



LAW IN POLITICS, POLITICS IN LAW

Edited by
David Feldman



HART STUDIES IN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

B L O O M S B U R Y

Law in Politics, Politics in Law

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David Feldman



• H A R T •
PUBLISHING

OXFORD AND PORTLAND, OREGON

2015

Published in the United Kingdom by Hart Publishing Ltd
16C Worcester Place, Oxford, OX1 2JW
Telephone: +44 (0)1865 517530
Fax: +44 (0)1865 510710
E-mail: mail@hartpub.co.uk
Website: <http://www.hartpub.co.uk>

Published in North America (US and Canada) by
Hart Publishing
c/o International Specialized Book Services
920 NE 58th Avenue, Suite 300
Portland, OR 97213-3786
USA
Tel: +1 503 287 3093 or toll-free: (1) 800 944 6190
Fax: +1 503 280 8832
E-mail: orders@isbs.com
Website: <http://www.isbs.com>

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First published in hardback 2013

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address above.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data Available

ISBN: 978-1-84946-990-6

Typeset by Hope Services, Abingdon
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

LAW IN POLITICS, POLITICS IN LAW

A great deal has been written on the relationship between politics and law. Legislation, as a source of law, is often highly political, and is the product of a process or the creation of officials often closely bound into party politics. Legislation is also one of the exclusive powers of the state. As such, legislation is plainly both practical and inevitably political; at the same time most understandings of the relationship between law and politics have been overwhelmingly theoretical. In this light, public law is often seen as part of the political order or as inescapably partisan. We know relatively little about the real impact of law on politicians through their legal advisers and civil servants. How do lawyers in government see their roles and what use do they make of law? How does politics actually affect the drafting of legislation or the making of policy?

This volume will begin to answer these and other questions about the practical, day-to-day relationship between law and politics in a number of settings. It includes chapters by former departmental legal advisers, drafters of legislation, law reformers, judges and academics, who focus on what actually happens when law meets politics in government.

Volume 3 in the series Hart Studies in Constitutional Law

Hart Studies in Constitutional Law

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Chris Ballinger

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Volume 3 Law in Politics, Politics in Law

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Volume 4 Parliamentary Sovereignty in the UK Constitution

Michael Gordon

Preface

This volume is largely based on papers presented at two events in 2011. One was the Annual Conference of the Society of Legal Scholars (SLS), the learned society of university lawyers in the United Kingdom and Ireland, which took place at Downing College and the Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge, from 5th to 8th September 2011. A distinguished collection of speakers discussed their experiences as lawyers in and around politics and the civil service. Professor Elizabeth Cooke, Sir Ross Cranston, David Howarth, Sir Stephen Laws, Professor Hector MacQueen, Matthew Parish and Sir Philip Sales subsequently revised their presentations or prepared new material for this collection. The other event was a seminar marking the centenary of the Parliament Act 1911, which was organised for the University of Cambridge Centre for Public Law (CPL) and held at the Canary Wharf offices of Clifford Chance LLP, generous and long-standing supporters of the CPL, on 22nd November 2011. Of the eminent participants, Dr Chris Ballinger, Daniel Greenberg, Professor Lord Norton of Louth, Professor Dawn Oliver and Dr Rhodri Walters kindly wrote up their presentations or offered new work to afford readers of this volume a range of perspectives on the interaction of law and politics in the planning, enactment and implementation of the 1911 Act and its amending Act of 1949, a case-study of the relationships between law and politics. Three speakers, the Right Hon Theresa Villiers MP, Professor Vernon Bogdanor and Professor Rodney Brazier, kindly took part in the conference or the seminar and greatly enhanced the discussion, but were unable to contribute to this volume. I am grateful to all of them for the illumination they offered, and am particularly indebted to the authors for translating their presentations into the form in which they appear here and for their patience and flexibility in responding to editorial demands.

The authors of two chapters did not take part in those events. Matthew Windsor arrived serendipitously in Cambridge in 2012 to undertake research on legal ethics in relation to lawyers advising governments on international law, and generously allowed himself to be persuaded to add the writing of a chapter on legal ethics to the other, more pressing demands on his time. The late Alan Rodger, Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, in a way laid the groundwork for this book by opening my eyes to aspects of its subject in his Presidential Address to the Holdsworth Club in the University of Birmingham in 1998. Then and subsequently, he showed me great professional and personal consideration and kindness. In 2009 we discussed the plans for the 2011 SLS Annual Conference and the possibility of a book such as this, and he delighted me by agreeing in principle to allow his 1998 Presidential Address to be included in any collection which might emerge from the Conference. His death in June 2011 deprived the legal world of a great gentleman, a fine lawyer and legal historian, an elegant, entertaining speaker and writer, and a delightful, inspiring companion.

