Office de la Propriété Intellectuelle du Canada
Un organisme d'Industrie Canada

Canadian Intellectual Property Office
An agency of Industry Canada

CA 2855878 A1 2011/04/21

(21) 2 855 878

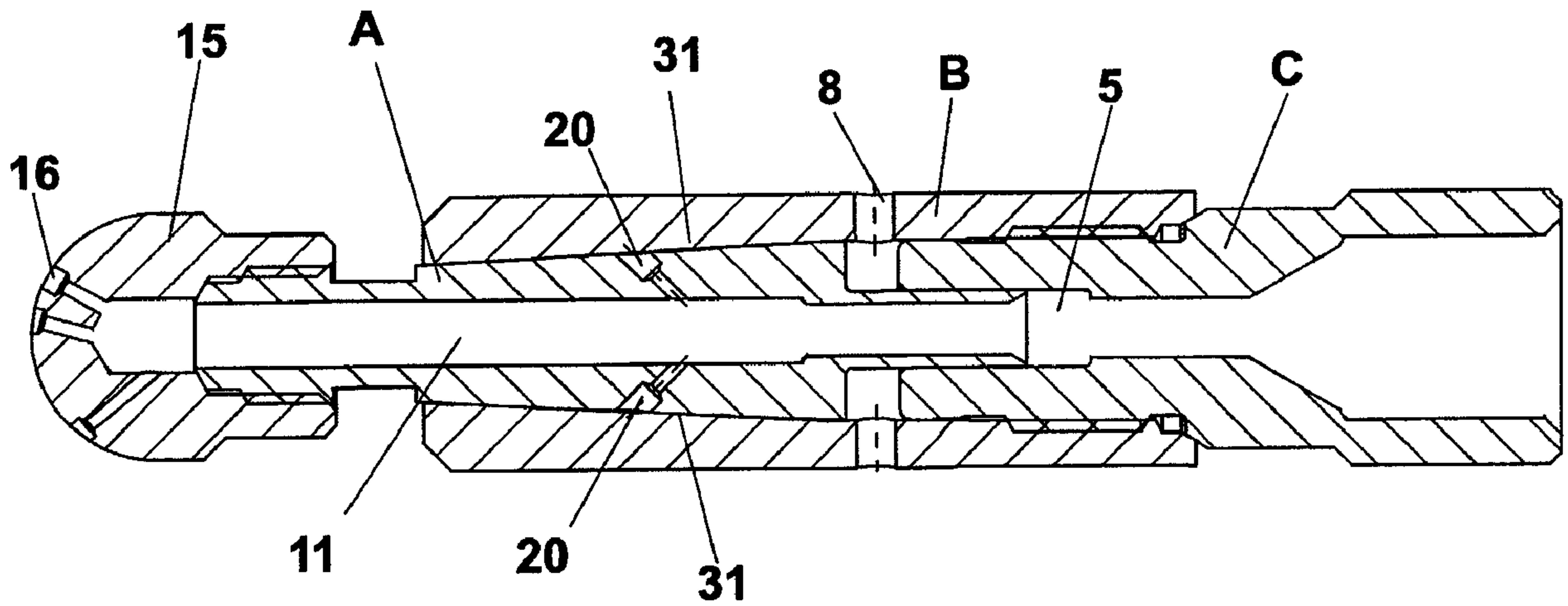
(12) DEMANDE DE BREVET CANADIEN
CANADIAN PATENT APPLICATION

(13) A1

(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 2009/12/23
(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 2011/04/21
(62) Demande originale/Original Application: 2 752 748
(30) Priorité/Priority: 2009/10/12 (US12/577,571)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *B05B 3/02* (2006.01), *B08B 3/02* (2006.01)
(71) Demandeur/Applicant: STONEAGE, INC., US
(72) Inventeur/Inventor: WRIGHT, DOUGLAS E., US
(74) Agent: BARRIGAR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW

(54) Titre : BUSE ROTATIVE HAUTE PRESSION AUTOREGULEE A PALIER FLUIDE AVEC EQUILIBRAGE DE POUSSEE
(54) Title: SELF REGULATING FLUID BEARING HIGH PRESSURE ROTARY NOZZLE WITH BALANCED THRUST FORCE



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
A high pressure rotary nozzle having a rotating shaft (1) operating within a fixed housing (B, C) wherein the axial force which acts upon the shaft due to the fluid pressure at the shaft inlet is balanced by allowing passage of a small amount of the pressurized fluid to be bled to a frusto-conical chamber between the outside of the shaft and the inside of the housing where the fluid pressure can act axially in an opposing direction upon the shaft to balance the axial inlet force. The balance of axial forces is self-regulating by controlling escape of the fluid through a frusto-conical region between the shaft and housing. This further provides a fluid bearing between the two surfaces and allows use of interchangeable rotating jet heads (15) having jet orifices (16) which can be oriented in virtually any desirable configuration including axially forward of the nozzle.

ABSTRACT

A high pressure rotary nozzle having a rotating shaft (1) operating within a fixed housing (B, C) wherein the axial force which acts upon the shaft due to the fluid pressure at the shaft inlet is balanced by allowing passage of a small amount of the pressurized fluid to be bled to a frusto-conical chamber between the outside of the shaft and the inside of the housing where the fluid pressure can act axially in an opposing direction upon the shaft to balance the axial inlet force. The balance of axial forces is self-regulating by controlling escape of the fluid through a frusto-conical region between the shaft and housing. This further provides a fluid bearing between the two surfaces and allows use of interchangeable rotating jet heads (15) having jet orifices (16) which can be oriented in virtually any desirable configuration including axially forward of the nozzle.

