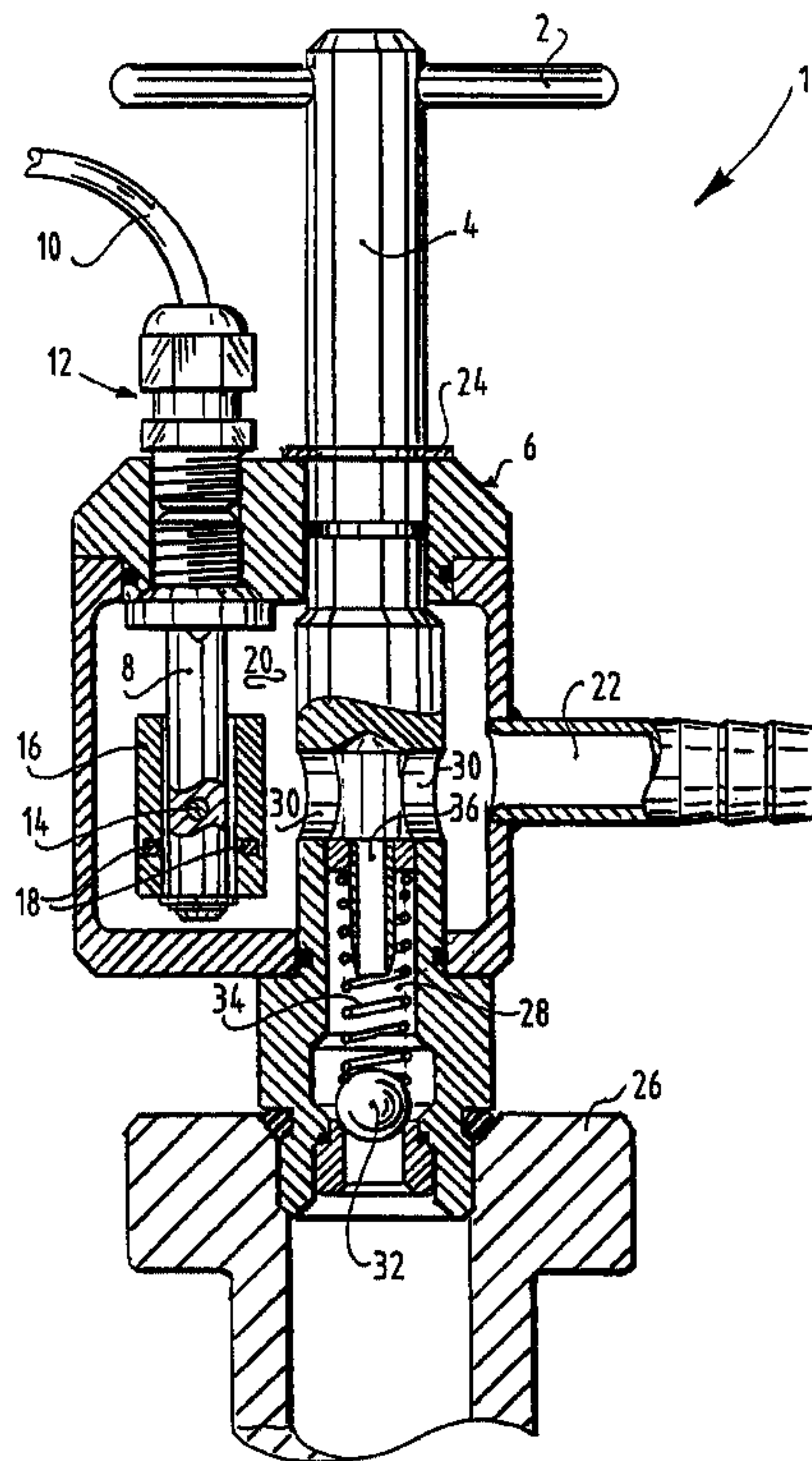




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(54) Title: DISPENSING DEVICE AND CONTAINER ASSEMBLY COMPRISING SUCH DEVICE



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

The invention relates to a device (1) coupleable to a fluid container (26), said device for dispensing fluid within the container, said device comprising: a fluid inlet (28); a fluid outlet (22); coupling means (14, 16, 18) for substantially, non leakably coupling the device to a fluid container, and alarm means for alarming a user that the container is substantially empty of fluid.