Two chapters, or versions of them, are published elsewhere. I am grateful to the following for permission to use material in this book:

Dr Christine Rodger, the Holdsworth Club of the University of Birmingham and its Vice-President, Mr George Applebey, Dr Ludwig Burgmann and Löwenklau Gesellschaft

eV, Frankfurt am Main, for chapter four, 'The Form and Language of Legislation' by Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, previously published by the Holdsworth Club (Birmingham, 1998), and, in a revised and updated version, in (1999) 19 *Rechtshistorisches Journal*, 601–35;

Mr Nicolas Besly, Editor of *The Table: The Journal of the Society of Clerks at the Table of Commonwealth Parliaments*, and the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments, for chapter thirteen, 'The Impact of the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 on a Government's Management of its Legislative Timetable, on Parliamentary Procedure and on Legislative Drafting', published in *The Table*, vd 80, 201: pp 11–16.

Many people have developed my own interest in the relationship between politics and law over 40-odd years. I owe special debts to Dr Stephen Cretney, my tutor, ex-colleague and friend, and to Professor Richard Hodder-Williams and Dr Hugh Rawlings, sometime colleagues in the University of Bristol, who organised an annual Law & Politics Colloquium in the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally, I acknowledge my gratitude and sense of obligation to several other people and organisations for making this book possible. The SLS honoured me by electing me as its President for 2010–11, allowing me to place law and politics at the heart of its Annual Conference in 2011. Professor John Bell, Director of the CPL, played a major part in organising the seminar on the Parliament Act 1911, and offered his customarily erudite and wholehearted support to the project. Mrs Felicity Eves-Rey, of the University of Cambridge Faculty of Law, provided valuable administrative backing and keen organisational skills for the Conference, seminar and book. I benefited from Richard Hart's encouragement of this project as I have for projects for more than a quarter of a century. For Hart Publishing, the perceptive copy-editor, Victoria Broom, ensured that many errors could be corrected and ambiguities resolved. It has been a pleasure to work with Rachel Turner, Mel Hamill and Tom Adams, whose efficiency and patience ensured that the various papers were smoothly moulded into a book at a particularly busy time for any academic publisher. And at home, Jill continued to tolerate me and my preoccupations and make everything seem worthwhile, as she has for 30 years.

David Feldman

Comberton, 29th August 2013

Preface to Paperback Edition

In the two years since the hardback edition of this collection of essays went to press, law and politics in the UK have not stood still. A referendum on independence for Scotland, conducted in Scotland in September 2014, produced a safe majority for maintaining the union between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom; but in the days before the referendum, the Government of the United Kingdom, fearing a majority the other way, promised that Parliament would be invited to devolve significant additional powers to Scotland in the event of independence being rejected. This led to a range of perhaps unanticipated complications concerning the relationship between the United Kingdom's constituent elements, generating wide-ranging reconsideration of the Unions and devolution which could substantially alter the character and constitution of the state. Then in a national General Election in May 2015 the Conservative Party secured a small majority of seats in the House of Commons and was able to form a Government without its former Coalition partners, the Liberal Democrats, who saw the number of their seats drop dramatically. At the same time, however, the Conservative Party was virtually wiped out in Scottish constituencies, where the Scottish National Party came close to a clean sweep of Westminster seats. The new United Kingdom Government, in accordance with its manifesto commitments, is attempting to renegotiate the United Kingdom's place in the EU prior to a referendum to be held within two years on continued membership of the EU; it is preparing legislation to replace the Human Rights Act 1998 and hoping to weaken or sever the link between the United Kingdom and the Council of Europe, including the mechanisms of the European Convention on Human Rights; and it is embarking on quite major reforms of devolution. Meanwhile the defeated Labour Party and Liberal Democrats have begun a period of self-examination and more or less bruising leadership elections.

The relationship between politics and law, self-evident in these fields, is as fascinating as ever. Yet these developments do not seem to me to have called into question either the themes or the detailed analyses and arguments which our authors offered in the hardback edition, so embarking on substantial revisions would serve no useful purpose. The original text is therefore reproduced without amendment in this paperback edition.

Nevertheless, developments relating to the campaign for an independent Scotland prompt especially interesting reflections in relation to Professor Dawn Oliver's discussion, in chapter 16 of this book, of 'constitutional moments', particularly in respect of her discussion of devolution to Scotland and Wales at pages 244 to 246 below. I am grateful to Professor Oliver for preparing the following further thoughts, to be read in conjunction with that passage, and also to the publishers, Hart Publishing, and its Production Manager, Tom Adams, for allowing them to be included here.

David Feldman

Comberton, 19th September 2015



Reflections on Scottish Devolution

Dawn Oliver

The referendum on Scottish independence in September 2014 crystallised and created 'constitutional moments' for the SNP, the Labour party, the House of Commons and the electorate. These reflected changes in public opinion and in senses of national identity, and were close to Ackerman's concept of transformative moments.

