INVENTION

Genius Flash Not Needed

New patent law declares that it is immaterial whether invention resulted from long toil and experimentation or whether it came to inventor in a flash, it is patentable.

➤ IT NO longer takes a "flash of creative genius" to come up with an invention which can be patented.

President Truman has signed into law a basic revision and codification of the mass of laws having to do with patents which have been passed since the first codification in 1870.

The new law also clarifies and reverses several court decisions. One of these decisions, made in 1941 by Justice William O. Douglas, declared that an invention had to be the result of a "flash of creative genius and not merely the result of the skill of the calling," to be worthy of a patent. The new law says that it does not matter how the invention was made, it is immaterial whether it resulted from long toil and experimentation or from a flash of genius.

Another section makes it easier to prove contributory infringement of a patent. Under the new law, someone who induces infringement can be guilty of contributory infringement as well as the person who actually contributes to the infringement.

Previously the courts had said that contributary infringement was illegal but that if a patent holder tried to go into court about it, he was misusing his patent. The new law does away with this paradoxical situation.

For the first time, it has been spelled out that the courts shall presume that a patent is valid once granted by the patent office. Previously, in some courts, the inventor had to prove that he had a right to his patent.

The law is the result of a cooperative effort of all those parts of society interested in patents. Scientists, inventors, corporations, patent lawyers and government officials got together to bring order out of what they felt was the chaos of patent law.

The first real patent law was passed in 1836, although a patent office had been set up at the behest of Thomas Jefferson in 1790. The laws were revised in 1870. Since then, new laws relating to particular cases, decisions by the courts of the land and opinions as to the meanings of the law have grown into a state of some confusion. The House Judiciary Committee, which held hearings on the new law, feels it gets the basic principles on which patents are granted codified for the first time.

Science News Letter, August 9, 1952

PHYSICS

Cause of "Flying Saucers"

➤ WATER DROPLETS in the sky too small to be seen by the naked eye could have caused the appearance of the "flying saucers" reported over Washington recently.

Radar sets will pick up echoes, making blips on the radar screens, from clouds of such water droplets. These invisible clouds will also reflect lights from the ground.

Blips from clouds of such small droplets can only be picked up by radar sets transmitting on very short wavelengths. The radar sets on which the objects were seen transmit on very short wavelengths.

Weather conditions in Washington were such that these water droplets could very well have existed at the time the sightings were made.

This would explain not only the blips on the radar scopes but also the sightings of "strange lights" at the place where radar operators saw the blips. Jet pilots sent up to investigate on some occasions saw these strange lights.

It was revealed at a press conference conducted by Maj. Gen. John A. Samford, Air Force director of intelligence, that on at least one of the three occasions when sightings were made by radar that a temperature inversion existed. Temperature inversions cause reflections of objects on the ground which can be picked up both by radar and by the naked eye.

Gen. Samford revealed that more emphasis will be placed on scientific observations of the reported phenomena in the future. About 200 diffraction grids or gratings have been ordered and they will be scattered around the country. These can be used to obtain spectra and to determine exactly what kind of light it is that is emanating from something seen in the sky. Also an effort will be made to utilize Schmidt camera telescopes. These photograph with constantly charged plates almost all of the sky that can be seen from the position of the telescope.

Gen. Samford explained that, of the 1,000 to 2,000 sightings of "flying saucers" reported to the Air Force, all but 20% have been explained. He emphasized that it is lack of sufficient information about this 20% group of sightings which keeps them in the unexplained column. Man is not as well equipped to measure what he observes as he is to observe, the general pointed out.

Efforts are being made to work with scientists, both in government and out, Gen. Samford explained. Scientists, quite properly, refuse to try to explain these phenomena when there is insufficient evidence to provide a reasonable explanation. Hence the effort to improve methods of measurement.

Science News Letter, August 9, 1952

RESOURCES

Report Ready on Resources for Freedom

➤ ANALYSIS OF the raw materials problem of the United States and its relation to the free and friendly nations of the world is contained in an outstanding report on American resources, prepared by the President's Materials Policy Commission and now available. It also contains recommendations for policies and programs to meet the situation.

It is a five-volume report bearing the title "Resources for Freedom." Volume I is on Foundations for Growth and Security. Volume II concerns the Outlook for Key Commodities. Volume III is on the Outlook for Energy. Volume IV is on the Promise of Technology, and Volume V contains Selected Reports to the Commission. All are available from the U. S. Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. (See listing, SNL, July 19.)

Resources for Freedom has as its central task an examination of the adequacy of materials, chiefly industrial materials, to meet the needs of the free world in the years to come. Today, throughout the industrial world but centering inevitably in the heavily industrialized United States, the materials problem bears down with considerable severity, the report states.

The problem is not the kind of "shortage" problem, local and transient, which in the past has found its solution in price changes. It lies first in the profound shift in the basic materials of the United States. Then it is to be found in the difficulties being encountered by other high-consuming nations, primarily in Western Europe, which stem from the serious depletion of their own resources coupled with the weakening or severing of ties with their colonies.

Resources discussed include products of agriculture, forestry, fishing and the mining of metals and other minerals including petroleum and various fuels. How production can be increased is one feature in the recommendations but the conservation of resources is of even greater importance.

Chairman of the President's Materials Policy Commission, which was created in January 1951, is William S. Paley. Other members are George R. Brown, Arthur H. Bunker, Eric Hodgins and Edward S. Mason. They were aided in their work by an executive and technical staff, and had much assistance from government offices.

Science News Letter, August 9, 1952

North America has over 100 million tons of known reserves of *titanium* ores.