SELF REGULATING FLUID BEARING HIGH PRESSURE ROTARY NOZZLE WITH BALANCED THRUST FORCE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention provides a simplified and reliable construction for a high-pressure rotating water jet nozzle which is particularly well suited to industrial uses where the operating parameters can be in the range of 1,000 to 40,000 psi, rotating speeds of 1000 rpm or more and flow rates of 2 to 50 gpm. Under such use the size, construction, cost, durability and ease of maintenance for such devices present many problems. Combined length and diameter of such devices may not exceed a few inches. The more extreme operating parameters and great reduction in size compound the problems. Pressure, temperature and wear factors affect durability and ease of maintenance and attendant cost, inconvenience and safety in use of such devices. Use of small metal parts and poor quality of materials in such devices may result in their deterioration or breakage and related malfunctioning and jamming of small spray discharge orifices or the like. The present invention addresses these issues by providing a simplified construction with a greatly reduced number of parts and a design in which net operating forces on nozzle components are minimized.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention provides a nozzle for use in a high pressure (HP) range of approximately 1,000 to 40,000 psi having a "straight through" fluid path to a jet head at an end of the device where the head is preferably capable of providing rotating coverage of greater than hemispherical extent, including the area directly along the axis of rotation of the device. In a typical nozzle assembly the internal forces resulting from such operating pressures tend to create an axial thrust force acting against the nozzle shaft with the force corresponding to the operating pressure and cross sectional area of the shaft. An example of a prior art device using mechanical bearings is shown in Applicants' prior U.S. Pat. No. 6,059,202. This prior art device provides the benefit that pressurized operating fluid can take a "straight through" from the inlet for the fluid source to the nozzle head. However, in this device the rotating nozzle shaft is supported against the internal axial thrust forces by a series of stacked bearings, with plural bearings being used to bear the relatively high thrust load without increasing the diameter of the device. In such devices the mechanical bearings have been used to serve as both radial and thrust bearings, however the size and/or quantity of such bearings has been dictated primarily by the need to resist thrust forces.

[0003] It has generally been considered desirable to keep the diameter of any rotating portions of a nozzle smaller than the largest diameter of such a nozzle so that contact between the rotating portions and any surface being cleaned is minimized or eliminated thereby minimizing abrasive wear to the nozzle and interference with the rotational movement of the nozzle jets. Other prior art devices have used nozzles which rotate around a central tube which provides the fluid source. However for the aforementioned reason, such devices, while being able to provide a cylindrical path of coverage with their rotating bodies, have not been well adapted to both providing a rotating coverage which can include a path very close to the rotational axis of the device and an "straight-through" fluid path.

[0004] In contrast to such prior art devices, the device of the present invention provides a much simplified structure which also provides a straight-through fluid path in which the pressure of the operating fluid is also allowed to reach and act upon opposing surfaces of the rotating nozzle shaft so as to effectively balance any axial thrust force. Further a small detachable jet head having a diameter smaller than the body of the nozzle can be attached at the leading end of the nozzle to provide an improved coverage pattern for the high-pressure fluid. This is accomplished by providing a "bleed hole" to allow a small portion of pressurized fluid to reach a chamber or channel within the housing but outside the exterior of the forward portion of the nozzle shaft where the fluid pressure can act upon the nozzle shaft with a sufficient axial component so as to balance the corresponding axial component against the nozzle shaft created by the internal fluid pressure. This chamber or channel communicates with the exterior of the device by means of a slightly tapered frusto-conical bore surrounding a corresponding tapered portion of the shaft which further allows the fluid to flow between the body and the shaft to facilitate or lubricate the shaft rotation.

[0005] Because of the tapered shape, the spacing between the housing and the shaft varies slightly with axial movement of the shaft and creates a "self balancing" effect in which the axial forces upon the shaft remain balanced and there is always some fluid flowing between the shaft and housing which helps decrease contact and resulting wear between these two components. Due to the lack of any significant imbalanced radial forces and the fluid flowing between the surfaces of the shaft and housing, a device of the present invention can be constructed without need for mechanical bearings.

[0006] In addition, around the inlet end of the shaft an annular groove or channel is provided in the inside surface of the housing body abutting the inlet end portion of the shaft. Surprisingly, this annular channel enhances bleed flow of fluid around the inlet end of the shaft to substantially reduce the effects of rotationally induced precession on the shaft, thus improving the operability of the nozzle.

[0007] In one aspect, the present invention provides a nozzle assembly for spraying high pressure fluid against an object, the assembly including: a hollow housing body; a hollow tubular shaft member coaxially rotatable within the housing body and having a fluid inlet end within and near one end of said housing body, said shaft member having an outlet end near a second end of the housing body for securing a spray head thereto for rotation with the shaft, said shaft member having a central axial passage to conduct fluid axially from said inlet end through the passage to said outlet end, said body having a high pressure fluid inlet passage communicating with said central passage of said shaft; a regulating passage formed between said housing body and said shaft near said outlet end of said shaft; and a passage communicating between the central passage of the shaft and a portion of the outer surface of the shaft member, wherein pressure of said fluid within said regulating passage acts axially upon said shaft to counterbalance axial force on said shaft exerted by fluid pressure acting upon said inlet end of said shaft, wherein the housing body has an inlet bearing area supporting the inlet end of the tubular shaft member and has a single annular channel formed in the housing body around the inlet bearing area.

[0008] The regulating passage may be a tapered frusto-conical gap defined between said tubular shaft and said housing body. The volume of the regulating passage may be variable as said tubular shaft moves axially within said housing body.

