United States Patent [19]

Shaw

[11] **3,877,562**

[45] **Apr. 15, 1975**

[54] **ARTICLE PACKAGING MACHINE**

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[73] Assignee: **Marcal Paper Mills, Inc.,** East Paterson, N.J.

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[21] Appl. No.: **254,989**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **198/24;** 198/106; 221/91

[51] **Int. Cl.** **B65g 47/00**

[58] **Field of Search** 198/24, 106; 221/91; 53/159, 164, 358

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Primary Examiner—Evon C. Blunk
Assistant Examiner—Douglas D. Watts
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Burns, Doane, Swecker & Mathis

[57] **ABSTRACT**

An automatic packaging machine for sanitary paper products such as rolls of toilet tissue, packs of paper napkins, towels, etc. The machine comprises an article feeding section, a bag-supporting magazine section, and a package sealing section. The feeding section includes a reciprocal device having a support surface for underlying a plurality of articles and pushing means for moving the articles or packs. The feeding device is shifted in one direction from beneath a selected quantity of articles or packs to displace the articles downwardly, and in a reverse direction to push the displaced articles or packs into a wrapper to form a package. Continued movement of the feeding device causes the package to be transferred to the sealing mechanism.

A magazine section is provided for supporting an irregularly shaped stack of bags. The magazine includes hinged table sections which are automatically pivoted as the stack is raised. In this manner, the magazine compensates for uneven dimensional variations of the stack occurring during depletion thereof to maintain the uppermost bag generally horizontal.

The sealing section includes a stop arm for orienting a package on a support plate and devices for tucking in and heat-sealing the end flap of the package. A reciprocating mechanism is provided for automatically shifting the support plate to enable an ejecting plunger to push the package from the support plate following the sealing operation.

11 Claims, 24 Drawing Figures

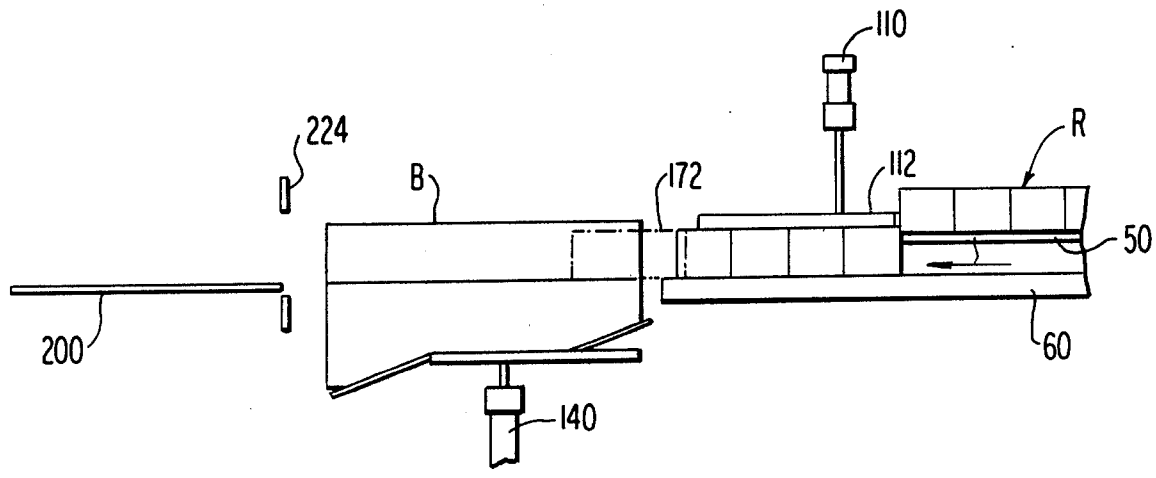


FIG1

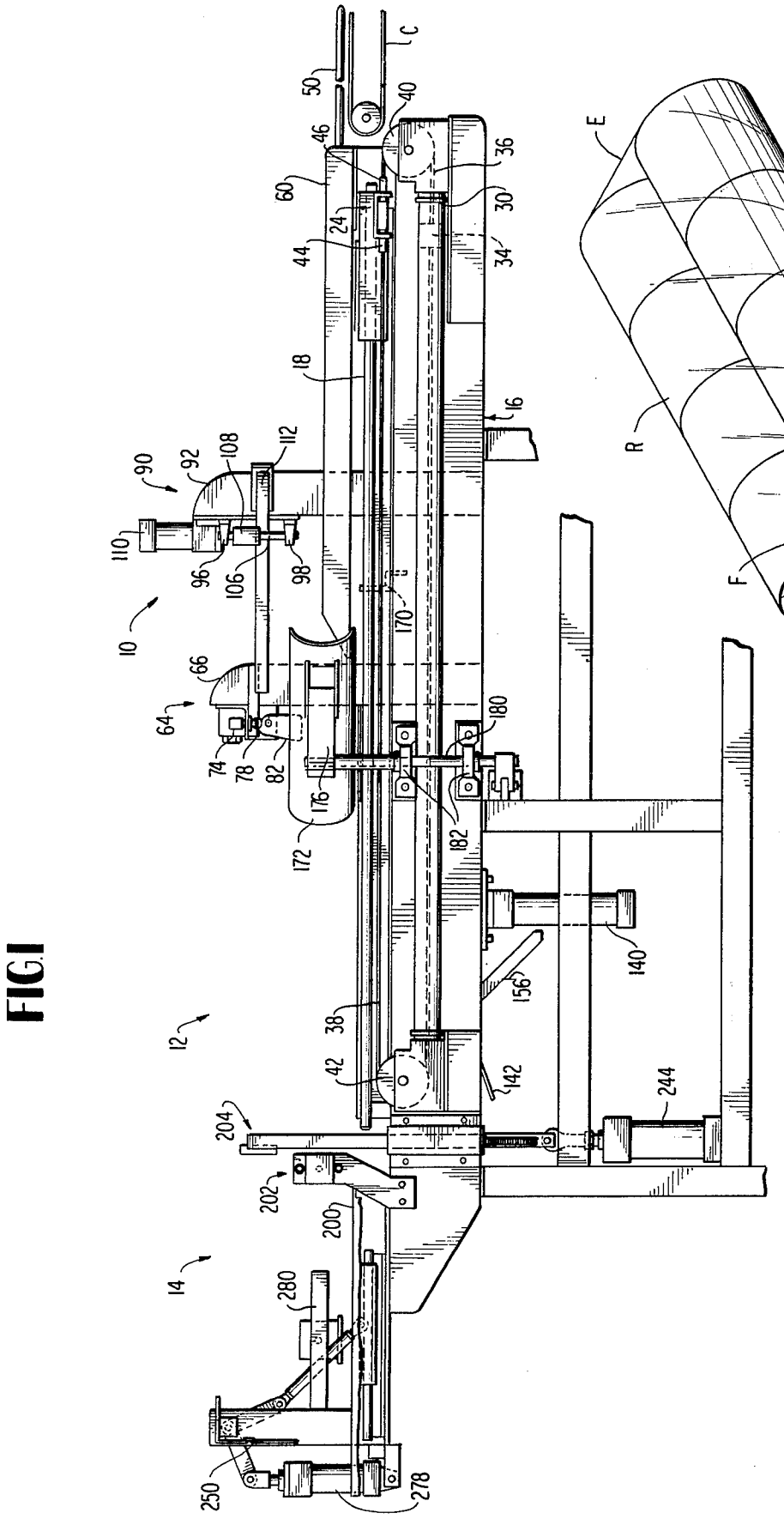

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FIG2

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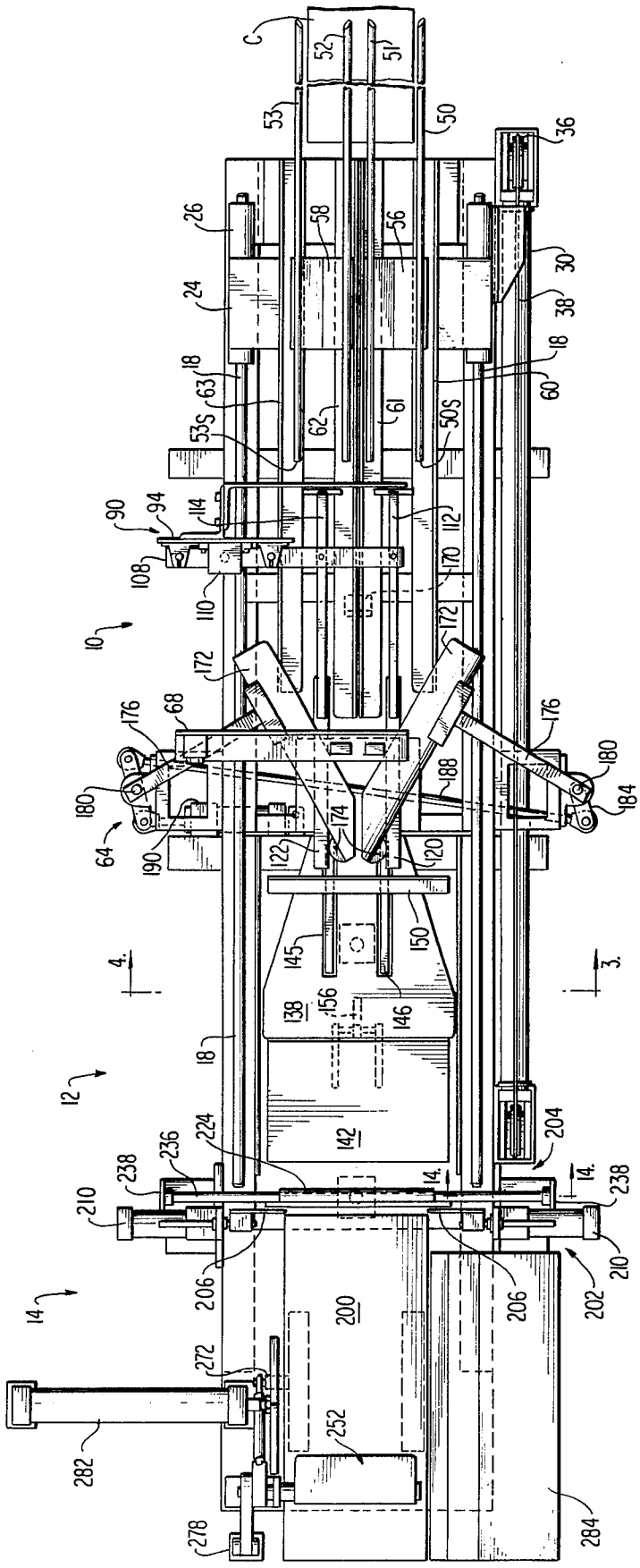

