

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 35.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 1907.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

A SIGNAL EXAMPLE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

JOSEPH H. CHOATE is unquestionably a leading light in the firmament of capitalist law. His experience and standing at the bar have been long, profound and distinguished. And these have been subsequently supplemented by what may be called a post-graduate course as Ambassador of the United States at the Court of St. James. From such a source one would, at first blush, expect that its utterances would reflect the condensed wisdom of the Age in the matter of that one essential thing to the maintaining of order in capitalist society—the mailed hand of FORCE. Yet, not so. As American representative at the Hague Conference Choate actually proposed the establishment of a permanent Court that is to decide disputes!! The most wild-eyed Utopian could not have done worse.



JOSEPH H. CHOATE
(1832-1917)

There is no Court in existence whose decree would stand the fraction of a second were not the bayonet behind it. 'Tis the glint of the bayonet that furnishes the light by which Courts' decrees are read. This is an inevitable consequence of the capitalist premises of private ownership of the necessaries of production. Private ownership cleaves society into warring fractions. The conflicts between the fractions would establish a state of actual anarchy. The only method yet hit upon, or developed, to tone the anarchy down enough in order to give life a chance, and place the veneer of order on turbulence—that sole method is that of Courts in front of bayonets. It is thus that capitalist society keeps itself corseted: it is thus that the decrees of its Courts are enforceable.

Does not Choate know this? To suppose he does not would be to charge him with ignorance—a preposterous charge. He has himself, as a lawyer but too often set in motion the force behind the Court. How, then, comes this expert on Force to

imagine an international Court could issue decrees worth something more than the paper they are written on? Does not he know these decrees are worthless without the bayonet to enforce them? Does not he know that an international Court cannot be so equipped? He knows all that. How, then, comes he to utter so Utopian a proposition? There is the rub. The capitalist mind is essentially visionary. The robustest bit of visionariness history has yet recorded is the vision that so top-heavy a structure as that of capitalist society can endure. Nursed at the breast of Illusion, inhaling the fumes of Illusion, the capitalist class, despite its much boasted “hard-headed practical sense,” is essentially a mooncalf—how essentially so may be judged from the circumstance that even a Joseph H. Choate succumbs to the affliction.

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Uploaded October 2009

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