

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

(FOUNDED BY LOUIS BAMBERGER AND MRS. FELIX FULD, 1930)

TEMPORARY OFFICES
100 EAST 42ND STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.

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Dear Justice Brandeis:

I hope I shall not be subject to arrest or impeachment if I venture on the basis of your dissenting opinion on the Oklahoma case printed in this morning's Times to congratulate you on having once more pointed out the great advantage which the American Federal system gives to the United States, namely, elasticity, freedom of experiment, etc. The problems with which we are dealing in education and economics are insoluble on a countrywide basis. They are soluble only if experimental stations can be set up here and there at the risk of those who have the intelligence and courage to make an experiment. A great German physical chemist said to me a year or two ago, pointing to a young fellow in his laboratory,

“That is the ablest man I have got, and I can do nothing for him.”

“Why not?” I asked.

“Because he has not gone through the educational mill. What could you do for him in America?”

“Anything”, I answered. “We could make him professor of physics, director of a physical laboratory, anything to which his abilities and training would lead him, no matter how he got it.”

In this proposed Institute for Advanced Study I shall smash precedents freely, and nobody will stop me. We shall learn something from our successes and perhaps not less from

our failures. If American universities are to be improved, they can only be improved on the basis of experimentation set up independently of existing institutions. Why a state should be estopped from making a social or economic experiment, I cannot for the life of me see. I do hope that the question may be presented to the Court sometime in the future when a majority will have had its eyes opened by the discussion which the present decision will occasion in the liberal camp.

I am expecting to be in Washington to attend a meeting of the Howard University Trustees on April 12. I wonder if I might venture to call on you and Mrs. Brandeis in the late afternoon.

With all good wishes to you both,

Ever sincerely,

Abraham Flexner

Justice Louis D. Brandeis
Stoneleigh Court
Washington, D. C.

AF:ESB