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FIG.3

FIG.4

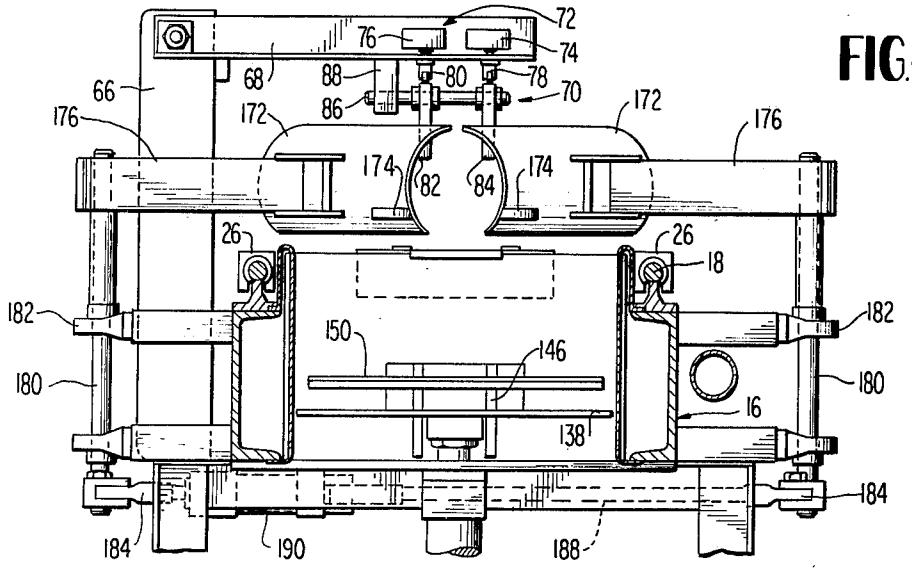

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FIG.5

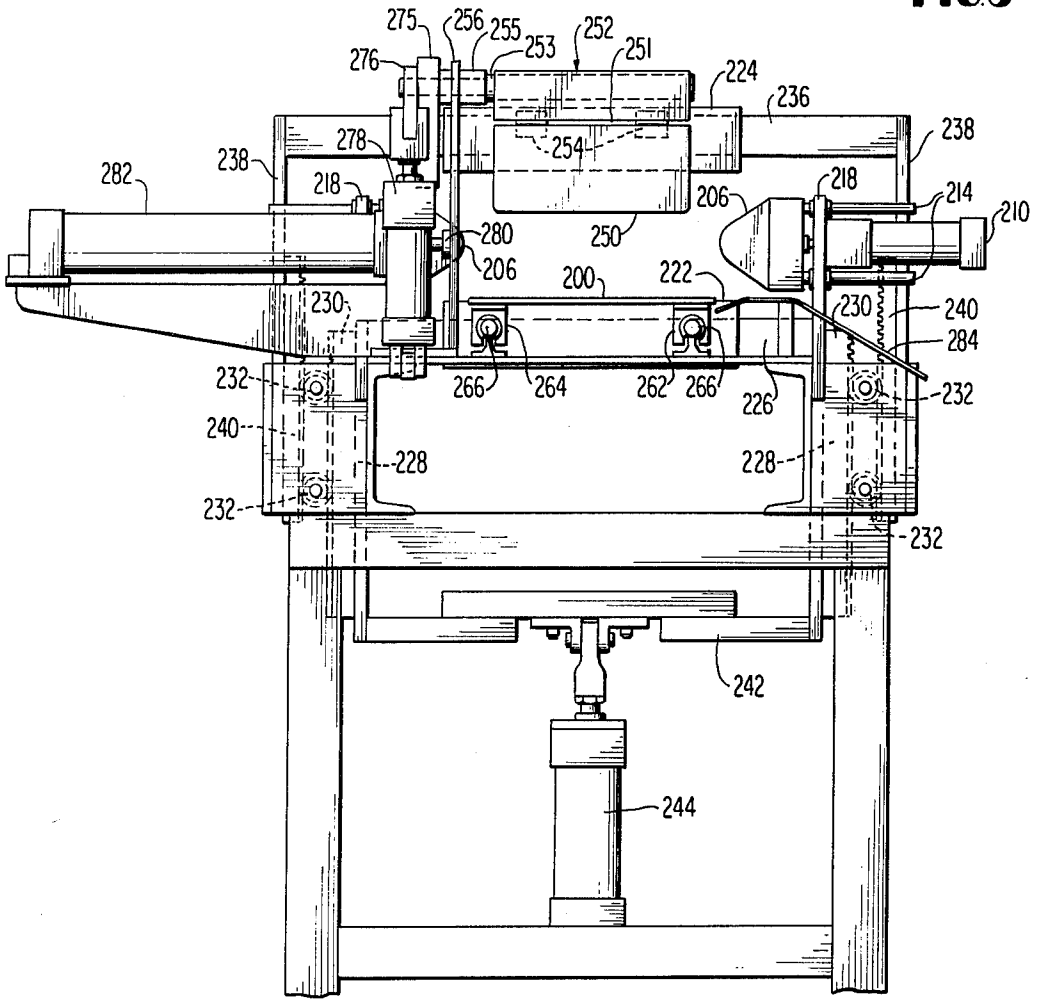
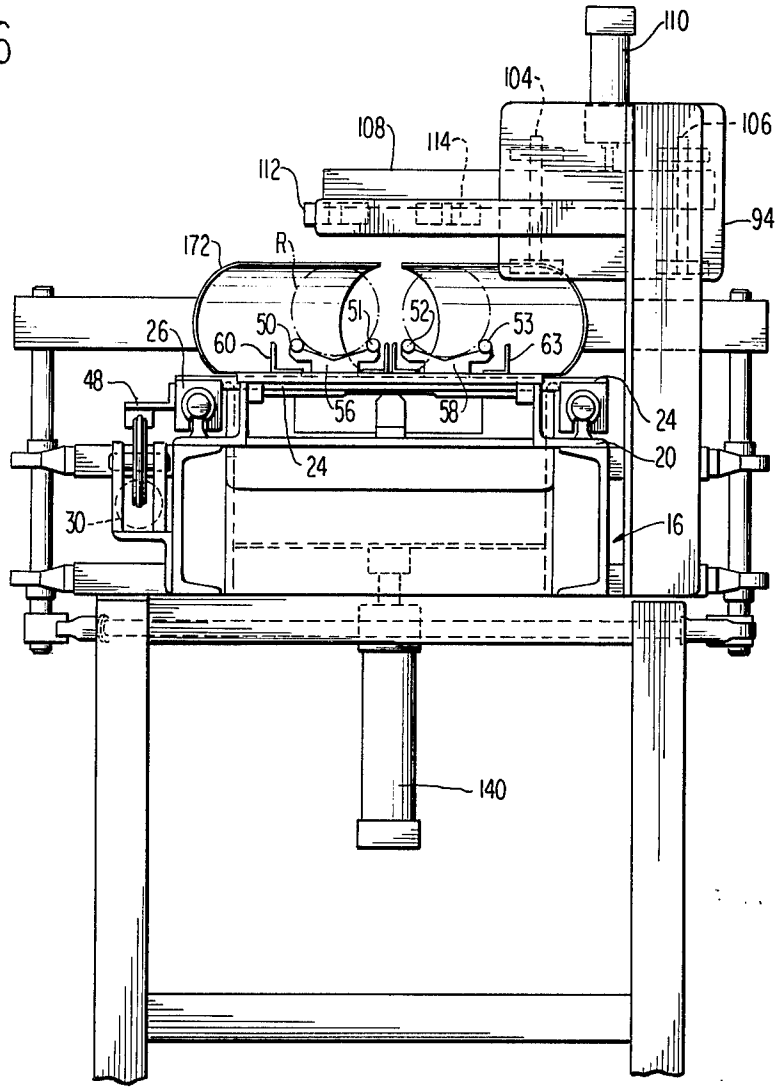

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FIG.6


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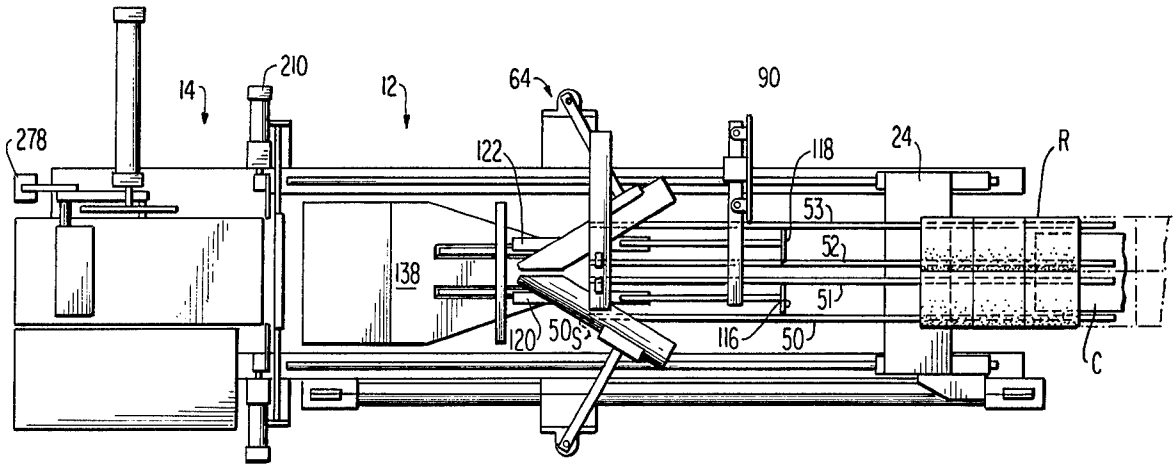

