

G. W. Pierson, of Yale, points out that the ideas and the devices for our universities, in the main, came from abroad. And he notes that the period from 1815 to 1876 was the era of what he termed "the great German influence." You will observe that these were the years in which were founded the schools in Baltimore and College Park which subsequently were consolidated into the University of Maryland—the College of Medicine of Maryland in 1807, the Maryland Agricultural College in 1856, the School of Dentistry in 1840, the School of Pharmacy in 1871, and so on. The German example of the free university, Dr. Pierson says, was the most important of these influences from abroad. And he described it as an institution where students could study when and what they pleased, and where the professors seemed to be free to teach and to investigate, to lecture, to conduct seminars, publish and compete with each other in the search for new knowledge. What we are doing here, then, might be described as the rebound of a force that was set in motion here a century ago. We may hope that what has come back is as good as what was sent.

But I have no more than a moderate interest in this single episode of history. Its significance, from my point of view, is that it exemplifies what Mr. Justice Holmes termed "the free trade in ideas." Our civilization is built on this competition of thought in a common market place, for, as Mr. Justice Holmes noted, the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in such competition. We in America have borrowed much from Europe and elsewhere in the erection of our State and our society. Ours is a government of laws, we say with pride, and we do not forget that the very basis of this government is the common law we inherited from the English.

Our Declaration of Independence and our Bill of Rights echo the spirit of the great enlightenment of the eighteenth century, applying the ideas and principles of men like Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire and the others. This does not mean that the statesmen who drafted these great documents were slavish imitators lacking the powers of creativeness.

*The English, the French, the Germans from whom we borrowed, themselves had borrowed from the Romans. And the Romans, in turn, had taken from the Greeks, and the Greeks from the Phoenicians and the Babylonians, and so on into the obscurity of history. The civilization we have today is a proliferation of the civilizations of the past—a distillation of the thoughts that were sound enough to survive the competition of the market place . . .*

*It is deplorable that as men, we have pushed ahead so far in science,*