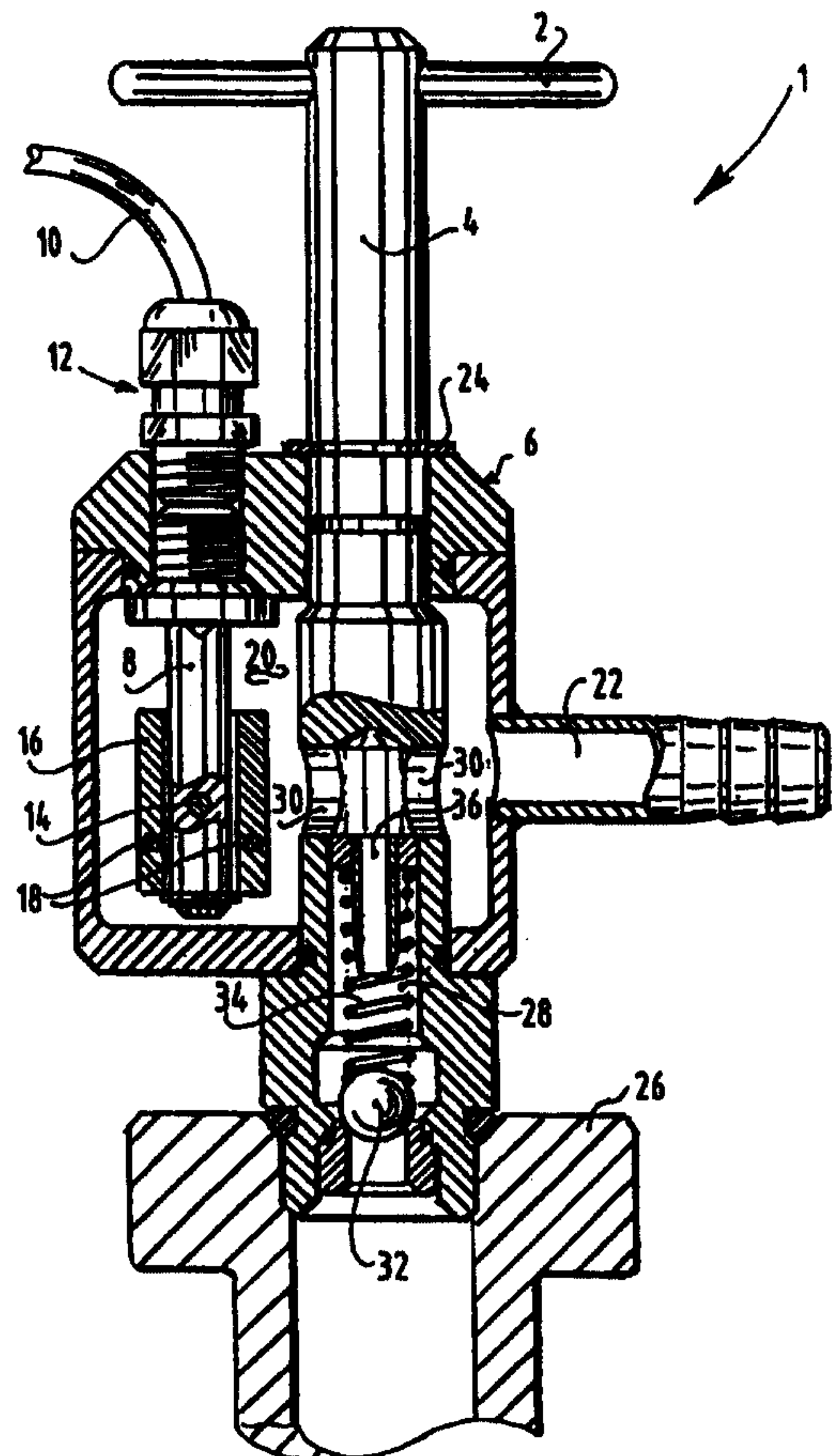
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(21) International Application Number: PCT/EP98/06631 (22) International Filing Date: 9 October 1998 (09.10.98) (30) Priority Data: 97203426.8 5 November 1997 (05.11.97) EP (71) Applicant (for all designated States except AU BB CA CY GB GH IE KE LK LS MN MW NZ SD SG SZ TT UG): UNILEVER N.V. [NL/NL]; Weena 455, NL-3013 AL Rotterdam (NL). (71) Applicant (for AU BB CA CY GB GH IE KE LK LS MN MW NZ SD SG SZ TT UG only): UNILEVER PLC [GB/GB]; Unilever House, Blackfriars, London EC4P 4BQ (GB). (72) Inventors: KUIL, Jan; Diversey Lever, Maarssenbroeksedijk 2, NL-3606 AN Maarssen (NL). VAN DER HEIJDEN, Lambertus, Gerardus, P.; Diversey Lever, Maarssenbroeksedijk 2, NL-3606 AN Maarssen (NL). (74) Agent: ROSEN JACOBSON, Frans, L., M.; Unilever N.V., Patent Dept., P.O. Box 137, NL-3130 AC Vlaardingen (NL).		(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG). Published <i>With international search report.</i> <i>Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>

(54) Title: DISPENSING DEVICE AND CONTAINER ASSEMBLY COMPRISING SUCH DEVICE**(57) Abstract**

The invention relates to a device (1) coupleable to a fluid container (26), said device for dispensing fluid within the container, said device comprising: a fluid inlet (28); a fluid outlet (22); coupling means (14, 16, 18) for substantially, non leakably coupling the device to a fluid container; and alarm means for alarming a user that the container is substantially empty of fluid.



DISPENSING DEVICE AND CONTAINER ASSEMBLY COMPRISING
SUCH DEVICE

5

The present invention relates to a device for dispensing fluid from a container, to a container assembly comprising such and to a method for warning as to the emptiness of a
10 fluid container.

Fluid substances such as dangerous chemicals are transported in large containers, such as metal jerry cans, from where such fluid is dispensed. There exists a need for dispensing fluid from such containers in such a way that
15 substantially no spillage occurs on dispensing thereof or on exchanging a depleted container for a full one.

Furthermore, a problem with existing containers, is that the user is often unaware as to the amount of remaining fluid in the container, whereby when the container is empty
20 a replacement full container is often not available since this has not been ordered in time.

An object of the present invention is to provide a device which substantially overcomes one or more of the above problems.

25 According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a device coupleable to a fluid container, said device for dispensing fluid within the container, said device comprising:

- a fluid inlet;
- 30 - a fluid outlet;
- coupling means for substantially, non leakably coupling the device to a fluid container; and
- alarm means for alarming a user that the container is substantially empty of fluid, characterized in that

1a

- (a) said alarm means comprise two independently activateable switches which are arranged in a fluid fillable chamber;
- (b) one of these switches is activateable by switch activating means comprising a spring such that activation of this switch occurs when the device is coupled with a container; and
- (c) the other switch is activateable by switch activating means comprising a float such that activation thereof occurs when the chamber is filled.

The present invention accordingly provides a device which enables fluid to be safely dispensed from containers, substantially without leakage, whereby the device is able to be removed from an empty container and replaced in position on a full container also substantially without leakage, and whereby a user is made aware of the fact that the container is empty by the device alarm.

Further desired features are referred to below.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided an assembly comprising the above device and a liquid container, to which the device is coupled for storing liquid.

According to a third aspect of the present invention there is provided a method for warning as to the emptiness of a fluid container, comprising coupling the above device to a fluid container, causing fluid to flow through the device from the container until the level of the fluid within the device reaches a predetermined level, whereby the device alarm is activated.

The invention will now be described by way of the following description which refers to the figures, wherein:

- figure 1 shows a partially cut away axial cross-section of an embodiment of a device known in the art;
- figures 2a-2d show axial cross-sections of a side view of an embodiment of the device according to the present invention in different working positions;
- figure 3 shows a perspective view of an assembly according to the present invention.

A device 1 (figure 1) is provided with a handle 2 connected to a metal turn-rod 4 which extends through a housing 6.

A sensor 8 connected to an electrical alarm circuit by means of cable 10 is fixed in the housing 6 by means of the

nut-bolt arrangement 12. This sensor 8 is a switch 14, operated by the presence or absence of a magnetic field. A cylindrical float 16 is arranged around the sensor 8 to be vertically displaceable thereover.

5 A ring-magnet 18 is housed within the float 16.

The ring-magnet 18, float 16 and sensor 8 are together known as a level switch.

The sensor 8 and float 16 are situated in a fluid chamber 20 of the device 1.

10 A feed tube 22 extends from the housing 6 and is connectable to a pump tube (not shown).

The metal-rod 4 co-operates with the housing 6 to enable said bar 4 to rotate therein. A seal ring cap 24 is provided around the metal rod 4 at the junction with the
15 housing 6.

The lower end of the metal rod 4 is screwed into a down tube 26 of a container by means of a screw thread (not shown) for co-operating with a corresponding screw thread arranged at the opening of the down tube 26.

20 The lower part of the metal rod 4 is provided with a bore 28 which opens out at openings 30 into the chamber 20 and the feed tube 22.