[0009] During pressurized operation of the nozzle, axial forces on said tubular shaft may reach equilibrium, so that there is no axial contact between said tubular shaft and said housing body. During pressurized operation of the nozzle, said tubular shaft may be supported within said housing entirely by a flow of operating fluid between said shaft and said housing.

[0010] In another aspect, the present invention provides a nozzle assembly for rotatably spraying high pressure cleaning fluid against an object to be cleaned, the assembly including: a hollow cylindrical housing body; a hollow tubular shaft member coaxially carried within the housing body, the shaft member having a fluid inlet end within and near one end of said housing body, said shaft member having an outlet end projecting from a second end of the housing body, the outlet end configured to receive a spray head fastened thereto for rotation of the head with the shaft, said shaft member having a central passage to conduct fluid axially from said inlet end axially through the inlet end to said outlet end, said housing body having a high pressure fluid inlet passage axially communicating with said central passage of said shaft; an inner wall of said housing body and a portion of said shaft near said outlet end of said shaft having complementary tapered surface shapes, together forming a regulating passage therebetween; said shaft member having one or more bores communicating between the central passage of the shaft member and the regulating passage, wherein pressure of cleaning fluid within said regulating passage acts axially upon said shaft to counter axial force on said shaft resulting from fluid pressure acting upon said inlet end of said shaft; and wherein the housing body has an inlet bearing area supporting the inlet end of the tubular shaft member and the housing body has a single annular channel formed around the inlet bearing area abutting the inlet end portion of the shaft member.

[0011] The regulating passage may be a frusto-conical gap defined between said tubular shaft and said housing body. The volume of said regulating passage may vary as said tubular shaft moves axially within said housing body.

[0012] During pressurized operation of the nozzle, axial forces on said tubular shaft may reach equilibrium minimizing axial contact between said tubular shaft and said housing body. During pressurized operation of the nozzle, said tubular shaft may be supported within said housing entirely by fluid between said shaft and said housing body.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. **1** is a cross-section of the nozzle of the preferred embodiment in which a tapered regulator passage also serves as a balancing chamber.

[0014] FIG. **2** is a cross-section of the nozzle of an alternative embodiment in which the balancing chamber is separate from the tapered regulator passage.

[0015] FIG. **3** is a cross-section corresponding to FIG. **2** showing the shaft in a slightly different axial position.

[0016] FIG. **4** is a cross-section of a structural variation of the nozzle shown in FIG. **1** in which an annular groove is provided in each of the bearing areas of the nozzle body.

[0017] FIG. **5** is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a nozzle in accordance with the present invention.

[0018] FIG. **6** is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a nozzle in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] As can be seen most clearly in FIG. **2**, one embodiment of the present invention includes a simple three-piece rotary nozzle structure. A hollow cylindrical rotary shaft **A** is contained in a two part housing or body comprised of an inlet portion **C** and an outlet portion **B**. The housing portions are secured together and sealed using threading or other similar fastening means **2** which allows assembly and disassembly of the device including allowing shaft **A** to be readily inserted or removed. The inlet portion **C** provides an inlet **3** for high-pressure fluid fed to the device by hose or other similar means attached to the inlet by any suitable means, most commonly a mated threaded fitting. A suitable material for each of the nozzle portions will have fairly high strength and resistance to galling, for example, any of various high nickel stainless steels. A bronze tubular shaft or bronze body may alternatively be used for enhanced galling resistance. A surface treatment or plating may be used for any known benefits such as lubricity or abrasion resistance.

[0020] At the opposite end of the housing inlet portion is a cylindrical cavity **5** which receives the inlet end **6** of the rotating shaft **A**. The annular interface **7** between the housing and shaft is sized so as to minimize leakage while still allowing rotation of the shaft **A** with a slight cushion of fluid. Typically the gap of the interface **7** will be approximately 0.0025" to 0.0005". Some passage of fluid at the interface **7** is desirable in order to allow a fluid layer to facilitate the rotating movement between the shaft **A** and outlet portion **B**. Elimination of the need of a seal at interface **7** reduces manufacturing expense and complexity in providing such a seal. Outlet portion **B** is provided with radial "weep" holes **8** to the exterior for escape of fluid passing the interface **7** or other paths along the exterior of shaft **A.**

[0021] The shaft inlet **10** is open to the cavity **5** to of provide direct flow of fluid into the central of bore **11** of the shaft **A**. Under normal operation the pressurized fluid exerts an axial force on the inlet end **6** of shaft **A** which will be referred to herein as the "input force." This force is directly proportional to (1) the area of the inlet end **6** perpendicular to the direction of fluid flow and (2) the pressure of the fluid. It is this axial force which the present invention is intended to counteract with an equal opposing force.

[0022] As the fluid enters the shaft most of the fluid will pass through the central bore of the shaft to exit through the nozzle head **15** attached to the outlet end **12** of the shaft. Head **15** will typically be provided with exit holes or orifices **16** positioned to direct high pressure fluid toward a surface to be cleaned and oriented to impart a reactive force to rotate the head and shaft.

[0023] A significant feature which eliminates the need for dedicated thrust bearings is the provision of one or more passages or bores **20** which communicate between the central bore **11** of the shaft and a chamber **21** defined between the outer surface of shaft **A** and the inner surface of the outlet portion **B** and having an outlet with sufficient restriction to retain fluid pressure within the chamber.

[0024] Passage or passages **20** are ideally configured to allow the pressurized fluid to reach chamber **21** with minimal restriction to allow sufficient pressure to be achieved within chamber **21** so as to act upon the annular surface of the shaft created by the stepped shoulder portion **22**. Alternatively, for extreme pressure operation, e.g. operating in a range of 40,000 psi, passages **20** may be sized to restrict the fluid pressure reaching the chamber **21**. The stepped shoulder portion **22** has a surface **23** which is directly perpendicular to the axis of the device. Fluid pressure acting upon this surface creates a thrust force (which will be designated herein as the "resistive force") having a net axial component acting upon the shaft which is opposed to and capable of countering the input force described previously.