Nicola Sturgeon of the SNP was the charismatic champion for independence in Scotland. The leader of the 'no' campaign, its champion, Alistair Darling, lacked Sturgeon's level of charisma. Although the SNP 'lost' the independence referendum, this was by a surprisingly narrow margin. The unanticipatedly high level of electoral support for independence (45%) was transformative for the Scottish electorate and buttressed the political influence of the SNP. The shifts in public opinion and national identity in Scotland were reflected in turn in the result of the UK General Election 2015, in which the SNP won all but one of the Scottish seats in the House of Commons. This result increased the political and public pressures on the British government and Parliament for reform of Scotland's governance, and reinforced the 'moments'.

Second, Labour's loss of support in Scotland and its poor electoral performance across the UK in the 2015 election reflected loss of confidence among the electorate in Labour's economic competence. It also reflected a loss of confidence among many who could be Labour supporters in the style of British politics and established politicians generally and the widespread acceptance of policies of austerity after the financial crisis of 2008–09. The Labour leader lacked the charisma of a 'Champion', someone who could impart sufficient momentum to the party's policies to overcome obstacles to their implementation (see page 241, below). This turmoil in the aftermath of the general election created a constitutional moment for the Labour party, leading to questioning of its role and policies. In September 2015 a new party leader, Jeremy Corbyn MP, was elected: he stood apart from the mainstream in the party, including Labour's front bench, standing for a new style of politics and new anti-austerity policies. His approach mobilised discontent about Labour's recent stand on policy and politics: the election was the result of widespread participation of Labour supporters in the process. To his supporters Corbyn was a charismatic Champion for their interests. As of September 2015 the outcomes of these moments for Labour, whether the policies to be developed by Labour will be sufficiently well prepared to be workable, whether they will 'fit' the constitutional system and whether they will command sufficient electoral support for Labour to be in a position to form a government remain uncertain.

And thirdly, the rise of Scottish nationalism and support for the SNP have stimulated demands in England for 'English votes for English laws' as an answer to the West Lothian Question: proposals to secure that MPs sitting for English or English and Welsh constituencies in the House of Commons have stronger voices in the legislative process where proposals in bills do not apply to Scotland. As of September 2015 this issue has not been resolved. Whether the creation of classes of MPs, some not entitled to vote on certain measures, would 'fit' the system, and thus whether it would be stable, remains to be seen.

List of Authors

Dr Chris Ballinger is the Academic Dean and an Official Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.

Elizabeth Cooke, Professor of Law in the University of Reading, is a Principal Judge of the First-Tier Tribunal (assigned to the Property Chamber) and a Deputy Judge of the Upper Tribunal (assigned to the Tax and Chancery Chamber). She was previously a member of the Law Commission.

Sir Ross Cranston, FBA, is a Judge of the High Court of Justice of England and Wales, and was previously a Labour MP for Dudley North, Solicitor General, and a professor of law.

David Feldman, QC (Hon), FBA, is the Rouse Ball Professor of English Law in the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Downing College, Cambridge, and was previously Legal Adviser to the Joint Committee on Human Rights in the UK Houses of Parliament.

Daniel Greenberg is Parliamentary Counsel, Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP; Editor of *Craies on Legislation*; and Visiting Professor of Legislation in the University of Derby.

David Howarth is a Reader in Private Law in the University of Cambridge, a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, and former Liberal Democrat leader of Cambridge City Council and MP for Cambridge.

Sir Stephen Laws, KCB, QC (Hon), now retired, was previously First Parliamentary Counsel.

Hector MacQueen, FBA, FRSE, is Professor of Private Law in the University of Edinburgh and a member of the Scottish Law Commission.

Philip Norton, Lord Norton of Louth, is Professor of Politics at the University of Hull and takes the Conservative whip in the House of Lords.

Dawn Oliver, QC (Hon), FBA, is Emeritus Professor of Constitutional Law at University College, London.

Matthew Parish is a partner with the law firm Holman Fenwick Willan in Geneva, and was previously legal counsel to the World Bank and, from 2005 to 2007, the Chief Legal Adviser to the International Supervisor of Brčko.

The late Alan Rodger, Lord Rodger of Earlsferry (1944–2011) was Solicitor General for Scotland and Lord Advocate (Conservative), Lord Justice General and Lord President of the Court of Session in Scotland, a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, and a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.

Sir Philip Sales is a Lord Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of England and Wales.

David Seymour, now retired, was the Legal Adviser to the UK Government's Home Office.

Dr Rhodri Walters, now retired, was Reading Clerk in the House of Lords in the UK Parliament.

Matthew Windsor is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge, and a WM Tapp Scholar at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

Sir Michael Wood is a barrister in private practice at 20 Essex Court, London, and was previously the Legal Adviser to the UK Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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