1953

A Dictionary for Accountants by Eric L. Kohler

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BOOK REVIEWS—Continued

whose approach to the subject is not that of the lawyer—but it is just
the lawyer who might not want it different.

The work is supplied with an index, perhaps the only part of the
work that could well be enlarged.

HARRY BEST

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A DICTIONARY FOR ACCOUNTANTS. By Eric L. Kohler. New York:

A dictionary for accountants is something new. It indicates that
the business—or should we say profession—of accounting has acquired
a language of its own. Four hundred and fifty pages are found
necessary to define and explain terms that have acquired meanings
peculiar to accounting during the rapid development of this field in
recent years. Words taken from everyday language, the author points
out, have acquired a technical usage at the hands of accountants.
Since legislation and court decisions have been very much influenced
by this language of accountants, these accounting concepts are of
very great interest to lawyers and judges, as well as “economists, engi-
neers, business executives, investors, government officials, and students
of accounting and business.”

At the very beginning the reader is told that of the 2275 entries in
the book, only 620 are single words. The remainder are phrases and
word combinations. Among these 620 we find such words as break-
even, carryover, cutoff, markon, and writery. Words that are usually
hyphenated have dropped the hyphen in the language of the ac-
countant. We find coinsurance, intercompany, oversubscription and
preaudit used. We also see the hyphen used to join words that are
ordinarily written separately. Thus we find here such terms as profit-
and-loss, single-entry bookkeeping and long-term lease. Then there
are single words as strange to us as many of those used in crossword
puzzles. Take the word “abscissa”, for example. There are terms that
may require two or three pages to explain, and even the use of illustra-
tions. “Arithmetic mean”, “balance of trade”, “breakeven chart”, “coef-
ficient”, “consolidation policy”, and “correlation table” may be cited as
instances. Even six or more pages may be required to explain such
terms as “depreciation”, “fund”, “logarithm”, “overhead”, and “stand-
ard cost”.

BOOK REVIEWS—Continued

It is hard to see how any dictionary can be more interesting than this one is.

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Professor Hellerstein has prepared a case book which is unusually valuable for the person interested in tax problems as such rather than in legal problems as such. This is true notwithstanding the fact that the book apparently deals as effectively with the legal problems as do available competitive books. It may be helpful to point to some of the distinctive characteristics of this volume as compared with others which the reviewer has examined.

In the first place, the author takes a broader view of education for the practice of tax law than do most persons who have prepared case books. This is reflected in the selection of case material and in the character of the notes and of the bibliographical materials supplied. These are broad enough to take account of literature in economics and tax administration generally and on the whole to link problems of policy with problems of law. For example, the author employs effectively not only law journal articles but also the literature of the National Tax Association, The Tax Institute, the economics textbook, and the journal authors. Whether this characteristic will prove important for legal education will depend on the outlook of the instructor. In any event, it is exceedingly useful to the general tax student confronted alike with economic, administrative, and legal (especially constitutional) issues.

In the second place, the author employs a broader variety of legal materials than do most other writers of case books. This book reflects the usual up-to-date array of materials on federal constitutional restrictions on the state taxing power with the exception that the cases appear to be selected on a somewhat different basis. It includes a very much larger number of state cases dealing with particular aspects of state tax law than do other books. The volume is expressly designed for use in conjunction with the tax statutes of particular states and is conceived as more or less all-inclusive. The author apparently has deliberately included more subject matter than the typical course in