

AN OUTLINE OF THE LAW OF AGENCY. By B. S. MARKESINIS & R. J. C. MUNDAY, (2nd Edition). [London: Butterworths. 1986. xxi + 255 pp. Softcover: £8.50]

AS A person who had the pleasure of listening, as a student, to Dr. Munday's lectures in Cambridge some years ago, it would perhaps not

be remiss for me to take a leaf from his humorous and witty style and proclaim the second edition of this book, done under the joint authorship of Dr Markesinis and Dr Munday, as a “Cheap Sale: Two for the price of one!”.

In using the word “cheap”, the reviewer is certainly not implying that this book is of low quality. Rather, it is to indicate that this book is one that is good value for money, considering the exorbitant price of law books in Singapore and Malaysia nowadays. In addition to a text that is modestly stated to be an outline, the book also contains edited extracts of the more important cases in Agency Law, hence, “two for the price of one!”.

The aim of the authors of this book, as stated in their preface to the first edition, is to produce a text which is readable and concise, and this aim has certainly been achieved. As an introductory text, it does not attempt to break new ground and is basically informative and yet, in its own way, it is unlike most introductory law books insofar as the authors have attempted to present sufficient analysis of problematical areas.

An example is the very first chapter of the book itself where the authors present their views on the concepts of power and authority. The first two paragraphs of this chapter reveal clearly the author’s aim in introducing the reader to the subject without overburdening him with lots of definitions, and at the same time immediately alert the reader to the difficulties of definition. While summarizing other writers’ definitions of the concept of power and/or authority in agency situations, the authors attempt to present their views on the concept of “legal power” as distinguished from mere “authority” which is often confusingly used in agency situations. It is a pity that space and their stated aims prevent the authors from further analysing and arguing their case for a more precise and /or complete definition.

Reading through the book as a whole, the one thing that immediately strikes the mind is that what was said about the first chapter can be said for the rest as well. The concise nature in which the authors present the basic facts, and the precise and analytical manner in which they outline the problems are a joy to read. Indeed, the main complaint about this book is that too often, the authors leave the reader to his own devices in trying to decide how the law should develop in a particular area, for example, in their discussion on undisclosed agency (at pp. 125–144).

Overall, this is an excellent book not just for the student, but also for lawyers who would like to refresh their knowledge of agency law at a level above that of a mere outline. With the case extracts also thrown in, students who need a quick idea of the cases without reading the original law reprints will find that all in all, this is a useful companion.