

Pacification text

Pacification

On 1 August 1746 the Act of Proscription came into force as part of the assimilation project to bring the Scottish Highlands into the British fold, as well as to put a stop to any ability to revolt. The Act of Proscription had three key aims:

1. Disarming the Highlands in Scotland

No person was to have in their "custody, use or carry a broadsword, target [targe], poingard [a small, slim dagger], whinger, or dirk, side pistol, gun or any other warlike weapon". This was an extension of the Disarming Act of 1716 which stopped the general population of the Highlands carrying any type of offensive weapon. Individuals had to surrender their arms on a set date in a given location.

Anyone found with weapons after the surrender was detained and had to pay a fine of fifteen pounds sterling (around £180 in Scots money). If this could not be paid then the person would be detained for a month. After this time, if the fine had still not been paid, they could then be transported to America.

If individuals were able to pay the fine and were then caught a second time with banned weapons, they would be transported 'beyond the seas, there to remain for the space of seven years'.



2. Restraining the use of Highland dress

'... no man or boy, within that part of Great Britain called Scotland, other than shall be employed as officers and soldiers in his Majesty's forces, shall on any pretence whatsoever, wear or put on the clothes commonly called Highland Clothes (that is to say) the plaid, philibeg, or little kilt, trowse, shoulder belts, or any part whatsoever of peculiarly belonging to the highland garb ...' For a first offence of wearing Highland dress, an individual would be imprisoned for 6 months. If caught a second time, they were liable to be transported to any of the king's plantations overseas for 7 years.

3. Prevent any future risings by ensuring that children and young people were not educated by disaffected or rebellious people

The government set up a system to regulate teaching staff and institutions, including Scotland's four universities and public schools. Masters, teachers, chaplains, tutors, or any governors of young people in Scotland had to take an oath to George II, his heirs and successors, and were required to pray for the royal family by name. This pledge had been in place since the 1690s and was being reinforced through the Act.

Educators were banned from entering Episcopalian meeting houses, many of which were burnt. Educators caught working without a certificate or caught in an Episcopalian meeting house would, in the first instance, be imprisoned for 6 months, and on a second offence be transported to plantations in America for life. If they returned to Great Britain they would be imprisoned for life.

The Act affected both Jacobite supporters and Scots who had fought for and supported the government throughout the '45. Many government supporters in the north saw the pacification process as a betrayal.

The act was not repealed until 1782.

