

Reply to Robert Webb

29/8/14

On 7th August 2014, Robert Webb, a UK comedy actor, wrote an article in the New Statesman, ostensibly about men who are now complaining about, in his words, "anti-male sexism". We may take this to mean MHRAs. Robert is a self-identified male feminist. http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/08/robert-webb-roll-roll-see-man-talking-about-feminism-what-could-possibly-go-wrong#disqus_thread

I respond point-by-point below (the italics are his words, the normal text is my response).

However, my main comment is simply this: in an article supposed to discredit the MHRA position, this idiot manages not to mention any of the MHRA issues at all - literally, not a single one. Well done, Robert. Great critique. Instead Mr Webb presents men's issues as just being whining about who does the housework.

Robert, let me tell you something. I have read a great deal of MHRA material and I have never once, never, heard any MHRA raise the issue of housework. Why? Because it's a fucking triviality, you fool. Only women bleat about housework. If you had bothered to actually give the MHRA position any recognition at all you might at least have stumbled across the genuine concern about fathers being shut out of their children's lives - 3.8 million of them in the UK alone. And that 's just one of a whole long list of issues, all of them substantial not trivial, which your ever-so-incisive analysis, Robert, has totally ignored. Educate yourself, read <http://redpiluk.co.uk/MHRAIssuesInBrief> .

Robert, you may wish to ask yourself why the New Statesman is happy to let you, someone who neither knows nor cares about men's issues, write an article for them on the subject? Why an article on a serious subject from someone whose only skill is buffoonery? A little reflection may lead you to the conclusion that this is precisely what they wanted: an article on men's issues which is burdened by no knowledge or compassion. I look forward to your article on relativistic quantum field theory. At least that won't do any harm.

So, here's Robert...

A man writing sympathetically about feminism is a curious spectacle. The reader leans in, fearing the grisly worst. It's a bit like watching someone juggling chainsaws between keystrokes: "By which I don't mean . . . which is not to claim first-hand experience . . . Look, guys, no, girls, no – WOMEN! Look, women . . . No, that sounds wrong . . ." Pitfalls, man-snares and booby traps (thanks) lurk beneath every clause: the dangers of condescension, hypocrisy, unacknowledged privilege. It could all give way at any moment and

whole paragraphs disappear into sinkholes of unsupported good intentions. Don't forget those good intentions, though. Please remember the good intentions when you take to Twitter to call me a dick.

Not a bad start, Robert. You do at least recognise that, being a man, the very best you can hope for, if you grovel abjectly enough, is to be regarded by the uber-gender as tolerable - not equal, mind, just barely tolerable.

But not all men are sympathetic.

Yes, indeed. Doing well so far, Robo.

I am a feminist. I don't especially care for the term but there it is. Few among us want to be an "-ist". Yet there's a special squeamishness around the term we use for "not being an arsehole about women". Some women are reluctant to use it, even hostile to it. But I'm not going to be found "mansplaining" it to women. It's the chaps I'm talking to now.

No, you've blown it now, Robert. You actually think that "feminism" means "not being an arsehole about women"? You really are a clown, aren't you? Oops, sorry, of course, you really are a clown, I'd forgotten. And, yes, some women are indeed reluctant to call themselves feminists. In fact, in a US survey, 77% of women and 84% of men declined to be described as feminists.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/16/feminism-poll_n_3094917.html

The same survey indicates that 8% of Americans specifically identify as anti-feminists (as do I), but the on-line poll at this Huffington Post link indicates that a massive 67% identify as anti-feminist, mostly strongly so. (This may be distorted by links from MHRA sites, I guess).

A man complaining about "anti-male sexism" is the sound of a man crying about lost advantages. Huge, man-made, God-thundering advantages.

Tell us about these God-thundering advantages, Robert.

Do you earn more than your female partner?

Yeah, I work 5 days per week, she works one. Of course I earn more. Aren't I privileged to be allowed to work full time?

Do you think it's a bit rich that you're now also expected to book your kids' dental appointments and do half the laundry?

No.