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FIG.7

FIG.8

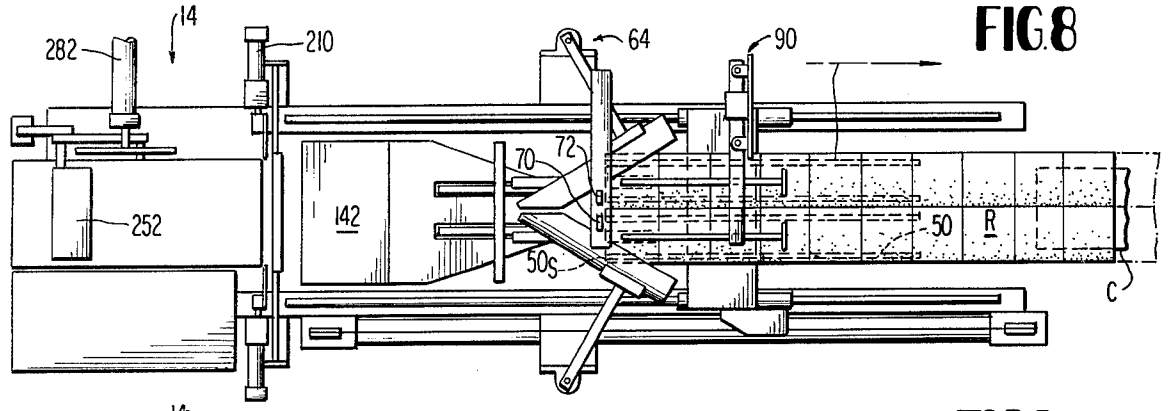


FIG.9

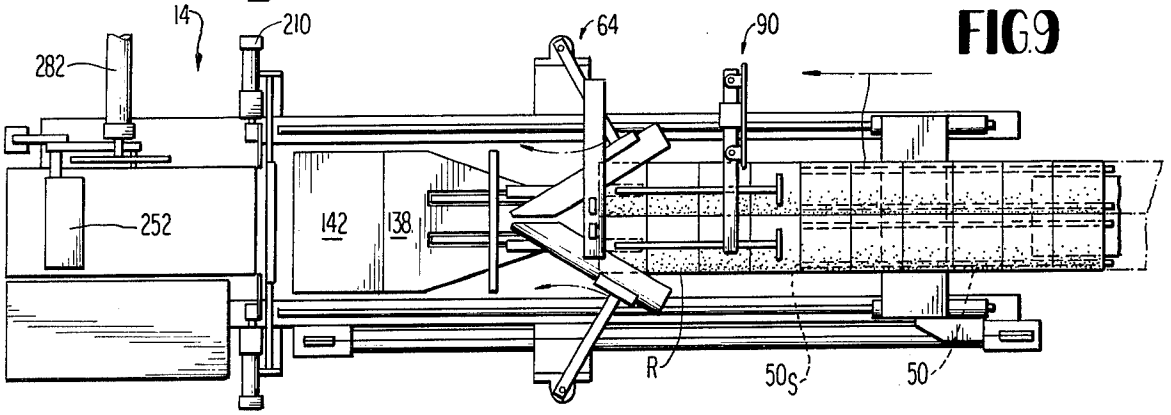


FIG.10

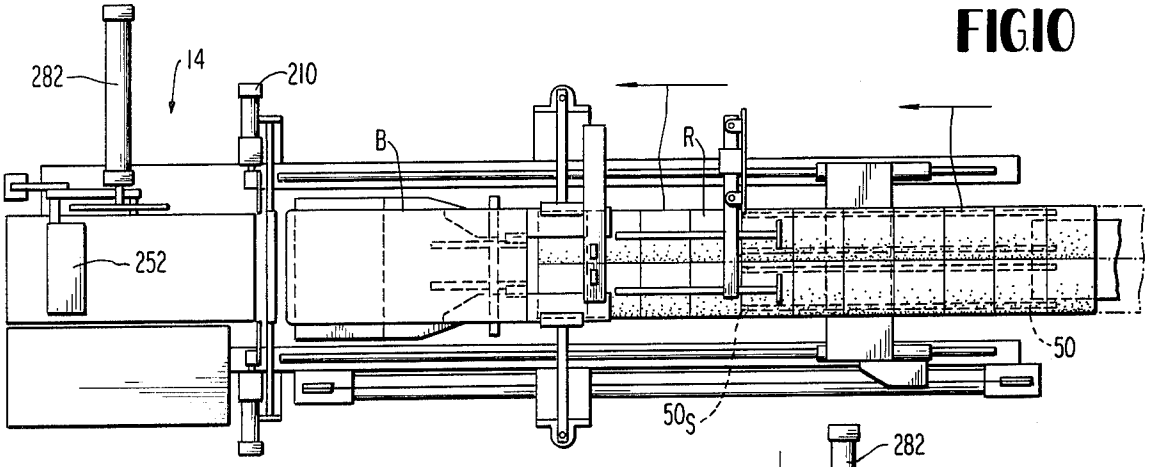
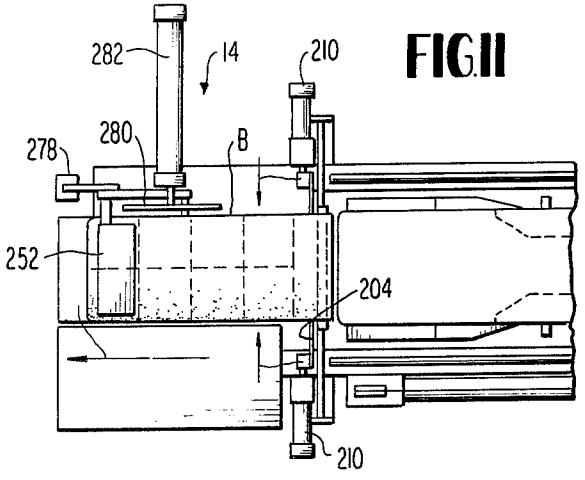


FIG.11



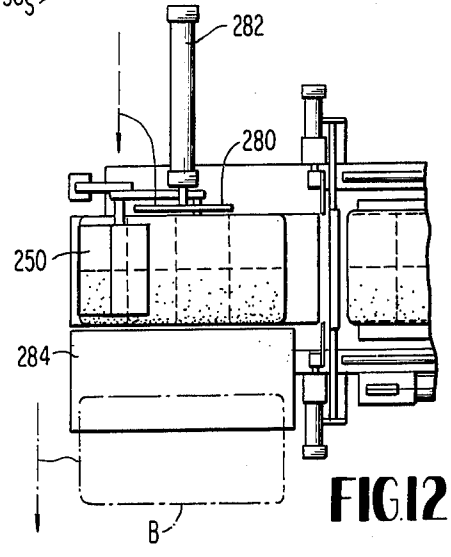


FIG.12

FIG.13

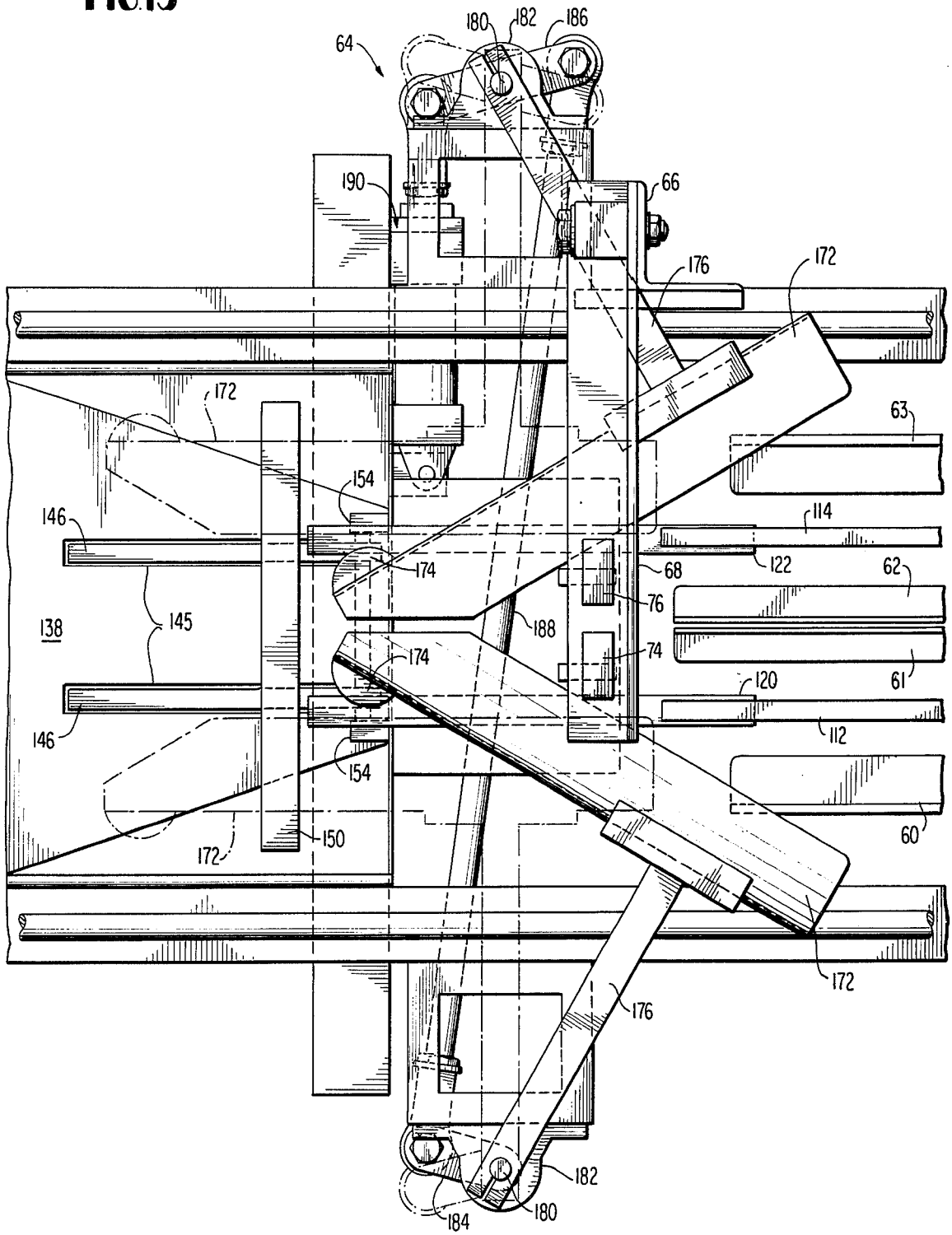

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FIG.14

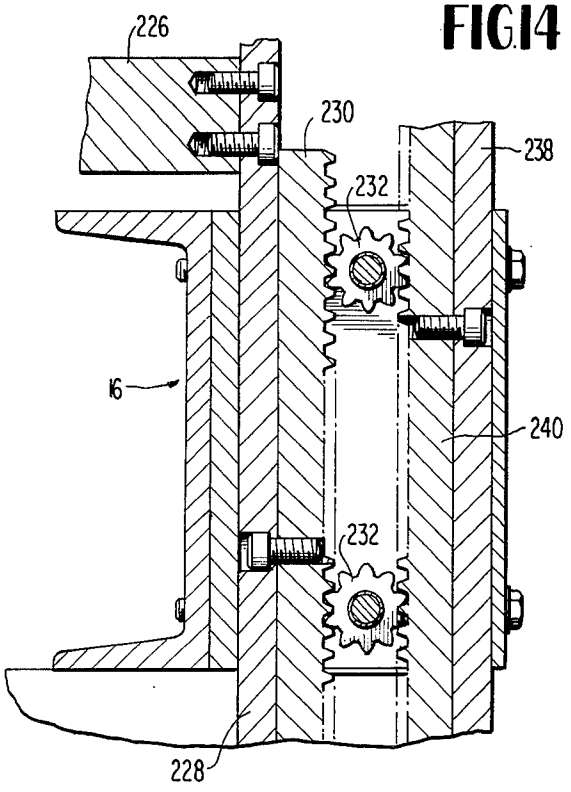
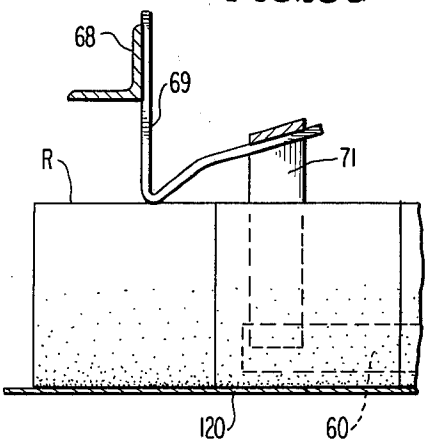


