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(54) **SOLEMOID OPERATED HYDRAULIC CONTROL VALVE**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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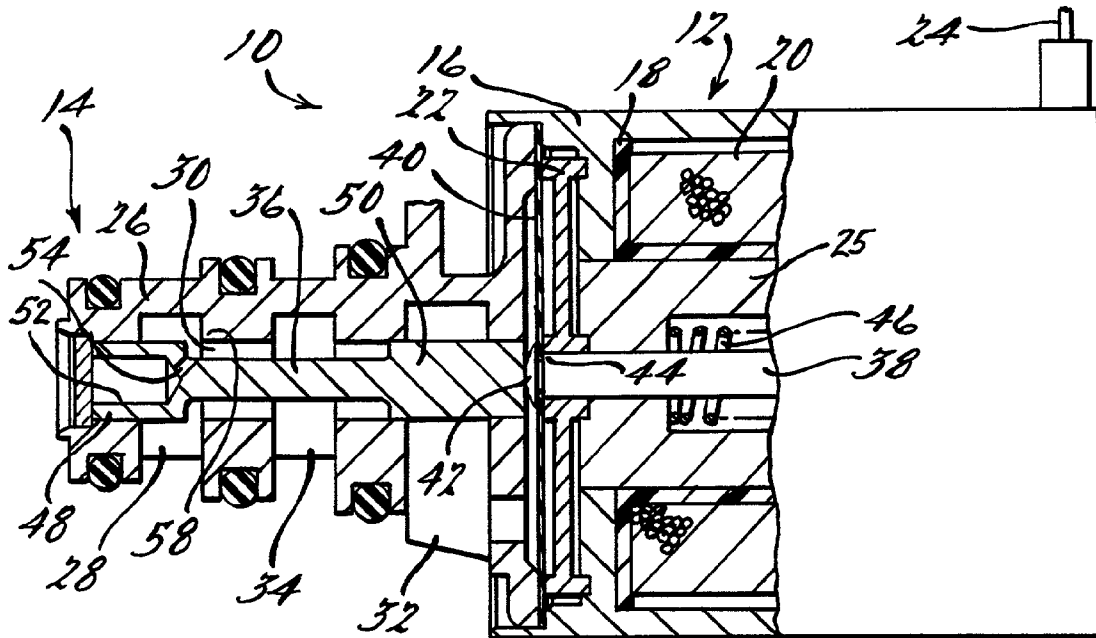
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A pressure control valve with a hydraulic system of an automatic transmission for a motor vehicle includes a valve body defining a control chamber, fluid ports communicating with the control chamber, and a valve spool having spaced pressure control lands located in the control chamber, the valve spool urged by a compression spring in an opposite direction from an electromagnetic force developed on the spool when a solenoid is energized. In one embodiment a control land is formed with a pressure feedback orifice that communicates a control port with a feedback chamber. The valve spool can be formed with different sized control lands. The feedback orifice is substantially insensitive to fluid temperature variation.



