

Denver Journal of International Law & Policy

Volume 21
Number 1 *Fall*

Article 13

January 1992

Australian Year Book of International Law

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Recommended Citation

Geraldine Cummins, Book Note, 21 Denv. J. Int'l L. & Pol'y 213 (1992).

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Australian Year Book of International Law

THE AUSTRALIAN YEAR BOOK OF INTERNATIONAL LAW; Edited by D.W. Creig and Philip Alston; Australian National University Publication, Canberra, Australia (1992); \$120.00; ISBN 07315 1407 6; 555pp. (hardcover).

The *Australian Year Book of International Law* contains a collection of speeches given at a conference held at the Australian National University in August of 1990. The speeches revolve around the two themes of the conference: the consent and acceptance of international law as binding, and gender bias in the writing and interpretation of international laws.

The book represents a survey of current developments in international law. The atmosphere of the conference, gleaned through the various speeches, is an intense appreciation for the importance of international law. Yet, one may also sense a vagueness as to what constitutes international law expressed by the constant need to define the international field. The speakers seem to be looking to self-actualize themselves as a legal field separate from other legal specialties. The speech by Professor Douglas Johnston of the University of Victoria concerning a cross-disciplinary perspective of consent in international law highlights this dilemma.

Although the two themes of the conference are presented in interesting ways by speakers from several countries, the absence of representatives from South America, Africa or the former communist countries appears blatant. The presence of these countries could have transformed an extensive survey of current international law issues into a more complete presentation.

Most interesting among the speeches are those concerning gender. Whether the stereotypically slow response of the legal world to social concerns, or the realization that many problems still await solution, the decision to place gender as one of the themes of the conference is refreshing. In her article, "Gender and International Law: Women and the Right to Development," Professor Marilyn Waring of the University of Waikato suggests that international law, and laws in general, are gender biased. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that human beings "should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." A more common example appears in the "reasonable man" standard applied by the courts in the United States.

This compilation not only constitutes a current discussion of two topical academic international law issues, but offers valuable insight on how to approach these issues in the future.

Geraldine J. Cummings

