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PROMOTION OF INNOVATION AND INVENTIVE ACTIVITY: THE ROLE OF
INVENTORS' ASSOCIATIONS AT THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND
INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

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1. THE SYRIAN PATENT SYSTEM

We have a special experiment in Syria, which might be useful for our colleagues. It is a combination of the socialist system looking with some caution on the capitalist system from the window. This description reflected positively on our Association, which had no difficulty persuading the Minister of Information to make room for publicizing every new patent by allowing it's owner to advertise it 12 times during one year, free of charge on all information media, particularly the three state television channels. In the capitalist market, it is an expensive service and we, as an Association of Inventors, draw a small benefit from the owner of the advertisement. It amounts to about \$20, contributed to the treasury of the Association, while the owner saves around \$12,000, the value of an advertisement. So far 93 inventors have benefited from this opportunity.

2. SOFT LOANS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOTYPE

Often, after the announcement, the inventor would want to transform his invention from a chart to a prototype. At this stage, Syrian banks give us the financial opportunity, according to which the inventor could receive an expedited easy loan of up to US\$20,000, in order to embody his invention, and make it more persuasive for investors. Seventeen inventors have benefited from such loans, which exceeded the cost of manufacturing the prototype. Furthermore, our Association plays a supportive role in the sense that it holds free-of-charge exhibits for the inventors, to attract the attention of investors, and effect a small financial benefit for the Association's treasury.

3. MANUFACTURING

In the third case, where the inventor wishes to produce his invention, we secure for him an "industrial loan", sufficient to cover two-thirds of the cost of production equipment, as well as the value of raw materials every year. The number of industrial inventors did reach ten yet. Nevertheless, and despite all these services, which helped us strengthen the bond between the inventors and their central association in the capital, we are still on the poverty line, and we think that we need your advice in an important matter.

Since all members of our Association are convinced of the necessity that the Association enter into partnership with those patent owners who have the chance of succeeding internationally, the question is whether this approach is sound? It becomes particularly accentuated when we share in the cultivation and not in the harvesting especially, when the inventor becomes big we request the advice of you all.

4. COMMERCIALIZATION & LEGAL PROTECTION

Another important matter, which we are unable to solve yet, lies in our conviction that every invention should be unprecedented, and hence global, i.e., cannot be restricted to one market and we should abstain from doing that. From this socialist window on the capitalist market, there are at least five out of the 400 Syrian inventors, whose patents should be known to the world. We, however, do not possess the ability to protect them from plagiarism. One of them was exposed to such experience. He is the owner of a patent in the field of Nanometers, which is related to pharmaceutical industries. His invention was scandalously stolen by an American-French group, and commercially marketed. What could we do? Particularly, when we do not possess the financial resources to offer the inventor and thus help him travel and sue them.

5. INSURANCE / PROTECTION AGAINST PIRACY AND ILLEGAL USE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

One of our most serious problems, which poses the reverse question to all Syrian inventors is: why do we abstain from plagiarizing their inventions, while they do not observe this rule. We as an Association, will never adopt such a method, and we, in this conference, are called upon to join efforts in solving this problem. We suggest to you as conferees to adopt a solidarity statute, according to which any member of the inventor's club, regardless of how he joined it, should pay a permanent nominal subscription fee. From the accumulated amount we establish an insurance company to protect patent owners all over the world. Any inventor who belongs to the club will be nominated as a Golden Card Holder.

We will present a working paper in this sense to a WIPO meeting, suggesting that it takes upon itself the responsibility of defending the owner of a Golden Card, or any other formula that saves the victimized inventor from the financial agony, and endows him with the self-confidence to move in the market of patent trade and circulation, confident that nobody will infringe on his rights. But, should that happen, and it will, there would be somebody who is responsible for defending him without any additional financial losses. That will be exactly like life and car insurance, but in a way suitable to the world of inventors. Looking forward to your ideas and discussion regarding the individual inventors, in order to arrive at some suggestion that consolidate their position, and solidify their marketing immunity, through minimizing their present element of fear.

6. ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION

The above reviewed actions of our Association have raised the morale of our inventors to a great extent, and they achieved a reputation close to that of the artists, the writers, and the painters. Hence, membership in our Association began to expand numerically. From 1946, the year of our independence, until 1992, the year of our Association's establishment, the number of registered inventors reached 138, while

during the last five years it jumped to 400. More than one hundred among them possess more than one patent of invention. The Syrian women entered the world of innovation; we have five women inventors.

The attending problem, however, is that those inventors are not in the same profession exactly, as is the case elsewhere in the world; otherwise, their association would have been their specialized authoritative reference. Hence, we observed that offering these solidarity advantages in advertisement, banking facilities and exhibits... etc., increases the number of inventors who knock on the door of the Association seeking help. But, it is still less than required and we strive to fortify the inventor against local encroachments, through making him aware of his rights and duties, before the danger and not after it. Still, our answer to his permanent question of “what shall I do when my patent is stolen...” is a stuttering and unwarranted one. And we as an Association do not possess the power to defend him in each locality.

Granted that he does not possess a fraction of our capability in the defensive movement, what shall we do? In this conference of WIPO, this subject is of utmost importance for us.

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