Law and Administration

THIRD EDITION



CAROL HARLOW AND RICHARD RAWLINGS

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Law and Administration

As the branch of law dealing with the exercise of governmental power, and so directly concerned with politics, policy issues and good governance values, administrative law can challenge even the advanced student. In response, this classic text looks at both the law and the factors informing it, elaborating the foundations of the subject. This contextualised approach allows the reader to develop a broad understanding of the subject. The authors consider the distinctive theoretical frameworks which inform study of this challenging subject. Case law and legislation are set out and discussed and the authors have built in a range of case studies, to give a clear practical dimension to the study. This new and updated edition will cement the title's prominent status.

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Zander: The Law-Making Process

M. Barthélemy, the Dean of the Faculty of Law in the University of Paris, relates that thirty years ago he was spending a week-end with the late Professor Dicey. In the course of conversation M. Barthélemy asked a question about administrative law in this country. 'In England', replied Dicey, 'we know nothing of administrative law; and we wish to know nothing.'

W. A. Robson, 'The Report of the Committee on Ministers' Powers' (1932) 3 Political Quarterly 346.

Preface: Three decades of law and administration

Law and Administration has never been simply a textbook of administrative law. As its title signifies, our primary objective in writing it was to further the study of law in the context of public administration and politics: the 'law in context' approach. We need to remind the contemporary reader that the first edition reflected an era of legal formalism when the study of case law, largely divorced from its social context, was seen as the be-all-and-end-all of legal studies. The formalist approach was reflected both in the dominant casebook method of teaching and the leading administrative law textbooks: de Smith's Judicial Review of Administrative Action - a title that speaks for itself - and Wade's Administrative Law, a slimmer version of the current well respected text. We saw formalism or legal positivism as largely obscuring both the plural character and the wide parameters of administrative law. Our preoccupations, spelled out clearly in the preface to the first edition, were 'process', 'legitimacy' 'competency' and a functionalist concern with effectiveness and efficiency. We made our points through lengthy case studies of administrative process, focusing especially on social security, immigration and planning law.

Our aim was to further a pluralist approach to the study of administrative law. Throughout our book we emphasised that public bodies possessed their own distinctive ethos, so too did the legal profession. Actors were also presented as individuals, holding different opinions and with differing styles; legal academics were likely to be similarly opinionated. We set out to convey this to our readers by allowing them so far as possible to speak in their own voices. This pluralist approach characterises every edition.

In respect of judicial review, we tried, by the inclusion of case studies, to free the case law from the formalist method that had smothered its political connotations and to re-establish the connections between judicial review and its political context. Judges, Sir William Wade acknowledged, were 'up to their necks in policy, as they had been all through history, and nothing could illustrate this more vividly in our own time than the vicissitudes of administrative

Now H. W. R. Wade and C. Forsyth, Administrative Law, 10th edn (Oxford University Press, 2009). The main exception, Griffith and Street's Principles of Administrative Law, 5th edn (Pitman Paperbacks, 1973) was out of print and virtually unobtainable.

law.' Judicial review is inevitably controversial, fought out in numerous tiny battles between (as Sir Cecil Carr once put it) 'those who want to step on the accelerator [and] those who want to apply the brake'. Only by recognising this, we argued, could the legitimacy of the judicial transformation of judicial review (see Chapter 3) and its proper place in the unwritten constitution be evaluated. Public law, as Martin Loughlin has since expressed it, is a form of political discourse. This too is a theme of all three editions.

At the date of our first edition, judicial review had recently emerged from a 'period of backsliding' seen by Professor Wade as 'its lowest ebb for perhaps a century'. The step between Lord Reid's famous observation that we did not have 'a developed system of administrative law. . . because until fairly recently we did not need it' (Ridge v Baldwin, 1963) and Lord Diplock's assurance that 'this reproach to English law had been removed' (O'Reilly v Mackman, 1983) is a huge one, marking judicial review's rapid progression. This edition tracks further major change. The Human Rights Act 1998 has shown itself to be an added bedrock for a new and necessarily more inventive form of judicial review, constructed under the supervision of the Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg. The case law of the Court of Justice of the European Communities has also been increasingly important. Both can be seen today as embedded in the national legal order, forcing the domestic law of judicial review to move beyond its traditional common law framework. As we shall see in Chapter 15, procedural change to the domestic system has ushered in a 'multi-streamed' system of judicial review whose jurisprudential architecture is sometimes well, and sometimes ill, suited to the increasingly complex range of problems our courts are asked to resolve. All this has grounded new arguments, explored in Chapter 3, concerning the legitimacy and competency of judicial process, today expressed in the vocabulary of 'deference' and 'constitutionalism'.