[0025] In the embodiment shown in FIGS. **2** and **3** suitable dimensions are a shaft diameter .182" at inlet **10**, an outer and inner diameters of .326" and .257" respectively of chamber **21**. The corresponding angle of taper of both shaft and housing along gap **30** is .57 degrees, with the housing inner diameter tapering from .257" to .250" over the length of the taper.

[0026] In order that the input and resistive forces may remain balanced the chamber or cavity **21** is provided with an outlet and regulator passage along the path defined by the narrow frusto/conical gap **30** between correspondingly shaped portions of shaft **A** and outlet portion **B**. The tapered configuration allows variation in the size of the gap as the shaft moves axially with respect to the housing. For example, the width of gap **30** may vary, being approximately .0001" as the shaft **A** is positioned toward the jet head shown in FIG. **3**. As the shaft moves to the position toward the inlet shown in FIG. **2**, the width of gap **30** may open to approximately .001". A larger gap allows greater escape of pressurized fluid resulting in corresponding decrease in the resistive force acting upon the shaft. Conversely, a smaller gap allows an increase of pressure. Any imbalance between the input and resistive forces tends to cause some axial movement of the shaft, which increases or reduces the gap in a manner which tends to re-balance these opposing forces. Accordingly, a state of equilibrium is reached where the input and resistive forces remain dynamically balanced.

[0027] Another embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIG. **1** in which the functional features described are combined and provided in a simplified structure. For there to be an axial resistive force it is unnecessary that there be a surface which is actually perpendicular to the shaft axis as described above so long as there is a surface with an areal component which is effectively perpendicular to the rotational axis. In the simplified structure shown in FIG. **1** the port from the shaft bore **11** communicates directly with the tapered outlet passage **31**, which serves the dual function of being a balancing chamber or cavity, where a balancing resistive force is created and a regulator passage, to control the amount of pressure which creates the resistive force. Since a force acting at any point on the frusto-conical surface imparts both a radial force and an axial force, the total of such forces over the surface creates a net axial force and with no net radial force. The following table illustrates suitable dimensions in inches for various parameters for flows between 8 and 50 gallons per minute using the tapered design of one of the preferred embodiments.

LOCATION	Design Flow:			
	8 gpm	15 gpm	35 gpm	50 gpm
Inner diameter through tool (determines flow capacity)	0.096	0.150	0.240	0.300
(inlet end of shaft diameter)	0.1410	0.220	0.345	0.430
(largest shaft diameter)	0.3250	0.506	0.750	0.840
(shaft diameter @ small end of taper)	0.2530	0.375	0.560	0.560
(inlet inside diameter)	0.1420	0.221	0.346	0.431
(body inside diameter- large end of taper)	0.3250	0.560	0.750	0.840
(body inside diameter- small end of taper)	0.2535	0.376	0.561	0.561
(length of inlet end of shaft)	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260
(length of taper)	0.7450	1.242		

[0028] Another embodiment is shown in FIG. **4**. This figure shows a variation of the nozzle structure of FIG. **1** in which identified elements are structurally equivalent and accordingly are correspondingly numbered. The annular groove **41** around the tapered portion of outlet portion **B** facilitates distribution of the pressurized fluid as it exits the bores **20** in the shaft **A** into the tapered outlet passage **31** between the frusto-conical tapered portions of the outlet portion **B** and the similarly tapered portion of the shaft **A**.

[0029] Surprisingly, general functional characteristics of the structure of FIG. **1** have been found to be unexpectedly enhanced by the addition of a circumferential annular groove, channel or chamber **42** in the inside wall of the portion **C** abutting the inlet bearing area **32** of shaft **A**, as shown in FIG. **4**. This channel or chamber **42** provides a continuous unrestricted circumferential fluid circulation path around the shaft **A** in the inlet bearing area **32** between the rotating shaft **A**, and body portion **C**. Although inlet fluid is designed to weep axially past the inlet bearing area **32** in the embodiments shown in FIGS. **1-3**, the presence of this groove in the embodiment shown in FIG. **4** surprisingly improves shaft stability. It is believed that the channel **42** may enhance circumferential distribution of the small weepage flow around the shaft **A** passing through the bearing area **32** which in turn minimizes the effects of precession of the shaft axis during operation. The result is a decreased, or at least maintenance of constancy of, the level of mechanical friction which may occur between the relative movable parts and which would otherwise impede the rotational motion.

[0030] As shown in FIG. **4**, this annular channel, or chamber **42,** preferably has a generally rectangular cross sectional shape, although other shapes may result in similar performance. Optimally only a single channel **42** is provided. Preferably the single channel **42** may have a width of between about .030 to about .050 inches and a depth of between about .020-.030 inches. Although the chamber **42** may alternatively be formed in the outer surface of the inlet end of the shaft **A**, optimal results appears to be achieved with the chamber **42** formed in the inlet bearing area **32** of the housing portion **C**. The annular groove **41** is created by a groove machined into the inner surface of the outlet portion **B**. Alternatively, it is believed that a similar groove could be machined into the external surface of shaft **A** rather than in the outlet portion **B** in order to achieve similar results. The groove **42** is an annular channel having a substantially rectangular cross section. The groove **41** is an annular channel having an arcuate cross section. The cross sectional configurations may be reversed between grooves **41** and **42** although a curved cross section of groove **41** is preferred in the tapered portion of shaft **A** adjacent the shaft bore **20**. Alternatively the grooves **41** and **42** may have different cross sectional shapes.

