

CRANE'S CRUSADE FOR IRISH HUMAN RIGHTS

POLITICAL PRISONERS on HUNGAR STRIKE in NORTHERN IRELAND

By Maureen Hartman

Political prisoners at Long Kesh prison just outside Belfast, Northern Ireland have been beaten semi-starved, and degraded so much that seven of them began a hunger strike three weeks ago.

The men are willing to die for their rights, and when one of the seven dies, another will take his place.

Raymond Crane, a prisoner who was released from Long Kesh three months ago, outlined Tuesday November 18, at the Chaplaincy Centre, the basic rights that are being asked for. The Irish political prisoners want the right not to wear prison uniforms and not to do prison work, freedom of association with other political prisoners, restoration of remission, and the right to organize educational and recreational facilities, to one weekly visit, one letter in and out per week, and to receive one parcel a week.

Crane was imprisoned for three years on a criminal charge of being a member of the IRA. He spent six months awaiting trial and two and a half years in H-Block. In H-Block, Crane joined the Blanket protest, formed in September 1976 in objection to exchanging personal clothing for prison uniform and doing prison work because it would admit their criminality.

Conditions in H-Block are harsh: prisoners are locked in their cells

24 hours a day, wear no clothing except for a rough blanket, and sleep on a piece of damp foam rubber on the floor. There is nothing else in the cells except perhaps for Bible, a bare light-bulb in the ceiling, and a cell-mate. The cells are 8' by 9' with one window (con-

crete slits in the wall) covered on the inside by a grill and on the outside by a covering cutting down the sunlight.

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The prisoners are allowed a one minute shower every week, the only time they get to see the other men. In his two and a half years in H-Block, Crane was given one bath. Some men have not had one in 5 years. Guards forcibly held Crane down while he was scrubbed with a scrub brush usually used on floors. Some men carried marks of the brush for a week.

"The food is terrible and interfered with so prisoners do not get it," said Crane. "Disinfectant is put in the tea, food is walked on, and maggots and glass are put in the food." Crane said he lost about a

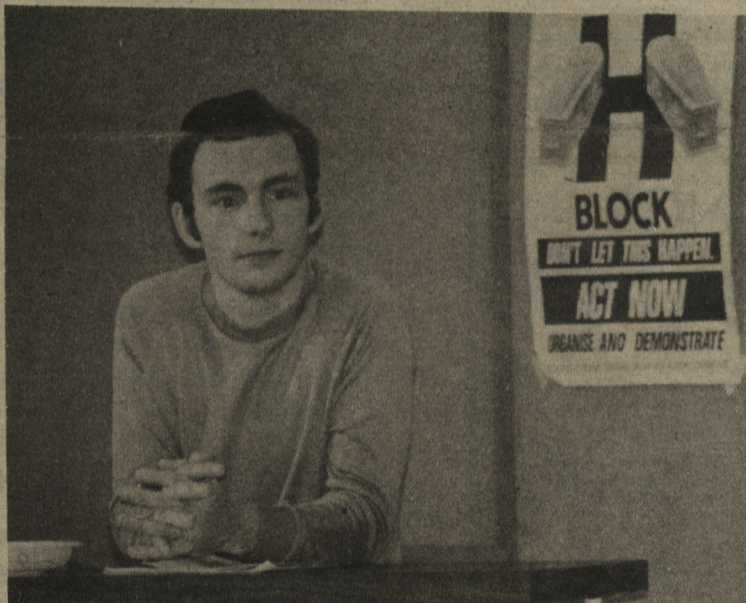
stone and a half, or 18 to 20 pounds, during his stay. He mentioned one woman in Armagh who lost three stone. received an award in their attempts to spread the Gaelic language, which was almost dead.

The prisoners of H-Block feel that they are being treated inhumanely. They are given mirror searches

before going and after coming from Mass and monthly visits with their families. Visitors are also searched, and the men are also kicked and spat upon when going on these visits. Guards stand duty during these thirty minute visits, so few personal discussions can occur. The men are beaten for refusing to undergo the mirror search. In one case, a man had his nose broken and his eardrum ruptured because of such a beating. It is also common practise for a man in solitary to be paraded naked in front of the governor every two weeks. The guards often beat the younger lads, according to Crane. The average age of the prisoners is 20. Crane was convicted on being a member of the IRA, although he vehemently denies having ever been a part of it. As Crane said, "It doesn't matter over there. The British are only interested in convictions. Innocence doesn't matter."

The British consider the IRA prisoners as criminals, but the men consider themselves political prisoners. "The forgotten prisoners, where are they? Every deed dieth if suppressed in silence."

- Amnesty International



Time was passed in talking as much as possible, explained Crane. The men talked to their cell-mate and shouted quizzes and stories out the door to each other. Days were also spent in learning the Gaelic language. The men of H-Block

C.I.C. CONFERENCE

by Jeff Szabo

The Atlantic Section executive of the Chemical Institute of Canada (CIC) met in Halifax on Nov. 15.

Attending from UPEI were Dr. Leon Loucks and Jeff Szabo, one of two student representatives sitting on the executive. Todd MacLaughlan, junior chemistry major, attended as well. The other student representative from the Atlantic Provinces was Sherry Hughes from Dalhousie.

Among topics discussed

were the National CIC Conference and the 1982 Atlantic section student conference to be held at UPEI.

The national conference to be held in Halifax next June is expected to have an attendance of 1000-1500 people. Some chemistry students will be chosen to work at the conference, and these students will receive free room and board, and possibly a stipend of \$100. This also applies to UPEI Chemistry students.