

Illicit Intercourse, evils arising therefrom

24 February 1810: Proclamation on the prevalent immorality and vice among the lower classes of the Colony. This page includes Macquarie's reprimand on this scandalous behaviour and his desire to promote a virtuous society through marriage, morality and decorum. NRS 1043 [SZ756, pages 579-581; Reel 6039]

579

Illicit Intercourse, evils arising therefrom

By His Excellency

Lachlan Macquarie Esq.

Captain General etc etc etc

Proclamation

Whereas, His excellency the Governor,
has seen with great Regret, the Immorality and Vice, so prevalent among the lower classes of this Colony, and whereas, he feels himself called upon in particular to reprobate & check as far as lies in his Power, the scandalous and promiscuous custom so generally and shamelessly adopted, throughout this Colony of Persons of different sexes cohabiting and living together unsanctioned by the legal ties of matrimony
And whereas the Consequences of this Immoral and illicit intercourse has been found (as might have been Expected) not only highly injurious to the interests of the Society

at large, but often times attended with grievous calamity to the Parties themselves, and the innocent offspring of this Misconduct, And whereas such Practices are a scandal to Religion, to Decency and to all good Government, and whereas, also, frequent applications have been made on the part of Divers women to the Court of Civil Jurisdiction for the grant of Letters of Administration of the Goods and Effects of Persons dying intestate, on the sole ground of having lived for a number of years with the Deceased in a State of illegal and criminal Intercourse. His Excellency the Governor anxious to promote the Interests of Virtue, upon which those of Society must ever rest by the Encouragement of lawful Marriage to preserve Morality and Decorum, and to protect the innocent sufferers from the consequences of such practices, and hoping that the frequency of such connexions may be in a great measure, owing to an Ignorance of the Calamity which will probably result from them, and that a more Extended Knowledge of this

circumstance may be the means of checking the formation of such Engagement in future, feels it is his duty hereby publicly to make known to the Inhabitants of this Colony that the mere circumstance of illegal cohabitation (for whatever length of time) with any Man confers no valid Title upon the Women to the Goods and Effects of such persons, in case he should Die Intestate, and that letters of Administration of the Goods and Effects of Persons dying intestate, cannot be legally granted to any applicants upon such grounds and under such circumstances as aforesaid and that the distressful consequences which must be felt in particular instances from the refusal of such Applications, can alone be awarded by the formation of honourable and legal Engagements.

His Excellency the Governor, aware of the frequency of such illicit connections, and seeing the shameful and open manner in which they are avowed, to the utter subversion of all decency

and Decorum, is compeled to express in this public manner, his high disapprobation of such Immorality, and his firm resolution to suppress by every means in his power all such disgraceful connexions, and publicly declares that neither favour, nor patronage will ever be extended to those who Contract or Encourage them.

On the other hand, his Excellency the Governor is anxious to hold forth every inducement to the formation of lasting and virtuous connexions and to Encourage Lawful marriage by every possible Means, as he is convinced, that from such connexions also, can be Expected to arise, either habits of Industry or Decency of Conduct those therefore, who from such connexions, and whose lives and conduct are sober, Decent and Industrious, may ever look up to His Excellency for all reasonable Encouragement.

As a further means of effecting that improvement which he so earnestly wishes, His Excellency cannot forbear to make known his indignation

towards those persons, who in Defiance of all Law and Decency, scandalously Keep open during the night the most licentious and Disorderly Houses for the reception of the abandoned of both sexes and to the great Encouragement of dissolute and disorderly habits, and he publicly avows his resolution to give street orders to the officers of the Police, to report to him, the Proprietors of all such Houses, and to punish such offenders to the utmost Extent allowed by law.

His Excellency the Governor,
sanguinely hopes that the measures he is now adopting will not be ineffectual in producing that Decorum and Morality, that want of which, is at once so Disgraceful and so Detrimental to Society and he trusts, that when the inhabitants of this Colony shall that favour and Encouragement are to be obtained only by a strict observance of the Rules of Morality and Decorum, they will become sensible of the Error and Folly of a longer indulgence of habits

of Profligacy and Irregularity.

Given under my hand etc

This 24 Day of February 1810

God Save the King

Signed L Macquarie

J T Campbell Secretary