

Book Review:

*DER SCHUTZ DES SCHWÄCHEREN*, BY E. VON HIPPEL,  
(J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1982); pp.214.

Reviewed by J. Neville Turner\*

This important and original book looks to the legal position of a multifarious group of persons whom the author classes as "weaker". The common denominator of these groups is their lack of the power to form an effective lobby, which has led to their interests being ignored in the past. They are:- workers, tenants, consumers, children, women, the elderly, the handicapped and the poor. Each of them is considered in a separate chapter, with the final two, very imaginative, chapters being devoted to the problems of developing countries and the protection of future generations.

The position has, of course, changed in recent years. A great amount of modern legal literature deals with each of the above groups. It is, however, rare to find a work of dispassionate scholarship which so convincingly advocates the necessity to improve the lot of the underprivileged as a matter of self-interest. Von Hippel persuasively argues that if national and international organs do not do this in the future, the world will face unrest and revolution.

Although the book is written from a German perspective, and the complex and comprehensive social security provisions of the Federal Republic are critically examined, von Hippel nevertheless draws from a host of legal and non-legal sources. Not surprisingly, much of the book highlights the deprivations of the Third World. The perspective of a comparativist (von Hippel is a fellow of the Max Planck Institute

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for foreign and private international law) prevents the work from being a parochial exegesis.

It is an eloquent, indeed passionate, work. But it is far from being a merely rhetorical appeal for compassion. The book is characterized by careful, indeed in places rather dry, statistical analysis of economic ramifications of the alleviating measures that the author thinks appropriate. But the message is that action is urgent and imperative.

A final merit of this fine work is that, unlike many scholarly works in the German language, it is written in a clear, concise and attractive style.