[0031] Another embodiment of a nozzle **100** is shown in FIG. **5**. This nozzle **100** is similar to nozzle **15** shown in FIG. **1** except that the total leakage rate required to balance the rotation of the nozzle **100** is reduced by approximately a factor of 4. As in FIG. **1**, nozzle **100** as a body **102** fastened to a high pressure inlet nut **104**. The inlet nut **104** is fastened to the body **102** via a retainer ring **103**. Captured between the body **102** and the inlet nut **104** is a frusto-conical shaft **106** rotatably supported on the stem **105** forming an inlet bearing area of the inlet nut **104**. A spray head **107** is fastened to the shaft **106** so that both shaft **106** and head **107** rotate together as an integral unit. The inlet nut **104** and its inlet bearing area, stem **105,** has a central bore **111** that directs fluid flow into and through corresponding spray bores in the head **107**.

[0032] During operation, high pressure fluid is introduced through the central bore **111** in the inlet nut **104**. This high pressure fluid passes out through the head **107**. A portion of the fluid flows around and along leakage path **110** along the inlet bearing area, i.e., the outside of the stem **105**, through passages or bores **108** in the shaft **106** to the frusto-conical tapered interface between the body **102** and the shaft **106**. This fluid then diverges and flows outward in opposite directions, first forward along leakage path **112** to exit the nozzle **100** around the head **107** and also rearward along path **112** to the clearance space **113** between the inlet nut **104** and the rear face of the shaft **106**. This portion of the fluid then passes through bores **114** in the inlet nut **104** and past the retainer **103** to atmosphere. As in the embodiment shown in FIG. **1**, the shaft **106** becomes dynamically balanced on the stem **105** during operation such that mechanical bearings are not required. The lubricity of the fluid flowing through leak paths **110** and **112** sufficiently supports and lubricates the shaft **106** and attached spray head **107**. In this embodiment, the leak path **110** generates about a 90% drop in pressure by the time fluid gets to the passages **108** to supply fluid to the outer taper, i.e. leak paths **112**. This allows a reduction of the total leakage rate by a factor of about 4 times.

[0033] A further alternative embodiment **200** of a nozzle in accordance with the present invention is shown in FIG. **6**. In this alternative embodiment, the spray head **210** and body **204** are attached together and rotate about the shaft **206**, which is fastened to the inlet nut **202**. Nozzle **200** has the inlet nut **202** fastened to the frusto-conical shaft **206** via threads **208**. The body **204** has a complementary frusto-conical shaped cavity that matches and interfaces with that of the shaft **206**. In this embodiment, the stem **205** is attached, or an integral part of the spray head **210** rather than being an integral part of the inlet nut **202** as in nozzle **100**. Spray head **210** is secured also to the body **204** via split ring retainer **207** such that the spray head **210** and body **204** rotate as a single unit. When nozzle **200** is assembled, the frusto-conical outer surface of the shaft **206** and the frusto-conical inner surface portion of the body **204** form a tapered frusto-conical leakage path **220**.

[0034] During operation, high pressure fluid is introduced through the central bore **211** through the inlet nut **202**. This central bore **211** extends through stem **205**. This high pressure fluid passes out through the head **210**. A portion of the fluid flows around and along leakage path **212** along the inlet bearing area, i.e., the outside of the stem **205**, through passages or bores **218** in the shaft **206** to the interface (regulating passage) between the frusto-conical tapered portions of the body **204** and the shaft **206**. This fluid then diverges and flows outward in opposite directions, first forward along leakage path **220** to the clearance space **213** and thence through bores **214** to atmosphere around the head **210** and also rearward along path **220** to atmosphere at the nut **202**. As in the embodiments shown in FIGS. **1** and **4**, the body **204** and head **210** becomes dynamically balanced on the stem **205** within the shaft **206** during operation such that mechanical bearings are not required. The lubricity of the fluid flowing through leak paths **220** around the interface **216** and path **212** along the stem **205** sufficiently supports and lubricates the body **204** and attached spray head **210** on the shaft **206**. In this embodiment, the leak path **212** generates about a 90% drop in pressure by the time fluid gets to the passages or bores **218** to supply fluid to the outer taper, i.e. leak paths **220**. This allows a reduction of the total leakage rate by a factor of about 4 times as in the nozzle **100**.

[0035] Thus comparing embodiment **200** with embodiment **100**, it can be seen that in both embodiments, the body and shaft rotate relative to each other. They both have complementary tapered surface shapes, together forming a regulating passage, or leakage paths **112**, **220** therebetween. In nozzle **100**, the shaft **106** is fastened to the head **107** and rotates therewith. In nozzle **200**, the shaft **206** is fastened to the inlet nut **202** and held stationary, while the body **204** is fastened to the spray head **210** and rotates around the stationary shaft **206** via stem **205**. Note that in nozzle **200** the stem **205** is integral with and extends from the spray head **210** rather than the nut **104** as in the nozzle **100**. Thus in both embodiments of the nozzle **100** and **200**, the body **102**, **204** and shaft **106**, **206** rotate relative to each other and about the stem **105** and **205** respectively. In both nozzles **100** and **200**, inlet fluid flows through bore **111**, **211** to the spray head **107**, **210**, and fluid flows from the inlet nut **104** and **202** into and through a first leakage path **110**, **212** around the stem **105**, **205** to bores **108**, **218** between the shaft **106**, **206** and the stem **105**, **205**, and then through the bores **108**, **218** to the frusto-conical interface **216** of the body **102**, **204**. Fluid then diverges and flows along the frusto-conical interface leakage paths **112**, **220**, i.e., the regulating passage, in both embodiments out to atmosphere, adjacent the nut **104**, **202** and through bores **114**, **214**.

