

No Barriers Against Ideas . . .

The Federal court ruling that Dr. Ernest E. Mandel, a noted Belgian Marxist scholar, could not be barred from delivering lectures or attending conferences in the United States upsets a repressive edict by Attorney General John N. Mitchell. In denying an entry visa to Dr. Mandel, the Justice Department embarrassed the United States rather than the applicant—a fact evidently understood by Secretary of State William P. Rogers, who had urged Mr. Mitchell to admit the scholar.

The case involved far more than the right of an individual who holds ideas abhorrent to Mr. Mitchell and probably to the majority of Americans. Fortress America was an image, long since abandoned, built on the mistaken ideology of military isolationism. Equally unacceptable in a free society is an intellectual fortress soundproofed against unpopular and even dangerous ideas, domestic or foreign.

The 2-1 ruling may, of course, be appealed to the Supreme Court. But for the moment the extraordinary significance of the opinion, written by District Court Judge John F. Dooling, lies in the fact that it holds unconstitutional important sections of the McCarran Act of 1952, that shameful legislation sired by cold war hysteria and passed over President Truman's veto.

The majority opinion, rejecting the counsel of fear, held that freedom of speech is abridged whenever unwarranted restrictions are placed on "open and wide-ranging debate." Freedom to hear thus is recognized as a vital ingredient of free assembly and free speech itself. This reaffirmation of a nation unafraid of free traffic in ideas, even beyond national boundaries, ought to set the scene for the too-long delayed elimination of the McCarran Act in its entirety.