A spring loaded non-return ball valve 32 is housed in the central bore 28, in association with a compression spring
25 34.

In use, the device 1 is firstly fixed into the opening of the down tube 26.

When a pump is connected to the feed tube 22 and turned on, an underpressure forces the non return ball valve 32

30 upwards to allow fluid to flow through the bore 28 and a narrower bore-channel 36 continuous therewith, and into the feed tube 22 and chamber 20 through the openings 30.

When the chamber 20 is full of liquid, the float 16 is so displaced around the stationary sensor 8, that the ring-magnet 18 is situated above the switch 14.

When the pump is switched off, the ball valve 32 closes to stop fluid being dispensed. Fluid is held in the chamber 20 whereby the ring-magnet 18 floats above the switch 14.

When the container is empty, air is sucked into the chamber 20, whereby the float 16 drops around the sensor 8, whereby the magnetic field in the region of the switch 14 increases due to the proximity of the ring-magnet 8 in order to break the circuit and cause an alarm, arranged in the circuit, to be effected, thereby making the user aware of the emptiness of the container.

It will be realized that the circuit can be so arranged, that the alarm is effected by either completing or breaking the circuit.

In the embodiment according to the invention, the device 50 (figures 2a-d) is provided with a feed-tube 52 which opens into a chamber 54, wherein a fixed sensor arrangement depends, which is provided with two independent switches 58 and 60.

These switches 58 and 60 are mounted in two sensors 56 and 57 which are connected to one another by an insulating connecting piece 62. A cylindrical float 64 is arranged in the chamber 54 around the sensor 56. This float 64 houses a ring magnet 66. The switches form part of an alarm circuit (not shown) and are connected thereto by cable 69.

The sensor 57 extends into a narrower middle section 68 of a housing 67 of the device. When the chamber 54 is empty (as in figure 2a), the float 64 rests on shoulders 70 of the housing 67 when the device is in an upright position.

The middle section 68 of the housing is continuous with a narrower bore channel 74 which terminates in a closed end 76. Openings 77 are arranged near this end 76.

A displaceable sleeve 72 covers the openings 77 when the device is not connected with a container. This embodiment of the device according to the present invention is designed to couple with a female coupling, such as described in EP 0 270 302.

A spring 79 is arranged between shoulders 75 of the sleeve 72 and a neck 78 of the middle-section 68 of the housing 67.

A ring-magnet 80 is arranged in a terminal perimeter of the sleeve 72.

An outer-casing 82 is associated with lugs 84, coupleable to the corresponding female coupling part (not shown) of the container 86.

In figure 2a the device is disconnected with a container and there is no resident fluid in the chamber.

In this position, the ring-magnet 80 does not activate the switch 60, although ring-magnet 66 activates switch 58 to open the latter.

On coupling the device to a container, having a volume of 50-70 L for example, the sleeve 72 is pushed upwards over the bore channel 74, thereby compressing the spring 79, whereby the openings 77 are uncovered, so that fluid flows from the container, through these openings 77, up into the channel 74 and into the chamber 54 and out of the feed pipe 52 (see figure 2a), when the latter is connected to a pump. On connecting the device 50 to the co-operable female member (not shown), the sleeve 75 is forced upwards by the female member, thereby compressing the spring 78 and bringing the ring-magnet 80 into the vicinity of switch 60, whereby this switch is also activated (figure 2b). In exclusively this position when both switches are activated,

i.e. open, there is no alarm. Accordingly, activation of switch 60 only occurs when the device is actually coupled to a container, and activation of switch 60 occurs when the chamber 54 is filled with liquid whereby the float 64 is displaced, so that ring magnet 66 resides in the vicinity of the switch 58, whereby the latter is activated (see figure 2b). Accordingly, this embodiment of the invention provides two switches which are independently activatable. As with the known device described above, it will be realized that the circuit can be so arranged that the alarm is effected by either opening or closing both the switches. When the container is empty, figure 2c, the device being however still connected, switch 60 remains activated, but since switch 58 is de-activated, i.e. the level of liquid in the alarm chamber 54 not being such that the float 64 brings the magnet 60 into the activating region of the switch 58, switch 58 is de-activated, closed, whereby an alarm sounds.

On decoupling the device 50 (figure 2D) from the container, but in the situation where an amount of fluid still resides in the chamber thereof, it is necessary that the alarm still registers, or else it could be assumed, that even though the coupling has been disconnected, there is still fluid left in the container.

As such on decoupling, the spring 78 forces the sleeve 72 back down over the end of the bore 74, thereby closing the openings 77, whereby leakage is prevented, and removing the magnet 80 from the vicinity of the switch 60, thereby causing the alarm.

It will be seen that this embodiment of the invention can be used whatever its connection orientation with respect to a container.

Furthermore, the sensor arrangement comprising the two sensors 56, 57 the connecting piece 62 and the switches 58,

60, can be easily removed/replaced as a unit without having to disassemble the whole device.

An assembly 100 (figure 3) according to the present invention comprises a jerry can container 102 whereupon the
5 dispensing-alarm-device 1 is arranged.

The present invention is not limited to the above described embodiments; the requested rights are rather determined by the following claims.

CLAIMS

1. Device (50) coupleable to a fluid container, said device for dispensing fluid within the container, said device comprising:

- a fluid inlet (77);
- a fluid outlet (52);
- coupling means for substantially, non leakably coupling the device to a fluid container; and
- alarm means,

characterized in that

(a) said alarm means includes two independently activateable switches (58; 60) which are arranged in a fluid fillable chamber (54);

(b) one of these switched (60) is activateable by switch activating means (57; 72; 79; 80) comprising a spring (79) such that activation of this switch occurs when the device is coupled with the container;

(c) the other switch is activateable by switch activating means (56; 64; 66) comprising a float (64) such that activation thereof occurs when the chamber (54) is filled;

and in that

said switches (58; 60) are arranged to activate the alarm means when the container is substantially empty of fluid.

2. Device according to claim 1, wherein switch activating means and/of the switches (58, 60) are displaceable, whereby in a first mutual position, the switches are activated and whereby in a second mutual position, the switches are inactivated.

3. Device according to claims 1 or 2, wherein the switch activating means comprise a magnet (66; 80).

4. Device according to claim 3, wherein the magnet (66) is housed in a float arrangement, floatable in the liquid contained within the container.

5. Device according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the switch activating means comprises a magnet arranged within a displaceable device part.

6. Device according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the chamber (54) is arranged substantially in line with the coupling means.

7. Device according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the chamber (54) is laterally displaced from the coupling means.

8. Device according to any one of claims 1 to 7, further comprising a valve (32) for controlling the flow of liquid through the device.

