

T082

Reliance on implication in legislation

Mr David Nathan (letters, 17 June 1999) says that 'by all the laws of language and reason' if he had not had laser treatment to one eye he could not have had it to both. As an old parliamentary draftsman I can tell him that one law of language is that you must draw necessary inferences. The question asking if he had had laser treatment to 'one eye' carried the implied additional word 'only'.

Of course it would have been better if the drafter of the form had made the question read expressly 'have you had laser treatment to one eye only?'. Since it would have been followed by the second question 'have you had laser treatment to both eyes?' all would have been clear.¹

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¹ *The Times*, 19 June 1999.