



*The complete Guide to the Rent Acts*: By Lionel A. Blundell and V.G. Wellings. Sweet and Maxwell 1958. Pages li and 514 including Index. £ 2 2s. net.

Woodfall is generally recognized as the preeminent authority on the law of Landlord and Tenant, whose unquestioned supremacy in that field has not so far been challenged. It has had twenty six editions since it was first published. The second edition of its Permanent Supplement consists of two parts, both by Messrs. Blundell and Wellings, the learned editors of Woodfall. The first part deals with the law of Business Tenancies. The present work forms part 2 of the Permanent Supplement to Woodfall.

The Rent and Mortgage Interest Restrictions Acts originated as emergency legislation of 1914-1918 war. They were aimed at dealing with the housing shortage which arose during that war in England. Their effect was to control rents and restrict the eviction of tenants, at the same time protecting mortgagor-landlords by controlling the rate of mortgage interest and restricting the enforcement of security. In the White Paper "Housing: the Next Step", published in November, 1953, it was stated that there were at that time thirteen-and-a-half million houses and flats in Great Britain. The White Paper divided the rented houses into four categories for each of which a policy was proposed: (1) slum houses, (2) dilapidated houses, (3) old fashioned houses and (4) sound houses. The Rent Act of 1957 frees from control a large number of these houses (said to be 800,000) and contains provisions for further decontrol to be made from time to time.

The aim of the authors is to provide a comprehensive and straightforward guide to this new law of Rent Control (1957), "so far as the subject permits". Unfortunately, the Rent Act of 1957 does not lend itself to very lucid exposition on account of its inherent cumbrousness. While the Rent Act of 1957 swept much of the old law and substituted new principles in place of the old repealed, there are in the body of its text cross references to numerous earlier Acts, all jostling and teeming in it like sardines in a tin. So while the book emphasises the new law, it was not possible to ignore the old law altogether. In the Appendix to the book, therefore, we find the full text of no less than 32 Acts, beginning with the Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restrictions) Act, 1920 and ending with Rent Restrictions Amendment Rules, (1958). There are still cases which the provisions of the Rent Act of 1920 will apply and the same is true about the numerous Acts passed since 1920 upto 1955, which



are said to be repealed by the Eighth Schedule of the Rent Act of 1920. In the Schedule decreeing their repeal, they have been kept alive for some purposes and all this leads to the immense complexity of the Act of 1957, with which the authors are mainly concerned in the book under review.

Added to the complexity of the Act of 1957 is its bad arrangement. "More than half of it, including the most important provisions, is contained in schedules, much of its language can hardly be described as felicitous, there are many careless errors and mistakes and difficulties of interpretation are legion. . . . Some provisions of the Act appear not to have been fully thought out by the draftsman" (Introduction). The authors confidently predict that the Act of 1957 "will prove as troublesome to landlords and tenants and their legal advisers as any of its predecessors". It is a pity that if it was not possible to simplify the Rent Acts, no attempt has been made by the legislature to consolidate them.

To speak about the bad craftsmanship of the Act of 1957 is not, however, to belittle the good work done by the authors of this book. True to their great reputation as the editors of Woodfall, they have done, in the present instance, the best of a bad job and it is difficult to overstress the extent of their magnificent achievement. Their book will be an invaluable help to the harassed tenants and landlords alike.

Some of the provisions of the Act of 1957 (Housing Act) will be of interest to an Indian reader. For instance, section 77 of the Act defines overcrowding: a dwelling house in which the number of persons sleeping is such that any two of those persons being persons ten years old or more of opposite sexes and not being persons living together as husband and wife must sleep in the same room. Another instance again: a certificate of disrepair issued by the local authority will nullify any notice of increase of rent. It rests with the landlord to apply to the local authority for cancellation of the certificate and the only ground on which he can apply is that all defects specified in the certificate have been remedied.

Altogether it is a very practical and useful book for the study of present Rent Acts in England.

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*The Legal Frame Work of World Trade*: By V.A. Seyid Muhammad. Library of World Affairs No. 4. Editors: George

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