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Thursday, 22nd May 2008

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Politicians clash over hunger strike film

Local politicians have clashed over the new film about Bobby Sands which is due to be shown on Channel 4 shortly.

The film, 'Hunger' was shown at the prestigious Cannes film festival last week and has already attracted rave reviews.

'Hunger' was directed by Turner Prize winning artist, Steve McQueen, and stars Michael Fassbender as Bobby Sands.

However, East Derry DUP MP Gregory Campbell has tabled a parliamentary motion at Westminster expressing concern at the decision to broadcast the film.

Mr. Campbell said he decided to table the motion after what he described as "flattering comments"

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by Channel 4 executives about Bobby Sands and other hunger strikers.

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"Bobby Sands was a convicted terrorist who belonged to an illegal paramilitary organisation that at the time of his death had already inflicted death and serious injury upon hundreds of innocent people in Northern Ireland. The fact that a bloodthirsty terrorist criminal chooses to starve himself to death in prison does not in any way legitimise or justify the barbaric terrorism in which they were engaged."

Mr. Campbell said he did not agree with comments made by Channel 4 that "it is the right moment to be revisiting and reconsidering the ideals of these young men who put themselves and others through a great deal for their belief that they could make their world better."

The DUP man said the campaign by the IRA did not make the world better for people in the North. "They were not, in any one way, attempting to 'make their world better' as has been claimed. Bobby Sands and the other hunger strikers were criminals not idealistic young revolutionaries. Senior IRA criminals are not deserving of the hagiography that Channel 4 seems to be dispensing," he said.

Meanwhile, Foyle Sinn Féin MLA and former hunger striker Raymond McCartney said he met with Steve McQueen while he working on the film. "I met Steve McQueen a few years back when he was preparing to write the screenplay for his newly completed film, 'Hunger.' I know he met with others who were on hunger strike in 1980 and 1981. He explained that although he was very young at the time the image of Bobby Sands appearing on news programmes had left a lasting memory on him.

"He said that he wanted to make a film which would explore the issues which led to the hunger strike in 1981. We spoke at length about the motivation and commitment of the men who died and he was interested in the type of people they were. I impressed upon him that they were very much like all of us on the protest, determined that we would not allowed ourselves to criminalised and that they possessed courage and selflessness which is very difficult to explain," he said.

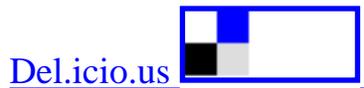
A spokesperson for Channel 4 rejected Mr Campbell's claims saying; "Hunger is not an apologia for terrorism or terrorists. It is a dramatic interpretation of how being in the environment of the Maze at that time affects a whole range of characters from a number of different perspectives and how people on all sides are brutalised by the situation."

The full article contains 532 words and appears in n/a newspaper.

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Enda Mc,

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Strange that Mr Campbell wasn't on the airwaves after Rangers 'fans' wrecked Manchester and almost killed a police officer. Campbell is simply playing politics with this issue.

Whether he likes it or not, Bobby Sands is revered throughout the island of Ireland by the Nationalist community. The time is right to debate the legacy of the hunger strikers, led by Bobby Sands. Campbell and his unionist cronies insist that we respect their history and their tradition, yet they fail to recognise that the hunger strikers played a pivotal role in our history.

Their defiance inspired a generation, not just a generation of violence but a generation who stood up to British tyranny in their own way. Catholics in the North are now treated as equals for the most part and that equality would not have been achieved without leaders, such as Bobby Sands.

Gregory Campbell is nothing more than a loyalist loudmouth, who does his best to stir up sectarian hatred in his community. The North will never be fully at peace whilst megaphone mouths, like Campbell insist on airing their sectarian spiel to the masses.

Perhaps, he should watch the film and look at what the man went through for his principles. I doubt if Mr Campbell would do the same for his principles, but then again he never had to fight for his principles, his principles were never oppressed by a foreign invade and he was never jailed for expressing his beliefs. It's easy to see why he can't understand Bobby Sands.

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