1-1-1979

Family Violence: An International and Interdisciplinary Study by John M. Eekelaar and Sanford N. Katz, eds.

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Recommended Citation
Edward Veitch, Family Violence: An International and Interdisciplinary Study by John M. Eekelaar and Sanford N. Katz, eds., 2 B.C. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. 540 (1979),
http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/iclr/vol2/iss2/14

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and disarmament. The arms race is described in terms of a great miscalculation. Competition is the driving force in this race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Statesmen on both sides have become captives of their own propaganda. Having persuaded their peoples that weapon arsenals are necessary and that they must be increased to maintain the "balance of terror," they now find it impossible to turn back. Herein lies the terrible danger to the world. The hope for the international community in this desperate situation is to pursue a policy of arms control and disarmament. This policy, it is argued, cannot succeed unless it becomes part of a wider process of global reform committed to the elimination of poverty, repression and ecological decay.

The Festschrift format of the volume makes it difficult to evaluate the essays as a totality. As might be expected, some of the articles evidence more scholarship and substantive merit than others. Overall, however, the book makes a worthwhile contribution to the quest for peace, with its realistic identification of the obstacles to international cooperation and with its elaboration of new approaches to security in the world.

EDWARD VEITCH*

FAMILY VIOLENCE: AN INTERNATIONAL AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY STUDY. EDITED BY JOHN M. EEEKELAAR AND SANFORD N. KATZ. Toronto, Canada: Butterworths, 1978, vii + 722 pp. $15.95, paper.

This fascinating collection of papers comprise the proceedings of the second International Conference on Family Law held in Montreal, Quebec in June of 1977. John Eekelaar and Sanford Katz are to be congratulated on several counts. First, they firmly but gracefully coerced the contributors to complete their submissions in time for formal publication by July 1978. Second, they not only added a thoughtful preface but also composed concise and accurate summaries of the ideas contained within each of the five parts into which the thirty-five chapters of the volume are divided. Third, Professor Katz provided a draft of his Model Act to Free Children for Permanent Placement which carries with it traditional but essential commentary.

As the title of the book proclaims, this is a joint effort by lawyers, judges, peace officers, physicians and social scientists from many jurisdictions to examine one of the major problems of societies the world over. The very nature of the papers reveals the sources of tension which surface whenever a multidisciplinary undertaking is attempted. For example, some of the anthropological writers seek to find answers to the problems of family violence in

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the long-term reorganization of the economic and social order and accordingly
direct their energies toward global solutions. This is impatient reading for the
lawyer whose desire is to find more immediate and workable solutions which
can be applied efficiently to the multiple cases arising today. Likewise, the
physicians tend to concentrate on the restoration to health of the victim of
violence and on the rehabilitation of the offender. Conversely, the lawyers are
absorbed with notions of intention to injure and with the manner of punish­
ment to be meted out to the defendant.

These fundamental differences of approach between lawyers and other pro­
fessionals makes one suspicious of the prospect of multidisciplinary agree­
ment. Yet the fact that this volume exists gives room for hope that the views of
these disparate groups need not remain irreconcilable. In short, one can hope
only that the participants were affected by each other’s presentations and that
their efforts will translate into ongoing interest and understanding. If the pre­
sent volume facilitates that consequence in some way, it will have made an in­
valuable contribution.

The individual chapters cover every aspect of family violence; but, of all,
the introduction is the most balanced and thought provoking. Therein Dr.
Anthony Storr, a British psychoanalyst, points out the dangers and risks of life
in the home, describes the inherent tensions — both erotic and hostile — and
gives direction to research on the understanding of the causes of domestic
violences.

In Part One the essays explore the essential violence of the capitalist system
and some render a plea for its replacement by the relative peace of socialism.
They raise the question as to what are the acceptable levels of violence in
families. Estimates are made regarding the familial calculus of pain, and
various observations are recorded on the violence engendered by interspousal
power struggles. The impact of routine blood-letting on television is not
overlooked.

In Part Two the editors begin the section on “Violence between Adults:
Legal and Social Responses” with the emotive quotation of one speaker: “At
present, man’s inhumanity to man is rivalled only by his inhumanity to
wife.”1 What follows thereafter gives the reader confidence as to the sound­
ness of the views of the individual authors and presents a balance and breadth
of commentary. But if there is a criticism to be laid against some of the writers
in this section, it must be that of parochialism. The British writers appear to
lean excessively on one controversial and local polemic of recent publication.2

1. It has its origin in a speech in the British Parliament, per Sir George Young, H.C. 905
PARL. DEB. H.C. (5th Ser.) 865 (1958).
2. E. PIZZET, SCREAM QUITELY OR THE NEIGHBOURS WILL HEAR (1974). The number of
references made to the work must have tempted the editors with the idea of adding it to the
volume as an appendix.
This, along with the English habit of laying emphasis on the views of one judge or on the decision of one court, illustrates the gap between the approaches to socio-legal problems of the researcher in the smaller, unitary jurisdiction and his or her counterpart in the larger, confederal system. Despite these drawbacks, one of the better papers in the volume is that of a British writer, Ms. Maidment of Keele, who convincingly and dispassionately points out that the police are reluctant to act when called in, that their practices vary by region and that many victims are unhelpful complainants. Other related papers develop the idea that too much is expected of the law whether the goal be prevention, correction, retribution, incapacitation or deterrence. This Part is filled with descriptive pieces on the reporting of family violence, the collaborative efforts between police and social scientists and the training of personnel to cope more effectively with troubled families.

Part Three deals with violence against children and outlines the failure of experiments in blanket-reporting procedures. The contributors inform us that family strife is worldwide and that child abusers are not necessarily mentally ill or deficient, poor or criminally inclined. Dr. Albert J. Solnit, co-author of the popular Beyond the Best Interests of the Child, notes the tremendous increase in divorce and the number of “single parents,” and raises the question of how much responsibility for child abuse to attribute to these developments.

The penultimate Part Four considers societal responses to violence against children. It deals with the future health of the victim, and intent of the wrongdoers and what care and punishment, if any, the wrongdoer should receive. Some detail is given as to the inadequacy of services generally, in contrast with some more recent European experiments of assisting families in a fishbowl setting.

The final section, Part Five, covers two of the most emotive subjects — suicide and incest. One author argues that suicide is the ultimate act of violence against the family by the perpetrator. Another suggests that we should decriminalize incest except for the incorrigible individual. At issue is how to reconcile the needs of the victim with the constitutional rights of defendant. The volume closes with Professor Katz’ Model Act to Free Children for Permanent Placement. In broad terms it appears to deal successfully with the needs of children who presently are living in situations of instability. Such a model doubtless will command the attention of legislatures both within and without the United States.

We have then a collection of articles on an important social issue — family violence — viewed from a variety of professional perspectives. What makes the book unique, however, is its international and cross-cultural scope. There is no other book like it. For that reason and because it consists of new ideas, thoughtfully discussed, Family Violence is recommended with enthusiasm.