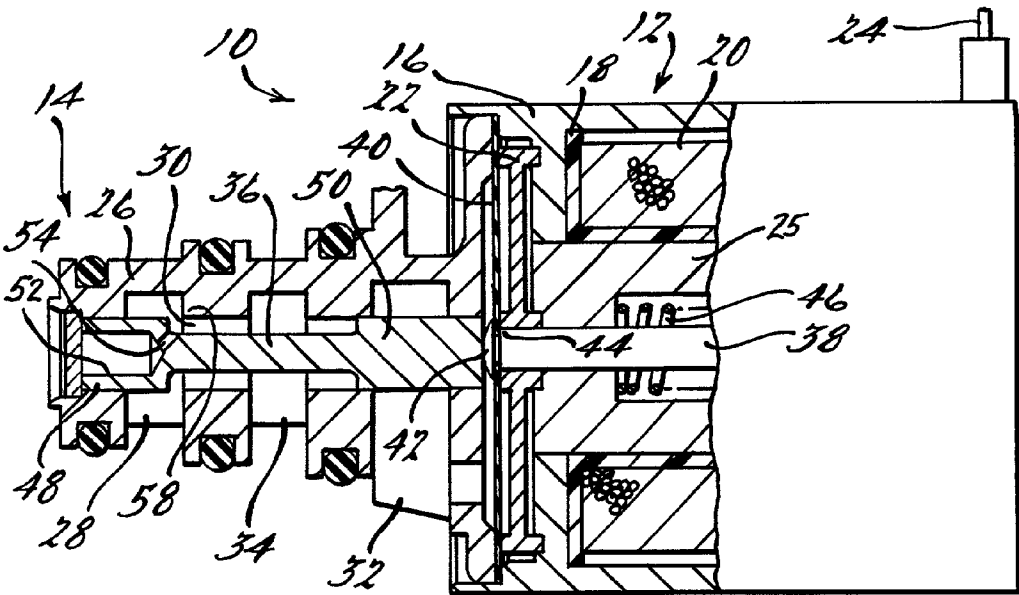


Fig. 1.

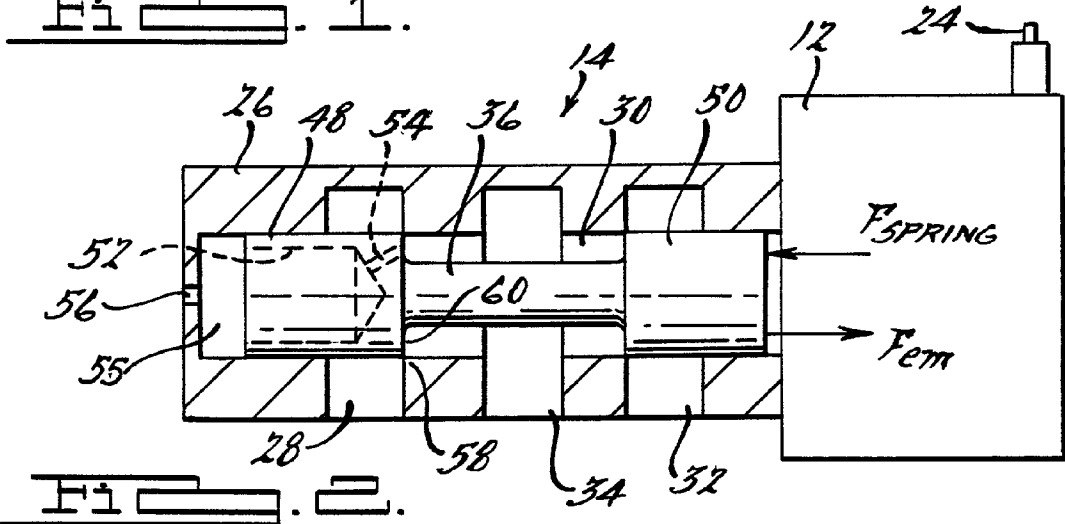


Fig. 2.

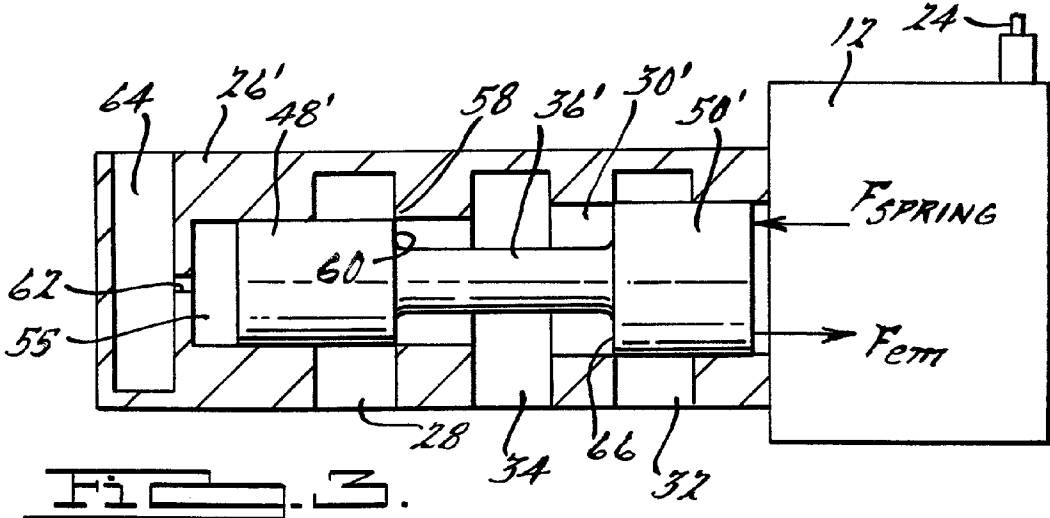


Fig. 3.