9. Assembly comprising a device (50) according to any one of claims 1 to 8, coupled to a container (102), for storing fluid.

10. Method for warning as to the emptiness of a fluid container, comprising:

providing a device (50) according to any one of claims 1 to 8;

coupling the device to a fluid container (102); and, causing fluid to flow through said device from the container until the level of fluid within the device reaches a predetermined level whereby the alarm means is activated.

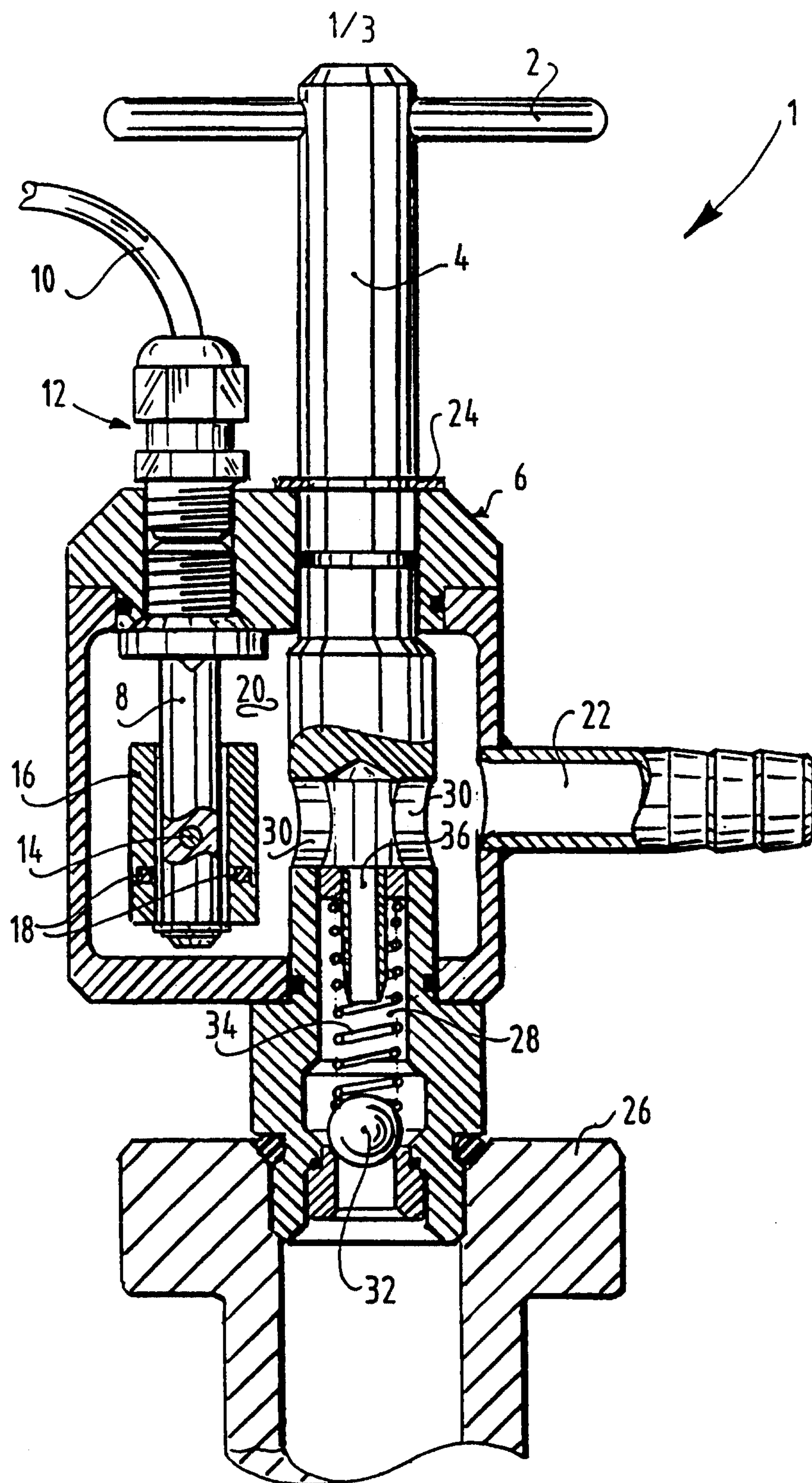


FIG. 1

FIG.2A

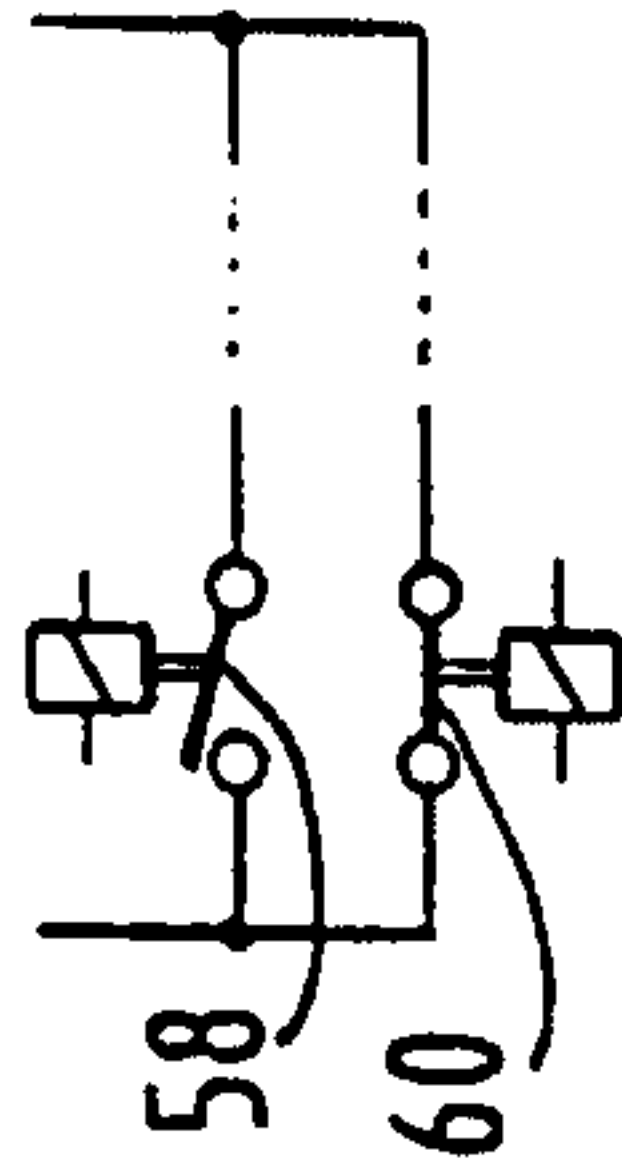
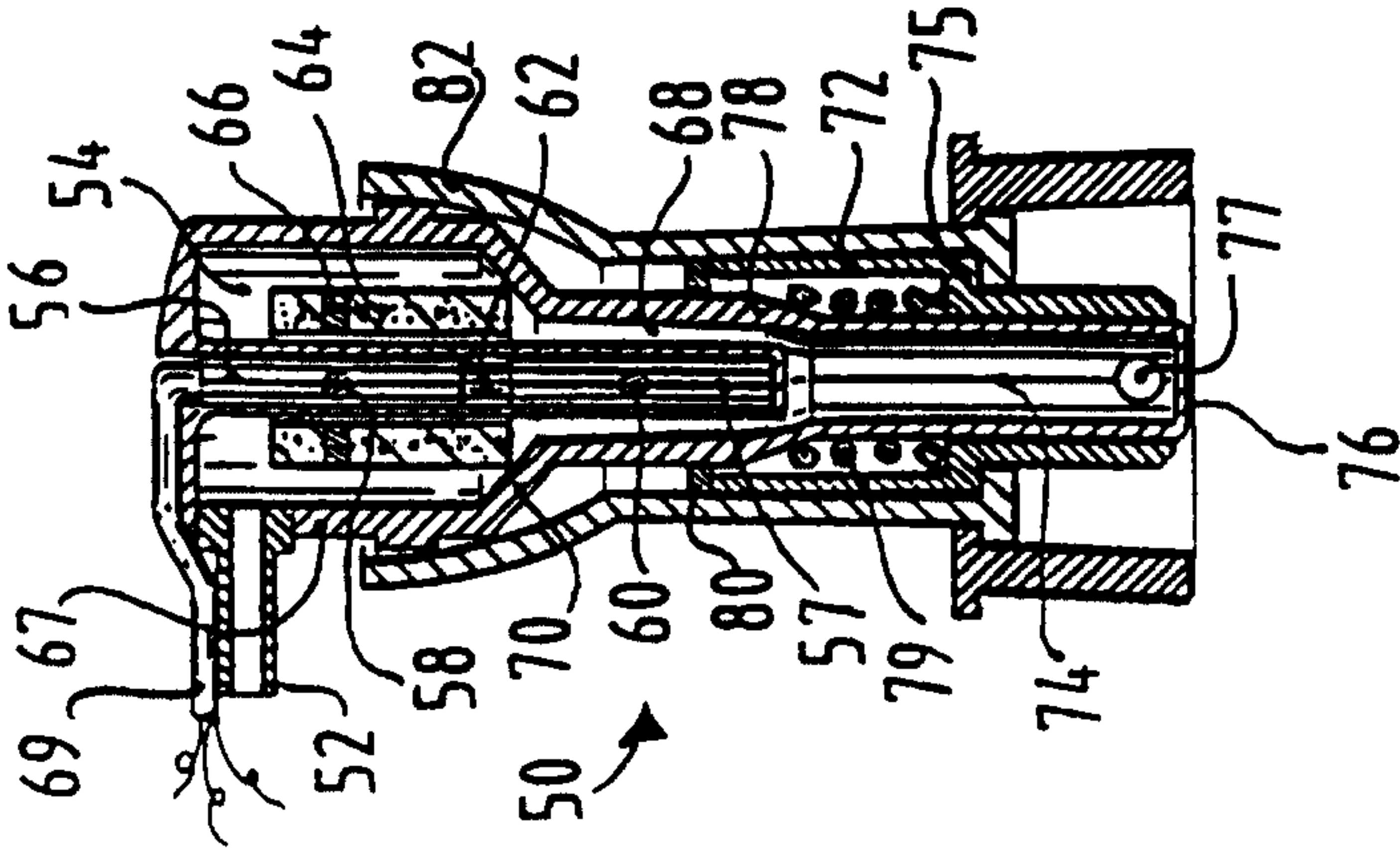


