

## Is Withholding Sex Now Sex Abuse?

by kevin harding - Saturday, December 03, 2011

<https://politicsrespun.org/2011/12/is-withholding-sex-now-sex-abuse/>

*Or, Is Lysistrata A Sex Offender?*

I attended today, along with Alex, a discussion panel to remember the Montreal Massacre where Marc Lepine murdered fourteen women at the École Polytechnique simply because they were women and he thought that they had prevented him from attending the school.

A lot of people - including many Conservatives who claim to fully support the *equality* of women (*in the eyes of the law*) - will argue that since the days of the Montreal Massacre society has advanced by leaps and bounds.

And sure, we've gone some distance since we established in law that women were merely the chattel property of their husbands or that forced sex in marriage was not rape because the woman were expected to provide sex to their husbands.

Or have we?

One of the courageous and amazingly strong women presenting at the panel today pointed out that in a time where the *Family Law Act* was being revised to erase gendered definitions (partially, perhaps, as an attempt to treat everyone equally in the law, and partially, perhaps, to fix legal issues once same sex marriage was legalized) that not everything has changed, and perhaps some areas have been changing back, in a scary way.

The example she used? [A fact sheet from the Legal Services Society of BC](#) ("[a non-profit organization accountable to the public and funded primarily by the Ministry of Attorney General](#)") that defines sexual abuse **of men by women** as including

*criticising a man's sexual performance and/or withholding sex as punishment.*

This is in context of replacing gendered terms in the *Family Law Act* and updating the 'legal information for battered women' with more gender neutral language.

So much for that. Here's what the definitions on this fact sheet look like:

# Men Abused by Their Partners

## Who this is for

This fact sheet is for you if:

- You are a man who is afraid, embarrassed, and/or depressed because your female partner is mistreating you.
- You are wondering if your partner's actions are abuse.

In this fact sheet, the word **partner** means wife, common-law partner, or ex-partner who is female.

- Sexual activity performed of punishment

## Abuse t

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- Assault abuser sexual.

Imagine that - here, we're going to the odd length of defining "partners" who abuse men as exclusively women, in a time where we're de-gendering the system, completely ignorant that the vast majority of partner-abuse cases are perpetrated by men against women.

And here's their terrifying description of what sex abuse is:

- **Sexual abuse** can be forcing you into sexual activity in a way you do not want; criticizing your performance; and/or withholding sex as a type of punishment.

This astounds me. In an age where we should be stressing what *consent* is to men, making sure that we're holding rapists to account and not blaming their victims, *we're defining withholding sex as sex abuse committed by women against men?*

Some intrepid reporter should ask our Families First (TM) Premier if she thinks saying "no" to a violent man and refusing to have sex with him is abuse.

Not to mention that this pamphlet seems to have classified [Lysistrata](#) as a sex offender, and [even the women of Belgium who threatened to withhold sex to try to end their country's political stalemate](#).

In short, however, the message to me is clear: we might think we've come a long way in gender equality since the Montreal Massacre, but the truth is that we haven't.

The police who respond to a domestic abuse call are likely to classify it as a "dispute" and not help women in need. The justice system, with an eye to formal equality, doesn't always understand that legalistic equality does not always mean substantive equality. A system that has for hundreds and thousands of years merely regarded women as the property of their men is not fundamentally changed by removing gendered nouns in the law. More must be done.

I most definitely do not consider a woman who says "no" to sex with a man after he hits her or degrades her to be abusing him, and I think it is preposterous for a government funded organisation that is supposed to provide educative materials to the public to suggest that it might be.

Consent is consent. Denying consent is not abusive. Suggesting, however, the denying consent *is abusive* is the most perverse enabling of abuse that I have ever seen.

We spend too much time as a society blaming women for being raped, allegedly through what they wear or where they walk. We shouldn't be saying that taking control of their own bodies is somehow abusive.