SOLEMOID OPERATED HYDRAULIC CONTROL VALVE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] This invention relates to a pressure control device for controlling the pressure of hydraulic fluid in the control system of an automatic transmission for a motor vehicle. More particularly, the invention pertains to a solenoid-operated pressure control valve.

[0003] 2. Description of the Prior Art

[0004] SAE Technical Paper 960430 describes a hydraulic control valve for use with a solenoid, the valve having two control lands of equal diameter and a long feedback orifice that passes through a control land and a major portion of the spool shank length. That valve is moderately stable due to viscous damping through the feedback orifice. However, it exhibits slow low-temperature response. Furthermore it is difficult and expensive to manufacture, particularly because of the long feedback passage.

[0005] U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,678,893 and 5,513,673 describe hydraulic control valves for use with a solenoid, each valve having three control lands of equal diameter and long orifices extending through the valve body. The valves are stable due to the presence of positive hydrodynamic damping; however, they are expensive to manufacture and require a large lateral package space.

[0006] U.S. Pat. No. 5,615,860 describes a hydraulic control valve for use with a solenoid, the valve having two control lands of unequal diameter. Damping occurs in the electrical solenoid. The valve is simple and compact, but it is unstable because damping is not reliable. Also it is possible that hydraulic fluid may not be continuously available for hydraulic damping.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] It is an object of this invention to provide an improved variable force solenoid-operated valve. The valve is stable and provides inertia damping, either through a short feedback orifice that passes through a land, or through a short damping orifice located at the pressure end. In either case, the valve is easy to manufacture, compact, and stable. It has good response time at low temperature.

[0008] The valve provides the ability to operate with these advantages at a low magnitude of load spring force and low electromagnetic force. The output pressure produced by the valve has been demonstrated to be predictable and stable over time and over a large range of line pressure.

[0009] In realizing these objects and advantages a solenoid-operated valve assembly for an automatic transmission of a motor vehicle includes a valve body having a control chamber, first, second and third ports spaced mutually along, and communicating with the control chamber; a valve spool located within the control chamber including a shank, a first land adapted to open and close the first port; a feedback orifice connecting a feedback chamber and the second port, and a second land located at an opposite end of the shank and adapted to open and close the third port; a spring urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber; and a solenoid assembly having an armature axially displaceable

in response to an electric signal supplied to a coil, the armature urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a partial cross sectional view through a pressure control valve according to the invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a cross section showing a variation of the control valve portion of the assembly of FIG. 1.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a cross section of another embodiment of the control valve portion of the assembly of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0013] Referring first to FIG. 1, a magnetically operated pressure control assembly 10 includes a solenoid portion 12 and a control valve portion 14. The solenoid includes housing 16, in which a magnetic coil member 18 carrying a coil 20 and a magnetic armature 25 are located. Coil 20 has an electrical connection 24 that extends outward from housing 16 and is adapted for connection to a source of electric power.

[0014] A valve body 26, attached to housing 16, is provided with an inlet passage or supply port 28, through which hydraulic fluid from a supply source, such as a pressure regulator valve, is carried to a central chamber 30 of the valve; a vent passage or port 32, through which chamber 30 is alternately opened and closed to a low pressure sump or vent; and a control or outlet passage or port 34, through which hydraulic fluid is connected to a hydraulic system or load.

[0015] In order to adjust the pressure in control port 34, and the stream of fluid supplied to the load, a valve spool 36 moves axially along the axis of chamber 30 in response to various pressure forces applied to the spool, the force of spring 46, and electromagnetic force applied by a push rod 38 to the spool from magnetic armature 25.

[0016] Push rod 38 is press-fitted inside the magnetic armature 25 and is centered radially by a diaphragm spring 40, which is clamped at its periphery on the inner wall of housing 16. The center of diaphragm spring 40 is secured longitudinally between a head 42 of the push rod and a hub 44 of a sealing diaphragm 22. Push rod 38 is supported and guided for sliding movement in a bearing sleeve located at its end that is opposite spool 36. Armature 25 is urged leftward by compression spring 46. Diaphragm spring 40 and sealing diaphragm 22 exert minimum force, if any, in the axial direction.

