

CHAPTER 11

OUR TRADE ASSOCIATION PROPOSAL

[524] We have found (§ 384) the trade association source of invention and research but a tiny quarter of 1 percent of all, but think it could and should be enormously expanded.

[525] What would be the traits of an ideal system for supporting invention and its pertinent sciences? First, it would provide that all who benefit from the work should join in paying for it, and that invention and its sciences, our greatest sources of progress should be more bountifully supported than ever before. To get the whole world to pay would be difficult, to be sure; our whole Nation can pay through governmental support; but it were desirable to invoke where possible the commercial motive and private management, in closest touch with the needs and thought of private industry. The inventing and also the science should also be in close relation with the universities, the scholars, and the great ideals of science: truth, human welfare, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and universal publication. The optimal system should further provide that each discovery and invention be promptly practiced on the widest scale that is economic, without any wasting of time or money on quarrels over ownership and who gets the money, before the new idea shall be permitted to be used; nor should there be any monopolistic extortion, nor any delays through possible poverty or personal incapacity of the individuals who made the inventions. And every person who made useful contributions should be rewarded, the most fruitful sources be especially stimulated, and every actuarially promising field be attacked, however remote, uncertain or generalized its foreseeable benefits.

[526] To realize this ideal were quite an order. Different items of the desiderata are fulfilled by different ones of our 17 or so cataloged supports for invention. None gives all; but all could be served by our new plan for the trade associations. The patent system *attempts* to fulfill them all, but with the poor success we have seen, unable to do anything serious for most fields, and motivating only about a fifth of all (ch. 3 and 6-9).

[527] Though trade association inventing is today so tiny a fraction of what it might be, and though it has been sufficiently described elsewhere,^{377 8} let us first recall its present status, from chapter 9, section 5. Some 384 associations in 1953-54 were conducting technological research or invention, spending \$14 million, 45% of it in their laboratories, the rest elsewhere, 25% being for basic research.⁵¹⁹ Few patents are taken out, and these are opened to the members or the public, free or for small royalties.⁵²⁰ The characteristic fields for the associations' activities that concern us are research rather than invention, coordination and encouragement of members' researchers, and problems affecting the whole industry rather than few members or a new