We have never denied the place for judicial review in our constitution. We have on the other hand argued that adjudication is 'an expensive form of decision-taking whose competency ought not lightly to be assumed'. Our early exploration of alternative machinery for redress of grievance such as tribunals and ombudsmen has expanded over time to four chapter-long studies of alternative mechanisms of dispute resolution: from tribunals, inquiries, and ombudsmen to internal complaints-handling machinery more appropriate and proportionate than expensive courts (Chapters 10-13). Nor have we been against accountability and control. Our position is as it always has been that control of the executive and administration can and should be exercised in ways complementary to judicial review that may be more effective. Common to every edition therefore have been extended studies of lawmaking and bureaucratic rule-making, forms of control pioneered both by British 'green light theorists' and by the American writer Kenneth Culp Davies as an alternative to courts. In this edition such an emphasis is, we feel, amply justified by the growing phenomenon of 'juridification' or governance by rules that links the bureaucratic world (Chapter 5) with that of the regulator (Chapters 6 and 7). The worlds of politics and Parliament have so far been affected to a lesser extent: there is as yet no requirement that the legislator should be rational! Chapter 4 nonetheless documents some of the changes undergone in recent years by the legislative process, partly under the influence of self-scrutinising parliamentary committees. Techniques developed in the administrative process or by regulators are today paralleled in Parliament where we find experiments with impact assessment, pre- and post-legislative scrutiny, public consultation, monitoring and evaluation.

Largely by happenstance, each of our three editions has gone to press on the cusp of a new political era. Looking back at the preface to the first edition, published in 1984, it seems unlikely that we had at that stage fully recognised the significance for administrative law of the 1979 election that had brought Margaret Thatcher's reforming Conservative government to power. It is indeed hard to recall the political background against which we were writing; the end of an era in which the state had happily combined steering and rowing, retaining the central position in a planned economy that it had come to occupy in the course of two world wars. Swathes of nationalised industry and state-run public services remained as yet to be privatised and liberalised. Not surprisingly perhaps, we largely overlooked the soon-to-be-expanded discipline of regulation. By then threatening to occupy the whole terrain of administrative law, this had to await the second, 1997, edition, where it occupied a central position. The second edition also focused on the replacement of traditional modes of 'club' or 'trust' government by 'the objective, Weberian model of standardisation and rules'. Under the label of 'a blue rinse', we tracked the reception into the public services of the methodology of 'New Public Management' and mentality of audit, noting the growing challenge posed to the values of administrative law.

There was some surprise that the election of Tony Blair's New Labour government did not bring paradigm change. 'Contracting out' of public services was not, for example, reversed, though its effects were softened. Public/private partnerships and public finance initiatives greatly increased, bringing pressure for control that the courts largely failed to meet, hence for new methods of accountability (see Chapters 8 and 9). There were further challenges for administrative law from the New Labour programme of constitutional reform: the process of devolution, for example, greatly complicated the structure of the lawmaking process, making it harder to know what is and what is not 'the law' (Chapter 4). Nor can we yet foresee what problems may flow from the process of continual administrative change instituted by New Labour under the rubric of modernisation. It has to be said that the picture which emerges in these pages is not one of competence or efficiency; administrative law has had to respond to failing administrative agencies, government departments declared unfit for purpose, whole-scale losses of government information and other serious failures. How far the constant restructuring of central government departments and blocking up of agencies into hyper-agencies has contributed to these administrative catastrophes is hard to tell. Equally, how the overhaul of the piecemeal tribunal system in England and Wales by the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, the recasting of the public inquiry system by the Inquiries Act 2005 and the restructuring of the courts system in the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 will work out in practice is, at the time of writing, far from clear.

Modernisation has been moving us fast into uncharted administrative territory of 'e-governance' empowered by ICT, bringing promise of greater administrative competence but also new threats to civil liberties and human rights. We ourselves see the pervasive New Labour slogans of 'inclusivity', 'responsive governance' and 'community empowerment' and recourse to the 'soft' terminology of openness, accountability, and participation, as deceptive. Equally, it is insufficient to leave everything to courts, a message driven home through the workings of the political process in the context of the so-called 'war against terror'. This is a lesson we need to remember.

At the same time as we have entered the world of 'public-plus-private', of 'governance through contract' and of 'decentred regulation' described in Chapters 6 to 9, we are moving into a larger world of globalized administration and governance. Here states must compete with governance through transnational agencies and networks of assorted public and private actors. Government, as Martin Shapiro defines it, where administration exists 'as a bounded reality' and administrative law 'prescribes behaviour within administrative organizations' and delineates relationships between 'those inside an administration and those outside it', has arguably broken down. No clear boundary exists (if one has ever existed) between the public and the private. New machinery of control and accountability is clearly necessary if the gains of greater political participation and greater transparency of decision-making associated by Alfred Aman with the administrative law of the 1960s and 1970s are not to be lost. To exemplify, the campaign for freedom of information that came to a head in the 1980s has to a certain extent been won; we now have to take on board and resolve the growing concerns over the emergent 'surveillance society' with its impact on privacy and data protection. Once again we seem to be standing on the cusp of a paradigm change, characterised this time by a rapid re-entry of the state into central areas of economic and financial affairs marked out by economic liberals in the last decade of the twentieth century as sacrosanct areas for private enterprise. We can only speculate on the changes that will be required from administrative law and the contribution administrative law will be able to make.

We cannot end without thanking the many people who have helped to bring this edition to press, starting with our families, who have had to suffer much inattention and, from time to time, some grumpiness. Susan Hunt helped with this, as with every, edition. Sylvia Lough played an equally valuable role. We also had much help and encouragement from Mark Aronson, Julia Black, Peter

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> Carol Harlow, Richard Rawlings, March 2009.

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