FIG.2B

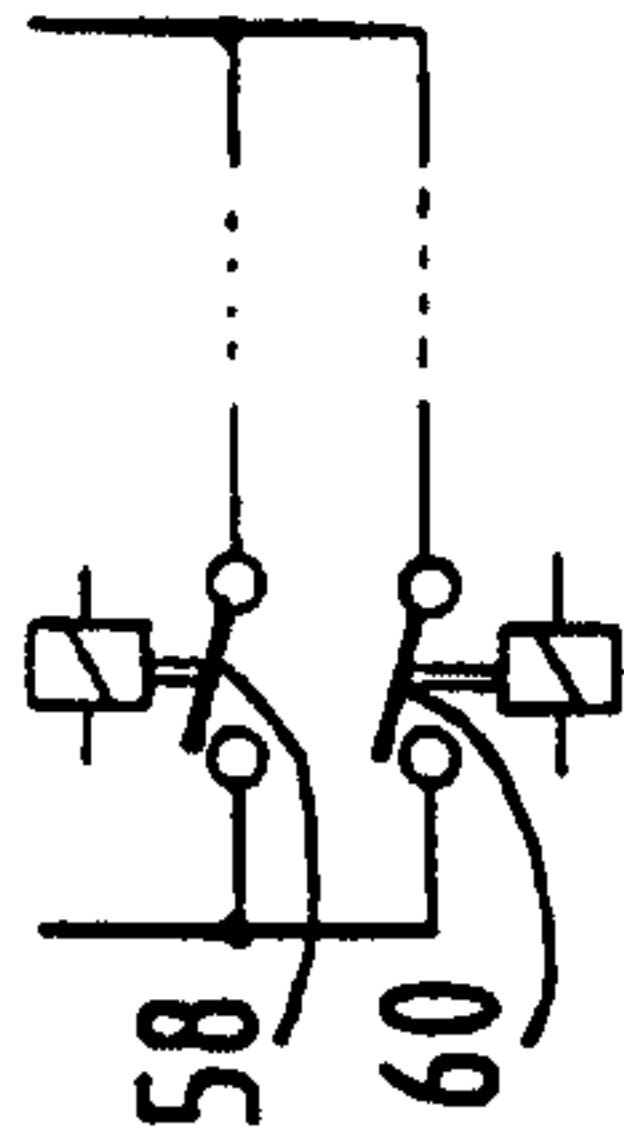
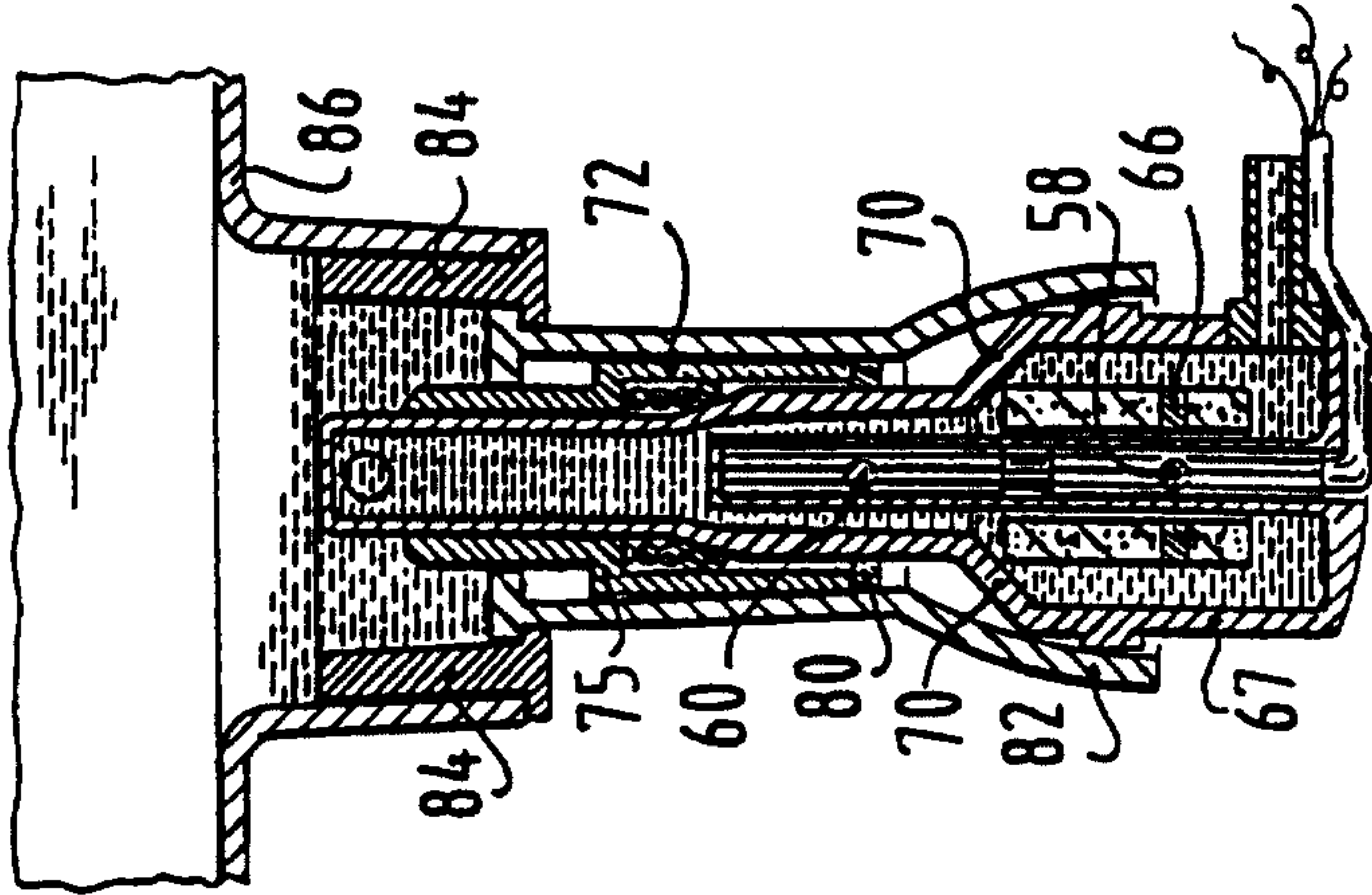


