

On Political Economy; or, The Ballad of Viola Desmond

It's impossible proof! The ten-dollar
Bill sporting her face demonstrates "Crime pays":
But, first, the heroine has to holler;
She has to be jailed while ass-like *Law* brays--

Because she didn't pay the penny tax
Required to sit where Caucasian folks sit
In that segregated cinema. Blacks,
In 1946, were deemed unfit

To share the same seating at the Roseland
Theatre in New Glasgow, and were told,
"Some rows are 'Whites Only.'" Who could withstand?
Voila! Viola--worth her weight in gold.

Desmond was a beautician, but her *Change*
Wasn't cosmetic. She wouldn't give
Two cents to back racism. That was strange:
It wasn't how most "Coloureds" had to live.

So Nova Scotia swiftly saw her jailed,
Tried her, declared her *Guilt*: Not for breaking
Racist rules, but only because she failed
To pay one cent the *Province* was taking

To support 'Whites Only' rules a-plenty
(As if *New Scotland* were South Africa).
Viola, convicted, was fined twenty
Dollars. That's her beauty spot, I tell ya.

Her two cents made a real *Difference*, made
Change begin to happen, nine years before
Rosa Parks sparked the Civil Rights crusade
States-side, a century past Civil War....

As an entrepreneur, she sought *Value*
And *Profit* in *Beauty*, Sis Desmond did.
But she strove for *Justice* because it's true--
Beauty turns ugly where *Justice* is hid.

Her bill is "disappointingly smooth," eh?
One can't feel her scars, scrapes, and scabs, that she
Suffered to bring about a "better day,"
Whose dawn would usher in *Equality*.

Still, she's the first Canuck *femme* and person
Of colour, to see her face integrate
Canadian currency. Partisan
Of *Justice*, ponder her interest rate—

From two cents to ten dollars, an increase
Of 50,000%. Also
Note her Royal Pardon: Miracles don't cease!
Royal Mint is Viola Desmond now.