



A History of Civil Litigation: Political and Economic Perspectives

Frank J. Vandall

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A History of Civil Litigation: Political and Economic Perspectives, by Frank J. Vandall, studies the expansion of civil liability from 1466 to 1980, and the cessation of that growth in 1980. It evaluates the creation of tort causes of action during the period of 1400-1980. Re-evaluation and limitation of those developments from 1980, to the present, are specifically considered.

The unique focus of the book is first, to argue that civil justice no longer rests on historic foundations, such as, precedent, fairness and impartiality, but has shifted to power and influence. Reform in the law (legislative, judicial, and regulatory) is today driven by financial interests, not precedent, not a neutral desire for fairness, and not to "make it better." It uses products, cases and policies for much of its argument. These policies can be summarized as a shift from a balanced playing field, negligence, to one that favors injured consumers. The strict liability foreshadowed by Judge Traynor, in *Escola v. Coca Cola* (1944), was not adopted until 1962, when Traynor wrote the majority opinion in *Greenman v. Yuba Power Products* for the California Supreme Court. Second, the book examines the role of persuasive non-governmental agencies, such as the American Law Institute, in reforming and shaping civil justice.

Never has it been less true that we live under the rule of law. Congress, agencies and the courts make the law, but they are driven by those who have a large financial stake in the outcome. Today, those with power shape the character of products liability law, at every turn.

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