

to the House of Commons

Patents, Designs and Trade Marks 1975

93rd Report of the
Comptroller-General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks

*Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 100 of the Patents Act 1949,
section 42 of the Registered Designs Act 1949 and
section 45 of the Trade Marks Act 1938*

*Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed
28th April, 1976*

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
73p net

occurred. It seems that the fall in business was the same for UK residents and others, for the proportion of complete specifications filed by UK residents was unchanged at 25 per cent. A sample investigation indicated that 'individuals and small firms' did not restrict their patent activities more than others did.

There were some exceptions to the general downward trend of activity. The number of applications for restoration of patents which had been allowed to lapse unintentionally, increased from 112 to 148, although each successful application now costs £55 in additional fees. The proportion of applications which attracted applications for extension of the period for putting them in order was much the same; from May and November last, each month cost £6 and £8 compared with £3 in 1974 and yet 21,291 months of extension were purchased in the year. Applications for endorsement of patents 'licence of right' increased from 748 to 1,208; renewal fees for patents so endorsed are halved; less than 2 per cent of the patents in force carry an endorsement.

Recruitment and wastage of technical staff in 1975 resulted in an increase of nine in the number available for examining applications. Due to this and the reduced filing rate of complete specifications the number of these specifications awaiting examination was reduced by 4,200. The average delay between filing and examination rose very slightly over the year to just over 13 months. At the end of the year the staff numbers were more than enough to deal with the current input and delay before examination should be reduced in 1976. The arrear is not the same in different technologies, the electrical and computer fields being generally behind the others. Recruitment in 1976 will therefore concentrate on these fields. The productivity of the technical staff was slightly better in 1975 than in 1974, progress continued in training them in foreign languages and preparations were made for training in European patent law and practice those who are likely to transfer to the European Patent Office.

At the end of the year there were no significant arrears in the non-technical areas of patent work.

To ensure that the staff are all employed efficiently and are correctly graded, a Government staff inspection team reviewed the technical staff during the year and started a review of the non-technical staff; the latter review will be completed by mid-1976. A modified system of acquiring management information relevant to forecasting output of work was introduced in October. At the same time the system of recording and collating statistics of work done by the staff was refined. The joint Official Side/Staff Side working party, mentioned in previous reports, continued to meet during the year to study problems arising from the introduction of the European Patent System.

* *Trend of inventions in published specifications*

Following the pattern set in recent years, the perceptible and significant trends of inventive thought are mainly concerned with the development and continuation of ideas originated in preceding years, although several genuine new departures are apparent.

Man's awareness of his environment and his desire to improve and protect it continue to inspire advances in the reduction of atmospheric pollution. In particular, much activity centres round the retroactive electric control of the fuel/air ratio supplied to an internal combustion engine in response to a

measurement of the exhaust gases. This new system has the object of producing cleaner exhaust emissions and/or more economic use of fuel. Also in the motor engine field, there is continued interest in internal combustion reciprocating engines and in means for improving combustion efficiency in both rotary and conventional internal combustion engines, with a view to reducing noxious exhaust emissions.

Unabated activity is also apparent in the use of incineration, alone or in combination with other processes, to eliminate all types of waste material and avoid air pollution.

Work on anti-skid braking systems has progressed with emphasis on safety circuits or devices which either test the system before use or monitor it during use to detect malfunction and provide normal braking. Again in the field of vehicle safety, a limited but important development concerns air-resisting retractable flaps for motor cycles and cars, optionally operated in conjunction with normal braking systems and a second instance utilises deformable energy absorbers in association with motorway crash barriers.

Other mechanical advances are to be found in 'twistlock' fasteners for securing reight containers to vehicles such as road trailers and trains, incorporating retractable fittings on the vehicle, and also in plastics bundling straps which embody a ratchet device to ensure secure fixing. In the medical art an area of development is concerned with the perfection of prosthetic knee-joints.

Significant advances in the electrical field worthy of mention relate to quadraphonic line transmission systems, digital electronic channel selection for tuning radio and television receivers and charge coupled semi-conductor devices. A new technique in the semi-conductor field known as 'Integrated Injection Logic' has facilitated simplification of metallisation patterns in integrated circuits, while the continuing activity in gas discharge display tubes and panels has included the first colour television wall display panels.

The number of specifications accepted in 1975, divided according to subject-matter, and the headings in which the above activity is classified, are given in Appendix 7.

Fees

* END

An account of receipts from fees is given in Appendix 8. Despite the fall in the level of business, renewal fees receipts rose from £4,367,467 to £7,464,942 and fees payable on filing complete specifications rose from £1,095,276 to £1,628,610. These rises are attributable to the fee increases effective from May and November 1975.

Patents in force

Appendix 9 shows the number of renewal fees paid in each of the 12 years 1964 to 1975 and the number of patents in force in 1975 to end of fourth year (as at 31 December 1975).

Other matters

Information about Certificates of the Comptroller, Oppositions, Revocations, Compulsory Licences, Extension of Term, other miscellaneous requests and applications and the Register of Patent Agents is given in Appendices 10 to 13.