



Companies Act 1948

1948 CHAPTER 38 11 and 12 Geo 6

PART II

SHARE CAPITAL AND DEBENTURES.

Prospectus.

37 Dating of prospectus.

A prospectus issued by or on behalf of a company or in relation to an intended company shall be dated, and that date shall, unless the contrary is proved, be taken as the date of publication of the prospectus.

38 Matters to be stated and reports to be set out in prospectus.

- (1) Subject to the provisions of the next following section, every prospectus issued by or on behalf of a company, or by or on behalf of any person who is or has been engaged or interested in the formation of the company, must state the matters specified in Part I of the Fourth Schedule to this Act and set out the reports specified in Part II of that Schedule, and the said Parts I and II shall have effect subject to the provisions contained in Part III of that Schedule.
- (2) A condition requiring or binding an applicant for shares in or debentures of a company to waive compliance with any requirement of this section, or purporting to affect him with notice of any contract, document or matter not specifically referred to in the prospectus, shall be void.
- (3) Subject to the provisions of the next following section, it shall not be lawful to issue any form of application for shares in or debentures of a company unless the form is issued with a prospectus which complies with the requirements of this section:

Provided that this subsection shall not apply if it is shown that the form of application was issued either—

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- (a) in connection with a bona fide invitation to a person to enter into an underwriting agreement with respect to the shares or debentures; or
- (b) in relation to shares or debentures which were not offered to the public.

If any person acts in contravention of the provisions of this subsection, he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds.

- (4) In the event of non-compliance with or contravention of any of the requirements of this section, a director or other person responsible for the prospectus shall not incur any liability by reason of the non-compliance or contravention, if—
- (a) as regards any matter not disclosed, he proves that he was not cognisant thereof; or
 - (b) he proves that the non-compliance or contravention arose from an honest mistake of fact on his part; or
 - (c) the non-compliance or contravention was in respect of matters which in the opinion of the court dealing with the case were immaterial or was otherwise such as ought, in the opinion of that court, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, reasonably to be excused:

Provided that, in the event of failure to include in a prospectus a statement with respect to the matters specified in paragraph 16 of the Fourth Schedule to this Act, no director or other person shall incur any liability in respect of the failure unless it be proved that he had knowledge of the matters not disclosed.

- (5) This section shall not apply—
- (a) to the issue to existing members or debenture holders of a company of a prospectus or form of application relating to shares in or debentures of the company, whether an applicant for shares or debentures will or will not have the right to renounce in favour of other persons; or
 - (b) to the issue of a prospectus or form of application relating to shares or debentures which are or are to be in all respects uniform with shares or debentures previously issued and for the time being dealt in or quoted on a prescribed stock exchange;

but, subject as aforesaid, this section shall apply to a prospectus or a form of application whether issued on or with reference to the formation of a company or subsequently.

- (6) Nothing in this section shall limit or diminish any liability which any person may incur under the general law or this Act apart from this section.

39 Exclusion of foregoing section and relaxation of Fourth Schedule in case of certain prospectuses.

- (1) Where—
- (a) it is proposed to offer any shares in or debentures of a company to the public by a prospectus issued generally (that is to say, issued to persons who are not existing members or debenture holders of the company); and
 - (b) application is made to a prescribed stock exchange for permission for those shares or debentures to be dealt in or quoted on that stock exchange;

there may, on the request of the applicant, be given by or on behalf of that stock exchange a certificate of exemption, that is to say, a certificate that, having regard to the proposals (as stated in the request) as to the size and other circumstances of

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the issue of shares or debentures and as to any limitations on the number and class of persons to whom the offer is to be made, compliance with the requirements of the Fourth Schedule to this Act would be unduly burdensome.

- (2) If a certificate of exemption is given, and if the proposals aforesaid are adhered to and the particulars and information required to be published in connection with the application for permission made to the stock exchange are so published, then—
- (a) a prospectus giving the particulars and information aforesaid in the form in which they are so required to be published shall be deemed to comply with the requirements of the Fourth Schedule to this Act; and
 - (b) the last foregoing section shall not apply to any issue, after the permission applied for is granted, of a prospectus or form of application relating to the shares or debentures.

40 Expert's consent to issue of prospectus containing statement by him.

- (1) A prospectus inviting persons to subscribe for shares in or debentures of a company and including a statement purporting to be made by an expert shall not be issued unless—
- (a) he has given and has not, before delivery of a copy of the prospectus for registration, withdrawn his written consent to the issue thereof with the statement included in the form and context in which it is included; and
 - (b) a statement that he has given and has not withdrawn his consent as aforesaid appears in the prospectus.
- (2) If any prospectus is issued in contravention of this section the company and every person who is knowingly a party to the issue thereof shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds.
- (3) In this section the expression “expert ” includes engineer, valuer, accountant and any other person whose profession gives authority to a statement made by him.