[0017] Spool 36 is formed with a first control land 48 and a second control land 50, each land having a control edge for opening and closing ports 28, 32 respectively, as the spool moves axially within chamber 30. Control land 48 is formed with a central bore 52 that extends partially along the length of the land and communicates with control port 34 through a short feedback orifice 54. The diameter of land 48 can be greater than that of land 50 if a lower spring preload and lower electromagnetic force are desired.

[0018] Hydraulic fluid is supplied to the control valve 14 preferably from a source of regulated line pressure through port 28. The fluid pressure produced by valve 14 is com-

municated through port **34** to a load or hydraulic system, such as a control and actuation system for an automatic transmission. In the alternate embodiment of the invention shown in **FIG. 2**, the space **55** of chamber **30** located at the left-hand end of control land **48** is connected through an orifice **56** to a source of low pressure such as a transmission fluid sump.

[0019] If coil **20** is energized, armature **25** and push rod **38** move rightward toward a pole piece (not shown). The force of compression spring **46** applies to spool **36** a force directed leftward.

[0020] Under steady state conditions, spool **36** is balanced primarily by three major forces: the leftward force from compression spring **46** (F_{spring}), the rightward electromagnetic force from coil **20** & armature **25** assembly (F_{em}), and the rightward net fluid pressure force on the spool. The spring and electromagnetic forces are applied to spool **36** through push rod **38**. The fluid pressure force is substantially equal to the product of control pressure (P_{control}) times the cross section area of land **50** (A_{50}). Therefore, one has the following approximate mathematical relation under steady state condition:

$$P_{\text{control}} = (F_{\text{spring}} - F_{\text{em}}) / A_{50}$$

[0021] Control pressure is thus controlled by electromagnetic force F_{em} . Both spring and magnetic forces are generally designed to be substantially constant with respect to the spool movement. If the maximum electromagnetic force is equal to the spring pre-load, then control pressure varies between its maximum and zero when the coil is de-energized and energized, respectively. A full range of inversely-proportional control can be achieved between the two extreme states. It should be noted, as shown in the above force balance equation, that the control pressure is a function of the cross section area of land **50** instead of that of land **48**. Without adversely affecting the spring pre-load and the peak magnetic force, one can design a bigger land **48** to accommodate larger flow demand and provide more space for a proper location of orifice **54** on end surface **60**.

[0022] Whenever the current to coil **20** and thus the electromagnetic force are changed, there will be a momentary force unbalance on spool **36**. Spool **36** will be forced to a new position, changing the relative size of the openings at the ports and thus the fluid flows rate from port **28** to port **34** and from port **34** to port **32**, thereby producing a new control pressure value to balance spool **36**. For example when the coil current is increased, the momentary force increment will pull spool **36** rightward, closing fluid flow from supply port **28** to control port **34** and opening fluid flow from control port **34** to vent port **32**. This spool movement reduces control pressure and thus decreases the pressure force that will roughly balance out the electromagnetic force rise.

[0023] Feedback damping orifice **54** communicates control pressure to the left end of land **48** through bore **52**, thereby offering resistance or damping to spool movement. For example when spool **36** is pulled rightward by an increased electromagnetic force, there will be a momentary pressure imbalance across damping orifice, the pressure at the left-hand end of land **48** being lower than control pressure at the right-hand end because of a vacuum effect caused by the flow restriction through damping orifice **54**. This vacuum causes a reduction in net pressure force, which

tends to resist the rightward movement of spool **36**. The flow through orifice **54** is proportional to the axial displacement velocity of spool **36** if one ignores fluid compressibility and leakage through the annular clearance around the outside diameter of land **48**.

[0024] Orifice **54** is relatively short, the pressure drop and damping is substantially independent of fluid viscosity and therefore is substantially independent of temperature. In other designs with long orifices, damping is predominantly achieved through laminar fluid flow, which causes too much pressure drop and thus extremely slow response at cold temperatures.

