

***An Introduction to International Law: Chiefly as Interpreted and Applied in Canada*, S. A. Williams and A.L.C. de Mestral, Toronto: Butterworths, 1979. Pp. xix, 338. \$12.50 (cloth).**

Professors Sharon Williams (Osgoode Hall) and Armand de Mestral (McGill) have made a valuable contribution to the "Basic Text Series" of Butterworth and Co. by completing their introductory text to public international law. Their book is intended to provide members of the legal profession, law students and others with a general outline of the basic principles of that branch of legal study. More importantly, the guide which they have written is based upon a Canadian perspective, and therein lies its value over and above other more established books dealing with the same subject matter.

Both the purpose and the relatively modest size of the Williams and de Mestral text inevitably raise comparisons, and one of the accepted standards in the field to which it might well be measured (and, indeed, which it may rival in the Canadian market) is the well-respected introductory text by Michael Akehurst.¹ Of the 18 chapters in the newer book, 15 appear to cover essentially the same material on the international law of peace as one will find in the first 16 chapters of Akehurst.² In addition, however, the Canadian text dedicates a substantially greater amount of space to the International Law of Fisheries (Chapter 14), International Environmental Law (Chapter 15) and International Economic Agreements (Chapter 18). The authors' concern with these topics is of relevance to the potential reader not only because they reflect international legal interests of a topical nature, but also because they are of particular interest to Canadians.

The value of the Williams and de Mestral book may well be considerable to anyone teaching or taking courses in public international law for which the Castel casebook on *International Law*³ is required reading. As stated in its Preface, the topics in the chapters of their book "are closely related to the cases and materials to be found in Professor J.-G. Castel's . . . Casebook." As any teacher or student who has made use of the Castel materials is aware, a competent guide to the vast amount of information crammed into the 1,200 plus pages of that work is, indeed, a useful and welcome tool.

¹*A Modern Introduction to International Law* 3rd ed., (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1977).

²The Akehurst text is composed of 18 chapters, the last two of which deal with the law of armed conflict (both international and civil war situations respectively). The Williams and de Mestral text restricts itself to the subject of public international law during times of peace. This was a good decision on their part, as the subject of public international law during times of war is too large a topic to fit in the concluding chapters of a small text. It deserves an entire book of its own.

³*International Law: Chiefly as Interpreted and Applied in Canada*, 3rd ed., (Toronto: Butterworths, 1976).

In the same breath, however, one must note that the two professors have not adhered too rigidly to the Castel format. For example, they have devoted three chapters of their book (dealing with subjects of international law, recognition and state succession) to what is, in essence, the fourth chapter (subjects of international law) of the Castel text. On a rough page count, this represents approximately 17% of the Williams and de Mestral book as opposed to a mere 8% of the Castel materials. The decision to deviate somewhat from the format of that standard Canadian reference is a most laudable one, for it provides not only a guide to the Castel materials, but also a somewhat different view of the subject by two noted scholars of public international law. When read together with Castel's work, the diversity of emphasis on various aspects of the subject matter is stimulating.

A question which a lawyer or student not familiar with public international law may well ask is why bother with a text which outlines the Canadian approach to that topic. There is a general twofold answer which lies: (1) in the fact that Canadian interests, attitudes and views are oftentimes distinct from those of any other nation, and (2) in the observation that an increasingly large number of Canadian laws and legal developments are the result of international obligations to which the nation has obligated itself (*e.g.*, bilateral and multilateral tax conventions, treaties guaranteeing human rights, fisheries and offshore development agreements). Because (contrary to what appears to be the uninformed layman's belief) the views of our nation frequently contradict those of our American or British neighbours, or both, it is of some general value that the legal profession know what they might be. On the more pragmatic level, some understanding of the Canadian approach to public international law may well prove to be useful in the course of certain legal work passing across a solicitor's desk.

In every book review, criticism of textual content inevitably arise. This one will be an exception to that rule because a recent review by Messrs. L. H. Legault and François Mathys⁴ have already referred to the few that are worthy of comment. Aside from observing that the book contains minor errors, omissions and the odd inconsistency, and that it needs the attention of a good editor (problems which appear to be the rule rather than the exception in the case of first editions of today's legal texts), Legault and Mathys have outlined two areas of dissatisfaction with the text. The first is based upon a question of judgment and relates to the belief that, in a Canadian text of this nature, more emphasis should have been placed upon the complexities and problems associated with the operations of a federal state in the international legal community. The second criticism is a contextual one and refers to a subsection on the chapter dealing with the law of treaties. The book's outline of Canadian internal treaty-making procedures is not (according to these

⁴(1980), 58 *Can. Bar Rev.* 706-708.

two senior members of Legal Section of the Department of External Affairs) entirely accurate, and they have attempted to set the record straight.

Notwithstanding the few problems which have beset the Williams and de Mestral text, one cannot help but conclude that the book achieves its stated goal. It is as up-to-date as one could expect, its organization is clear and follows the general guidelines of the traditional approaches to the study of the public international law of peace, and the text itself is written in a clear and readable fashion. The two writers of the book are to be congratulated on their fine efforts. Any person who is interested in obtaining a concise outline of international law from a Canadian perspective, be he a political science undergraduate or a seasoned legal practitioner, is invited to read this text. It will very likely serve the initial needs of anyone seeking an introduction to the subject.

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***Plain English for Lawyers*, Richard C. Wydick, Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1979. Pp. 91. US \$10.00 (paperback).**

Lawyers write poorly.

That is the theme of a recent small book to come from the Carolina Academic Press entitled "Plain English for Lawyers". Its author, Richard C. Wydick, is Dean and Professor of Law at the University of California Law School in Davis. Dean Wydick feels he has good grounds upon which to castigate the practicing bar for what he views as sloppy, inaccurate legal writing of poor quality. Especially he identifies what to him is the gross sin of prolixity. The result, according to a critic whom the author quotes, is to produce legal writing which has four outstanding characteristics: it is wordy, unclear, pompous and dull.

While Dean Wydick may have been directing his comments concerning legal writing to the American Bar in particular, one gains the clear impression from reading his book that all English speaking bars may be included in his criticisms. And not only is it the author who personally complains of poor writing by lawyers. He indicates that the cry has been taken up by the popular press and by such highly placed