[0036] Thus comparing embodiment **200** with embodiment **100**, it can be seen that in both embodiments, the body and shaft rotate relative to each other and they both have complementary frusto-conical tapered surface shapes, together each forming a regulating passage, i.e., leakage paths **112**, **220** therebetween. Pressure of fluid within the regulating passage in each embodiment acts axially upon the shaft to counter axial force on the shaft resulting from fluid pressure acting upon said inlet end of the shaft, thus dynamically balancing the rotating parts without the necessity for mechanical bearings of any kind in the structure of the nozzle **100**, **200**.

[0037] In accordance with the features and benefits described herein, the present invention is intended to be defined by the claims below and their equivalents.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A nozzle assembly for spraying high pressure fluid against an object, the assembly comprising:

a hollow housing body;

a hollow tubular shaft member coaxially rotatable within the housing body and having a fluid inlet end within and near one end of said housing body, said shaft member having an outlet end near a second end of the housing body for securing a spray head thereto for rotation with the shaft, said shaft member having a central axial passage to conduct fluid axially from said inlet end through the passage to said outlet end, said body having a high pressure fluid inlet passage communicating with said central passage of said shaft;

a regulating passage formed between said housing body and said shaft near said outlet end of said shaft; and

a passage communicating between the central passage of the shaft and a portion of the outer surface of the shaft member, wherein pressure of said fluid within said regulating passage acts axially upon said shaft to counterbalance axial force on said shaft exerted by fluid pressure acting upon said inlet end of said shaft, wherein the housing body has an inlet bearing area supporting the inlet end of the tubular shaft member and has a single annular channel formed in the housing body around the inlet bearing area.

2. A nozzle assembly according to claim 1 wherein said regulating passage is a tapered frusto-conical gap defined between said tubular shaft and said housing body.

3. A nozzle assembly according to claim 2 wherein the volume of said regulating passage is variable as said tubular shaft moves axially within said housing body.

4. A nozzle assembly according to claim 3 wherein during pressurized operation of the nozzle, axial forces on said tubular shaft reach equilibrium, so that there is no axial contact between said tubular shaft and said housing body.

5. A nozzle assembly according to claim 4 wherein during pressurized operation of the nozzle, said tubular shaft is supported within said housing entirely by a flow of operating fluid between said shaft and said housing.

6. A nozzle assembly for rotatably spraying high pressure cleaning fluid against an object to be cleaned, the assembly comprising:

a hollow cylindrical housing body;

a hollow tubular shaft member coaxially carried within the housing body, the shaft member having a fluid inlet end within and near one end of said housing body, said shaft member having an outlet end projecting from a second end of the housing body, the outlet end configured to receive a spray head fastened thereto for rotation of the head with the shaft, said shaft member having a central passage to conduct fluid axially from said inlet end axially through the inlet end to said outlet end, said housing body having a high pressure fluid inlet passage axially communicating with said central passage of said shaft;

an inner wall of said housing body and a portion of said shaft near said outlet end of said shaft having complementary tapered surface shapes, together forming a regulating passage therebetween;

said shaft member having one or more bores communicating between the central passage of the shaft member and the regulating passage, wherein pressure of cleaning fluid within said regulating passage acts axially upon said shaft to counter axial force on said shaft resulting from fluid pressure acting upon said inlet end of said shaft; and

wherein the housing body has an inlet bearing area supporting the inlet end of the tubular shaft member and the housing body has a single annular channel formed around the inlet bearing area abutting the inlet end portion of the shaft member.

7. A nozzle assembly according to claim 6 wherein said regulating passage is a frusto-conical gap defined between said tubular shaft and said housing body.

8. A nozzle assembly according to claim 7 wherein the volume of said regulating passage varies as said tubular shaft moves axially within said housing body.

9. A nozzle assembly according to claim 8 wherein during pressurized operation of the nozzle, axial forces on said tubular shaft reach equilibrium minimizing axial contact between said tubular shaft and said housing body.

10. A nozzle assembly according to claim 6 wherein during pressurized operation of the nozzle, said tubular shaft is supported within said housing entirely by fluid between said shaft and said housing body.