FIG.13a



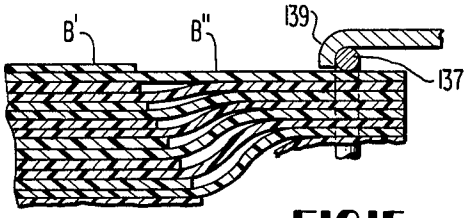


FIG.15

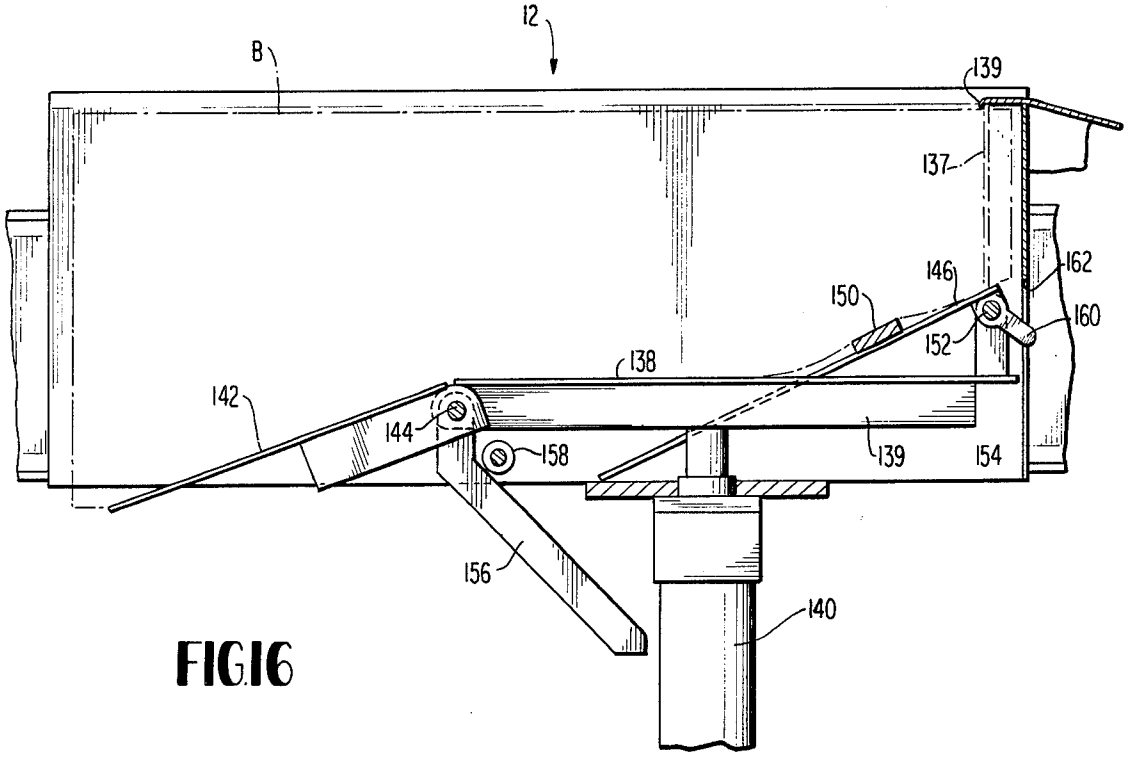
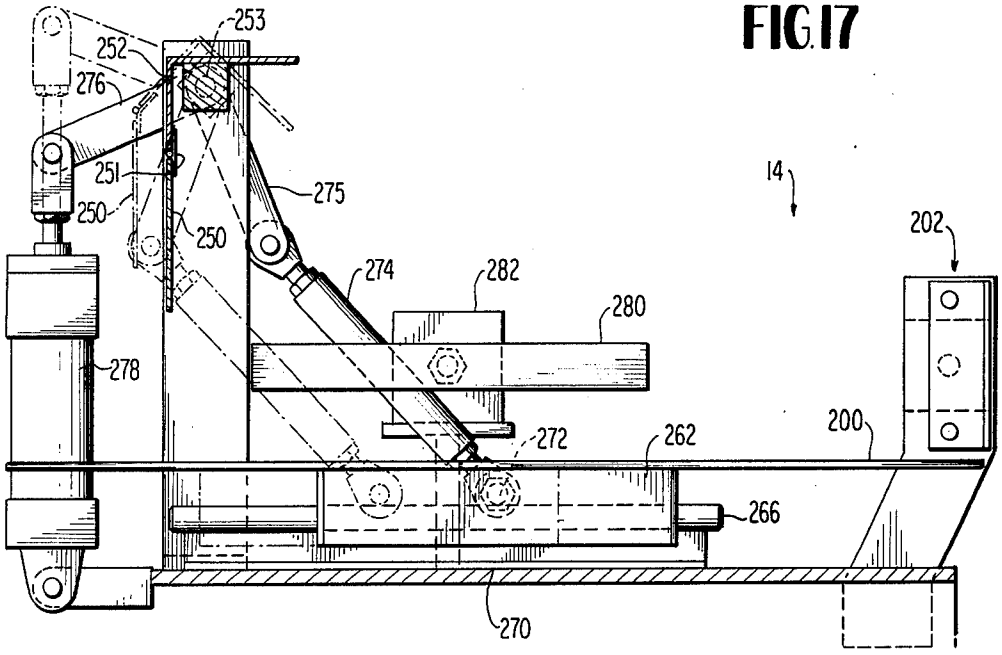


FIG.16

FIG.17


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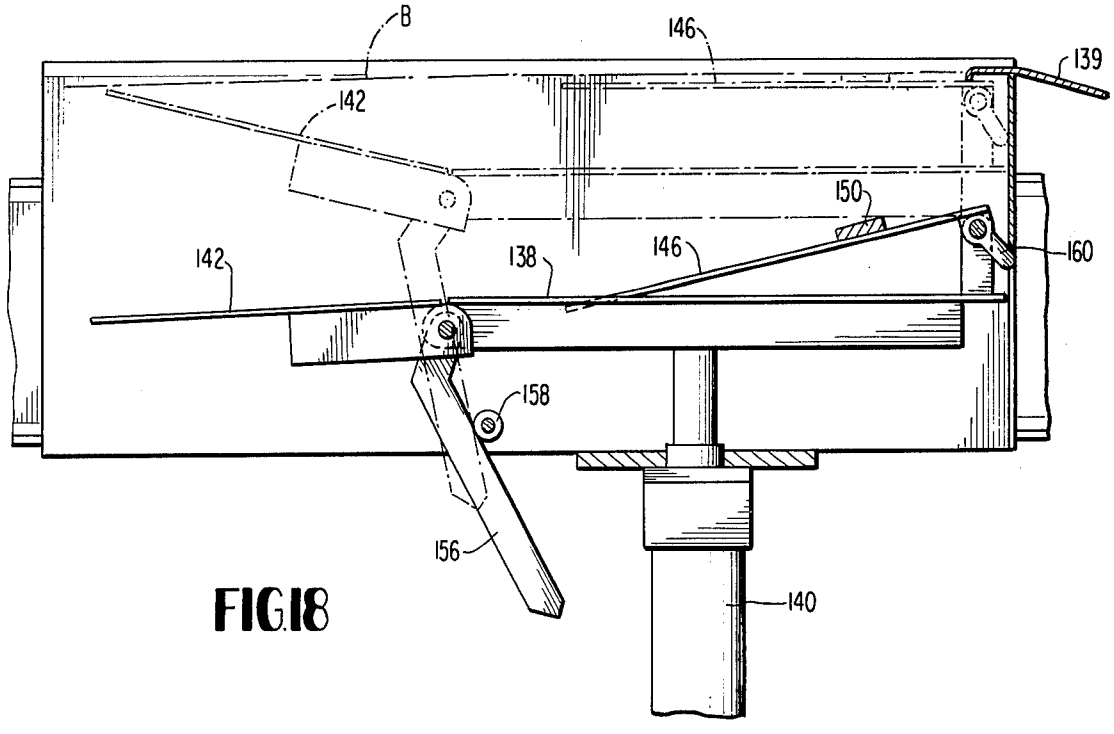

