

*Patents of Invention*

and amendment may not be in order for that reason. But the question in connection with this Patent Act is whether the consumer and labour are protected. I was very much struck as hydro electric commissioner and chairman of the board of control of the city of Toronto years ago by the fact, as shown by the similarity of prices in the various tenders, that there was practically an electrical combine and monopoly in this country. It must be remembered that this electrical business includes not only light and power, but telephones and the operation of electric railways. In connection with the taking over of the Toronto street railway I found that a vast amount of money was added to the cost and simply thrown away because of these patents, with the result that the consumer and labour and the people who had to pay the power bills had to pay it all in the rates. There was an investigation into this matter in England, and it was revealed how these monopolies extended all over the world, and that they parcelled out and farmed out the territory.

Great improvement has been made by this government in this new patent law. I have pointed out on previous occasions that the United States patent law required an invention to be manufactured in the United States within three years after the date of the patent. The protection which I believe in as a Conservative is protection for all the people, not some of the people. I believe in protection for the consumer, for labour, for the people who use light and power in their houses. Sir James Whitney did not intend the cheap light and power for aristocrats but for all the people, the farmers and the small householders and the toilers in the industrial centres. For years these monopolies fought in Ontario to prevent the hydro from selling appliances and equipment to the public, and in the end failed. Thus their rates were brought down by hydro competition notwithstanding their patent monopoly. We must decide whether or not there is to be a monopoly. Of course we know that a monopoly has existed. I have dealt with these people, and I know that one has no recourse and must pay the price. I am not here to criticize the large electrical supply companies, such as the Canadian General Electric, Westinghouse and others, because I do know of late years they lowered their rates and brought about better working conditions. In that respect I should like to pay tribute to them, and I believe any person who has acted as a commissioner must compliment them upon the great amount of good they have done in Canada generally.

[Mr. Church.]

The question is however as to what by this Patent Act we can do towards protecting the consumer. Is Canada forever to be the happy hunting ground of the foreign patent capitalists, or in our transactions through the Patent Act with them are we to insert provisions for the protection of our consumers? As the Secretary of State has said, it may be true that the amendments proposed by the hon. member for East Kootenay are not in order on account of the convention made by the late government through the League of Nations. We must remember however that in the next five years the greatest problem in Canada will be that of constitutional and parliamentary reform. In England that is the greatest issue to-day.

A year ago our king spoke calm words over the radio. Those who heard him must have been impressed with them. We should be up to date, keep pace with the times, declare for parliamentary and constitutional reform and, as he said, bring into public affairs those qualities of unshakable sanity, invincible patience and tireless good will which His Majesty so fittingly commended. During the past ten or fifteen years I have been deeply interested in Canadian patent law, and while I must give the government credit for the commendable action it has taken in drafting the bill now before the house I regret that we are depending still on the league for a lot of action. I am reminded of what Burke said over a hundred years ago, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue." As we sit here I have before me a copy of the English Review for May in which appears an article Letting in the Socialists. As a footnote I find this paragraph:

The British Electric Grid system, which has been attributed to Mr. Samuel Insull's initiative, inflicts injustice on private enterprise. Furthermore, it is technically and economically unsound and strategically dangerous.

I would say that the new electric law in England advanced by the MacDonalld government is a sample of sovietism, coercing consumer and producer alike. The consumer in England, whether in domestic or in commercial life, may buy from only one agency. Not only coercing importer and consumer, they coerce all concerned.

I do not believe we have gone far enough in this legislation. The investigations held by the price spreads commission have shown that which we knew ten years ago, namely what takes place in connection with patent laws when devices are farmed out and the consumer can buy from only one agency.