41 Registration of prospectus.

- (1) No prospectus shall be issued by or on behalf of a company or in relation to an intended company unless, on or before the date of its publication, there has been delivered to the registrar of companies for registration a copy thereof signed by every person who is named therein as a director or proposed director of the company, or by his agent authorised in writing, and having endorsed thereon or attached thereto—
- (a) any consent to the issue of the prospectus required by the last foregoing section from any person as an expert; and
 - (b) in the case of a prospectus issued generally, also—
 - (i) a copy of any contract required by paragraph 14 of the Fourth Schedule to this Act to be stated in the prospectus or, in the case of a contract not reduced into writing, a memorandum giving full particulars thereof or, if in the case of a prospectus deemed by virtue of a certificate granted under section thirty-nine of this Act to comply with the requirements of that Schedule a contract or a copy thereof or a memorandum of a contract is required to be available for inspection in connection with the application made under that section to the stock exchange, a copy or, as the case may be, a memorandum of that contract; and

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- (ii) where the persons making any report required by Part II of that Schedule have made therein, or have, without giving the reasons, indicated therein, any such adjustments as are mentioned in paragraph 29 of that Schedule, a written statement signed by those persons setting out the adjustments and giving the reasons therefor.

The references in sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph (b) of this subsection to the copy of a contract required thereby to be endorsed on or attached to a copy of the prospectus shall, in the case of a contract wholly or partly in a foreign language, be taken as references to a copy of a translation of the contract in English or a copy embodying a translation in English of the parts in a foreign language, as the case may be, being a translation certified in the prescribed manner to be a correct translation, and the reference to a copy of a contract required to be available for inspection shall include a reference to a copy of a translation thereof or a copy embodying a translation of parts thereof.

- (2) Every prospectus shall, on the face of it,—
- (a) state that a copy has been delivered for registration as required by this section; and
 - (b) specify, or refer to statements included in the prospectus which specify, any documents required by this section to be endorsed on or attached to the copy so delivered.
- (3) The registrar shall not register a prospectus unless it is dated and the copy thereof signed in manner required by this section and unless it has endorsed thereon or attached thereto the documents (if any) specified as aforesaid.
- (4) If a prospectus is issued without a copy thereof being delivered under this section to the registrar or without the copy so delivered having endorsed thereon or attached thereto the required documents, the company, and every person who is knowingly a party to the issue of the prospectus, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five, pounds for every day from the date of the issue of the prospectus until a copy thereof is so delivered with the required documents endorsed thereon or attached thereto.

42 Restriction on alteration of terms mentioned in prospectus or statement in lieu of prospectus.

- (1) A company limited by shares or a company limited by guarantee and having a share capital shall not previously to the statutory meeting vary the terms of a contract referred to in the prospectus, or statement in lieu of prospectus, except subject to the approval of the statutory meeting.
- (2) This section shall not apply to a private company.

43 Civil liability for mis-statements in prospectus.

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this section, where a prospectus invites persons to subscribe for shares in or debentures of a company, the following persons shall be liable to pay compensation to all persons who subscribe for any shares or debentures on the faith of the prospectus for the loss or damage they may have sustained by reason of any untrue statement included therein, that is to say:—
 - (a) every person who is a director of the company at the time of the issue of the prospectus;

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- (b) every person who has authorised himself to be named and is named on the prospectus as a director or as having agreed to become a director either immediately or after an interval of time;
- (c) every person being a promoter of the company; and
- (d) every person who has authorised the issue of the prospectus:

Provided that where, under section forty of this Act, the consent of a person is required to the issue of a prospectus and he has given that consent, he shall not by reason of his having given it be liable under this subsection as a person who has authorised the issue of the prospectus except in respect of an untrue statement purporting to be made by him as an expert.

- (2) No person shall be liable under subsection (1) of this section if he proves—
- (a) that, having consented to become a director of the company, he withdrew his consent before the issue of the prospectus, and that it was issued without his authority or consent; or
 - (b) that the prospectus was issued without his knowledge or consent, and that on becoming aware of its issue he forthwith gave reasonable public notice that it was issued without his knowledge or consent; or
 - (c) that, after the issue of the prospectus and before allotment thereunder, he, on becoming aware of any untrue statement therein, withdrew his consent thereto and gave reasonable public notice of the withdrawal and of the reason therefor; or
 - (d) that—
 - (i) as regards every untrue statement not purporting to be made on the authority of an expert or of a public official document or statement, he had reasonable ground to believe, and did up to the time of the allotment of the shares or debentures, as the case may be, believe, that the statement was true; and
 - (ii) as regards every untrue statement purporting to be a statement by an expert or contained in what purports to be a copy of or extract from a report or valuation of an expert, it fairly represented the statement, or was a correct and fair copy of or extract from the report or valuation, and he had reasonable ground to believe and did up to the time of the issue of the prospectus believe that the person making the statement was competent to make it and that person had given the consent required by section forty of this Act to the issue of the prospectus and had not withdrawn that consent before delivery of a copy of the prospectus for registration or, to the defendant's knowledge, before allotment thereunder; and
 - (iii) as regards every untrue statement purporting to be a statement made by an official person or contained in what purports to be a copy of or extract from a public official document, it was a correct and fair representation of the statement or copy of or extract from the document:

Provided that this subsection shall not apply in the case of a person liable, by reason of his having given a consent required of him by the said section forty, as a person who has authorised the issue of the prospectus in respect of an untrue statement purporting to be made by him as an expert.

