is Derek Blighe. He has accumulated over €5,000 between his BuyMeaCoffee account and a GoFundMe fundraiser for the European elections, with one contribution of €1,000 on the former platform.



Derek Blighe

The IFP has opted to carry out all its online fundraising on GoFundMe for the upcoming election campaigns. Party leader Hermann Kelly is running in the Midlands North-West constituency and has raised €2,435 so far on the platform.

Over €1,000 of Kelly's donations on the site are noted as anonymous and four of those – valued at €500, €125, €100 and €100 – are at or above the threshold for anonymous donations. As with the donations on BuyMeaCoffee, there is no indication on GoFundMe of whether some donors are contributing multiple times or where they come from.

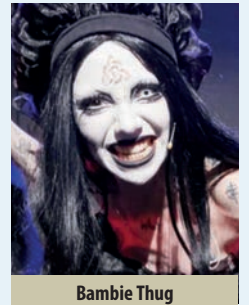
Goldhawk recently highlighted Gript Media's contribution of the maximum amount allowed, €18,000, to the European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR), a European Parliamentary party whose constituent parties include VOX from Spain; Fratelli d'Italia; Sweden Democrats etc (see *The Phoenix* 8/3/24). In addition, the Edmund Burke Institute (EBI), of which Gript deputy editor Gary Kavanagh is a director, also donated €18,000 to the ECR in 2022 and another €18,000 in 2023.

Subsequent to our article, Gript editor John McGuirk claimed the €18,000 Gript paid to the ECR was for sponsorship of an ECR conference at the Lyrath Estate in Kilkenny. Gript was not mentioned in the event programme or subsequent publicity.

The EBI's financial statement for 2023 notes an income of €90,758 from donations, just marginally down from the €90,821 it raised in 2022. Many of the new Irish right-wing formations will wonder if any of the largess Gript and the EBI have doled out to the ECR over the last two years will be donated domestically in 2024.



We firmly believe in the unifying power of music, enabling people to transcend differences and foster meaningful conversations. We feel it is our duty to create and uphold this space, with a strong hope that it will inspire greater compassion.



Bambie Thug

Statement from nine Eurovision contestants, including Bambie Thug, explaining their reason for not boycotting the contest over Israel's involvement, Irish Independent

Look, I think this is potentially a billion dollar idea but it could also be a zero. **Dermot Smurfit Jr covers all the bases for his latest online venture, Irish Times**

For the first time, Pierce's all-white aesthetic is interrupted with inky blue garments, furthering the otherworldliness in the collection with a sense of duality: light and dark, air and water, peace and anger. **Victoria Brunton on Róisín Pierce's latest fashion range, RTÉ Guide**

Beetroot wears its smoky mantle with gravitas and aplomb, as dill-brightened pistou and creamy goat's cheese, zippy with lactic tang, enervate the earthy tuber and an excellent, rustic cracker completes a super dish. **Joe McNamee, Irish Examiner**

They said they really, really wanted me. They kept on at me, and still I said no, because I was scared. I don't want to be a celebrity, it's a fake world. I have no desire. I like music and staying under the radar. **Louis Walsh on his reluctant appearance on Celebrity Big Brother, Sunday Independent Life Magazine**

For the artwork in Kraftwerk, my latest collection for Dunnes, inspired by the music of the electronic band, I razorbladed the paint so it looked like the sound desk moving. **Artist and designer Helen Steele, Irish Independent Weekend magazine**

Varadkar did not just represent a new Ireland, he was not just a mere signifier of a new political reality. He brought it with him. **Finn McRedmond, Irish Times**

I left it a day before texting him "best of luck with whatever you throw your hat at next Leo, you've given a great tenure and service and should be proud of yourself". He replied a couple of days later with a clasping hands emoji as a 'thank you'. No, thank you, Leo. **Eugene Masterson, Sunday World**

Simon Harris may be the man of the moment, but it is Michael McDowell who channels the spirit of the age. **Colin Murphy, Sunday Independent**

Please send suitable contributions to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie



'No I don't 'work here', I only 'work' here.'