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Peer reviewed

Review: *Environment and the Law: a dictionary.*

By V. R. Patton-Hulce

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Patton-Hulce, V. R. *Environment and the Law: a dictionary.*
Contemporary Legal Issues. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1995. hardbound
US \$39.50 ISBN: 0-87436-749-2. Acid free paper.

Mission brown in the 70s and 80s and heritage green in the 90s -- dominant epochs for both house paint and environmental issues? Not for Vicki Patton-Hulce. She's still focused on brown, brown, brown. 'Pollution and Federal US law' would have perhaps been a better title for this dictionary because 'green' biodiversity, sustainable natural and cultural resource management, trade, consumption, and international legal issues receive scant treatment. The entries in *Environment and the Law: a dictionary* predominantly address domestic regulatory issues concerning waste, emissions and pollution, and although each entry is quite long, this is not an extensive and broad dictionary. But if we can attribute the dictionary's over-extended current title to the publisher's marketing inclinations, how well does the book meet its aspirations on its primary waste and pollution concerns?

This dictionary was purportedly written for students from high school level onwards, and for people interested in environmental studies. It is intended to give readers a commonsense explanation of the fundamental principles of environmental law. It opens with an overview chapter on 'environment and the law' and follows with an alphabetical list of entries on legal, technical and policy matters. This dictionary however, is unlikely to satisfy the broad market it is intended to serve. Although it includes tables of cases, statutes and regulations, a bibliography, and a general subject index, the entries are not sufficiently numerous nor detailed to assist with sound legal analysis. Take its entry on asbestos, for example. This classifies the various types of asbestos fiber by color and not by technical name or characteristic, and does not disaggregate the risks of asbestos according to its type. *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Ecology* does not deal with legal issues, but it is a more accurate and reliable guide on technical definitions.

There is very little comparative analysis of regulatory approaches taken outside the US, so readers are not led to other literature to assess the effectiveness of the US approach. Readers can read snippets about leading administrators and politicians, even if they're the barest of details. There are short entries on Presidents Bush and Reagan, for example, but not on Clinton.

One limitation of the dictionary that is particularly worrying is its lack of coverage of international legal issues. This is a major shortcoming given the proliferation of international environmental instruments and contemporary debates over the impact of globalization and transnational actors. For example, readers will not find assistance on the 1989 Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. Other important international instruments dealing with waste and pollution issues are also not included, such as the London Guidelines for the Exchange of Chemicals in International Trade, the London International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation, and the two International Atomic Energy Conventions on Nuclear Accidents. A select few NGOs receive short entries, despite the importance of NGO activities in environmental politics. In general, as a reviewer based outside the US, I would not recommend that 'green' environmentalists purchase this dictionary.

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