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FIG.18

FIG.19

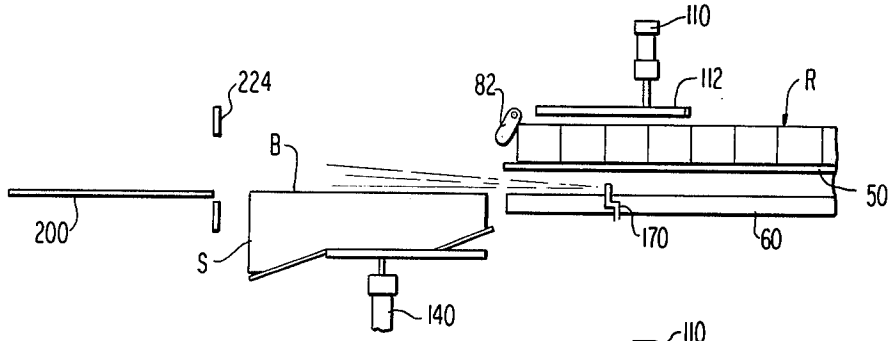


FIG.20

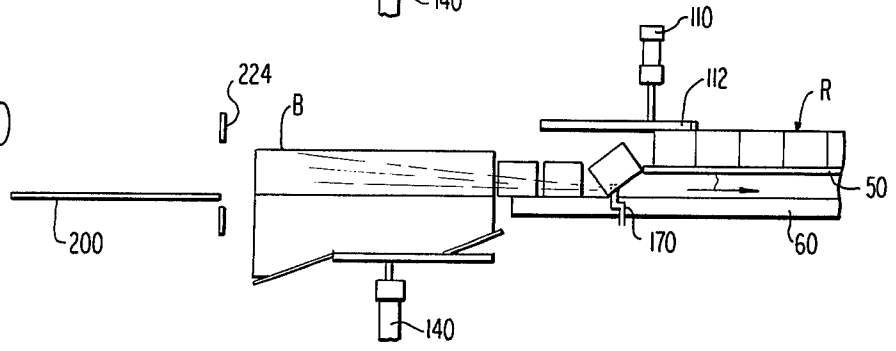


FIG.21

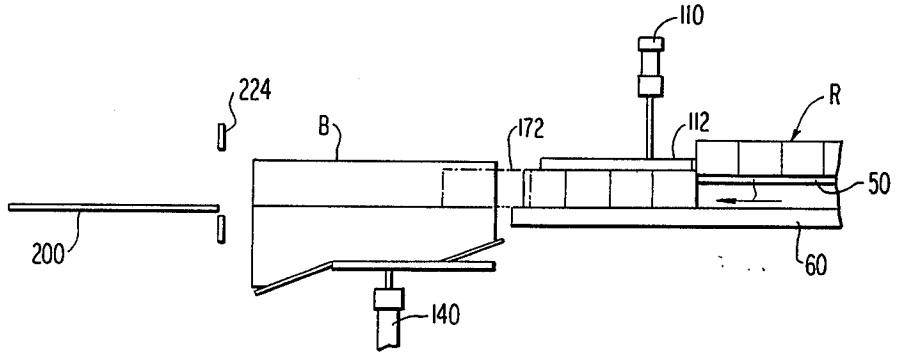


FIG.22

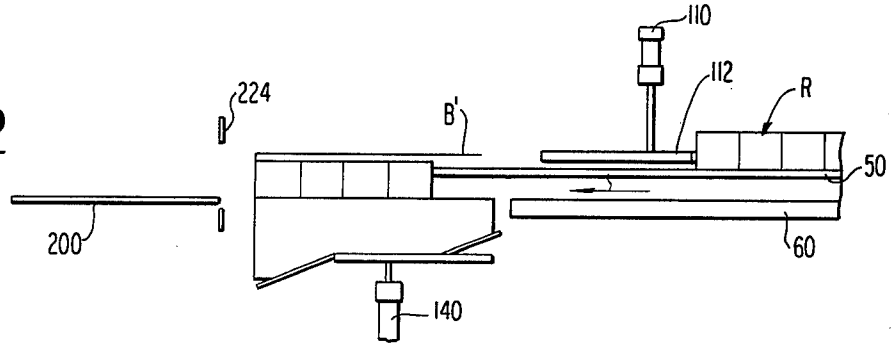
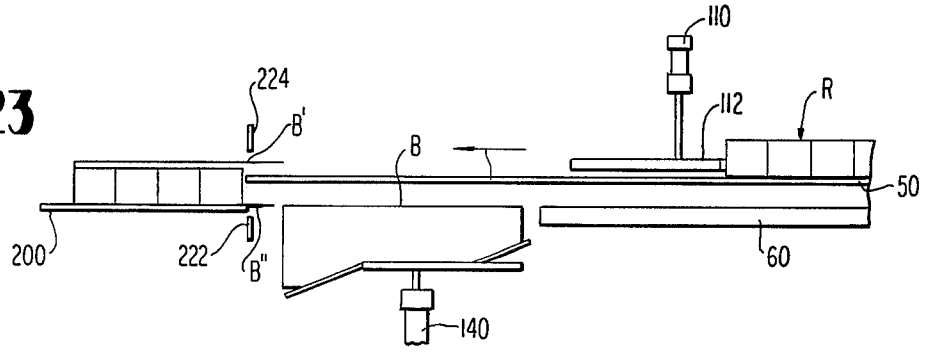


FIG.23



ARTICLE PACKAGING MACHINE

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to improvements in Article Packaging Machines and, more particularly, to devices for inserting articles into wrappers or bags to form packages and subsequently sealing the packages, all by automatic operation.

It has been proposed heretofore to insert articles into plastic bag-type receptacles by means of reciprocal pushing mechanism prior to closing and heat-sealing the bags. An example of an operation of this type is illustrated in U.S. Pat. No. 3,339,338, Sept. 5, 1967.

In conjunction with such operations, it is desirable that a suitable quantity of articles to be packaged, should be positioned at an injection station intermediate the receptacles and the pusher mechanism. While this can be accomplished manually, expensive labor costs may be encountered and it would render the packaging operation slow and tedious. Moreover, the high costs and increased size of complex mechanical devices for metering and positioning the articles has tended to reduce the practicality of automating these operations.

Previously proposed packaging assemblies have additionally included a magazine for supporting a stack of plastic bags which are sequentially opened and filled. Such operations have utilized a stack of bags which are closed at one end and open at the other. The bags are held together at their open end by a retaining clip. Stacks of this type may exhibit non-uniform dimensions wherein the stack is thicker at the closed end than at the open end. This non-uniformity may be initially compensated for by appropriately shaping the magazine table to properly orient the topmost bag for being mechanically opened and filled. Gradual depletion of the stack, however, may result in uneven changes in stack dimensions, causing subsequently filled bags to be improperly oriented.

Another problem in the art has been the provision of a fully automated apparatus which will fill receptacles effectively will articles and then seal the filled package.

One object of this invention is to simplify and improve the construction of an automated receptacle filling and sealing assembly to enable the assembly to be operated at high speed, and yet to be constructed at less cost and with less complexity and to require a substantial reduction in overall space for the use thereof.

Another object of the invention is to provide a compact article feeding mechanism which automatically meters a selected quantity of articles and inserts the articles into a receptacle such as a bag.

Still another object of the invention is to provide an article feeding operation wherein the same structure functions both to meter the articles and to insert them into the bags.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide a bag-supporting magazine for carrying a non-uniformly shaped stack of bags while automatically compensating for uneven dimensional changes in the stack during depletion thereof.

A still further object of the invention is to provide for automatically tucking, sealing, and ejecting a package of articles.

At least some of these objects may be accomplished according to one embodiment of the invention by providing an article packaging apparatus which includes a

reciprocal article transfer mechanism. The article transfer mechanism includes a supporting surface for underlying and supporting a plurality of articles, packs, etc., and a pushing surface for engaging and transferring articles to a receptacle. Means is provided for shifting the supporting surface and the pushing surface from beneath a selected quantity of the articles to be packaged. Consequently, the articles are displaced downwardly to a position located between the pushing surface and the receptacle. Reciprocally shifting the pushing surface in the opposite direction causes the pushing surface to engage and push the articles into the receptacle.

According to a further aspect of the invention, the article transfer mechanism comprises two pairs of pusher arms. The peripheral surface portions of the pusher arms define the article supporting means in the form of two pairs of parallel guideways. The guideways are operable to support two continuous rows of articles, such as rolls of toilet paper, or packs of paper towels, napkins, and the like, as they are mechanically fed therealong. Terminal end walls on the arms define the pushing surfaces. A reciprocal piston is operably connected to the pusher arms to reciprocate the arms in one direction, causing a downward displacement of the rolls or packs, and in the opposite direction effecting an insertion of the articles into the package. A control arrangement is provided for automatically initiating the actions of the pistion in response to appropriate orientation of the rolls or packs.

In another independently significant facet of invention, a receptacle-supporting magazine is provided for carrying a stack of plastic bags. The magazine includes forward, and rearward sections for underlying and carrying corresponding sections of the stack. The rearward section initially lies in a downwardly sloping posture to accommodate the thicker stack at this end due to the folded over ends of the bags. Camming devices are provided for automatically varying the slope of the forward and rearward sections as the magazine table is raised. In this manner, uneven dimensional variences of the stack during its depletion tend to be compensated for such that the uppermost bag of the stack is kept in a generally horizontal orientation.

A bag-opening mechanism is provided and includes an air nozzle for directing a stream of air across the top of a bag, producing a vacuum over the bag. Consequently, the upper wall of the bag becomes lifted slightly, enabling the air stream to enter and inflate the bag. A pair of guide arms are pivotally mounted adjacent the bag in a manner operable to be swung into the opened bag to maintain the bag in an opened posture and to serve as a guide for articles being inserted into the bag.

In a further independently significant aspect of the invention, a package sealing mechanism is provided for automatically tucking and sealing the end flaps of a filled bag and subsequently ejecting the package. The sealing mechanism includes a shuttle plate for carrying a package. Significantly, the shuttle plate is disposed such that the package may be transferred thereto by the pusher arms which are employed to insert the articles into the package. A tucker plate assembly and a sealing jaw assembly are disposed adjacent the shuttle plate sequentially to tuck-in and heat-seal the end flaps of the bag. The shuttle plate is reciprocally arranged in a manner operable to move the sealed package clear of

the tucker and sealing assemblies. In this fashion, an ejector, extending transversely of the shuttle plate, may engage and displace the package therefrom. A stop arm is provided for initially positioning the package on the shuttle plate and for accommodating movement of the package during the ejecting operation.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

This embodiment of the invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a side elevational view of a packaging machine showing the feeding, bag-supporting, and sealing sections thereof;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a package of rolls which has been formed and sealed according to the invention;

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the packaging machine;

FIG. 4 is a detail cross section through the machine, on the line 4—4 in FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is an end elevation of the sealing end of the packaging machine;

FIG. 6 is an end elevation at the feeding end thereof;

FIGS. 7 through 10 are top plan views of the apparatus, in schematic presentation, illustrating the sequence of steps performed in the bag filling operations thereof;

FIGS. 11 and 12 are partial top plan views illustrating diagrammatically steps performed during the sealing and ejecting of a package;

FIG. 13 is a detailed top plan view of an article-guiding portion of the apparatus;

FIG. 13*a* is a detailed side elevation, partly in section, showing an article retainer;

FIG. 14 is a partial cross-section of operating means for a pair of bag-sealing jaws;

FIG. 15 is a partial cross-section, in detail, of a stack of bags being held by a retaining clip;

FIG. 16 is a side elevation, partly in section, of the bag-supporting magazine;

FIG. 17 is a side elevation, partly in section, of the sealing section of the apparatus;

FIG. 18 is a view similar to FIG. 16 showing the bag-supporting table in a partially raised posture; and

FIGS. 19 through 23 are diagrammatic views, in side elevation, illustrating the sequence of steps performed in filling a package.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF DISCLOSURE

The invention is described in connection with the packaging of rolls of toilet tissue that are to be inserted in multiples, as two, four, six or eight, for example, in a suitable bag. An example of the completed package is illustrated in FIG. 2, having eight rolls R enclosed within a transparent polyethylene bag B. The latter has a closed end E and an initially open filling end F. In forming the package, the lateral edges of the bag B are tucked in as indicated at T, and the free edges of the bag B are then brought together and sealed along a transverse line S. The steps of accomplishing this operation will be described hereinafter.

Referring to FIGS. 1 and 3, there is illustrated a packaging machine which generally comprises three basic sections, namely, a feed section 10, a bag magazine section 12, and a bag sealing section 14. These sections are mounted on a base frame assembly 16 which interconnects the sections into an integral unit.

