

The order reflected the views of the governor expressed to the Lower House at the close of the 1696 General Assembly:

That he was very sensible of the difficulty he had met with in reforming the manners and Insolency of the people of this province. That the making of Laws was very insignificant unless the same were put in due prosecution which hitherto seemed to be much neglected by the Magistrates there being such an apparent overflowing of vice therefore Recommended and gave strict charge to such members of the House as were Magistrates or bore Rule within any of the Places for which they were chose that they would take due care to see all the Laws put in strict prosecution especially those against Drunkenness Blasphemy prophan Swearing for fornication Adultery etc.²⁴

At the close of the May–June 1697 session the governor in addressing the Assembly stated:

I am in his Majestys behalfe to thanke you for being Instrumentall in the making soe many good lawes which it's hoped will tend to the Glory of God, his Majestys honor and good of your Country being the three chiefe and principall ends for which you were first and have hitherto beene called together And I thinke the Country is now finished with such a body of lawes as will answer those three ends if the same are put in due Execution without which they will prove uselesse For Lawes unless put in Execution become but a dead Letter.²⁵

Difficulty was also encountered in compelling public officers to perform all the duties imposed by act of Assembly or conciliar order. Accordingly, in December 1696, the Council Board, "having taken into consideration the evill Consequences that doe dayly happen to this his Majesties Government occasioned Chiefly through the remissness of the officers thereof in the strict performance of their duty," ordered that:

[T]he Sheriffs in the First place look well to the discharge of their Duty and of the great Trust and Confidence reposed in them, and that they take Special Care duly to execute all precepts, and punctually observe and Obey all Orders of his Excellency which from time to time they shall Receive, under penalty of being displaced and prosecuted according to the Utmost Rigour of the Law; And that they give notice in generall to all Officers Military and Civill within their respective precincts to be diligent and Circumspect in the Execution of their severall Offices and places; His Excellency being pleased openly to declare it to be his Firm Resolution that those persons that make due Compliance in the Just performance of their Duty may expect all imaginable Favour he Can Shew them, but on the Contrary deserved punishment.²⁶

By virtue of this conciliar order several persons were proceeded against by the attorney general "for their non Compliance in the Duty of their respective Offices pursuant to the directions of Severall Acts of Assembly and Orders of Council issued." However, the governor having received some "reasonable Excuses" from divers persons proceeded against, "alleading their deficiency of not rightly understanding or being thoroughly advised in those matters and that the same was not done out of any Contempt," he ordered a stop put to the process provided the parties concerned made due compliance by the first day of the next Provincial Court. The governor also made proclamation that:

24. 19 *id.* 471, 497. Cf. the rejected Council proposal that part of the revenue given towards furnishing arms be laid out for books such as "the Common Prayer book, Whole duty of Man, and Book against Drunkenness and Swearing" to be distributed among the "Common Sorte of people that are poor." 19 *id.* 484.

25. 19 *id.* 552.

26. 20 *id.* 578–79.