[0025] In hydraulic valve design, it is known that at each metering port there is a steady state flow force, or steady state hydrodynamic force, which tends to resist the valve from opening the port. In the case of the metering port between supply port **28** and control port **34**, the steady state hydrodynamic force tends to move spool **36** rightward. The source of this force is the well-known Bernoulli effect: the hydrostatic pressure drops when the velocity increases along a fluid stream. Because of continuity, the velocity is the highest and thus the hydrostatic pressure is the lowest at the radially outer edge of surface **60** (see **FIG. 2**), which is located at the right-hand end of land **48**. The hydrostatic pressure on surface **60** is approximately equal to hydrostatic control pressure at the radially inner corner where surface **60** and the spool shank meet. This non-uniform pressure distribution results in a leftward pressure force reduction on surface **60** and thus a net rightward force increase on spool **36**. This net force affects the overall force balance on spool **36** and thus control pressure produced by the valve. According to the Bernoulli effect, the hydrostatic pressure distribution along surface **60** and thus valve control pressure are influenced by fluid velocity distribution, which in turn is a function of pressure at supply port **28** and load flow or flow demand. The control pressure from an ideal pressure regulating valve should be a function of input current or electromagnetic force only.

[0026] Another advantage of orifice **54** in this application is its potential for line pressure compensation. The exact hydrostatic pressure value in feedback chamber **55** depends on the location of orifice **54** on end surface **60**. If the opening is located on surface **60** between its radially outer edge and radially inner corner, the hydrostatic pressure in feedback chamber **55** will be less than the hydrostatic control pressure, thereby reducing the rightward fluid pressure force. A pressure force compensation is achieved if the rightward pressure force reduction in feedback chamber **55** is equal in magnitude to the leftward pressure force reduction on end surface **60**.

[0027] In addition, the combination of bore **52** and short feedback orifice **54** is easier to manufacture than a combination that includes a long axial passage extending along land **48** to the center of the shank portion of spool **36** and a radial passage communicating with such a long axial passage.

[0028] In the alternate embodiment of the present invention shown in **FIG. 2**, one can add a scaling orifice **56** at the left-hand end of feedback chamber **55** to reduce the steady state pressure in chamber **55**, thereby allowing the valve to operate with lower magnitudes of spring and electromagnetic forces.

[0029] The valve of FIG. 3 creates at the end volume 55 a dynamic pressure to resist movement of the spool. The valve body 26' is formed with a control chamber 301. A valve spool 36' has a control land 50' having a larger diameter than the diameter of control land 48'. In addition, damping orifice 62 connects the end volume 55 within chamber 30', located at the left-hand end of spool 36 to an oil reservoir 64. Under steady state conditions, the differential pressure force on the faces 60, 66 of the control lands resulting from the pressure in outlet passage 34 is balanced against the net force produced by spring 46 and the electromagnetic force.

[0030] If the variable force solenoid is not always immersed in hydraulic fluid, the oil reservoir 64 is necessary to assure that volume 55 is filled with fluid. Orifice 62 is large enough to avoid causing a substantial steady state back pressure in volume 55 due to the leak flow path from supply port 28 and through the clearance between chamber 30' and land 48'. This leak flow tends to fill volume 55.

[0031] The presence of the damping orifice 62 at the end of land 48' produces a valve having substantially stable dynamic pressure and improved low temperature performance. The valve is easy to manufacture, yet is simple and compact.

[0032] Preferably, the diameter of the orifice 54 is 0.6-1.1 mm. Orifice 54, whose length is preferably no more than 3.0 mm, is relatively short in order to produce turbulent flow, so that the valve is less sensitive to temperature effects, such as the viscosity variation of the transmission fluid, than is laminar flow. Preferably the diameter of lands 48 and 50 is 3.0-6.0 mm. In the case where land 48 is larger than land 50, the diameter of land 48 can be as large as 10.0 mm. The diameter of land 48' is preferably 3.0-10.0 mm, and the diameter of land 50' is preferably 4.0-10.5 mm.

[0033] In the valve of FIG. 3, orifice 62 creates a flow restriction, but the restriction preferably will not permit the steady state pressure in volume 55 to be large enough to upset the force balance on the spool. The flow restriction is great enough, however, to resist unstable, oscillatory spool movement. Orifice 62 need not be centered on the axis of the spool. Both the end volume 55 and oil reservoir 64 can be filled with fluid leaking between supply port 28 through the gap between valve body 26' and the outer diameter of control land 48'.