Article Feeding Mechanism

The article feeding section includes a pair of guide rails 18 fixedly secured to a pair of upper longitudinal frame elements 20 (FIG. 6), which comprise part of the frame assembly 16. Positioned on the guide rails 18 for travelling movement therealong is a carriage plate 24. The carriage plate 24 extends transversely across the upper frame elements 20 and is secured to the rails 18 by means of downwardly projecting bearing blocks 26. The bearing blocks 26 have longitudinal openings therein to receive slidably the rails 18 (see FIG. 6).

A power mechanism (FIG. 1) in the form of a cable cylinder unit 30 is provided at one side of the machine for transmitting reciprocal movement to the carriage plate 24. The cable cylinder unit 30 comprises a cylinder 32 which is attached to one of the frame elements 20 and includes an internal reciprocal piston 34. Affixed to the piston 34 are a pair of cables 36 and 38. Each cable has one end secured to one of the piston 34 and another end attached to the carriage plate 24. Intermediate its ends, the cable 36 passes around a sheave 40. In similar fashion, the cable 38 extends from the piston 34 around a sheave 42 spaced longitudinally at the opposite end of the machine. The cables 36 and 38 are secured to the piston 34 in any suitable manner and slidably extend through opposite end walls of the cylinder 32. Appropriate packing structure may be provided to seal the openings in the end walls through which the cables pass. The cables 36 and 38 are connected to the carriage plate 24 by means of sleeves 44 and 46, respectively, which are attached to one of the bearing blocks 26 by a bracket 48 (see FIG. 3).

The cylinder 32 is in communication with a source of compressed air (not shown), or other fluid under pressure, for selectively applying pressure to opposite sides of the piston 34. In this fashion, reciprocal movement may be transmitted to the carriage plate 24 through the cables 36 and 38.

Mounted on the carriage plate 24 are a series of four pusher rods or arms 50, 51, 52 and 53 arranged side-by-side in two pairs. The length of the pusher arms 50–53 will vary according to the number of rolls or the thickness of the articles, to be included in each package. The pusher arms are fixed to a pair of generally T-shaped blocks 56 and 58, there being two pusher arms attached to each block (see FIG. 6). The blocks 56 and 58 are secured to the carriage plate 24 wherein the carriage plate 24, the blocks 56 and 58 and the pusher arms 50–53 reciprocate as a unit. The pusher arms 50 and 51 are mounted on the block 56 in spaced, parallel relationship. The longitudinal peripheral surfaces of the arms 50 and 51 serve as tracks to define supporting surfaces for underlying and guiding a row of paper rolls R as shown in FIG. 6. The block 56 is appropriately recessed between the pusher arms 50 and 51 to accommodate the curved bottoms of the rolls. The remaining pair of arms 52 and 53 are connected to their block 58 in similar fashion to guide and support an adjacently disposed row of rolls.

The pusher arms 50–53 also include terminal ends which form pushing surfaces facing the bag magazine section 12. The pushing surfaces serve to insert the desired quantity of rolls R into a bag B as will be described in detail.

The rolls are delivered to the pusher arms 50–53 by means of an appropriate conveyor mechanism, such as

a belt conveyor or conveyors C (see FIG. 1). The rolls travel in parallel rows which slide along guideways defined by the respective pairs of pusher arms.

The belt conveyor or conveyors C is continuously driven normally tending to urge the rolls forwardly through frictional contact therewith unless the forward movement of the rolls is restrained. The rolls sit in the conveyor surface which is located sufficiently close to the pusher arms **50–53** that the arms of each pair will be iin embracing relation with the lower contour of the rolls in each line whereby each line of rolls will be transferred smoothly from the conveyor surface to the pusher arm surfaces.

Attached to cross-frame members **57** and **59** of the frame assembly **16** are two sets of parallel guide rails **60, 61** and **63,** which extend in a fore and aft direction. The guide rails **60–63** are shown as formed of angle bars and are disposed such that one rail of each set lies in an L-shaped posture and faces the other rail which lies in a reverse L-posture. The guide rails of each set are spaced so as to accommodate reciprocal passage of the pair of pusher arms therebetween. As will be explained subsequently, the guide rails **60–63** function to support a quantity of rolls after the rolls have been displaced from the pusher arms.

Overlying the frame assembly **16** is a switching mechanism **64** (see FIGS. 1 and 4). The switching mechanism **64** is secured to the frame assembly by means of an upstanding post **66** and an overhanging bracket **68,** the bracket **66** being suitably secured to the post **66.** The switching mechanism **64** includes a pair of electrical limit switches **70** and **72.** The switches are identically constructed, each being associated for operation with a respective pair of pusher arms. The switches comprise electrical switches **74** and **76** which include vertically reciprocal plungers **78** and **80.** Suitable switches may be purchased under the name Mead Micro Line Valve MV-30P. The switches are actuated by a pair of fingers **82** and **84** pivotally mounted on a common bar **86.** The bar **86** is attached to the overhanging bracket **68** by means of a bearing fixture **88.** The lower portions of the fingers **82** and **84** hang freely over the guideways defined by the respective pairs of pusher arms **50, 51** and **52, 53.** The upper portions of the fingers are configured such that pivotal movement of the lower ends thereof, upon being engaged by rolls travelling on the pusher arms, causes the plungers **78** and **80** to be projected upwardly to actuate the switches **74** and **76.**

Spaced from the limit switches **64** in a direction toward the article-receiving end of the machine is a stop assembly **90.** The stop assembly **90** is attached to a post **92** which is upstanding on the frame assembly **16.** A transverse plate **94** is secured to the post **92** and includes two pairs of vertically spaced brackets **96, 98** and **100, 102.** The pairs of brackets serve to mount vertically extending guide rods **104, 106.** A laterally extending beam **108** is mounted for vertical sliding movement on the guide rods **104, 106** by suitably placed apertures. A pneumatic or other power cylinder **110** is fixed to the transverse plate **94** and includes a downwardly extending reciprocal piston rod which is secured to the lateral beam **108.**

Attached to the lateral beam **108** are a pair of fore and aft extending bars **112** and **114.** As shown in FIGS. **3, 8, 9** and **10,** the bars **112, 114,** overlie and extend parallel to the guideways defined by the pairs of pusher arms **50, 51** and **52, 53.** In this fashion, extension of the cylinder **110** causes these bars to be lowered toward rolls which may be positioned therebelow as will be described in connection with FIGS. **19** through **23.** The bars also include stop plates **116** and **118** which are mounted at the ends thereof and extend in a lateral direction with respect thereto. The stop plates **116, 118** function to hold back the line of rolls and to separate the selected number of rolls to be packaged.

Suitably attached to the frame assembly **16** are a pair of fore and aft extending guide strips **120** and **122** (FIG. 13). These strips, together with the guide rails **60** and **62** serve to underlie and support lines of rolls after the pusher arms have been withdrawn therefrom.

Although the operation of the apparatus will be discussed later in detail, a brief explanation is presently in order. With the terminal ends of the pusher arms **50–53** being disposed generally beneath the switching mechanism **64,** two rows of rolls R are pushed along the pusher arms by the conveyor C. When the forwardmost rolls contact and swing the fingers **82** and **84,** the switches **74** and **76** will be activated, to cause the power cylinder **110** to operate and lower the bars **112** and **114.** The cable cylinder **30** will be operated also to shift the pusher arms rearwardly from beneath a selected quantity of rolls as in FIG. **20.** These rolls will drop onto the guide rails **60–63** and the guide strips **120** and **122** (see FIGS. **9, 20** and **21**). Reciprocal shifting of the pusher arms in the reverse direction causes the terminal ends of the pusher arms, defining pushing surfaces, to contact and move the selected quantity of rolls toward and into the bag B (see FIGS. **10** and **22**).

If the packaging machine be used for flat articles, such as paper napkins, paper towels, or the like, the desired quantity thereof to be included in each package may be separated by an operator, to be moved forward by the feeding means into the bag in the magazine.

Bag Magazine Mechanism

The bag magazine section **12** includes a bag-carrying table assembly to support a stack of bags B(see FIGS. **1, 3, 16** and **18**). The overall configuration of the table assembly, as shown in FIG. **16,** is such as to accommodate an irregularly-shaped stack of collapsed bags B. The bags, made of polyurethane or other suitable material, are pre-formed so as to be open, or unsealed, at their one end (facing the feeding section) and closed at their other end. The closed end is preferably formed by folding over the end of each bag and sealing it in this condition. Thus, a stack of such bags is thickest at its closed end as indicated in dotted lines in FIG. **16.**

The unsealed end of each bag is formed in a manner such that the upper wall B′ of each bag terminates short of the lower wall B″, as illustrated in FIG. **15.** The walls B″ of all the bags are retained in position by an inverted U-shaped clip, or wicket **137.** The clip **137** passes through aligned apertures in the lower walls B″ and is maintained in position by means of a retainer bracket **139.** The retainer bracket **139** is suitably secured to the frame assembly **16** and engages over the top of the clip in a conventionally known manner. As a result of this arrangement, the stack is of reduced thickness at the receiving end. Consequently, the table assembly is initially disposed so as to accommodate the decreased thickness of the stack. This tends to maintain the uppermost bag in a generally horizontal position when ready to receive the contents.

More specifically, the magazine table section comprises a generally horizontal disposed support plate **138** mounted on a support bar **139**, affixed to the rod end of an upstanding power cylinder **140**. The cylinder **140** is secured to the frame assembly **16** and communicates with a suitable source of fluid under pressure (not shown) for raising and lowering the support plate **138**.

At one end of the table support plate **138** is a hinge plate **142** which is pivotally connected at **144** to the support plate **138** for upward and downward swinging movement with respect thereto. In this manner the hinge plate **142** accommodates the thick end of the stack, with the uppermost bag lying substantially horizontal.

In this connection, the hinge plate **142** is provided with a downwardly slanted lever **156**. Mounted on the frame assembly **16** adjacent the lever **146** is a roller **158**. As the support plate **138** is raised, the roller **158** is positioned to be contacted by the lever **156**. Thus, the hinge plate is gradually shifted toward a horizontal or upwardly inclined position as the stack is being depleted (see FIG. **18**).

The support plate **138** is slotted at **145** (FIG. 3) to accommodate a pair of support fingers connected together by a cross-bar **150**. The fingers are pivotally connected at **152** to a pair of ears **154** (see FIGS. **13** and **16**) which extend upwardly from the support plate **138**. The fingers **146** and the cross-bar **150** define a support for the receiving end of the stack, the bottom of which stack slopes upwardly with respect to the support plate to compensate for the reduced stack thickness at the opposite end in maintaining the uppermost bag horizontal.

It will be apparent that as bags are being filled and removed from the stack, the stack dimensions will change in a non-uniform manner. That is, the thickness of the closed end of the stack decreases as bags are removed therefrom more than that of the filling end of the stack. In uneven dimensional variances of the stack.

