

The campaign for road safety in this and other parts of the world has led to the filing of a number of inventions having this end in view, such for example as railway-crossing barriers, warning and anti-dazzle devices, as well as the development of apparatus to complete automatically the change from one stage of control to another, and the provision of better braking-systems to relieve the driver of as much physical effort as possible. The bulk of the specifications filed in respect of the classes relating to milking-machinery and to building refer to teat-cups and ferro-concrete structures respectively, efforts also being directed to the improvement of concrete by the vibration process.

In regard to internal-combustion engines most interest appears to be directed to carburettors, atomizers, and other devices for the better mixture of fuels. Interest is also being shown in methods of treating carcasses for the purposes of securing better marketing-conditions. Hair-waving appliances are still receiving attention, including methods and apparatus intended to minimize the risk of personal injury. Due possibly to the present enthusiasm for home knitting, a number of applications have been received for hand wool-winding devices.

INVENTION IN RELATION TO HUMAN PROGRESS.

It has been said that the history of man is the history of invention. This, like many broad statements of truth, must be regarded as being subject to certain reservations. But whatever these reservations may be, it is well established that among the important foundations upon which modern society is built is the law designed to foster and protect the products of the human mind. Invention—whether it is associated with discovery or not, and whether it involves the creation of things suited to man's material needs, or to his intellectual and spiritual needs—is, in fact, essential not only to the foundations of civilization, but also to its superstructure. Progress in industrial pursuits, in manufacture, in transport, and in communication depends primarily and in essence on the initiative and fertility of the inventor. Similarly, looking at the cultural, educational, and spiritual aspects of life, we find that progress depends largely on continual additions to human knowledge by the creative worker, either through the enunciation of new truths or the seeing of old truths in new lights, and in relation to the swiftly changing environment of modern life.

The creator of new ideas and new things—whether his realm be literature, art, music, or patentable invention—must have the means to live. Recognizing that such creators are essential to a healthy, well-balanced civilization, the State has passed laws to protect and encourage creative effort. This protection and encouragement must extend not only to the creative worker himself, but also to those who by work or money contribute substantially to bringing the creative idea into a practical form. Until this practical form is achieved—as a machine, a process, a book, a work of art, or other appropriate embodiment—the public cannot enter into possession of this new human advance.

It is for this reason that two large and influential International Unions have been functioning for over half a century, and that many years ago New Zealand decided to take her due place in international deliberations on ways of improving national and international safeguards to patent and copyright assets from both the individual and the public point of view.

The subject-matter of these two Conventions is becoming in various ways interrelated, and, at the Copyright Conference which is to be held at Brussels, discussions of great importance to numerous patentees will take place.

Just as fast aircraft, ships, and land engines have brought close together things that were previously far apart, so creative development has brought together two branches of human activity that up till then had not been so strikingly linked. The two branches of activity to which I refer are industrial invention and intellectual invention in the shape of patents and copyright, which have recently become more intimately bound together as a result of the development of radio broadcasting.

INVENTIONS RELATING TO RADIO.

The last few years have, in fact, seen a remarkable growth in the number of proceedings that have been instituted for the grant of letters patent relating to radio. In 1935, in the radio class, a record was established not only for that class, but also for all the eighty-two classes into which inventions are at present divided in New Zealand. This record in 1935 was broken last year as a result of a further increase in the radio class of approximately 53 per cent. over the record number received in 1935. The number of proceedings in 1936 constitutes an increase of close on 100 per cent. on the average number of cases for the years 1930 to 1934 inclusive.

Radio is, of course, one of the most powerful agencies in the world to-day for extending the range and effect of human personality. The importance of the human voice in many phases of life has in fact been enhanced by invention to such an extent that leaders of thought in various directions—in education, art, science, and medicine—are increasingly turning their attention to exploring new ways in which radio can be used for the public good.

INVENTIONS RELATING TO TELEVISION.

The effect of broadcasting upon the life of the community will, in the near future, receive further impetus as a result of television. This branch of invention has shown a most interesting growth during the last decade, the number of proceedings relating to television having risen from 10 in 1927 to the remarkable number of 191 in 1936. What further steps inventors will take in extending the field of human perception, it is not easy to forecast. It is certain, however, that further ingenious methods will be evolved of bringing to the fireside, more and more realistic reproductions of the activities of the world around us. Thus it may well be that invention, which in some ways has tended to break down home life in the past, may be the means of building it up again in the future on a much more satisfactory footing.