HOLLY CULLEN, *THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW IN THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOR* (The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2007)

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Being the 28th volume in the Monograph Series, Procedural Aspects of International Law, *The Role of International Law in the Elimination of Child Labor* makes a significant contribution to existing debates on the issue of child labor. Indeed, while a great deal has been written about child labor to date, very little of that research has focussed on the response from the international community from a legal perspective. Moreover, this monograph represents a unique and thorough examination of not only what the international community recognises as constituting child labor, but more predominantly, how it proposes to deal with this issue whether formally or informally.

Cullen effectively sets the stage for the book by laying down the historical foundations to child labor which date as far back to the time of the Industrial Revolution when children were expected to work. She explains the interesting story concerning the evolution of child labor as a concept worldwide and details the steps taken at international level to tackle this issue where the welfare of children became at risk. Cullen then succinctly explains the impact of the children's rights movement on this area of law, in particular, following the introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and in particular, Article 32 thereof. The author leads into the main body of the book outlining what is understood by the term child labor. While the author makes it very clear that in light of the difficulties with defining child labor, a comprehensive definition was not intended. Ultimately the approach is adopted that child labor for the purposes of the monograph encapsulates an element of exploitation. In any case, Cullen asserts that the problem does not really lie with legally defining child labor, but more appropriately manifests itself in the lack of certainty surrounding the more general concept of childhood. Following an explanatory introduction, the monograph is divided into two distinct parts.

Part I of the book moves on to explore current international legal standards governing child labor. Indeed, the initial three chapters attempt a critical evaluation of the relevant provisions governing the worst forms of child labor as reflected in Article 3 of the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor 1999, Convention No. 182. These include slavery and slavery-like practices, the commercial sexual and criminal exploitation of children, and child soldiers. As acknowledged by Cullen, while there is a lot of support in theory from States concerning prohibitions on slavery and forced labor, these high levels of support do not necessarily translate into reality as debt bondage and forced labor are still part of life in many countries, where enforcement of laws banning such practices are lax. The final chapter in

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part I, while noting the fact that it sets priorities in the area of child labor, and moves away from the former abolitionist approach (which had been adopted in older ILO Conventions) identifies the real difficulties inherent in ILO C 182 and highlights possible alternative approaches to tackling child labor through international law.

A logical continuation of the discussion concerning the law on child labor is reflected in Part II of the book which focuses on the overall issue of enforceability and more predominantly, the extent to which relevant international legal provisions in the area have been implemented in practice as well as the issue of enforceability in general. This part of the book is quite comprehensive in scope in that it not only explores the usefulness of the state party reporting mechanism as well as the individual or collective complaints procedure, but it also undertakes a critical examination of the debate over the use of trade sanctions against states where child labor is most prevalent. The extent to which these trade sanctions are consistent with international obligations under World Trade Organisation treaties is also effectively addressed. Chapter 8 is quite focussed in its aim, in that it sets out to highlight the availability of measures which can help overcome some of the more obvious obstacles to implementation of international laws preventing the worst forms of child labor. The usefulness of technical assistance as an informal measure utilised by states is explored as well as private action through corporate social responsibility (in the form of codes of conduct as well as less frequently used social labelling). The in-depth discussion and consequent critical evaluation of each of these informal methods of enforcement provides a helpful insight into the advantages and disadvantages of each method and their overall effectiveness.

Cullen concludes her work by effectively highlighting the reality that child labor cannot be addressed solely through international legal means alone. Indeed, as a complex multi-faceted issue, with a variety of causes which are of an economic, social and cultural nature, it is clear that international law must be complemented with other informal means of enforcement. That all being said, it is worth noting the reality that international law, in particular the influence of the CRC, in this complex field has resulted in some benefits. For example the CRC, the most highly ratified international human rights treaty to date, has set down a set of uniform minimum standards, to which 193 States parties across the world have signed up. This certainly paved the way for child labor been seen as a human rights issue. However, as Cullen notes, unfortunately this consensus has been undermined to some extent by inconsistencies introduced by the ILO through its attempts to place equal emphasis on C 182 and C 138.

In general, this monograph is a welcome addition to existing literature on the issue of child labor. Cullen comprehensively describes what can only be regarded as extremely complex legal issues surrounding the issue of child labor and critically evaluates the effectiveness and overall efficiency of current mechanisms which have been put in place for implementation and enforcement.