FIG.2C

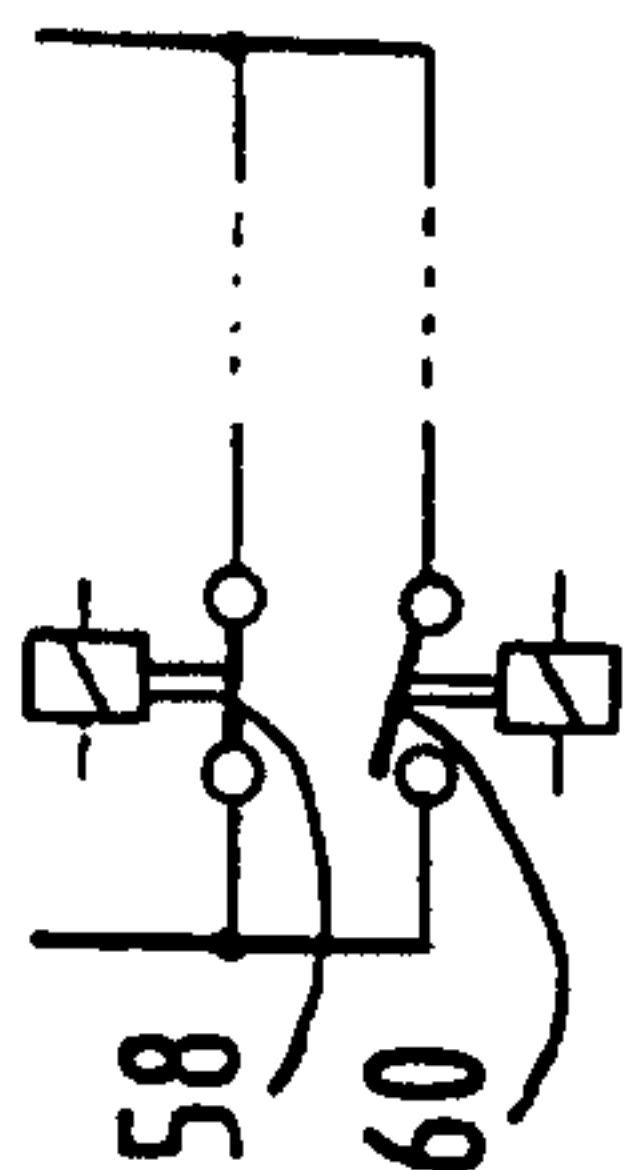
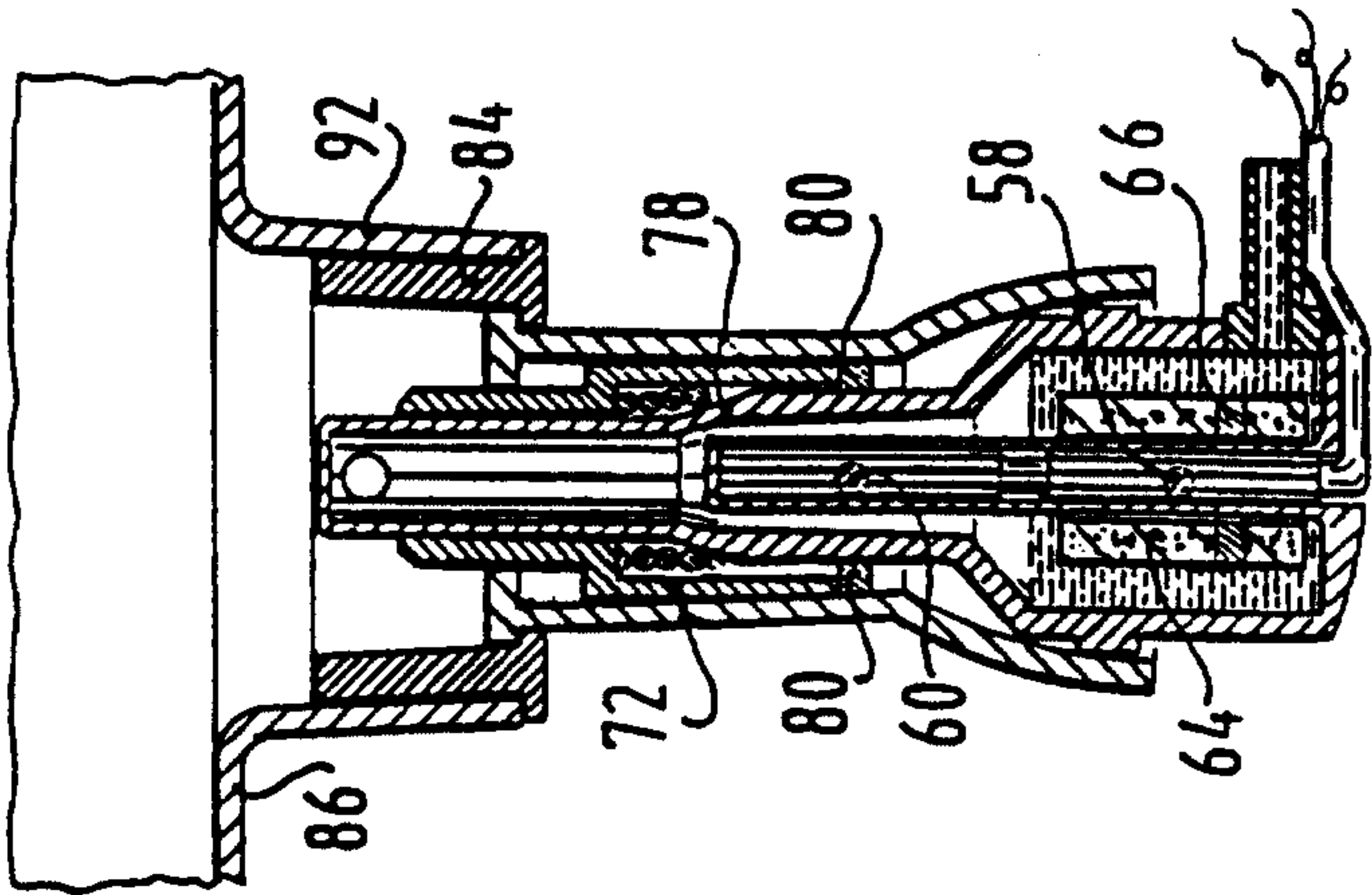