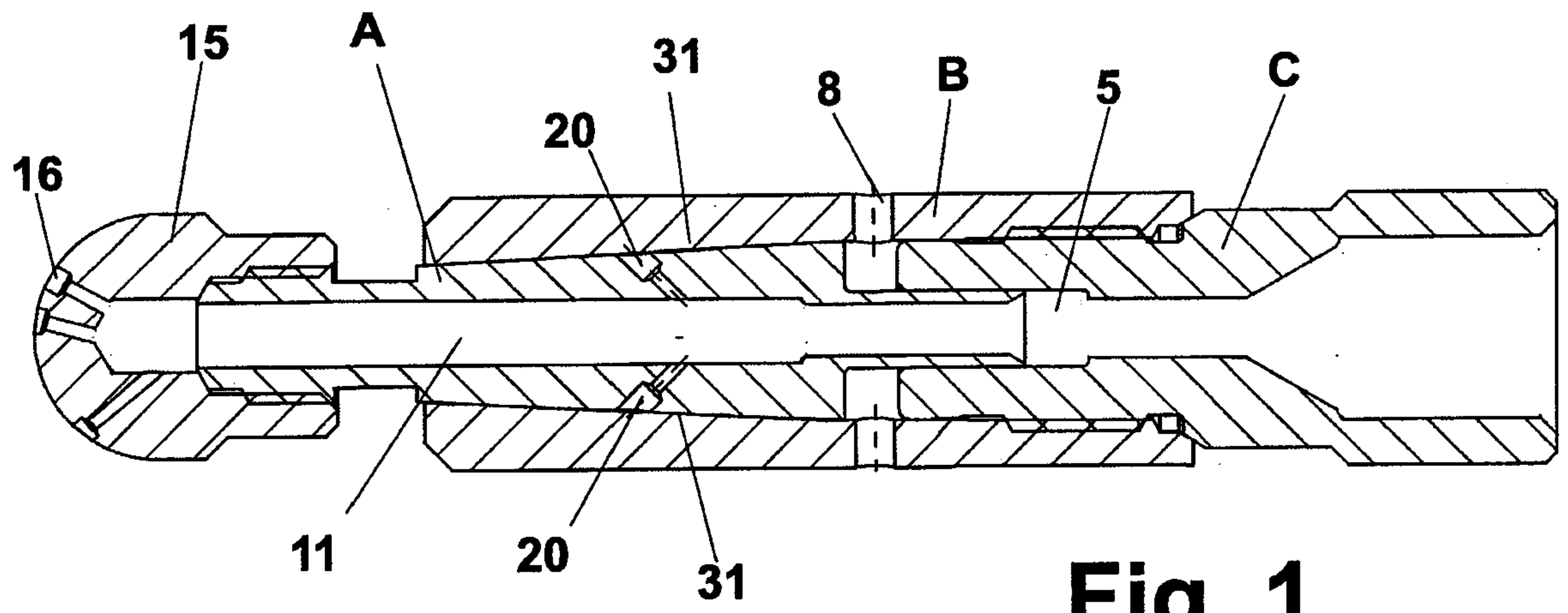


Fig. 1

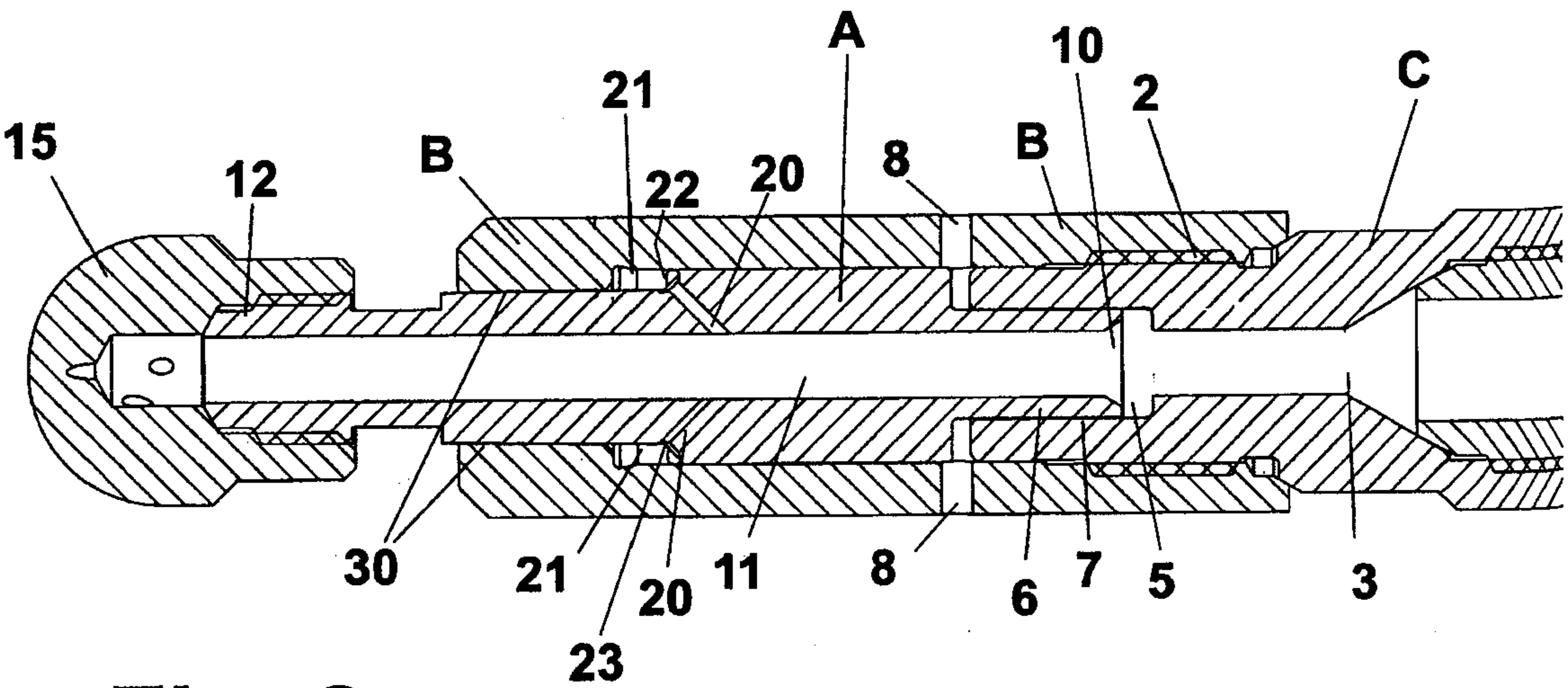


Fig. 2

