

A FIRST BOOK OF ENGLISH LAW. 6th Edition. By O. HOOD PHILLIPS.  
[London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1970. xxxi + 346 pp. (including  
index)]. Paperback £1. 2s.

One basic criticism of legal education in many universities is that the student is suddenly exposed to the detailed rules of subjects like contract, tort and criminal law, without the broader perspective of law as a whole. This perspective, it is hoped he will gain in the course of his studies on a trial and error basis or when he takes the course which by way of an imposing quadrisyllable is called Jurisprudence.

It is with this in view, that this introductory work performs an invaluable function. It seeks to present a brief but comprehensive survey of the hierarchy of English courts; the sources of English law and the main branches of English private law.

This sixth edition seems to have been necessitated by the reorganisation of the English Court of Appeal, the House of Lord's statements on precedents in *Conway v. Rimmer* and the wide changes created by case law that has arisen in the past five years.

For the local student some caution must be expressed and noted. Part 1 of this work deals with the hierarchy of English courts. If the work forms the student's first exposure to any court system, he will be well advised to disregard this segment

as he may be misled or confused. However for the student who is fully aware of the local hierarchy of courts this segment should prove useful, if only for a basis of comparison and also for cultivating a sharpened awareness of the value of decisions from different English courts. It will be useful also for him to note the existence of miscellaneous legal bodies like inferior tribunals, ombudsman and domestic tribunals.

What is of greater interest and relevance however is to be found in Parts 2 and 3 on sources of law and general principles. This is because the common law in these two areas have specific application in Singapore vide the 2nd Charter of Justice 1826. In this context the decision of the Privy Council in *Australian Consolidated Press Ltd. v. Uren* (1969) A.C. 1 to the effect that decisions of the House of Lords are not necessarily binding on it should be noted, particularly when one observes that our local courts appear to be obsessed by English decisions. Further one should note the local case of *Khalid Panjang (No. 2)* (1964) M.L.J. 108 to the effect that decisions of the Privy Council dealing with the legislation of other jurisdictions with *pari materia* counterparts in Malaysia and Singapore, are necessarily binding on the Federal Court/Court of Appeal and *a fortiori* other local courts. Less attention however should be given to the chapter on customs as local custom has evolved on different lines although the principles as to their recognition are germane.