

# INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LAW

By S.M. Waddams

Agincourt: The Carswell Company, 1979

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Those who read law books to cure insomnia will be surprised by S.M. Waddams' *Introduction to the Study of Law*. The writing sparkles. Professor Waddams has brought his considerable writing skills to a subject clouded by obscurity, particularly for the beginning law student.

The book begins with the question "What is Law?" This sets the tone of the book, which endeavours to introduce not only the vagaries of legal vocabulary but also the principles and policies behind them. Next comes a chapter on Legal Education, followed by chapters on Legal Language and Analysis of Legal Problems. The remainder of the book deals with Public and Private Law, Common Law and Equity, Statutes and the Structure of the Courts, and finally, the Legal Profession. The Appendices, which are very extensive for a book of this size, include Latin and French phrases, lists of law reports and other books, common abbreviations, law schools in Canada, and a Statement of the Association of American Law Schools on Prelegal Education Policy.

The book is intended for use in law schools as well as pre-law and law related courses. This, unfortunately, is a weakness. Beyond Orientation Week, its value in law school is very limited, although the portion on the analysis of legal problems may provide some helpful advice on answering examination questions. The portions on how to approach the admissions process are certainly superfluous for the student who has already made it. Several areas are given short shrift. In particular, those portions dealing with public policy and social change are barely explained.

The explanation of the divisions of law and the Canadian court system are given far better treatment in Gerald Gall's recent book.<sup>1</sup> Although Gall's book is more extensive, Waddams' book would be more helpful if some charts could be added explaining the court structure in each Province. By eliminating much of the material intended for others, and treating in greater depth the topics law students will encounter, such as precedent and *stare decisis*, and the interaction between the legislature and the courts, this book would be of greater value to law students.

On the other hand, Waddams makes good use throughout of the example of the original owner trying to recover a lost or stolen watch from a *bona fide* purchaser. He also gives a glimpse of every exciting case decided in Anglo-Canadian jurisprudence. This should whet the appetite of every student.

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1. G. Gall, *The Canadian Legal System* (1977) Chaps. 2, 5.

In the past, it has been necessary to turn to England<sup>2</sup> or the United States<sup>3</sup> for introductory materials in law. Therefore, Waddams' "little red book" does fill a gap in Canadian legal materials. Although significant improvements could be made, I would recommend it either as summer reading for incoming law students or for use in Orientation Programmes.

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2. G. Williams, *Learning the Law* (10th ed. 1978); J. Farrar, *Introduction to the Legal Method* (1977).

3. S. Mermin, *Law and the Legal System* (1973). See also J. Dobbyn, *So you want to go to Law School* (1976); B. Siegel, *How to Succeed in Law School* (1975); S. Kinyon, *Introduction to Law Study and Law Examinations in a Nutshell* (1971).