

A slander on Canadian men (National Post December 10, 2008)

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What kind of leader will Michael Ignatieff be? It's a question that popped into my head when he cranked out a communique last week about domestic violence. It was the sort of pro forma statement most of the media ignored. But I didn't.

Last week, I used the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the Ecole Polytechnique massacre to challenge the feminist movement's anti-male orthodoxies and bogus "statistics," which have swollen the government-funded coffers of women's projects at the expense of truth and men's rights. Normally I'd wait a while before tackling the subject again. But when a possible future prime minister of Canada puts his name to scare-mongering nonsense, for no other discernible reason than to curry favour with one identity group at another's expense, I feel compelled to write a follow-up.

Marking the 19th annual commemoration of the Ecole Polytechnique massacre, Mr. Ignatieff issued a statement commiserating with the 14 female victims' families. Well and good.

Not well and good was the lily-gilding statement, "Even today, nearly one in three Canadian women are victims of spousal abuse."

This oft-cited figure is a myth, fabricated from whole ideological cloth. If true, the epidemic social pathology it represents would render Canada as dysfunctional as Darfur.

Millions of Canadian women would be roaming the streets with broken bones.

Here are the facts Mr. Ignatieff's staff could not be bothered to research: The five-year incidence of spousal assault victimization reported by women in a recent StatsCan survey was 8% for women, 7% for men. It is not reported whether, as is likely, many of the victims were also perpetrators, since half of intimate partner violence (IPV) is reciprocal. For severe violence, the annual reported figures are 2.6% for men and 4.2% for women. Unilateral spousal "battering" is fairly rare. In a U. S. national survey of men and women touched by IPV, only 6% of married women cited unprovoked abuse by their husbands against 10% of men reporting the same by their wives. Why, on the subject of IPV, do our political and cultural elites so stubbornly cling to obvious absurdities in the face of this transparent, authoritative and readily available information to the contrary?

The persistent stereotyping of IPV as a male pathology would seem to be a form of mass hysteria -- not personal emotional breakdown, but rather hysteria in its viral sense of mass popular self-deception. How is the hysteria spread? By false statements such as those in Mr. Ignatieff's press release.

The misandric myths perpetrated by the "white ribbon" industry have terrible consequences. Falsely accused men are routinely driven from their homes, torn from their children's lives, languish in jail and a frighteningly high number are even harassed to suicide. That is because our legal system panders to the mass hysteria that Mr. Ignatieff, in thrall, like so many other pusillanimous politicians, to a handful of virulently anti-male ideologues, has indicated he will be complicit in promoting.

When leaders can't remedy social ills, or even apply themselves to understanding their actual causes -- and IPV is indeed a social ill in need of realistic treatment, not scapegoating -- they should at least refrain from adding to the problem.

There are important words Mr. Ignatieff needs to say to the literally millions of blameless fellow men his ignorance and bias have slandered: "I was wrong. I'm sorry." If he doesn't have the courage to do so, I would hope that Canadian men and fair-minded Canadian women will remember his cowardly silence, as I will, when next they go to the polls.

