

S. Marsden to J. Pratt, 26 October 1815

Parramatta Oct^r 26. 1815

Private

Dear Sir,

In former Letters, I informed you a Society was instituted in the Colony for the Protection of the Natives of the South Sea Islands generally: and I was in hopes that it would have been attended with some benefit at the time it was instituted; but I had soon Cause to alter my Opinion— About twelve months ago when the Cumberland returned to Port Jackson (a Vessel belonging to this Settlement) which had been trading amongst the Islands; I was informed that the most dreadful Murders had been committed in one of the Islands by some of the People belonging to the Cumberland. As Duaterra was here and several more New Zealanders when the Cumberland came in; and as the Cumberland had touched on her outward bound Voyage at the Bay of Islands, where she had received two men from Duaterra, and one of them was now killed by an European, he was anxious to know the Cause— I therefore called a general meeting of the Society— Some of the members attended, and some did not. At the meeting many objections were started ~~against~~ against examining [f] into any of the transactions of the Cumberland, while she was amongst the Islands—I used every Argument I could to prevail upon the Committee to hear what I had got to say, and to examine the witnesses I had to bring to prove the Facts, agreeable to the Resolutions entered into at the first Formation of the Society: but

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to little Purpose— One could not, because he was part owner, another was interested some other way, hear any Evidence, or examine in any way into the Buisness. Several Europeans as well as Natives had been killed— but no notice whatever was taken of the death of the Europeans even— I have no doubt, had the Committee allowed me to have investigated this Subject, but an horrid Scene of Rapine, and Murder, and Violence would have been laid open to the public Eye. I then clearly saw from the Spirit of Opposition manifested at this meeting that no relief was to be expected from the leading men of this Colony for the injured Savages in these Seas. Tho' a Sum of money was subscribed at the Formation of the Society for the Relief and Protection of the Natives of the South Sea Islands, yet not one Shilling has ever been expended for their use and Benefit; tho' some of these poor Creatures have been brought [f] by Sickness, and Hardships on board the different Whalers and other Vessels to the very mouth of the Grave, and landed at Port Jackson in want of all things. I do not expect now that any thing will be done by that Society for the Benefit of the Natives of these Islands; and for certain Reasons. Was a Society here to act, it would be a Check upon that plundering, murdering System, which has so long disgraced the European name amongst the Inhabitants of these Islands; but this would wound the Interest & Honor of Individuals of some weight and Influence— I mention these things to shew that at present we can form no public auxiliary Society— we are not strong enough— besides there are other Reasons which operate against it,

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at present, but may be removed in a little time. I herewith send you a Copy of all the Proceedings I could get taken at the general meeting last October – Tho Duaterra attended the meeting, and wished to know the Cause of the Death of the Man whom he had committed to the Care of the Master; and several of the Crew belonging to the Cumberland had been killed, and one Otaheitean, yet the matter would not bear examination. The whole was hushed up in Silence and remains so to this very Day. All that Duaterra [f] could learn was that his man had been shot by one of the Ship's Company, but for what Reason he was not told – You may deem this Letter unnecessary nor should I have sent it, but I wished to shew the difficulty that might, and would arise in the way of the Mission if any public auxiliary Society was attempted to be formed as yet – The People here would think their "Craft was in danger" – I am of opinion that when a vessel belonging to the Colony returns from the Islands with only part of her Crew, the others said to be killed – it is the duty of Government to inquire into the Cause of these men who are missing, losing their lives. Such an Inquiry, if it had no Regard to the Natives would tend to bring to Light many Acts of Darkness & Cruelty – I have now writen [sic] to you at considerable Length, and in much haste, and in the midst of a variety of other Calls, so that I must crave your Indulgence for all Errors, of every kind –

I am

Dear Sir

MS. 55/35

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Yours with much esteem

Sam^l Marsden

Rev^d J. Pratt

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