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- (3) A person who, apart from this subsection would under subsection (1) of this section be liable, by reason of his having given a consent required of him by section forty of this Act, as a person who has authorised the issue of a prospectus in respect of an untrue statement purporting to be made by him as an expert shall not be so liable if he proves—
- (a) that, having given his consent under the said section forty to the issue of the prospectus, he withdrew it in writing before delivery of a copy of the prospectus for registration; or
 - (b) that, after delivery of a copy of the prospectus for registration and before allotment thereunder, he, on becoming aware of the untrue statement, withdrew his consent in writing and gave reasonable public notice of the withdrawal, and of the reason therefor; or
 - (c) that he was competent to make the statement and that he had reasonable ground to believe and did up to the time of the allotment of the shares or debentures, as the case may be, believe that the statement was true.

(4) Where—

- (a) the prospectus contains the name of a person as a director of the company, or as having agreed to become a director thereof, and he has not consented to become a director, or has withdrawn his consent before the issue of the prospectus, and has not authorised or consented to the issue thereof; or
- (b) the consent of a person is required under section forty of this Act to the issue of the prospectus and he either has not given that consent or has withdrawn it before the issue of the prospectus;

the directors of the company, except any without whose knowledge or consent the prospectus was issued, and any other person who authorised the issue thereof shall be liable to indemnify the person named as aforesaid or whose consent was required as aforesaid, as the case may be, against all damages, costs and expenses to which he may be made liable by reason of his name having been inserted in the prospectus or of the inclusion therein of a statement purporting to be made by him as an expert, as the case may be, or in defending himself against any action or legal proceeding brought against him in respect thereof:

Provided that a person shall not be deemed for the purposes of this subsection to have authorised the issue of a prospectus by reason only of his having given the consent required by section forty of this Act to the inclusion therein of a statement purporting to be made by him as an expert.

(5) For the purposes of this section—

- (a) the expression “promoter ” means a promoter who was a party to the preparation of the prospectus, or of the portion thereof containing the untrue statement, but does not include any person by reason of his acting in a professional capacity for persons engaged in procuring the formation of the company; and
- (b) the expression “expert ” has the same meaning as in section forty of this Act.

44 Criminal liability for mis-statements in prospectus.

- (1) Where a prospectus issued after the commencement of this Act includes any untrue statement, any person who authorised the issue of the prospectus shall be liable—

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- (a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds, or both; or
- (b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds, or both;

unless he proves either that the statement was immaterial or that he had reasonable ground to believe and did, up to the time of the issue of the prospectus, believe that the statement was true.

- (2) A person shall not be deemed for the purposes of this section to have authorised the issue of a prospectus by reason only of his having given the consent required by section forty of this Act to the inclusion therein of a statement purporting to be made by him as an expert.

45 Document containing offer of shares or debentures for sale to be deemed prospectus.

- (1) Where a company allots or agrees to allot any shares in or debentures of the company with a view to all or any of those shares or debentures being offered for sale to the public, any document by which the offer for sale to the public is made shall for all purposes be deemed to be a prospectus issued by the company, and all enactments and rules of law as to the contents of prospectuses and to liability in respect of statements in and omissions from prospectuses, or otherwise relating to prospectuses, shall apply and have effect accordingly, as if the shares or debentures had been offered to the public for subscription and as if persons accepting the offer in respect of any shares or debentures were subscribers for those shares or debentures, but without prejudice to the liability, if any, of the persons by whom the offer is made, in respect of mis-statements contained in the document or otherwise in respect thereof.
- (2) For the purposes of this Act, it shall, unless the contrary is proved, be evidence that an allotment of, or an agreement to allot, shares or debentures was made with a view to the shares or debentures being offered for sale to the public if it is shown—
 - (a) that an offer of the shares or debentures or of any of them for sale to the public was made within six months after the allotment or agreement to allot; or
 - (b) that at the date when the offer was made the whole consideration to be received by - the company in respect of the shares or debentures had not been so received.
- (3) Section thirty-eight of this Act as applied by this section shall have effect as if it required a prospectus to state in addition to the matters required by that section to be stated in a prospectus—
 - (a) the net amount of the consideration received or to be received by the company in respect of the shares or debentures to which the offer relates," and
 - (b) the place and time at which the contract under which the said shares or debentures have been or are to be allotted may be inspected;and section forty-one of this Act as applied by this section shall have effect as though the persons making the offer were persons named in a prospectus as directors of a company.
- (4) Where a person making an offer to which this section relates is a company or a firm, it shall be sufficient if the document aforesaid is signed on behalf of the company or firm by two directors of the company or not less than half of the partners, as the case may be, and any such director or partner may sign by his agent authorised in writing.

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46 Interpretation of provisions relating to prospectuses.

For the purposes of the foregoing provisions of this Part of this Act—

- (a) a statement included in a prospectus shall be deemed to be untrue if it is misleading in the form and context in which it is included; and
- (b) a statement shall be deemed to be included in a prospectus if it is contained therein or in any report or memorandum appearing on the face thereof or by reference incorporated therein or issued therewith.