

Corporations

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Corporations

A Contemporary Approach

*Cases and Materials for a
Course in Corporate Law*

SECOND EDITION

Michael Diamond

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

Durham, North Carolina

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ISBN: 978-1-59460-541-3
LCCN: 2008930706

Carolina Academic Press
700 Kent Street
Durham, NC 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America

To family, friends and colleagues
who have provided love, inspiration, and support,
my deepest thanks..
—M.D.

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Introduction

Why another casebook on corporate law? The field abounds with good choices. I have undertaken this project because I think that despite the existence of excellent casebooks on the market, no one of them completely addresses issues I believe corporate law students need to think through in order to be equipped both to serve as corporate lawyers and to be educated as lawyer citizens in the twenty-first century. In one respect, this casebook is traditional: it addresses the same topics and uses many of the leading cases found in other books. In another, I believe that the approach of this book is entirely original. It is that aspect of the project that has led me to produce this book.

I believe that the study of corporate law apart from the consideration of issues raised by the nature of the corporation and its purpose in society provides an incomplete education in the subject. All contemporary casebooks treat the corporation as an economic institution, and this one is no exception. As a doctrinal matter, corporations serve as the most powerful and prominent vehicle for the conduct of business in America and indeed the world. As a theoretical matter, corporate law has, over the course of its history in this country, developed to serve this function very well. This book, as others, presents these doctrinal and theoretical views, both through the cases and in the materials following them. And, like others, it addresses issues of practical lawyering.

But it is not enough to say that doctrine and economics answer all of the important questions about the modern business corporation. In fact they frequently fail to raise some of the most important questions. For all of its vitality as an economic institution, the corporation is a social and political institution as well. Its peculiar legal characteristics, its role in public life, and its dominating power in the world economy require the modern corporate lawyer to understand the special roles of the entity he or she is serving. To this end, I have included a range of social science insights that do not normally accompany the study of corporate law doctrine, from economics alone to sociology, psychology, political and moral philosophy, and history. I have done so not only through the essays and questions throughout the book but also, as in the case of Chapter One, in the very construction of the book itself. I hope that this approach to the study of corporate law, the questions of role, purpose, and responsibility, questions of public entity versus private property, questions of shareholders versus stakeholders, supports the doctrinal materials and makes for a richer course that situates the modern American business corporation in the world more realistically than does a more traditional limited focus on the internal workings of the enterprise. I have done this, I believe, in a format that will be comfortable for and familiar to seasoned teachers of corporate law, including teachers who focus on traditional paradigms, stimulating to new teachers, and, most important, enriching for students in the course.

While I have my own views on these questions, I have tried to present this material with as light and subtle a touch as I can. It is not my intention to be heavy-handed or to

attempt to indoctrinate students into one way of thinking. It is, instead, simply my belief that no student should finish his or her study of corporations without thinking about the questions and problems I raise. The conclusions that you reach will be your own, informed, I hope, by the material I present.

It is in that spirit—the spirit of broad intellectual engagement—that I present this book. I hope you enjoy it and welcome your comments for consideration in future editions.

Note to Teachers

You will, as I mentioned, find the classic cases in our book, as well as other cases that I believe enhance the thematic and methodological approach. One area I have not addressed in very much depth is agency and partnership, topics that in recent years have formed the opening sections of most corporations casebooks. I do discuss these materials where I think they are helpful to an understanding of corporate law, but I do not present them in a way that permits their in-depth teaching. I feel comfortable in this decision both because I believe that there is so much material to cover in corporate law itself that I did not want to detract from the principal focus of the book or its themes, and also because I know that several excellent paperback casebooks covering only agency and partnership law are available for those teachers who choose to explore these materials in detail and would otherwise be inclined to use this book.

M.D.