Oh, I see you say that you do. Lazy bastard. And you are assuming that most men are like you? I suspect you are lazier than most. Perhaps that's one of the reasons you find it necessary to fawn and grovel to the wimmins so obsequiously. But the important point, Robert, is that you are talking trivia here. And if you really do insist

on addressing the division of household chores we could have a nice little discussion about, (a) do women really take the lead in many chores because they want to be in charge?, and, (b) what about the "man's stuff"? You know, the DIY, the basic car maintenance, the getting up to your elbows in shit (literally) clearing the blocked drain (it's *always* a sanitary towel, trust me), and going up on the roof to replace that ridge tile despite the fact you fucking hate heights, etc., etc. No, none of that counts, I know. Men are supposed to do their share of what in the bad old days was regarded as women's work, but the reverse never really caught on, did it?

We pause here to note that that was it. That was all Robert had to say about men's God-thundering advantages. I heard no God-thundering. I heard nothing. No advantages at all were forthcoming from the mouth of Mr Webb.

The shit that we notice women having to put up with is almost certainly a tiny fraction of the shit that women actually do put up with.

Yes, indeed, the wimmins are indeed noted for their suffering in silence. Very silent they are. Never a moan. Tell us about their suffering, Robert, do.

Guys, your doctor might tell you to lose a few pounds – but the taxi driver will not; the Daily Mail will not. You won't open the Sun and compare your own cock to that of a well-endowed model. You won't get dressed for a party and worry if you look like a slut, or get called a slut, or get raped on the way home "because you look like a slut". In the rare event that you do get raped, the police won't seem to mind what you were wearing. Lawyers won't ask what you were wearing; your mother won't ask what you were wearing. You don't judge yourself for eating a cake; you haven't, since childhood, been encouraged by the media and by every careless comment from your family to have a relationship with food that borders on psychosis.

I assume this must be just a teaser before you hit us with the real stuff, the genuine oppressions, Robo? OK, I'll play along. I'll pretend a reply is necessary. This is about female appearance. Women like to look good. Why would this be? Well you see, it's evolution. The prime directive is to pass on your genes. For men this starts with fucking. So men have a very strong urge to fuck. I think we can agree on that. For women, it requires attracting a mate. So women have a very strong urge to be attractive. Women make themselves attractive, men are attracted. That's how it works. Am I going too fast for you, Robert? You see, it's not the Patriarchy forcing women to wear sexy clothes. It's not men "objectifying" women. That is all projection. Women have a very strong urge to make themselves attractive. This urge is the exact counterpart of men's urge to fuck. Men's sexuality is out in the open, there is no

hidden agenda. With women, though, their sexuality is all hidden agenda. Rather than 'fessing up to it, women project their urge to attract onto men in the form of the claim of objectification. Bottom line is this: no taxi driver ever made a woman eat too much junk food and take no exercise, and no man ever told a woman what to wear and lived ('cept Gok Wan, and he doesn't count). But women are constantly complaining about being told what to wear. By whom? Not me. To me this sounds like a man claiming that it's women who are responsible for his irrational urge to fuck. It's hardly taking responsibility for your own sexuality, is it? And, yes, I do realise that women do not dress up just for men. They dress up when they go out with the girls, or when they are just going down the shops. But that hardly supports the idea that women's interest in their appearance is due to being oppressed by men, does it?

When you dance in a ballroom, you won't have to do it backwards in high heels;

For the high heels, I refer you to the above discussion. If I were King Eurystheus having to relive giving Hercules his labours, I'd say this, "Hercules, old boy, I want you to get all women to wear sensible shoes". Poor bastard would have no chance. I rest my case. As for the dancing backwards bit - novel gripe, Robo. Well done. Not come across that one before. Never heard the ladies down out regular Sunday afternoon Tea Dance complain about it though. They like being led, you know. I think it's a sex thing.

When you speak in a boardroom, you won't have to second-guess yourself in case you're coming across as "shrill". You reached that boardroom with the grain, not against it. You didn't need to look hard for role models.

OK, so you're saying that women have it tough because they have to stop themselves being shrill. Err, why couldn't they just not be shrill, you know, naturally? No oppression required. Reach the Boardroom "with the grain"? I'm happy with that. So why are there targets which companies are supposed to achieve, or risk being named and shamed? Sounds like being forced against the grain to me. And why do we only hear about women demanding greater representation on Boards, as MPs, and as Professors and Consultants? No interest in being bin men, road diggers, sewerage workers, roofers, welders, builders, car mechanics, or any of the other jobs that 99% of men do - you know, the nasty, dirty, laborious and down right dangerous jobs that mean that men get to be 96% of workplace deaths. No takers, ladies, no? But there is a gender imbalance! It must be corrected immediately!

