

Glasgow Central: SEP on the ballot in socially-polarised constituency

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9 April 2015

Katie Rhodes has been registered as the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Glasgow Central, a constituency of around 90,000 people inside Scotland's largest city. It is the home of two universities, two art schools, three colleges, a large infirmary, the city's financial, administrative and shopping centre. It also includes wealthy areas alongside some of the most impoverished in Britain.

The Labour Party, which, in the aftermath of World War II, commanded the allegiance of large numbers of working people, is now a hated warmongering apparatus of the upwardly mobile and the super-rich. The sitting MP is the Labour Party's Anas Sarwar, vice chair of former prime minister Tony Blair's Progress grouping in the Labour Party. The previous MP was Sarwar's father, Mohammed, a cash-and-carry millionaire and latterly governor of the Pakistani Punjab province.

Sarwar is in serious danger of losing his seat to the equally right-wing Scottish National Party (SNP).

Decades of work by pseudo-left tendencies, including the Scottish Socialist Party, Solidarity Scotland, the Radical Independence Campaign and the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), have helped the SNP foster an entirely undeserved image of itself as a left-wing movement. In reality, the SNP is a tool of the financial oligarchy no less than the Labour Party it is seeking to supplant across Scotland.

Both parties have worked to expand Glasgow's financial district, in the centre of the constituency, which hosts many of the leading organs of financial parasitism such as the Bank of Scotland, Clydesdale Bank, RBS, Esure, Barclays Wealth, Santander, Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan, BNP Paribas, Shell and Tesco Bank. It is the world's 66th richest financial centre. Some 52,000 workers are employed in the

sector, while only 20,000 work in engineering, much of which is concentrated on the arms industry.

Across Glasgow 130,000 students are enrolled in three colleges and five higher education institutions. The University of Strathclyde, Caledonian University, the City of Glasgow College, Metropolitan College and Stow College, as well as the prestigious Glasgow School of Art and the Royal Conservatoire all lie within the constituency boundaries.

But for all the billions of pounds, dollars and euros transacted every day within the financial district, and the exorbitant fees charged to thousands of overseas students, areas within the constituency remain deeply impoverished. Labour and the ruling SNP have ensured that thousands have been pushed off benefits and into low-paid employment, fraudulent workfare schemes or out of the economy altogether.

In 2014 there was a drastic increase in people using Glasgow's four Trussell Trust food banks. In December the Trust reported that 14,781 people were referred to its food banks over the preceding 12 months. This compared to only 2,564 during the same period in 2012-13—an increase of 476 percent. In the period between April and September alone, almost 7,300 people were forced to use a food bank in Glasgow. These included over 2,800 children—more than any other city in Scotland.

Shelter, a homeless charity, estimates that as much as 53 percent of occupied properties in Glasgow City fail the Housing Quality Standard, while 1,677 families live in temporary accommodation, including 1,147 children. Around 5,000 households were assessed as homeless in 2013-14.

Some of the most depressed neighbourhoods in Glasgow fall within the constituency.

In terms of male life expectancy, five out of the 10

neighbourhoods with the lowest life expectancy are within the centre of Glasgow, including Yorkhill and Anderston (67.4), Parkhead and Dalmarnock (67.6), Calton and Bridgeton (67.8), Greater Gorbals (68.7) and the City Centre (69.7). Male life expectancy exceeds 80 years in the wealthiest neighbourhoods.

Deprivation is so acute in areas of the city that a whole field of debate has opened up amongst social scientists and medical professionals over the “Glasgow Effect”. This refers to the phenomena of much poorer health and life expectancy, despite sharing identical levels of poverty with other areas of Britain devastated by deindustrialisation like Manchester and Liverpool. The city’s press and advice agencies regularly report instances of former welfare claimants and asylum seekers who are absolutely destitute, with no money at all.

Over the coming weeks, SEP campaigners and *World Socialist Web Site* writers will comment and report on the campaign and the social and political questions it raises, interview workers and constituents young and old and seek to build support for the International Committee of the Fourth International’s May Day rally against war, dictatorship and poverty on May 3.

We will hold election committee meetings, and encourage sympathisers to support our campaign. We call for voters in the constituency to register support for us, vote for Katie Rhodes and, above all, to join the Socialist Equality Party.

For further details visit: www.socialequality.org.uk



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact