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Eric B. Easton

Lawyers of the Old Left

Morris Hillquit, Seymour Stedman & Charles Recht

SERIES IN LAW

About the author

Eric B. Easton is Professor of Law Emeritus at the University of Baltimore School of Law, where he specialized in Media Law and Legal Writing for more than 25 years. This is his second book profiling lawyers of the early twentieth Century. The first was 'Defending the Masses: A Progressive Lawyer's Battles for Free Speech', a biography of Gilbert E. Roe.

Professor Easton's other books include 'The Life and Crimes of Jared Flag', 'New York Times v. Sullivan: Documentary Supplement', and 'Mobilizing the Press: Defending the First Amendment in the Supreme Court'. He is also co-author of 'The Law of Advertising', a multi-volume treatise, general editor of the 'Sourcebook on Legal Writing Programs', and founding editor of the peer-reviewed 'Journal of Media Law & Ethics'. In addition, nearly 10,000 readers have downloaded his roughly 40 law review and other articles. Before joining the University of Baltimore faculty, Professor Easton taught Media Law and other subjects at Loyola University-Maryland. He has also taught Comparative Media Law at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland; Shandong University, China; and the University of the Netherlands Antilles, Curaçao. He was a visiting scholar at the Journalism Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, and a Fulbright Specialist at the University of Pristina, Kosovo.

Professor Easton holds a Ph.D. from the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland; a J.D. from the Francis King Carey School of Law, University of Maryland; and a B.S. from the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University. He was a professional journalist for more than 20 years before joining the academy. His works in progress include 'Magnificent Failure: The Trials and Tribulations of Dudley Field Malone', a biography. When completed, this will be the third in Easton's series on historic lawyers.

Summary

'Lawyers of the Old Left' contains professional profiles of the three most important – if not the most famous – lawyers of the American Left in the first quarter of the twentieth Century. These men were involved in some of the most significant cases of the tumultuous era that surrounded World War I, and they all commanded the respect of both their contemporary colleagues and adversaries.

Morris Hillquit was practically synonymous with the Socialist movement that flourished in New York City. Not only was he a prolific chronicler of the movement, but he also ran for political office several times under the Socialist banner. Hillquit took a leadership role in the defense of antiwar activists during wartime and the repression that followed. In time, he would become one of the nation's pre-eminent labor lawyers.

Seymour Stedman was a leader, with Eugene Debs and Victor Berger, of the home-grown Socialist movement that prevailed in Chicago, Milwaukee, and other midwestern cities. He rose to prominence at the national level, ultimately becoming the Party's vice-presidential candidate in Debs' campaign for the presidency in 1920.

Charles Recht was unquestionably the most important American lawyer representing the Soviet Union, both before and after that country was recognized by the United States. He also participated in many important civil liberties cases, including the IWW and other anarchist-related cases. Recht also pursued a second career as a novelist, poet, and theatrical translator.

Anyone interested in radical politics, the labor movement, and civil liberties law should be interested in reading this book. While these men played an outsized role in their time, they are largely forgotten today and appear only peripherally in the period literature. This book provides a perspective on the era that is otherwise largely unavailable.



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August 2025 | Hardback 236x160mm | 247 Pages | ISBN: 979-8-8819-0302-2

SUBJECTS History, Law, Political Science and International Relations

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