Have you actually worked in a large company, Robert? In my 36 years in such organisations I have never come across any anti-female discrimination. No, not even 36 years ago. *I've* had my bottom pinched, mind - by a woman. But that doesn't count I guess. (I'm a bloke, btw, in case you hadn't guessed - never can tell these days,

so many of us pesky MHRAs are women. Goddam unnatural, init?). Also there is plenty of anti-male discrimination disguised as being "equality for women", like "take your daughters to work day". My sons never did understand why that was fair. The sillies didn't realise that they were automatically advantaged by virtue of their penises. Unlike girls, they apparently didn't need to know what Dad did at work all day, though strangely they did seem curious. But it was only girls that were allowed. No discrimination there at all.

Oh, and role models. Role models, Robert! You really have the fucking nerve to refer to role models as an advantage for boys? Really? What planet are you currently inhabiting? Clearly not a planet on which one in three children are raised with no adult male in the house, and in many major cities more than 50%. Clearly not a planet in which these same children attend a primary school where, if they are lucky, they may come across an adult male for the first time - but only one. But the chances are that they won't be lucky, because many primary schools have no male teachers at all, or even male support staff. So where are boys in this situation to gain any idea of what it might be to be a man? From the media? Ah, so to be a man is to be a wife beater, a rapist, a groper, a paedophile? Oh, yes, Robert, boys are so advantaged by their access to positive role models, aren't they? They really are going to spontaneously identify with David Cameron, the Governor of the Bank of England and the CEO of Barclay's Bank - sure they are. Lucky them. And fuck you.

If they cut your genitals when you were an infant, they didn't expect it to make much difference to your enjoyment of sex. If they cut your genitals while you were giving birth . . . Ah, but then you will never give birth and nobody will make you feel guilty about whether you breastfeed or not.

Sorry about the not giving birth thing. I admit men are pretty selfish about that one. Breastfeeding? You could have mentioned being made to feel guilty about smoking and drinking alcohol during pregnancy too. Well, you know, if you do something shitty and selfish, feeling guilty is what happens. You don't really deserve sympathy for it. Guilt is, like, just punishment, you know?

But you have made me seriously angry now, you utter twat, Webb. Genital mutilation, only an issue for women, eh? Stand well back. No, on reflection I haven't the strength. Educate yourself. Read <http://redpilluk.co.uk/Circumcision.html>, or check out the delightful pictures here <http://www.ulwaluko.co.za/Photos.html>, just a tiny fraction of the half a million African boys who have died or been seriously mutilated by botched circumcisions in the last eight years, <http://www.health-e.org.za/2014/06/25/half-million-initiates-maimed-knife/>. Or read about the men of Moi's Bridge in Western Kenya, cowering outside their police station in the hope that the police would protect them from the circumcision gangs. They didn't. They got to be stripped naked in the street and forcibly cut, all with the same dirty knife

<http://www.kenyan-post.com/2014/08/12-men-ambushed-and-circumcised.html> like many before them. And it is not just in poor countries. Each year in the USA 117 boys die from entirely unnecessary circumcision operations, the same as the number of deaths by SIDs ("cot death") http://www.circinfo.org/USA_deaths.html. Yet, whilst SIDs deaths get everyone terribly worked up, no one pays much attention to deaths due to circumcision. In the UK the number of circumcision deaths is unknown because no one cares enough to even bother collecting the data. Female genital mutilation is illegal - and rightly so. But anyone can genitally mutilate a male. All you need to set yourself up in business is a pair of scissors and some olive oil. Sure, some babies will bleed to death, such as Angelo Ofori-Mintah and Goodluck Caubergs, but, hey, who cares? Not the feminist journalists who campaign against FGM anyway, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/active/mens-health/10995925/Its-time-for-a-proper-debate-on-circumcision.html>.

And in so many of these cases of enforced male genital mutilations, it is women who are insisting that it be done. But the public still has compassion only for female victims but not for boys. And whose fault is that? It's your fault, Robert. All those mutilations and deaths, they are your fault, because you don't give a shit - along with the rest of the public. Because you would rather ingratiate yourself with the ladies than actually bother to think or find out the truth - about any of these issues. You are the problem. With your ever so right-on, pseudo-liberal, self-congratulatory, smug conviction of rectitude which is so very, very wide of the mark.

