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Masculine Criminality as a Policy Issue

Cynthia Cockburn

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I'm very proud to be here and part of this fantastic turn-out for Million Women Rise. All of us have one thought today, and one goal: stop male violence against women.

Stop MALE violence against women. That's what it says on the posters advertising this march. All too often you see the words "violence against women and children" without any reference to who does it. As if it falls from the sky.

The Home Office yesterday, for March 8, published an updated "Action Plan to end Violence against Women and Girls". And who exactly does the Home Office see as the source of this violence? In Theresa May's two-page announcement the words 'man', 'male' and 'masculine' don't appear ONCE. There are just these anonymous people called 'perpetrators'. We have to 'OUT' the male in the perpetrator!

Male violence, in fact masculine criminality generally, needs to be addressed as a conscious policy issue, as any other serious social problem would be. The government have the facts – they're the ones who produce the statistics. They know that men commit 80% of all crime, 90% of violent crime and 99% of sexual crime in England and Wales. Yet these facts are shovelled under the carpet.

For instance - it hit the headlines recently that Jimmy Savile and a bunch of male TV celebrities had been abusing children. What was the policy response? It was "We must have better child protection". Not, "What IS IT with men and power?" And take last night's TV news - three of our sisters in Durham shot dead by a male family member. The policy response aired on Channel 4 News: "Tighter gun control". Not, "What IS IT with men and guns?" Jon Snow – can you hear me?

It's foundational in the thinking of the women's movement that masculinity and femininity are NOT something given in nature. They're not biology. They're socially shaped. Simone de Beauvoir said "a woman isn't born, she's made". Well, a MAN isn't born, he's made. And we need to make him differently. By conscious social policy. In infancy, in school, in sports, in video games, in movies, in the military. It can't be beyond human wit to interrupt this ridiculous, antique, constitution of the male body as a walking weapon, the ideal man as someone always ready to land a punch - or lead the nation to war.

Where is the men's movement that will take responsibility in this? Not just a few brave little groups like White Ribbon. Not just individual men supporting their feminist friend. Of course we welcome them. But no – what I long to hear is men by the million, supporting EACH OTHER in saying "If THIS is what it is to be a man, I'm NOT a man". I refuse.