[0034] Although the form of the invention shown and described here constitutes the preferred embodiment of the invention, it is not intended to illustrate all possible forms of the invention. Words used here are words of description rather than of limitation. Various changes in the form of the invention may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as disclosed.

I claim

1. A solenoid-operated valve assembly for an automatic transmission of a motor vehicle, comprising:

- a valve body having a control chamber, mutually spaced first, second and third ports communicating with the control chamber;
- a valve spool supported for movement along the control chamber, including a shank, a first land adapted to open and close the first port, the first land having a feedback

chamber and a feedback orifice connecting the feedback chamber and second port, and a second land located at an opposite end of the shank from the first land and adapted to open and close the third port; and

a spring urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber; and

a solenoid assembly having an armature axially displaceable in response to an electric signal supplied to a coil, the armature urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber.

2. The valve assembly of claim 1 further comprising:

a source of low pressure;

wherein the valve body further includes a scaling orifice connecting the feedback chamber and the source of low pressure.

3. The valve assembly of claim 1 wherein the length of the feedback orifice is relatively short.

4. The valve assembly of claim 1 wherein the first land and second land have substantially equal diameters.

5. The valve assembly of claim 1 wherein the first land has a larger diameter than the diameter of the second land.

6. The valve assembly of claim 1 wherein the first port is adapted for connection to a source of supply pressure, the third port is adapted for connection to a source of low pressure, and the second port is adapted to produce control pressure achieved by balancing supply flow from the first port, vent flow to the third port, and control flow to and from the load.

7. A solenoid-operated valve assembly for an automatic transmission of a motor vehicle, comprising:

a valve body having a control chamber, first, second and third ports spaced mutually along, and communicating with the control chamber;

a valve spool located within the control chamber, including a shank, a first land adapted to open and close the first port and having a first end and second end, a second land located at a opposite end of the shank and adapted to open and close the third port, the second land having a larger diameter than the diameter of the first land;

a damping orifice facing the first end, communicating the control chamber adjacent the first end and a source of low pressure fluid;

a spring urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber; and

a solenoid assembly having an armature axially displaceable in response to an electric signal supplied to a coil, the armature urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber.

8. The valve assembly of claim 7 wherein the first control land includes a control edge located at a radially outer surface of the first land at the second end, and a radial step defining an annular surface extending radially between the shank and control edge, and wherein the feedback passage is directed radially and axially from the bore to the annular surface.

9. The valve assembly of claim 7 wherein the first port is adapted for connection to a source of supply pressure, the third port is adapted for connection to a source of low pressure, and the second port is adapted to produce control

pressure achieved by balancing supply flow from the first port, vent flow to the third port, and control flow to and from the load.

10. The valve assembly of claim 9, wherein the source of fluid at low pressure is a volume of fluid contained apart from the valve assembly.

11. The valve assembly of claim 9, wherein the source of fluid at low pressure is a volume of fluid contained in the valve assembly.

12. A solenoid-operated valve assembly for an automatic transmission of a motor vehicle, comprising:

a valve body having a bore, mutually spaced first, second and third ports communicating with the bore;

a valve spool supported for movement along the bore, including a shank, a first land adapted to open and close the first port and having an axial bore extending partially along the first land from the first end thereof toward the second end, a feedback orifice in the first land communicating the second port and said axial bore in the first land, said feedback orifice being substantially shorter in length and smaller in diameter than said axial bore in the first land;

the first control land including a control edge located at a radially outer surface of the first land at the second end, and a radial step defining an annular surface extending radially between the shank and control edge, and

wherein the second feedback orifice extends from the bore to the annular surface;

a spring urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber; and

a solenoid assembly having an armature axially displaceable in response to an electric signal supplied to a coil, the armature urging the valve spool to move along the control chamber.

13. The valve assembly of claim 12 further comprising: a source of low pressure;

wherein the valve body further includes a scaling orifice connecting the feedback chamber and the source of low pressure.

14. The valve assembly of claim 12 wherein the first land and second land have substantially equal diameters.

15. The valve assembly of claim 12 wherein the first land has a larger diameter than the diameter of the second land.

16. The valve assembly of claim 12 wherein the first port is adapted for connection to a source of supply pressure, the third port is adapted for connection to a source of low pressure, and the second port is adapted to produce control pressure achieved by balancing supply flow from the first port, vent flow to the third port, and control flow to and from the load.

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