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SECTION SEVEN OF THE AMENDMENTS TO THE PATENT STATUTES.

In a recent issue we commented editorially upon a : that, although we discussed the provisions of each to secure its defeat. amendment in detail, we were careful to place by itself, and publish without any comment, a certain section 7 which reads as follows :

"That in every case where the head of any department of the government shall request the Commissioner of Patents to expedite consideration of an application for a patent, it shall be the duty of such head of a department to be represented before the Commissioner, in order to prevent the improper issue of a patent.'

Our silence with regard to this section was due to a reluctance to make any criticisms which might have purpose : for we are free to confess that at the first reading it appeared to be a most foolish, ill-considered, and unnecessary measure.

We eagerly sought for enlightenment as to the intermeaning ourselves. We were unable to obtain any exand we were finally referred to the author of the secupon himself the responsibility of seeing that the whole length of Manhattan Island. Commissioner of Patents does his duty and does not | The present Eighth Avenue horse car line will be become a burden upon the government."

with which the bill was finally pushed through.

is not so qualified, it must be either because of his inwe to suppose that the head of some other department fifth Street to Eighth Avenue. or his irresponsible clerk would be more capable?

fact that it places the head of a department in the southern portions of the city. It will give a parallel anomalous position of being plaintiff and defendant at service on each side of Broadway which cannot fail to friend of the case, he urges that it be taken up for con- cross line at Fifty-ninth Street will very materially constacles in the way of the grant of a patent. The applibe argued in a triangular fashion between the attorney, the Commissioner, and a third somebody, whose claim improper issue of the patent."

To appreciate this amendment at its full value, one

stood as the friend of the inventor and would-be patentee.

Section 7 of the amendments, however, will change bill embodying certain amendments to the patent all this at a stroke, and inventors will in the future statutes of the United States which had been signed by hesitate to disclose their plans to heads of departments the retiring President in the closing hoursof his admin-1 who, if they considered that a patent would "impose a istration. Our readers may or may not have noticed burden upon the government," would use every effort

THE UNDERGROUND TROLLEY IN NEW YORK CITY.

'The street railroad commission of New York has granted the application of the Metropolitan Traction Company to operate its lines by the underground trollev system—a change which will affect some forty miles of railroad lines in New York City.

It is a well known fact that the problem of transportation in New York presents special difficulties which arise from the nature of the site upon which the city is built. All the elevated and surface systems of transbeen based upon a misconception of its real scope and portation run mainly in parallel lines from north to south along the full length of the island. By far the greater part of the travel is in a north and south direction, and although the different arteries of travel lie but a block distant from one another, there is at all pretation of this measure, being unable to grasp its full times of the day more or less crowding, and during the "rush" hours the congestion is attended with great planation of the meaning of the amendment at the discomfort and more or less delay. As the important Patent Office; the chairman of the committee which change which is contemplated by the Metropolitan formulated the original bill was no better informed, Traction Company is directed primarily to relieving the traffic upon the Broadway cable road, the lines tion in question. Briefly stated, it provides that where which are to be electrically equipped are those which the head of a department undertakes to hasten a deci- lie immediately to the east and the west of this road, sion upon a patent application, he shall also take and extend from the Harlem River south through the

