REPRESSIVE JURISPRUDENCE IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

The First Amendment and the Legacy of English Law

This volume will enable readers to understand how the Revolutionary American society dedicated to the noble aspirations of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights could have adopted one of the most widely deplored statutes in American history, the Sedition Act of 1798. It demonstrates how the wholesale incorporation by the new states in 1776 of the full body of English law into the American law also meant the adoption of the English repressive common-law jurisprudence that had been fashioned to support the English monarchical political system that had been repudiated in the American Revolution. The unhappy result was that in the new nation as well as in England, strong criticism of the executive (King or President), the legislature (Parliament or Congress), the judiciary, and Christianity was criminalized. Despite the First Amendment, freedom of speech and press were dramatically restricted for 150 years as American courts enforced the repressive jurisprudence until well into the 20th century. This book will be of keen interest to all concerned with the Early Republic, freedom of speech, and the evolution of American constitutional jurisprudence. Because it addresses the much-criticized Sedition Act of 1798, one of the most dramatic illustrations of this repressive jurisprudence, the book will also be of interest to Americans concerned with preserving free speech in wartime.

Phillip I. Blumberg is Dean and Professor Emeritus at The University of Connecticut School of Law. After two decades of law practice on Wall Street and service as the CEO of a New York Stock Exchange–listed financial corporation, he turned to legal teaching and scholarship. He is the country’s leading authority on corporate groups and the author of path-breaking books including The Multinational Challenge to Corporation Law and the magisterial five-volume treatise Blumberg on Corporate Groups (2nd edition). Six years ago, he started his study of the early American jurisprudence; this volume is the result.
To my grandchildren, Andrew, Emily, Phillip, Gwen, Sarah, Kathryn, Elizabeth, Christopher, Alexander, and Caroline, and to all the nation’s other children who will determine its future
Repressive Jurisprudence in the Early American Republic

THE FIRST AMENDMENT AND THE LEGACY OF ENGLISH LAW

Phillip I. Blumberg

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Acknowledgments

As with all my other books, The University of Connecticut School of Law has made a major contribution to this undertaking. Dean Jeremy Paul and his predecessor, Dean Nell Jessup Newton, have provided continuing interest, encouragement, and support. Law librarian Professor Darcy Kirk and the dedicated members of the library staff, particularly Simon Canick, Lee Sims, Sarah Cox, Janis Fusaro, Andrea Joseph, and Morain Miller; administrative staff Lisa Ouellette and Susan Severo, as well as Ann Crawford, Ricardo Mardales, and Christine Dahl of the technological staff, day in and day out over a six-year period were indispensable in their unfailing assistance during the research and writing of the book. Delia Roy, head of the secretarial staff, saw to it that I had unfailingly timely secretarial help, and my devoted secretary, Rosa Colon, cheerfully and conscientiously struggled with the processing and reprocessing, and reprocessing yet again, of the manuscript with its endless revisions. Sandi Browne helped with the preparation of the Table of Cases.

Thomas E. Hemstock, Jr., and Cecil Thomas provided exceptional research assistance during the formative period of writing the book. Numerous other students also provided valuable research help, including Oliver Bowers, Sarah Healey, Peter Hitt, Kellyanna Johnson, Samantha Kenney, Kenneth Kukish, Margaret Sarah Moran, Michael Pohorylo, Jacob Pylman, and Jamalia Wang.

Faculty colleagues, too numerous to mention, were, as always, warm in their support and endlessly helpful when called upon. My dear friend and distinguished colleague, Professor R. Kent Newmyer, was particularly helpful.
Finally, John Berger, senior editor at Cambridge University Press, has been a continuing source of interest, advice, and support. It has been a pleasure to work with him, as well as with my production editor, Regina Paleski, and my copy editor, David Anderson.

I thank them all.

In this as in all other undertakings, I am profoundly grateful to my dear wife, Ellen Ash Peters, superb scholar and distinguished judge, for her continuing inspiration, insightful advice, loving support, and patience.

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