The fingers **146** are provided with levers **160** (only one shown in FIGS. **16** and **18**) which abut a cam shoulder **162** of the frame assembly **16** as the support plate **138** is lifted. This results in the fingers being gradually shifted toward horizontal positions when the stack is substantially depleted.

The amount of incremental pivoting of the hinge plate **142** and of the fingers **146**, is determined with a view toward maintaining the uppermost bag in a generally horizontal position for being properly opened and filled.

Bag Opening Mechanism

The packaging assembly further includes means for automatically mechanically opening the bags B. In this connection, an air nozzle **170** is disposed on the frame assembly **16** between the innermost ones of the guide rails **61** and **62**, intermediate the switching mechanism **64** and the tamper assembly **90** (see FIGS. **1** and **3**). The air nozzle **170** communicates with a source of air under high pressure and is located remote from the magazine **12**. In this illustrated embodiment, the nozzle is spaced about **3** roll lengths from the magazine. The axis of the jet opening is such as to direct a blast of air across the upper wall B′ of the uppermost bag, as illustrated in FIG. **19** and spaced above the upper wall.

This produces a vacuum above the bag and causes the upper wall thereof to be lifted from the lower wall. The jet of air is directed sufficiently above the bag so that its force does not enter the bag. However, in order to fully open the bag after this top wall is raised by the vacuum of the air jet, a set of two guide wings **172** is provided. The guide wings comprise a pair of curved plates which are disposed at opposite sides of the frame assembly with their concave surfaces in generally facing relationship.

Each of the wings **172** for cylindrical articles, such as rolls of toilet tissue, is made semi-cylindrical for proper guiding of the articles when the wings have spread the bag open. When the top layer of the bag is raised somewhat with respect to the bottom layer, the wings **172** are operated to enter the bag and expand it to receive the articles. Each of the wings **172** is provided on the back of the forward end position thereof with a knob **174** on which the mouth of that bag engages. As shown in FIG. **13**, the knob **174** is elongated and curved longitudinally. The mouth of the bag is stretched over these knobs **174** to facilitate holding the bag on the wings **172** and yet to allow the bag to be withdrawn by lengthwise pressure. The knobs **174** are below the center of the arc of the curved wings to avoid breaking the side seams of the bag.

Each guide wing **172** is mounted on a crank arrangement which enables the guide wings to be swung into and cut of the bags. The crank arrangements comprise a pair of wing support arms **176** which are fixed to the upper ends of shafts **180** rotatably mounted on the frame assembly **16** by bearings **182** (FIG. **6**). Secured to the bottom ends of the shafts **180** are crank arms **184** and **186**. Interconnecting the crank arms **184** and **186** is a torque-transmitting rod **188**.

As shown in FIG. **13**, the crank arm **186** is extended on opposite sides of the shaft **180**, one end of which is connected with the rod **188** and the other end is connected to a pneumatic cylinder **190**, which is provided with a suitable source of gas or other fluid under pressure and is operable to rotate the guide wings **172** toward and away from each other and relative to the bag magazine section **12**.

In a retracted condition of the cylinder **190**, the guide wings **172** are disposed in a rest position away from the bag magazine section, as shown in full lines in FIG. **13**. When a bag B has been partially opened by the suction on the top layer by the jet from the air nozzle **170**, the cylinder **190** is extended. By means of the mechanical connection between the cylinder and the guide wings, the latter are simultaneously swung into the mouth of the bag to shape properly and to orient the the opening for reception of a quantity of rolls R. The guide wings **172** also function to guide the rolls into the bag as they are forced by the pusher arms **50–53**.

Sealing Mechanism

As shown in FIG. **17**, the sealing section **14** includes a shuttle plate **200** which is disposed in generally horizontal alignment with the top of the stack of bags B. In this fashion, the filled packages may be pushed onto the shuttle plate **200** by the pusher arms **50–53**. Mounted adjacent the entrance end of the shuttle plate are tucking and sealing assemblies **202** and **204**, respectively, (FIG. **1**), which are sequentially operable to tuck-in and seal the open end of a filled package which has been transferred to the shuttle plate **200**.

The tucker assembly comprises a pair of tucker arms or plates **206** (FIG. 3), disposed on opposite sides of

the shuttle plate **200** and are connected to the rod ends of pneumatic cylinders **210.** The cylinders **210** communicated with a suitable source of fluid under pressure so as to be operable to project the tucker plates **206** inwardly toward each other in properly timed relation to the movement of the package. The tucker plates are each provided with a pair of guide pins **214** slidably mounted in an upstanding bracket to insure that the tucker plates will reciprocate rectilinearly and be maintained in upstanding relation to fold the bag end as indicated at T in FIG. **2.**

The sealing assembly **204** includes a pair of vertically spaced, laterally extending lower and upper sealings jaws **222** and **224** (see FIGS. **3** and **5**). The lower sealing jaw **222** is connected by an inverted U-shaped frame unit comprising a horizontal support **226** and downwardly extending legs **228.** Attached to the outside faces of the legs **228** are gear racks **230** which are in mesh at each side with a pair of pinions **232.**

The upper sealing jaw **224** is also connected to an inverted U-shaped frame which comprises a horizontal support **236** and downwardly extending legs **238.** The legs **238** of the upper frame are arranged so as to straddle the legs **228** of the lower frame. The inside faces of the legs **238** are provided with gear racks **240** which are also in mesh with the opposite sides of the pinions **232** (FIG. **16**). The legs **228** of the lower frame are connected together by a bar **242** (FIG. **5**). An upright power cylinder **244** has its rod end operatively attached to the connecting bar **242** and is in communication with a source of fluid under pressure so as to be operable to reciprocate vertically the lower sealing jaw **222.** The upward movement of the lower sealing jaw **222** is transmitted by the rack and pinion mechanism **230,** 232, and **240** to the upper jaw **224,** wherein an equal, but oppositely directed, force is applied to the upper sealing jaw **224.** Thus, when the cylinder **244** is extended, the sealing jaws converge toward the end flaps of a bag to form the sealed lips S (FIG. **2**); when the cylinder is retracted, the jaws open.

The sealing jaws **222** and **224** may be connected in a conventional manner to an appropriate heating source to heat the pressure surface thereof. In operation, the jaws will be heated to a temperature great enough to soften the plastic maerial of the bags.

When a filled package is deposited onto the shuttle plate **200** the end flaps of the bag extend within the vertical plane of movement of the sealing jaws **222, 224.** The tucker plates **206** are then operated toward opposite edges of the package to tuck in the opposite sides of the open end. Then, the sealing jaws **222, 224,** are operated to converge and to fuse together tge flaps of the bag and thus form the sealed lip S (FIG. **2**). A suitable suction assembly (not shown) may be provided for removing portions of the end flaps which have been severed during the sealing operation.

In order to insure that the end flaps of the filled bag will extend into the plane of the sealing jaws when the package is pushed onto the shuttle plate **200,** the sealing suction includes a stop plate **250** suspended in the path of the package in this shuttle plate (see FIG. **5**).

The stop plate **250** is hinged at **251** to a support plate **252** mounted on a cross shaft **253.** The stop plate **250** is yieldably retained in an upright position by one or more leaf springs **254** fixed at one end to the support plate **252** and bearing on the back face of this stop plate. The cross shaft **253** is rotatably mounted in a bearing sleeve **255,** attached to the frame assembly by means of a bracket **256.** The stop plate is maintained at a height sufficient to enable the closed end of a package to abut against the stop plate **250.** The hinged support of the stop plate **250** will maintain it yieldably in different vertical positions for different angular positions of the support plate **252.**

When a filled package is pushed onto the shuttle plate **200,** the closed end of the package will abut the stop plate **250.** The stop plate is situated such that the flaps of the unsealed end of the bag will lie within the plane of the sealing jaws. Thus, the stop plate **250** provides a simple but effective means of properly orienting the package.

Once the package has been sealed, it is intended that it be ejected laterally from the machine. Prior to this, however, it is necessary that the sealed end of the bag be moved from out of the tucking assembly **202.** In accomplishing this, the shuttle plate **200** is mounted on bearing blocks **262** and **264** (FIG. **17**) at opposite sides. The bearing blocks are arranged to slide on a pair of rails **266** which are fastened to a fixed frame support **270.** One of beanning blocks **264** is provided with a laterally extending projection **272.** A coupling rod **274** is connected between the projection **272** and a lever **275** which is attached to the cross shaft **253.**

A crank arm **276** is also affixed at one end to the cross shaft **253** and to a power cylinder **278** at the other end. The power cylinder **278** is in communication with a source of fluid under pressure for rotating the cross shaft **253.**

With this arrangement, it is apparent that extension of the power cylinder **278** will rotate the lever **275** to transmit a sliding movement to the shuttle plate **200.** Consequently, a sealed package carried by the shuttle plate will be shifted away from the tucker and sealing assemblies.

An ejector mechanism may be provided if desired. In this embodiment I have shown an ejector mechanism, in the form of a plunger bar **280** (FIGS. **1** and **3**), attached to the rod end of a fixed pneumatic or other cylinder **282.** Extension of the cylinder **282** after a sealed package has been moved away from the sealing and tucker assemblies causes the package to be pushed from the shuttle plate **200** and onto a ramp **284** (see FIG. **12**). The ramp **284** is attached to the frame assembly **16** and may terminate adjacent a suitable conveyor or receptacle (not shown) where the sealed packages are received or accumulated.

OPERATION

In operation, the pusher arms **50–53** are initially disposed with their terminal ends being generally disposed beneath the switching mechanism **64,** as illustrated in FIGS. **7** and **19.** Two rows of rolls R are fed by the conveyor C onto the other ends of pusher arms. The rolls in each row travel along a respective pair of pusher arms until the leading rolls abut and rotate the cams **82** and **84** to actuate the switches **74** and **76** (see FIG. **13**). Actuation of the switches produces a signal which operates the cable cylinder **30** (FIG. **1**) and the power cylinder **110** of the stop assembly **90.** In this manner, the pusher arms **50–53** are shifted rearwardly from beneath a selected quantity of rolls and the stop bars **112, 114** are then lowered into the path of the following rolls supported in the retracted packer arm.

The number of rolls to be included in one package is dropped from the retracted pusher arms **50–53** onto the guide rails **60–63** and the guide strips **120, 122** where they may be retained by yieldable holders **69** (FIG. 13*a*) if desired. These holders are in the form of leaf springs having an intermediate lower area bearing upon the rolls R with the ends of the springs secured to the bracket **68** and to a bracket **71** supported on the guide rails, and extending in bridging relation therebetween.

Actuation of the switches **74** and **76** also produces a signal which activates the bag-opening mechanism. Thus, a stream of air is emitted from the nozzle **170** in a line spaced above the top of the uppermost bag. The vacuum which is created thereby acts on and lifts the upper wall of the bag. The guide wings **172** are swung into the mouth of the bag by the power cylinder **190,** as illustrated in FIGS. **10** and **21** and spread the mouth fully open. In this posture, the guide wings are in general alignment with the outermost guide rails **60** and **63** and assist in the supporting of the displaced rolls.

