



**Everybody's Business Is Nobody's Business: Or,  
Private Abuses, Public Grievances: Exemplified In  
the Pride, Insolence, and exorbitant Wages of our  
... Manifesto By The Author of Robinson Crusoe**

*Daniel Defoe*

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"Women servants are now so scarce, that from thirty and forty shillings a year, their wages are increased of late to six, seven, nay, eight pounds per annum, and upwards; insomuch that an ordinary tradesman cannot well keep one; but his wife, who might be useful in his shop or business, must do the drudgery of household affairs; and all this because our servant-wenches are so puffed up with pride nowadays, that they never think they go fine enough: it is a hard matter to know the mistress from the maid by their dress; nay, very often the maid shall be much the finer of the two. Our woolen manufacture suffers much by this, for nothing but silks and satins will go down with our kitchen-wenches; to support which intolerable pride, they have insensibly raised their wages to such a height as was never known in any age or nation but this."

"The first abuse I would have reformed is, that servants should be restrained from throwing themselves out of place on every idle vagary. This might be remedied were all contracts between master and servant made before a justice of peace, or other proper officer, and a memorandum thereof taken in writing. Nor should such servant leave his or her place (for men and maids might come under the same regulation) till the time agreed on be expired, unless such servant be misused or denied necessaries, or show some other reasonable cause for their discharge. In that case, the master or mistress should be reprimanded or fined. But if servants misbehave themselves, or leave their places, not being regularly discharged, they ought to be amerced or punished. But all those idle, ridiculous customs, and laws of their own making, as a month's wages, or a month's warning, and suchlike, should be entirely set aside and abolished. When a servant has served the limited time duly and faithfully, they should be entitled to a certificate, as is practised at present in the wool-combing trade; nor should any person hire a servant without a certificate or other proper security. A servant without a certificate should be deemed a vagrant; and a master or mistress ought to assign very good reasons indeed when they object against giving a servant his or her certificate."

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