

Handbook of International Law (Third Edition) (Book Note)

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New York, which at the time of the publication of the previous edition had annotations of Contracts and Conflict of Laws, has not received any others.

DAVID S. EDGAR, JR.*

HANDBOOK OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. Third Edition. By George Grafton Wilson. St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1939, pp. xxiv, 623.

It is probably not too much to say that no lawyer has ever found the solution to a difficult legal problem in a Hornbook. And it is doubtful whether the chancellories of the world will frequently consult this volume as an aid in the disposition of the current pressing problems that beset them. Life does not put questions as a rule that can be answered, true or false. The ayes do not have it and the noes do not have it. And at least in the realm of international law, there is currently no way that the "right" answers of the books can be expected to obtain in practice.

The uncertainty of the law is now a commonplace. Only recently, Mr. Justice Frankfurter said:¹

"We recognize that *stare decisis* embodies an important social policy. It represents an element of continuity in law, and is rooted in the psychological need to satisfy reasonable expectations. But *stare decisis* is a principle of policy and not a mechanical formula of adherence to the latest decision, however recent and questionable, when such adherence involves collision with a prior doctrine more embracing in its scope, intrinsically sounder, and verified by experience."

At the same Term of court, we have been treated to an almost unprecedented series of reversals and repudiations of prior decisions, in the pursuit, no doubt, of policies "intrinsically sounder, and verified by experience".

As a body of legal principles, international law shares with all other branches of jurisprudence this inevitable necessity of verifying enunciated doctrine by conclusions from experience. It differs radically from other branches of law, however, in the inability, thus far, to supply a laboratory for judicial experiment that can be obtained only through the general enforcement of decisions. The present chaos in international affairs is a discouraging confirmation of the view that but little progress has been made to bring international law in line with other branches of jurisprudence.

A Hornbook on any legal subject, and particularly this one on International Law, has, however, a definite place in the student's armory. It crystallizes, in the broadest terms, the so-called accepted principles and familiarizes the uninitiate with the terminology and the approach of those who have labored in the field. While this is only the beginning of the science of international law, it is none-the-less an essential basis for further study and investigation. The present

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¹ *Helvering v. Hallock*, 8 U. S. Law Week 192, 195.

volume fills this need admirably. Its claims are not extravagant. The style is interesting and the scope inclusive. It drives those who are just beginning to want to know more and beckons the reader onward to further research. It is for these qualities that this new edition may take its honorable place in the Hornbook Series which has for so many years filled an important niche in the law school library.

MAURICE FINKELSTEIN.*

JURISDICTION AND PRACTICE OF THE COURTS OF THE UNITED STATES. Fourth Edition. By Charles W. Bunn. St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1939, pp. 257.

This publication, having undergone the process of multiple revision, now emerges as a fourth edition of the original work. Lectures delivered at the University of Minnesota had comprised the framework of the original volume and has been made the foundation of the present issue. This up-to-date statement of the law, with the spoken word as its genesis, has a quality of receptiveness which only those bent on remaining barren can avoid. The volume does all and, perhaps, more than its preface promises: " * * * to present a brief view of essentials, ignoring refinements * * *."

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