issue the patent improperly. As it has been explained equipped throughout with the new system. Commencby the author of the amendment, "He (i. e., the head, ing at the Harlem River, the new line will run on this of a department) should be represented by his law officer avenue to Fifty-ninth Street, where there will be a or otherwise, as he may choose, in order to prevent the cross line of the same construction from First to Tenth improper issue of a patent which, being issued, may Avenue. From Fifty-ninth Street the new line will continue on Eighth Avenue over the present route to a While we are satisfied that this amendment was terminus at Canal Street and Broadway. Another drawn up with the best of intentions and a desire to branch will start from Fifty-ninth Street and run down protect the interest of the country at large, we think it Sixth Avenue to West Broadway. At Fulton Street it possesses features which are strongly objectionable and will be carried east to Church Street, and through which have probably been overlooked in the haste Church Street to a terminus in Battery Place. The company has announced that the first part of the work The amendment certainly seems to take the form of to be undertaken will be the Sixth and Eighth Avenue a vote of lack of confidence in the Commissioner of lines below Fifty-ninth Street, and it is expected that Patents and the work of the Patent Office. If the they will be in running order by the middle of the au-Commissioner of Patents is not qualified to prevent tumn. The company intends to put in the same sys-"the improper issue of a patent," who is? And, if he tem on the Fourth and Madison Avenue line, which runs from the Harlem River to the Post Office. It will capacity or partiality. If he is incapable of judging also construct a line on Amsterdam Avenue, from Manwhat is proper or improper in his own department, are hattan Avenue to Sixty-fifth Street and through Sixty-

It will be seen that the proposed system will give a There is a further objection to the amendment in the greatly improved service between the northern and one and the same time. In one breath, as a supposed relieve the congestion, especially in the lower city. The sideration, and in the next he is instructed to put ob- tribute to the convenience of cross town travel, inasmuch as passengers from Amsterdam Avenue and cation is no longer a matter to be determined between Eighth Avenue can cross over to Madison Avenue and the client's attorney and the Commissioner; but it must continue down on the east side of the city, and on the other hand, passengers from the Harlem district over the Madison Avenue line can cross over at Fifty-ninth to standing in the case is the fact that he has asked for Street and continue down Sixth or Eighth Avenues to its early consideration, and is there "to prevent the the shopping district, both of which journeys can be accomplished without change of car.

It is the intention of the company to push the work has only to consider the history of the bill up to the through with all possible dispatch, and have the whole time when section 7 was added. The bill was drawn forty miles of line in operation before the close of the up by a committee of the highest authorities and most year. If they succeed in doing this, it will rank as one distinguished practitioners of patent law—a branch of of the most remarkable feats of railway construction on the law, be it said, which is admitted to be particularly record of any kind, and will be entirely without a complex and abstruse. The amendments carried the parallel in the records of street railway construction. sanction of the American Bar Association, and they The managers of the company claim that they will be were only drawn up in their final form after extensive able to build at this high rate of construction because correspondence with patent solicitors and others of the comparative simplicity of the construction and specially learned in this branch of law. They then re-¹ the enormous force of men which they will crowd upon

ceived the careful consideration of the House commiteach section of the work.

'tee; were passed by the House, and forwarded in due course to the Senate. Here, at the eleventh hour, Metropolitan Traction Company has been operating without the knowledge of the gentlemen of the bar who formulated the bill originally and without consul tation with any who were likely to possess any special knowledge of such matters, this amendment was inserted, and the friends of the bill deemed it been based upon the experience which has been gained wisest to accept the amendment in order to avoid the in this way.

defeat of the whole bill.

Looked at from any point of view, it is difficult to see what good this amendment can work to the governthe heads of departments should be kept well advised as ⁶ the government is especially concerned; and it has at as far as it legitimately could do so, the government The iron conductors will be of a T-shaped cross section

It will be known to many of our readers that the for some time several miles of underground trolley system on a branch known as the Lenox Avenue line. This was built largely for experimental purposes, and the designs for the present proposed extensions have

In its broad features the construction will be similar to the one mentioned, which was fully illustrated in the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN for February 22, 1896. The ment or to anyone else. It is certainly advisable that main features of the new system are as follows: The conduit, which is placed in the center of the track, to the progress of invention in those fields with which carries two conductors, one for the supply and one for the return current. It will be shallower than the one on ⁴ been the custom of inventors to seek the advice of Lenox Avenue, and from the interior of the conduit an heads of department and their aid in hastening the open passageway, about 5 inches in width, will connect hearing of such patent applications as might affect the with the street surface and will be closed with the cus-¹⁹ interests of the various departments. In this respect, tomary slot rails, leaving a narrow opening for the plow.