

## CIPL DISCUSSION GROUP

**The Rule of Law in a Colonial Setting:**  
A lunchtime discussion of R.W. Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power: Victorian Empire and the Rule of Law*

**Professor Michael Taggart**  
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**Tuesday 4 April 2006, 1pm**

**Staff Library** Level 1, ANU College of Law, (Bldg 5), cnr Fellows & East Roads  
RSVP to: [cipl@law.anu.edu.au](mailto:cipl@law.anu.edu.au) by cob 3 April 2006. You are welcome to bring your own lunch.

The controversy arising from the brutal suppression of a rebellion at Morant Bay, Jamaica in mid-October 1865 was one of the causes célèbres of the Victorian era. It has been much written about by historians because of the stark polarisation of opinion over the legality and morality of the events. Continued interest seems assured by the eminence of many of the protagonists – a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ of the mid-Victorian era. These men fought an intense and bitter battle over several years, investing considerable time, energy and money prosecuting or defending Governor Eyre, the man who had declared martial law in Jamaica. This battle produced the most sustained and significant public discussion of the Rule of Law during Queen Victoria’s long and eventful reign.

Rande Kostal’s justification for entering this well-ploughed historical field is to move the law to the centre of the stage in the unfolding of the drama. Indeed, Kostal succeeds so well that at times one starts to believe that the law is not just centre stage but the entire stage. In the result, however, the law disappointed everyone. So this book is not just about the Rule of Law in the context of a fascinating episode in imperial history. It transcends time and place, and contains a morality tale about misplaced faith in law in times of crisis.