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LAW IN A CYNICAL SOCIETY?: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAW AND PUBLIC OPINION. By Dale Gibson and Janet Baldwin, eds. Calgary: Carswell Legal Publications, 1985.

This is an edited collection of papers presented at an International Conference on Law and Public Opinion, held at the University of Manitoba in the fall of 1982. The centrepiece of the book is an extensive Canadian survey of attitudes toward law and the legal system. After a wide-ranging and stimulating introductory essay by Dale Gibson, the book comprises a set of about forty short essays and comments on different aspects of the law's performance. Not surprisingly, the tone is far from complacent or optimistic. Cynicism is rampant and, at times, threatens to overwhelm any reasoned debate. Yet those cynics who are not entirely 'burnt-out idealists' make a valuable and disturbing contribution to the limited contemporary scholarship on law and public opinion in Canada.

BAKKE AND THE POLITICS OF EQUALITY. By Timothy J. O'Neill. Middleton, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1984.

For a long time Americans, and for a much shorter time Canadians, have viewed the courts as a 'forum of principle' and judges 'as teachers in a vital national seminar'. In this interesting book, O'Neill, a political scientist, offers an empirical analysis of the *Bakke* case (affirmative action) in terms of its success and efficacy as a "democratic exercise in political education." Concentrating on the fifty-one *amicus curiae* briefs submitted by 107 organizations, he examines the representativeness, strategies, and politics of these proxy groups for general citizen participation. His assessments are mixed. He seems to conclude that the briefs did not enrich the moral debates, but simply echoed and reinforced the legalistic arguments of the parties. Indeed, the fact that lawyers tended to dominate most of the organisations impoverished and regularized their *amicus* contributions. His more general reflections drawn from the *Bakke* experience come down to a very salutary message for Canadians: "we may expect too much of courts . . . and, in turn and paradoxically, too little of the political process."

CHILDREN AND THE LAW. By Jeffery Wilson and Mary Tomlinson. Toronto: Butterworths, 1985.

It is remarkable how rapidly Jeffery Wilson's *Children and the Law* (1978) fell out-of-date in so many areas. This obsolescence resulted from a flurry of legislative activity at the federal and provincial levels. Indeed, it would not be too glib to suggest that change has become one of the few constants in modern family law. The publication of a revision is thus necessary and timely. With this edition, it can be said with confidence that *Children and the Law* contains the best textual analysis of contemporary Canadian law relating to children. The book develops the basic topics contained in the first edition, introducing case law and legislative developments, including, of course, the *Charter* and the *Hague Convention*. No text rivals this coverage.

The new edition, written by Jeffery Wilson and Mary Tomlinson, improves upon the clear and logical presentation found in the original text. That is not a simple matter where, for example, one seeks to describe the meaning and effect of the copious provisions of the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* (while at the same time cross-referencing the provisions of the repealed *Child Welfare Act*). In consequence, this book is one that can be of value not only to legal practitioners, but to other professionals working in fields that relate to family law. Perhaps too, it could serve as a principal teaching aid, and not simply as 'recommended reading' in a course on children's law.

The authors have consciously chosen to concentrate primarily on doctrinal matters and not to delve deeply into policy and evaluation. Although this means that the text will likely inform more often than it will persuade, the book executes its expressed objectives well.

As with the original work, the book focuses on Ontario when the matters discussed fall within provincial competence. This is as limiting as the prospect of canvassing all relevant provincial legislation across Canada is daunting. But again, the thoroughness of the treatment of the Ontario law is commendable. And it is current — at least for now!

ESSAYS IN EQUITY. By P.D. Finn, ed. Sydney: The Law Book Co., 1985.

There is now a wealth of Australian literature on equity and related subjects. This collection of essays — which is the product of a seminar held at the Australian National University — is a worthy addition to the list. It is a fine example of the expression of what has become an Australian Chancery tradition. It is a tradition that is Janus-faced: it has respect for the past, but also looks to the future. Two other features

of these essays stand out. First, they are the products of academics, practitioners, and judges who share a common approach that is neither predominantly academic nor predominantly practical. Second, the essays, and the principles and rules they discuss, cover a diverse range of subject-matters. Trusts, of course, are a major topic, but of special interest is the relevance of about half of the essays to commercial transactions. *Essays in Equity* is an interesting book that deserves wider attention by Canadian lawyers than it is likely to receive.