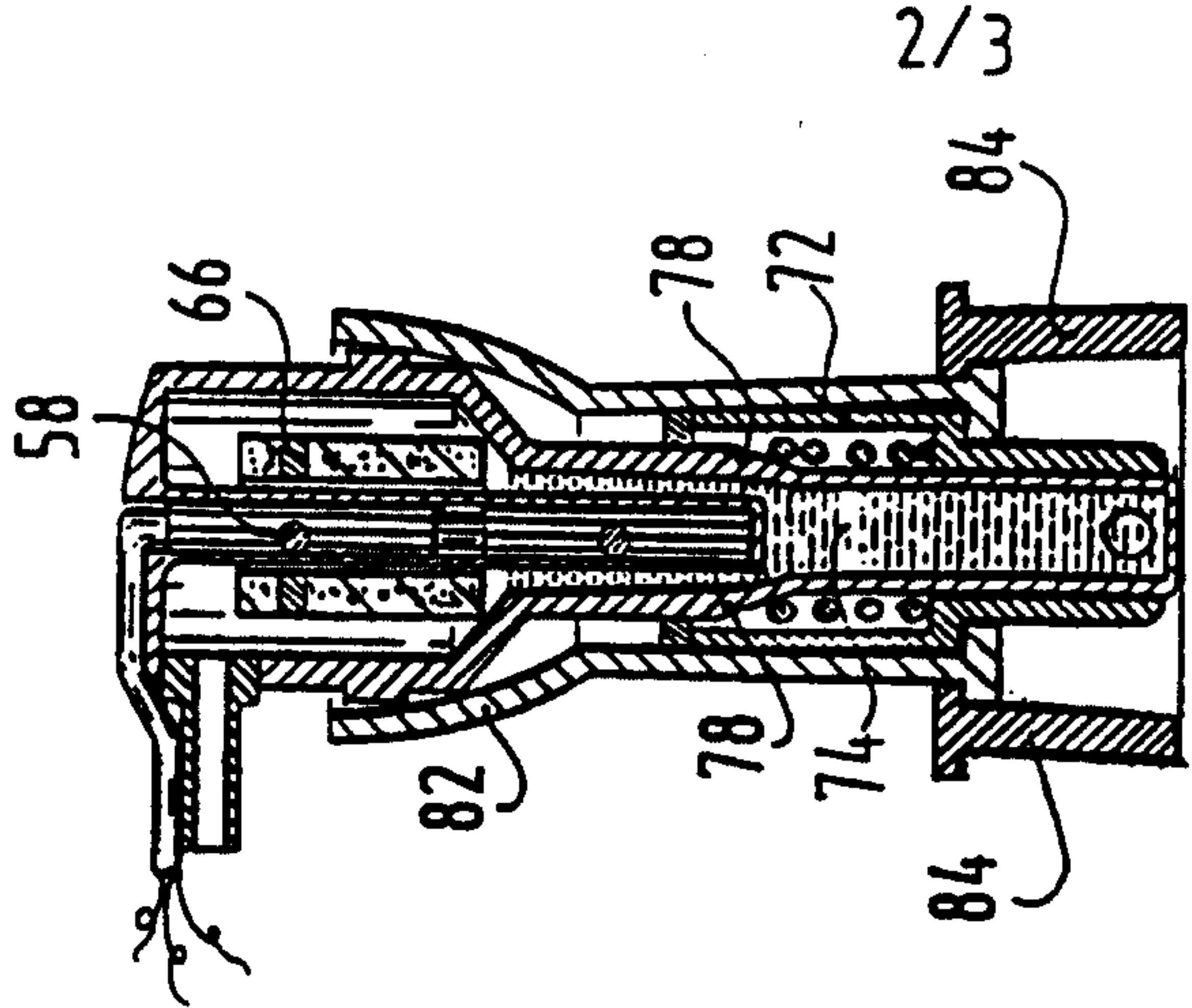
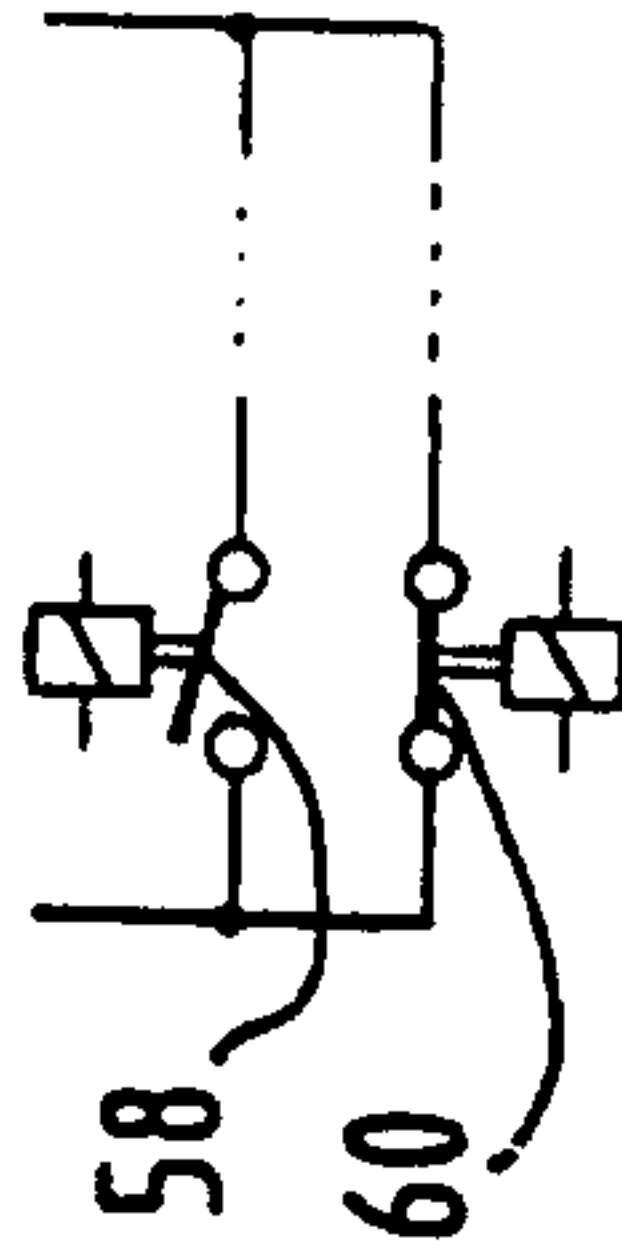


