

Statute Law.

Renton and the Need for Reform

THE drafting of legislation in Britain is too often an arcane subject, baffling the citizen and confusing even his professional advisers. Lawyers, accountants and many others are gravely troubled by the law's needless obscurities and the frequent impossibility of working out what any given statute does actually provide. To seek, and press for adoption of, solutions to these problems, the Statute Law Society was set up in 1968.

Following pressure from the Statute Law Society, the Government set up the Renton Committee to review the drafting of Parliamentary Bills with a view to achieving greater simplicity and clarity in statute law. The Committee reported in 1975.

The Government gave a guarded reception to the Renton proposals. In the Commons the Solicitor-General moved a resolution that the House "takes note" of the Report, rather than one accepting it. In the Lords it was left to a private peer to initiate a debate on the Report.

Despite the relatively modest nature of the Renton proposals, little has been done to implement them. More fundamental changes proposed by the Statute Law Society seem far from adoption. To draw attention to these matters, and make the arguments more widely available, the Society decided to publish this collection of papers.

The collection opens with remarks about the non-implementation of the report of the Renton Committee expressed by its chairman, The Rt. Hon. Sir David Renton, P.C., Q.C., M.P. These are followed by a transcript of oral evidence given to the Renton Committee on behalf of the Statute Law Society by Hedley Marshall, C.M.G., Q.C. and Brian Russell. This amplified the written evidence by the Society already published in *Statute Law: A Radical Simplification* (1974). Finally, the written and oral evidence to the Renton Committee by Francis Bennion, the immediate past chairman of the Statute Law Society, is given.

The economic cost of statute law obscurity is enormous yet there is [^]* to change. It is hoped that in a modest way publication of these materials w towards the solution of an important social problem.

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