

REVIEWS

varying degrees and forms) and this creates a sense of *deja vu* in places. Some of the essays, such as Vitali's, appear to be pitched at practitioners, while others, such as Bayne's, are perhaps of more academic interest. Taken as a whole, however, *Administrative Law* is a significant addition to the literature on Australia's administrative law system. Lawyers with even a passing interest in administrative law are likely to find many of the essays useful.

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LAW IN CONTEXT

by Stephen Bottomley, Neil Gunningham and Stephen Parker; Federation Press 1991; 365 pp; \$45 (pb).

The study of law in Australia is undergoing significant change. Law degrees are increasingly the path for careers outside traditional legal practice. The trend can only increase as universities churn out more law graduates based on a combination of student demand and low cost teaching. Adding to the pattern of change is demand for lawyers with broader expertise as the law plays an increasing role in social and economic regulations in areas such as business practices, environment and discrimination.

Combined degrees have been one response to this situation. Another has been more cross-disciplinary analysis of law within law studies. *Law in Context* is a book which grew out of a first year law course at the Australian National University. It is an attempt to relate the study of law to other social sciences and to alert students to the dangers of seeing law only as something found in law reports and judgments.

The book is structured as a combination of reprinted excerpts from other prominent writers within a framework

of the authors' own explanation and analysis. Australian material has been given preference. The content is up to date and well selected.

The book includes an historical background to dominant political and philosophical views of the legal system with a focus on liberalism and its claim to provide for 'rule of law' and formal equality of citizens. Analysis then focuses on the legal process, access to justice and the role of lawyers in both a criminal and civil context.

The book has a substantial section on 'Law and Economics'. The attempt to present a simplified explanation of marginal analysis, economic efficiency, public choice theory and other economic theory is generally very useful. The explanation of the ideological basis of economic and market assumptions is also welcome information in explaining the link between liberal political theory and the dominant 'Law and Economics' writings.

The remainder of the book covers some of the major critical challenges to liberal concepts of equality and the law through focus on gender, race (particularly focused on Australian law and Aborigines) and class. Coverage of the range of perspectives in feminist jurisprudence is quite broad whereas the analysis of views about class and power are more introductory. The section on law and economics points to a lack of critical impact from writers outside the market ideologists. Much of this last part of the book is in fact dealing with the deficient assumptions of liberalism and related economic theory.

Generally I found the style of the book very satisfying. The authors cover well the range of views of others and openly give their own views in a critical but non-dogmatic way. The dialectic of competing views and analysis is the basis for stimulating students and others to develop their ideas. The authors succeed excellently in this. Hopefully the legal text book writers who are satisfied to say 'unfortunately the report of the case does not disclose . . . ' could be encouraged to

see legal research extending beyond such superficiality.

A few critical comments of my own. I think the emphasis on liberal theory and law plays down both the influence of conservative social ideology on the law and the influence of interventionist political struggle to challenge both the conservative and liberal conceptions. The latter part of the book does assist in bringing this into focus but could it also be integrated more into the earlier material.

I found some difficulty in reading the book because of the poor quality of paper (allowing the reverse side printing to appear) and relatively small print. I would also appreciate some biographical material about the authors.

Overall I thoroughly recommend the book as an introduction to broader views about law and legal study.

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