

# LETTER

to **John Spencer** (1734–1783), M.P. for Warwick (1756–1761)  
and **Henry Archer** (–1768), M.P. for Warwick (1735–1768)

1758

We, the Mayor, Aldermen, and other constituents of the Borough of Warwick, too sensible that the illegal exportation of corn, and mercenary combination of farmers, corn-factors, millers, and meal-men, are the destructive causes of the enormous high price that bread has been at for such a length of time as no history can parallel! We are also too tenacious of our sacred laws, so far as we have power, to suffer tumults to redress complaints. But should the multitudes around us, enraged with hunger and despairing sustenance, rise to support existence, too feeble would be then the civil power with our assistance, and useful then the military only to put poor starving wretches out of misery!

But to reflect that such convulsions may be produced even in the bowels of the land by such a low minority of the whole who trample on the laws or, sneering, evade them, greatly alarms us! Yet, if the real great would condescend to see the real poor, thence must arise a sure prevention of the dread calamity. Hope supplying us with an enlivening presage from your best endeavors, we, without further proem, beg leave to transmit to you these following instructions, viz.:

That the ports of Great Britain may be continued open for twelve months, or until wheat shall be generally sold at five shillings per bushel.

That no wheat be exported with or without the bounty when it is more than five shillings per bushel; and that foreign wheat may be imported, duty free, when the general price is five shillings and upwards.

That all sorts of grain be sold, for the future, in Great Britain by the standard measure of Winchester only.

That no farmer shall blend any sort of grain otherwise than as it grows under the several species of corn to his respective market; and that the destructive introduction to ingrossing and forestalling, otherwise the fallacious practice of selling by sample, be totally abolished.

That collusions in bargain-making for corn be deemed illegal and strictly punishable; and that every buyer and seller of corn shall be obliged to give in their prices, upon oath, to the clerk of the market or other proper person, if the magistrate shall require them.

That no miller shall buy any corn but for his own domestic use, nor buy or sell any flour upon any consideration.

That every miller shall be obliged to grind every species of corn separate; and that he be paid in money for the future, and not in toll (as formerly) for his trouble.

That their deceptions and ruinous machines, called dressing-mills,<sup>1</sup> may be demolished to the end of time, such implements as cloak the iniquity of their compound grinding, rendering horse-provender the food of men whilst the avaricious cannibals devour the poor, imposing their killing-powders for nourishing wheat meal, whilst the unwary magistrates throughout the Kingdom fix the assize and price of bread as the pure product of the neatest wheat.

That prosecutions be carried on at each city and county's expence, or other modus as the wisdom of the Honourable House think most expedient. That the prosecutors may not be embarrassed with expenses or delays; and that the penalties may be so high, and so easily acquired, as to compel the miller, etc. to be honest. For if

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<sup>1</sup> Dressing mills separated flour based on its fineness or coarseness

they are subject only to trivial fines, those their exorbitant profits in combination would enable them to pay, and they continue to deride the law and starve the poor.

That half the penalties, without deduction, be given as encouragement to the valuable informers; the other part to be deposited in the hands of the chief magistrate of the place as a fund to carry on (as far as it will go) each future prosecution.

Your Honours adhering to the above, shall ever demand such just regard as friendship for the distressed claim, and gratitude can pay, from

—. *Six Letters upon Interesting Subjects* (London: M. Cooper, 1758):41–43.