

What Kind of Cover-up Is the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry?

A poem by Rolf Auer

August 5, 2011

“She calls out to the man on the street, / ‘Sir, can you help me?’ / ‘It’s cold and I’ve nowhere to sleep...’ / ‘Is there somewhere you can tell me?’ / He walks on, doesn’t look back, / he pretends he can’t hear her. / Starts to whistle as he crosses the street, / seems embarrassed to be there. / Oh, think twice, ‘cause it’s another day for you and me in paradise. / Oh, think twice, ‘cause it’s another day for you, you and me in paradise.”
—lyrics from the song by Phil Collins, “Another Day in Paradise”

On August 5, 2011
the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry
further marginalized the women
of the Downtown Eastside (DTES).

The Commission begins
formal hearings in Vancouver
on Oct. 11, 2011
examining police conduct
and other aspects of the investigation
of convicted serial murderer Robert Pickton.

On August 5, it announced it was seeking to
retain and fund one or two lawyers to
“present the perspectives of the
Downtown Eastside community and
Aboriginal women.”

The Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre (DEWC)
and the Feb 14 Women’s Memorial March Committee
both have formal standing before the Committee.
Neither was consulted about
the Committee’s decision.

In an open letter
these DTES groups—
representing women,
especially Indigenous women,
facing physical, mental, emotional,
and spiritual violence on a daily basis—

emphatically protested the decision declaring “the purpose of the inquiry is being whittled away.”

They wrote:

“Women in the DTES have their own voices and stories and critical information to share with this Inquiry and have been demanding... [that] for decades, but this Inquiry no longer facilitates this possibility.”

Once again, as past evidence has born out, it would appear that a cover-up protecting the police and related authorities is proceeding apace. So, wrote the groups, “what do the police and officials have to hide and why is the Inquiry serving them?”

The letter forcefully concludes:

“This was supposed to be our Inquiry – one that shed light on the crimes and complicity of the police and officials. But it appears there is no justice and no public in this Inquiry and the meaningful participation of women and the community has effectively been denied.”