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Political pledges to women are hard to believe

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The most frustrating aspect of the relentlessly sexist campaign against Senator Hillary Clinton is how unaware the perpetrators of it pretend to be, and how naive the mentally colonized women, those who believe feminism is outdated and irrelevant, are.

It took millions of "angry white women" to clue in. They are now the XX-factor in politics, much as "security moms" were in 2004 and "soccer moms" in 2000.

Ah, female voters. Can't win with them. Can win without 'em.

Of course, not all women south of the border are white and/or angry. Many indeed are thrilled at the prospect of Barack Obama's winning the presidency.

Others, those who agree that women's reproductive rights should be curtailed and that First Ladies should be seen and not heard, are sure to vote for John McCain. Never mind how McCain dumped his devoted first wife for his much younger and very wealthy second, whom he would go on to publicly denounce with the c-word.

And no, we're not talking "Cindy."

Despite many differences between the U.S. and Canadian political pictures, there are some scary parallels, no thanks to how Stephen Harper's Conservative government marches in lockstep with the Bush administration on military spending, the environment and foreign policy.

And, with Conservative MP Ken Epp's sneaky Bill C-484 in the works, and the government's determination to see its so-called Unborn Victims of Crime Act passed, it's evident that the PMO's position on a woman's right to choose is not very different from the Oval Office's.

This would explain the naked pitch for women voters last week made by the federal Liberals.

Party leader Stéphane Dion declared that he would stop C-484 from passing – although

it's a mystery how he can make the 28 caucus members who stood with the Conservatives when it sailed through second reading change their votes.

Dion's promise was made at a news conference announcing that, if elected, his government would establish a Commissioner of Gender Equality, who would act independently, much like the Auditor General, Chief Electoral Officer or Official Languages Commissioner, "to ensure that legislation and policies of the Government of Canada are examined with an equality lens" as well as "to audit federal government departments for gender-based analysis" and "examine existing programs and policies for their gender equality."

That apparently doesn't necessarily mean that half of all jobs in government would automatically go to women, or new laws would be passed to ensure that there is better female representation on the boards of private companies.

What it does entail is that everything will be placed under a microscope to see who benefits, and if the scale is weighted against women and, by extension, their children.

For make no mistake, poverty, education and even the environment are women's issues just as much as child care and equal pay for work of equal value.

If a woman can't raise her children with dignity in a safe and healthy environment, she is at risk, as is society.

But the Liberals have made similar pledges in the past, and never acted on them, even when they had the power to do so. That's why it's hard to believe that, despite Dion's good intentions with respect to putting more women's bums on the back benches, he isn't just pandering to female voters who are increasingly uncomfortable with Harper's policies.

As well they should be. After all, in January 2006, Harper pledged to "fully uphold" women's rights – and yet, ever since, he has been stripping away resources that will help women better their lives.

Which is why I'm hoping that, during our next election, it won't be just the white women here who will be angry enough to kick him out.

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