You can be angry without being accused of hysteria.

True. But a man who gets angry with a woman, regardless of how justified the anger may be, is risking her deploying the "he made me fearful" attack. You can go to prison for it. Ask Caroline Criado-Perez.

You never had it explained to you and you never had to figure it out for yourself that in this world, you're slightly wrong.

True, as a man I never had it explained to me that I share the guilt of every man who commits a crime, and that I am therefore a wife beater, a rapist and a kiddie fiddler by proxy. I didn't have to have it explained to me because the media and societal attitudes generally inculcate this feeling without any direct explanation being necessary. And for those men who resist the tidal waves of guilt thrown at them, the feminists make sure they do not escape by direct accusation, using lines like "all men are rapists". Our collective guilt is rammed down our throats via the sentence meted out to us by the court of female entitlement, such as #KillAllMen. There is nothing subtle about it. Perhaps this is why you try so hard to appease, Mr Webb - fear? That would, at least, be a sensible motive. For this ideology is fearfully strong. It does have a stranglehold on most people's thoughts - including yours.

The whole gender expectations thing is bad for men, too.

Agreed on that one.

You won't find a man on his deathbed saying, "I wish I'd spent more time working. I wish I'd misunderstood women a bit more. I wish I'd seen less of my children."

I'll give you two out of three there. No man on his deathbed ever said "I wish I'd understood women a bit more". Get real, twit.

I'd say about 100 years before boys are told they're beautiful as often as girls are told they're strong.

Girls will be strong if being strong is seen as attractive. If appearing weak is seen as more attractive, they will be happier to appear weak. Girls will be *called* strong if they are flattered to be so called. They will be flattered to be called strong if they regard it as attractive to be strong. All these things are perfectly feasible, and perhaps already apply to some women.

Boys will be told they are beautiful if there is utility for girls in boys being thought beautiful. This seems unlikely, unless girls start pimping boys.

One of the best things that a male feminist can do is to shut up and let a woman do the talking.

Bang on right with that one, Robert. That's been the case since Seneca Falls, 1848, the world's first women's rights conference. The nascent male feminists were told they could sit at the back as long as they kept quiet.

So this might be a good time to plug Fabulous Creatures, my wife's comedy feminist musical, now on in Edinburgh! The luminous Abigail Burdess has written the book and lyrics to a show that has a wider scope and more generous heart than anything I could hope to write on this subject or any other. I can't summarise the show without injuring its subtlety and brilliance and I refuse to give away any of its joyful puns. So I won't. But its abiding image is of a man and a woman who finally recognise each other as fully human.

Pass the sick bucket. What an obnoxious display of toadying.

Feminism isn't about hating men.

Feminism is absolutely about hatred of masculinity. That, Robert, is what you have not, and dare not, accept. I almost have some sympathy for you. It is a vile truth to stomach. But it is so. You need only read what the feminist authors, journalists and bloggers write. For example, <http://www.amberpawlik.com/Masculinity.html>, "*Young women are being taught that masculinity is not to be looked at in admiration, but in*

fear. This is all feminists' fault. Masculinity is never associated with anything positive by feminists. They consistently equate masculinity with violence. Gloria Steinem gave several speeches in 2002, preaching school shootings, Nazism, and terrorism were a product of male dominance. She says: The cult of masculinity is the basis of every violent, fascist regime. We need to raise our sons more like our daughters, with empathy, flexibility, patience, and compassion." Feminists have, from the start, had as their goal the elimination of masculinity. The radical feminists want to do this by the physical eradication of males, <http://redpilluk.co.uk/AgentOrange.pdf>. But even the moderate feminists want to get rid of masculinity, their strategy being the more likely to succeed - namely to raise boys to be feminine. They will face a problem which they will not admit. Boys masculine nature is mostly inherent, not socially constructed. But the feminists will persist and will probably succeed in as far as it can be done. The lovely Yvette Cooper has made her intentions clear: boys must be brought up as "confident feminists". <https://karenwoodall.wordpress.com/2014/07/08/education-emasulation-and-equality-a-letter-to-yvette-cooper/>. This is fascism. I do not mean this as mere name calling. I do not mean it as metaphor. I mean that Cooper and her ilk are actually fascists, literally. Fascism is a political ideology based on hatred of a sector of the population by virtue of an accident of their birth. Feminism is fascism. And you, Robert Webb, are its lackey.