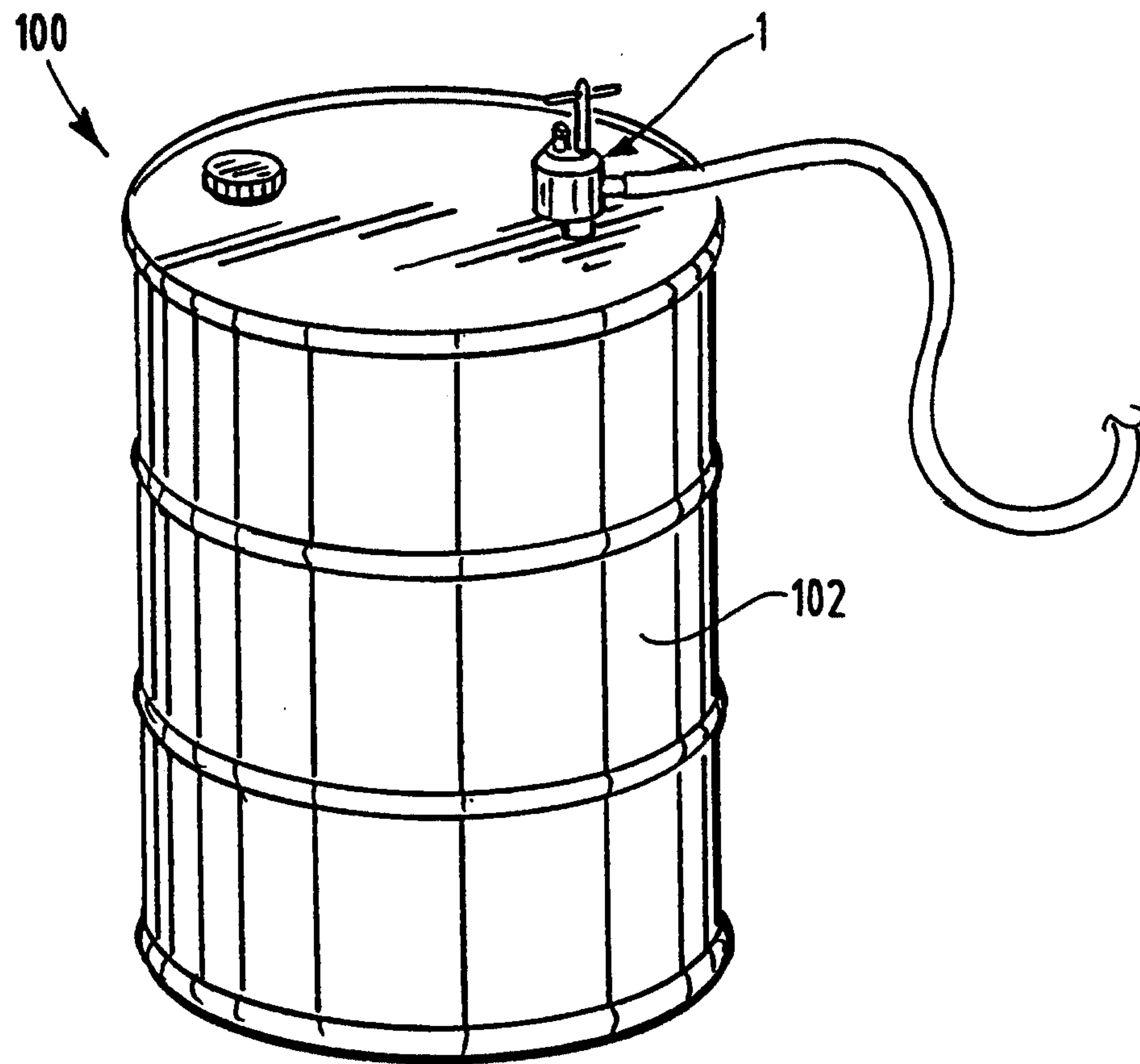
FIG.2D



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3/3

FIG. 3

