

# Derry Conference 2025

Equity - Essex & Hertfordshire Branch



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## Erin Battle's Report

### Summary

Suitably armed with copious Conference documents and forging into the unknown of my first 3-day Equity Annual Conference, with two Essex and Herts colleagues, I felt so welcomed by the people of Derry, my fellow delegates and by Equity personnel. Entering this arena, I'd no idea how powerful, inspiring and resonant this experience would become.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Conference is to debate and transact important & relevant motions that will form the basis of Equity's future work across its bandwidth. Mingling in with motions are reports given by key Equity personnel across the Secretariat, Policy & Governance, Recorded Media, Live Performance, & Finance.

Traditionally, there's a local rally to spearhead for local colleagues. Derry's Northern Ireland Government Offices certainly knew Equity was in town. Evening events were networking opportunities to mix with delegates and special guests. Paul W Fleming and Lynda Rooke ensured there were multiple 'war cries' and reference paid to the rich local history.

Overall, delegates come away enriched, motivated and poised for the personal and collective missions and targets ahead.

### Highlights

By background, I'm an Irish/American with a British accent. Professionally, I'm an artist who's creative voice spans the micro-scale of family, through community and into the importance of humanity, identity and nationhood. By day, I'm active in speaking up and out on all manner of issues that are faced by professionals in Film, TV and music.

Conference provided a wonderfully rich opportunity to learn, grow and apply my whole self, with my battalion of ancestors, to understand critical topics and learn more about interest groups that would catch most interest. This was best facilitated by Fringe events held on the Sunday afternoon.

The first fringe event I attended focused on 'Trade Unionism in a New Ireland'. John Barclay described this as the best Equity meeting he'd ever attended. I didn't want our blistering hour to end. How might the six counties meld peacefully with the 26? What will be the keys to unlocking the combined human potential that a united Ireland presents to all, no matter their socio-economics, religion, past politics, age or gender? Ideas, dreams, and vision were cast to the group. May the Universe see, hear and provide!

The people of Derry have a rich history of resilience and resistance. Derry's present is considering the shape of its future, both locally and nationally. Given a World shadowed by darkness, and our conference, and our ethos, it felt so poignant that Derry could light a path showing current World trouble spots that there's hope for peace, equity, a vibrant culture, and a future of working together.

Other Fringe events to grab my attention were 'Making the Industry More Accessible', and 'Women at Work'. To add to my lived experience, both events deepened and strengthened my knowledge of gender- and disability-derived work challenges, and how I and colleagues can work towards a safer, more accessible, and more fulfilling environment.

The final Fringe event I attended tapped into the purest essence of my being. Entitled, 'What is International Solidarity', we were introduced to the new International Solidarity Committee, and heard from Paul W Fleming on solidarity with Columbian colleagues and the life-threatening dangers they face simply for organising workers. We also heard first-hand from special guest speakers on the catastrophic conditions in the Sudan and in Palestine. There wasn't 'a dry eye in the house', as our humanity touched and met the terror faced by ordinary people living in extraordinary times.

The final morning of Conference rang with the overtones of the previous day. As we raced through the business of the day, a thought occurred of an opportunity to organise a solidarity photo on the stunning Derry Peace bridge just a few hundred metres from our venue. Lynda Rooke agreed with the plan, and a band of warriors duly assembled on the Peace bridge to show our wish and reverence for Peace.

### **Touristing**

The final afternoon provided an excellent opportunity to walk Derry's city walls, tour the Tower Museum (including of course paying homage to the Derry Girl's section), visit the murals and memorials in Derry's Bogside, and finish-up in the Peacemaker's Museum. One thing for next time is an extended tour of Derry's many, many ice-cream cafes.

### **What Next?**

Now that the Conference is over, I've a number of projects to progress. For example, a draft motion is sitting with the women's committee for feedback.

After various conversations with policy, I'll follow-up with further information. A colleague and I have a meeting with Paul W Fleming on a particular matter.

### **Special Thanks**

Special thanks goes to the people of Derry, to our President, Lynda Rooke, to Bao Tieu (esteemed colleague), Dee Mardi (aka. fearless leader), Paul W Fleming, and to the best Regional Official in Equity, Mr. Iain Croker.