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Review by Patrick Brown & Christa Grace-Warrick

## ***A Mystery, A Plot—Hopefully An Ending***

**T**he Legislature Raids' blog will convince any skeptic of the value of 'citizen journalism—the great new shot in the arm to news media. It is unusual to review a blog but this one is outstanding—it tells a great story, and a great BC mystery.

Presided over by a wise woman who goes under the *nom de plume* of BC Mary, 'The Legislature Raids' records all that has been written about the last three-and-a-half years of courtroom activities stemming from RCMP raids on the BC Legislative Buildings on December 28, 2005, including subsequent charges laid against Dave Basi, Bob Virk, and Aneal Basi.

The case was originally scheduled to go to trial on June 5, 2006. The pre-trial maneuvers that have delayed the case tell a tale of political and judicial perversion and obfuscation probably unmatched in the province's history. So far, the trial has been delayed through two complete provincial elections. And this is significant given the nature of the case.

A trial date still has not been set, although current scuttlebutt around the BC Supreme Court is that the lawyers involved are clearing their schedules for September of this year through January 2010.

Unless you have been reading BC Mary's blog regularly, you will be excused for knowing very little about what has been going on. That's because the daily newspapers have reported on the case rather sporadically, either because they didn't think it was very important any more, or because they figured that after all this time, you (dear reader) would have got tired of it; or maybe because you couldn't understand. Anyway, most of the time, they haven't sent anyone to cover the court proceedings.

'The Legislature Raids', on the other hand, documents more than a hundred pre-trial days of Court time spent wrangling over what the trial should be like—who's in, who's out, and what anyone can or cannot say. (That rumbling noise you hear is Perry Mason revolving in his grave, wheelchair and all.)

### **So What's the Plot?**

So what could possible be so convoluted and need so much court rigamarole? That, it is hoped, is what the long-delayed trial will reveal—should it ever get past the tireless activities of the government-appointed Special Prosecutor.

For the last several months, the prosecution, now under

pressure, has been trying to get permission from the court to introduce a secret witness in the trial, while withholding his identity. So far, the Courts have not given their permission, but the Special Prosecutor has appealed this procedural matter to the Supreme Court of Canada, which is not at this point expected to rule on this until October. More delay.

Back to that plot; it all seems to have something to do with the sale of BC Rail to CN Rail, very early in the Gordon Campbell era.

And it seems that Basi, Virk, and Basi have been charged with some sort of corruption in connection with the bidding process for BC Rail; some of the other bidders claimed that the bidding process unfairly favoured CN.

Basi, Virk, and Basi's defense seems to be that they were only doing the bidding of their political masters: Judith Reid, who was Minister of Transportation at the time, and who has since retired from politics; Gary Collins, who was Minister of Finance at the time, and who has since retired from politics; and Gordon Campbell, who was Premier at the time, and still is.

However, at the time of the RCMP raid, the RCMP were quick to assure the public that there would be no charges against any elected officials.

### **Curiouser and Curiouser**

The case becomes curiouser and curiouser. A Pandora's box of paperwork, touching on many topics of our times, not surprising, since the raid took place in the Legislature.

Most of the endless days in court that are recorded on the blog have been about disclosure: the defense lawyers seek documents that would reveal what exactly went on, and the prosecution's attempts to block their access to any such documentation, using excuses such as solicitor-client privilege, legislative privilege, and cabinet confidential. In the Legislative Assembly, the government has refused to answer any questions with the excuse that the case is 'before the courts'.

More and more evidence is appearing on the record—some 300,000 pages in total so far. Including 8,000 pages retrieved by the Nanaimo NDP-MLA Leonard Krog through an application to the Supreme Court. (These documents are now available to the public in the file registry of the Vancouver Law Courts.)

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However 'The Legislature Raids' is definitely easier reading than this blizzard of documents.

### **The New Media**


Given corporate conglomerate ownership, its need to cut corners to maximize return to executives and shareholders, and because the easy-pickings days of newspaper revenues are over, the mainstream media is out of its depth in covering a topic of such magnitude, not to say massive bulk.

Only skilled and dedicated citizens, journalist and layperson, like those who feature on 'The Legislature Raids' are the ones with the fortitude to carry out the task. The blog has contributions by people who are not only unpaid, but who have given their time to attend the court sessions, write them up, and to use their expertise to interpret what is going on (in particular, Robin Mathews). You will find reports and columns

by professional journalists (particularly Bill Tieleman), a number of useful links, and copies of the occasional newspaper items from *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, *The Globe & Mail*, Victoria's *Times-Colonist* and links to *Island Tides* articles (scroll through 'BC Politics' in our online subject archive to view them).

### **No Ending In Sight**

'The Legislature Raids' is a story without an ending, yet. The final page is a secret kept even from the blog's author. However reading the blog regularly is a great way to keep up with the next episode. You will be appalled—and delighted and thankful that, in the cause of justice, such blogs exist.

Visit 'The Legislature Raids' at (<http://bctrialofbasivirk.blogspot.com/>). 

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