When the selected quantity of rolls R have been displaced from the pusher arms **50–53,** the forward ends of the pushing arms will face the end ones of these selected rolls. At the end of the rearward stroke of the cable piston **34,** the cable cylinder **30** is automatically actuated to reverse the movement of the pusher arms. The pushing surfaces of the arms **50–53** thus engage and push the rolls toward and into the open bag. During transfer of the rolls toward the bag, the rolls are supported and guided into the bag by the concave opposed faces of the guide wings **172.**

Continued movement of the pusher arms, after the rolls have been inserted into the bag, causes the lower wall B'' (FIG. **15**) of the bag to be pulled from the wire clip **137.** The filled package is then transferred onto the shuttle plate **200** of the sealing section **14** until it abuts the stop plate **250.**

At this point, the pusher arms are automatically retracted to their initial position beneath the switching mechanism; the wings **172** are swung rearwardly to their rest position (full lines in FIG. **13**); and the stop bars **112** and **114** are raised. With the stop bars no longer obstructing movement of the rolls located on the pusher arms, these rolls travel toward the switching mechanism under the influence of the moving conveyor C to begin a new packaging cycle.

Once the filled package is suitably situated on the shuttle plate **200,** the power cylinders **210** are automatically operated to extend the tucker plates **206** horizontally inwardly against the open end of the package just rearwardly of the rolls therein. The sides of the open end are thus tucked in toward the center of the package end as indicated at T in FIG. **2.** At the same time, the power cylinder **244** is automatically expanded to close the heated sealing jaws **222** and **224** against the bag end flaps. The top and bottom portions of the end flaps become fused together, forming a neat and compact seal, indicated at S in FIG. **2.** Waste portions of the end flaps which have been severed by the sealing jaws are sucked away by a suitably disposed suction unit or by other suitable means.

Following the sealing operation, the tucker plates and sealing jaws are automatically retracted to their rest positions. Subsequently, the power cylinder **278** automatically extends to shift the shuttle plate **200** forwardly and move the sealed package clear of the tucker and sealing assemblies. The plunger bar **280** is then automatically extended by the cylinder **282** to push the sealed package onto the discharge ramp **284.** Any other suitable means may be used to remove the package.

With respect to the bag magazine section **12,** it is noted that after a bag has been filled and transferred from the stack, the cylinder **140** is automatically extended by a predetermined increment to position the topmost bag in appropriate orientation for being filled. Upward movement of the support plate **138** (FIG. **16**) causes the hinge plate **142** and the support fingers **156** to be rotated slightly due to engagement of the levers **156** and **160,** respectively, with the roller **158** and the shoulder **162,** respectively. This tends to compensate for the uneven dimensional changes in the stack which occur at the forward and rearward portions of the stack due to the removal of a bag. The topmost bag will thus be situated in a more clearly horizontal posture.

The several operations as described are controlled by electrically operated valves and switches, which are controlled in proper sequence by suitable limit switches, the operation of which is well known in the art and need not be described in detail.

Although the invention has been discussed in connection with the packaging of plural rows of articles, it will be understood that a single row of one or more articles could be package in accordance with the teachings of the invention. Moreover, articles of any convenient shape, other than cylindrical, may be packaged by merely adapting the configurationn of the various supporting surfaces to the shape of the articles.

As will also be apparent from the foregiong description, this invention provides a compact assembly which automatically fills and seals a package. Significantly, the assembly employs a reciprocal arm mechanism which operates to support a plurality of articles, displaces a selected quantity thereof, inserts the selected articles into a bag, and transfers the filled bag for sealing. The bag-supporting magazine operates to orient automatically the bags during depletion of the stack to assure that they will be opened effectively and filled. The sealing unit comprises a simple, yet effective assemblage of elements for automatically sealing and ejecting a package.

While the article feeding section **10** (FIG. **1**), the bag magazine section **12,** and the package sealing section **14** have been described in connection with a single packaging assembly, it will be understood that each of these sections contains independently significant features and may be separately utilized with other forms of packaging devices.

While the invention has been illustrated and described in one embodiment, it is recognized that variations and changes may be made therein without departing from the invention set forth in the claims.

I claim:

1. An article packaging assembly including means for supporting a receptacle, and article transfer means for forwarding articles thereto, said article transfer means comprising: arm means mounted for horizontal reciprocal movement and including a supporting surface and a pushing surface; conveyor means for advancing a continuous column of articles horizontally along said supporting surface in the general direction of said receptacle; power means for reciprocating said arm means; means automatically actuable in response to a

predetermined advancement of said column of articles on said supporting surface to: activate said power means for retracting said arm means rearwardly from beneath a selected quantity of said articles to cause said selected quantity of articles to be displaced downwardly, and activate said power means for advancing said arm means forwardly subsequent to downward displacement of said selected quantity of articles to bring said pushing surface into pressure engagement with the rearwardmost one of said selected quantity of articles in a manner to effect forward movement of said selected quantity of articles toward said receptacle, and means movable into the path of the column of articles upon downward displacement of said selected quantity thereof during the subsequent advancement of the arm means to push the selected quantity of articles toward the receptacle for stopping forward movement of said column.

2. An article packaging assembly including means for supporting a receptacle, and article transfer means for forwarding articles thereto, said article transfer means comprising: arm means mounted for horizontal reciprocal movement and including a supporting surface and a pushing surface; conveyor means for advancing a continuous column of articles horizontally along said supporting surface in the general direction of said receptacle; power means for reciprocating said arm means; and means automatically actuable in response to a predetermined advancement of said column of articles on said supporting surface to: activate said power means for retracting said arm means rearwardly from beneath a selected quantity of said articles to cause said selected quantity of articles to be displaced downwardly, and activate said power means for advancing said arm means forwardly subsequent to downward displacement of said selected quantity of articles to bring said pushing surface into pressure engagement with the rearwardmost one of said selected quantity of articles in a manner to effect forward movement of said selected quantity of articles toward said receptacle, said activating means comprising a member extending into the path of movement of said continuous column of articles and being in position to be contacted and actuated thereby; and an arm movable toward the path of said continous column for stopping forward movement thereof.

3. Apparatus according to claim **1** wherein said arm means comprises a pair of spaced rods defining said supporting surface; said rods being arranged to support spaced sides of a continuous column of articles being advanced therealong.

4. A curved article packaging assembly including means for supporting a receptacle, and article transfer means for forwarding curved articles thereto, said article transfer means comprising: a pair of spaced parallel rods mounted for horizontal reciprocal movement, said rods having forwardly disposed pushing surface means; said rods being arranged to support spaced sides of a column of curved articles; conveyor means for advancing a continuous column of curved articles horizontally along said rods in the general direction of the receptacle; stop means for selectively preventing forward movement of said continuous column of curved articles; first power means for retracting said rods rearwardly from beneath a selected quantity of said curved articles to cause said selected quantity of curved articles to be displaced downwardly, second power means for shifting said stop means into the path of travel of curved articles in said continuous column located behind said selected quantity of curved articles to prevent further advancement of said column; said first power means being arranged to advance said rods forwardly subsequent to downward displacement of said selected quantity of curved articles and subsequent to shifting of said stop means ahead of said column to bring said pushing surface means into pressure engagement with the rearwardmost one of said selected quantity of curved articles in a manner effecting forward movement of said selected quantity of curved articles toward the receptacle.

5. Apparatus according to claim **4** including control means having an actuating lever extending into the path of movement of said continuous column of curved articles to be contacted and actuated thereby; said control means being operatively connected to sequentially activate said first and second power means in response to being actuated by said advancing column.

6. An article packaging assembly including means for supporting a receptacle, and article transfer means for forwarding articles thereto, said article transfer means comprising: power-activated arm means mounted for horizontal reciprocal movement and including a supporting surface and a pushing surface; conveyor means for advancing a continuous column of articles horizontally along said supporting surface in the general direction of said receptacle; power-activated stop means for stopping forward movement of said continuous column of articles; and means for: activating said power-activated arm means to retract said arm means rearwardly from beneath a selected quantity of said articles to cause said selected quantity of articles to be displaced downwardly, activating said power-activated stop means to shift said stop means into the path of travel of articles in said continuous column located behind said selected quantity of articles to prevent further advancement of said column, and activating said power-activated arm means for advancing said arm means forwardly subsequent to downward displacement of said selected quantity of articles to bring said pushing surface into pressure engagement with the rearwardmost one of said selected quantity of articles in a manner effecting forward movement of said selected quantity of articles toward the receptacle.

7. Apparatus according to claim **1** wherein said arm means comprises a pair of spaced rods, said rods defining said support surface; said rods being arranged to support spaced sides of a continuous column of curved articles being advanced therealong.

8. An article packaging assembly including means for supporting a receptacle, and article transfer means for forwarding a selected quantity of articles thereto, said article transfer means comprising: arm means mounted for reciprocal movement and including a supporting surface operable to underlie and support the selected quantity of articles, and pushing means operable to advance the selected quantity of articles; means for feeding a plurality of articles in a column to and along said supporting surface; power means for reciprocating the arm means rearwardly from beneath the selected quantity of articles causing the selected quantity of articles to be displaced downwardly so as to be separated from the remaining articles in said column, and for then forwardly moving the pushing means into pressure relation with the selected quantity of articles; stop means

mounted above the arm means; power means for shifting the stop means downwardly after separation of the selected quantity of articles to restrain movement of the remaining articles in the column during further advancement of the selected quantity of articles; and switching means including actuating means therefor extending into the path of movement of articles traveling along the arm means and being in position to be contacted and actuated thereby; the switching means being operably connected to the respective power means for lowering the stop means and for reciprocating the arm means.

9. An article packaging assembly according to claim **8** wherein: the arm means comprises at least one pair of parallel rods; the outer peripheral surface of the rods defining said supporting surfaces with forward terminal ends on the rods defining said pushing means.

10. An article packaging assembly according to claim **9**, including: a carriage mounted for reciprocal sliding movement; the rods being attached to the carriage; a power cylinder including an operable piston; cable means operatively connected between the carriage and the piston and being operable to transmit reciprocal motion of the piston to the carriage.

11. An article packaging assembly according to claim **8**, including a second supporting surface in advanced position, with respect to the first-mentioned supporting surface and spaced at a lower elevation with respect thereto to receive thereon the selected quantity of articles upon rearward movement of the arm means.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

Patent No. 3,877,562 Dated April 15, 1975

Inventor(s) Jesse B. Smaw

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent are hereby corrected as shown below:

On the Title Page, in item [75] the inventor's name "Jesse B. Shaw" should read -- Jesse B. Smaw --

Signed and Sealed this

twenty-second Day of July 1975

[SEAL]

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