



FAR RIGHT SPOILING FOR A FIGHT

DESPITE THE attention the far right in Ireland has received in recent years, it has had little or no success in elections.

However, far-right politicians believe fervently that, in the upcoming local and European elections, their fortunes are about to change. The problem from their perspective is that there are several political parties vying for the same votes and, as a result, tempers are getting frayed.

A recent confrontation in the European Parliament between Irish Freedom Party (IFP) leader Hermann Kelly and Irish journalist Thomas O'Reilly, who works for the *European Conservative*, was due not only to personal estrangement but also to the aforementioned political tensions.

O'Reilly's supporters in the *Burkean* claim that "Kelly slapped a phone out of Thomas O'Reilly, a young Irish journalist's hand after confronting O'Reilly and trying to instigate a fist fight between them". They claim that this was only the latest incident in a campaign of harassment by Kelly and that it was reported to both the Brussels police and the European Parliament security.

Kelly has dismissed these claims, arguing that he has had an impeccable working and behaviour record in the European Parliament over the last 15 years. He published a picture of O'Reilly on X and made a string of insulting comments about him.

The context for this row is that Kelly and the IFP have been outflanked by the emergence of Independent Ireland (II). Party leader Michael Collins recently claimed that the II will run somewhere in the region of 75 candidates in the local elections. With former RTÉ midlands correspondent Ciaran Mullooly announced as its candidate for the Midlands North-West constituency in the European elections, the II has grabbed headlines. The new party also hopes that talk radio personality Niall Boylan will run for it in the South constituency.



Hermann Kelly

This contrasts sharply with the IFP's lacklustre campaign. Kelly hopes to run 20 or so candidates in the local elections but many of those already announced are relative newcomers to electoral politics compared to some of the more experienced campaigners II has attracted.

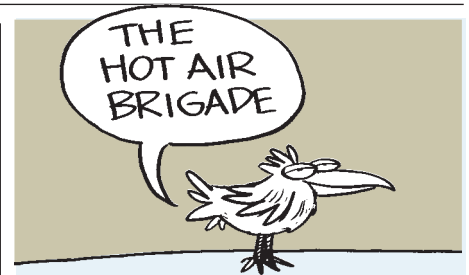
IFP candidates for the EU elections also lack the profile of those standing for II. While Kelly has attracted a smattering of coverage in the Irish media over the years, it proved irrelevant in the 2019 European Parliament elections, when he secured just 2,441 (0.67%) votes in the Dublin constituency. The IFP's other European candidates, Michael Leahy in South and Diarmaid O'Connorain in Dublin, have little or no name recognition with the electorate.

Some IFP council candidates have also had negative publicity. Alan Fagan from Drogheda was stood down as a candidate after the *Sunday World* revealed some of his antisemitic, anti-Muslim, homophobic etc posts on social media. Paul Fitzsimons, an IFP candidate in Ongar, Dublin, also received some column inches after he was arrested by gardaí and charged with threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour in a public place; failure to comply with the direction of a member of An Garda Síochána; and possession of a knife in a public place in Dublin city centre in February.

A large amount of Kelly's credibility in the conservative-right scene in Ireland derives from the fact that he has worked in the European Parliament for a decade and a half, first as Nigel Farage's press officer and more recently for Romanian politician Cristian Terhes. The latter is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformist (ECR) group in the parliament.

Keen to show that he is not merely an errand boy for the likes of Farage and Terhes, Kelly shared a picture of a post he made at a 2023 rally of Terhes's Alliance for the Union of Romanians party, which stated he was invited to the event as IFP president. He also recently shared a picture of himself and Farage at the latter's 60th birthday party and the accompanying text asserted: "We worked together for over 10 years in Brussels and achieved great things".

Collins's ECR links are on a different level. In November he was on stage at its conference in the Lyrath hotel in Kilkenny and in December he spoke at Fratelli d'Italia's annual Atreju gathering in Italy.



Join the Harris juggernaut. **Enda Kenny speech at Fine Gael's ard fheis**

I'd read a lot about the ancient Celtic warriors going into battle. There were always rituals beforehand. I remember getting ready for the opening night of *Lord of the*

Dance. I started putting on my face paint. Then a guy showed up with this bowl. He said, 'This is for you. We slaughtered a bull in your honour'.

Michael Flatley, Sunday Independent Life Magazine

I wish only the best to Kate O'Connell in the rest of her life. **Leo Varadkar, quoted in Irish Mirror**

I'd watched a documentary about fast fashion and my cognitive dissonance was shattered overnight. And I jumped in at the deep end and did no less than a six-month buying ban for myself. So that was a little baptism of fire into it. **Fionnuala Moran on Drivetime, RTÉ Radio 1**

Simon [Harris] quickly displayed the attributes that are needed to be a minister – the ability to listen, compassion, an agile mind and the ability to speak without hesitation, a firm belief in his abilities.

Newly appointed minister of state Peter Burke speaking in the Dáil

Objectivism maintains that individualism and devotion to personal productive achievement should be our only driving force. Today, Elon Musk exemplifies the virtues that Rand eulogised in *The Fountainhead*. **David McWilliams, Irish Times**

Harold Macmillan used to talk about 'events, dear boy, events'. Those times in life when the least expected things happen. Such events happened to me last summer. Despite it being an exceptionally difficult time, it made me reassess and explore new opportunities to realise some dreams I've long held in my heart. **Ryan Tubridy on the launch of his new podcast, Instagram**

It's also skilfully produced (by NK Productions, which also makes *Path to Power*, with Matt Cooper and Ivan Yates), with seamless edits, warm audio, Walliams's measured baritone playing counterpoint to Tubridy's lickety tenor. **Fiona McCann on Tubs's podcast, Irish Times**

Coachella doesn't deserve Blur – I saw them in Dublin in 2013 when gigs were about the music and not just Instagram opportunities. **Chrissie Russell, Irish Independent**

I am probably one of the happiest divorced women on the planet. **Sharon Corr, RTÉ Radio 1**

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