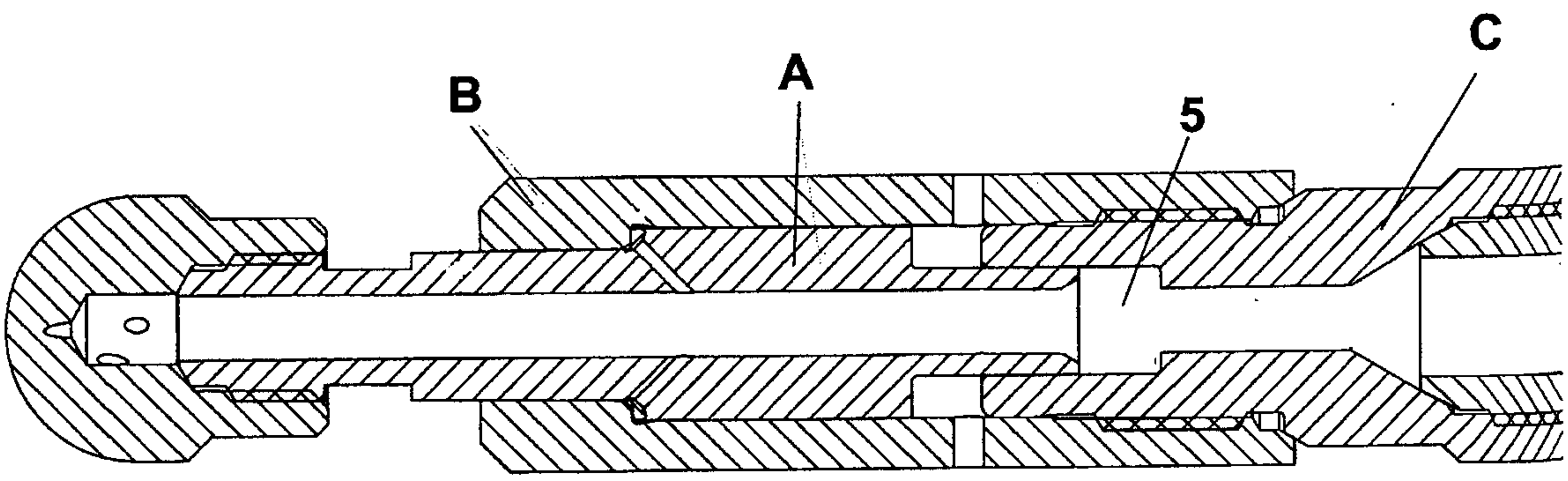


Fig. 3

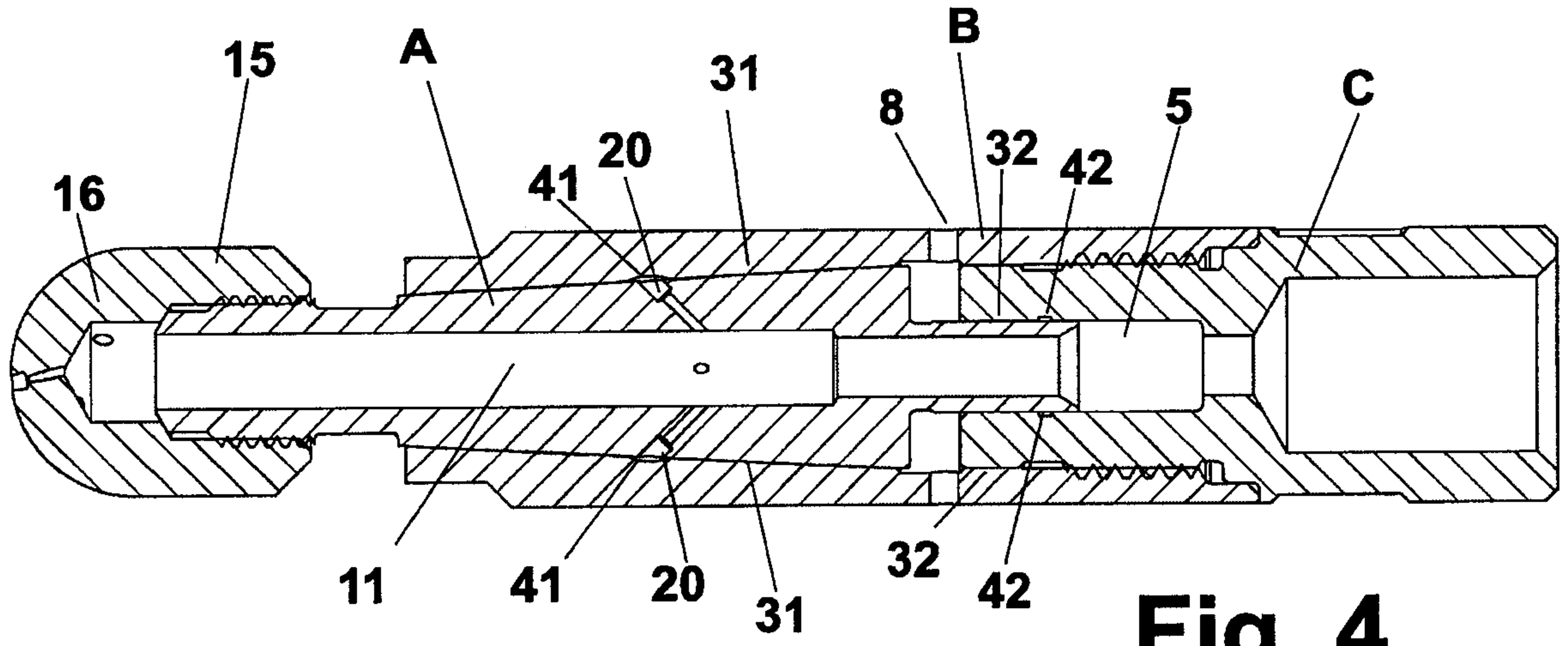


Fig. 4

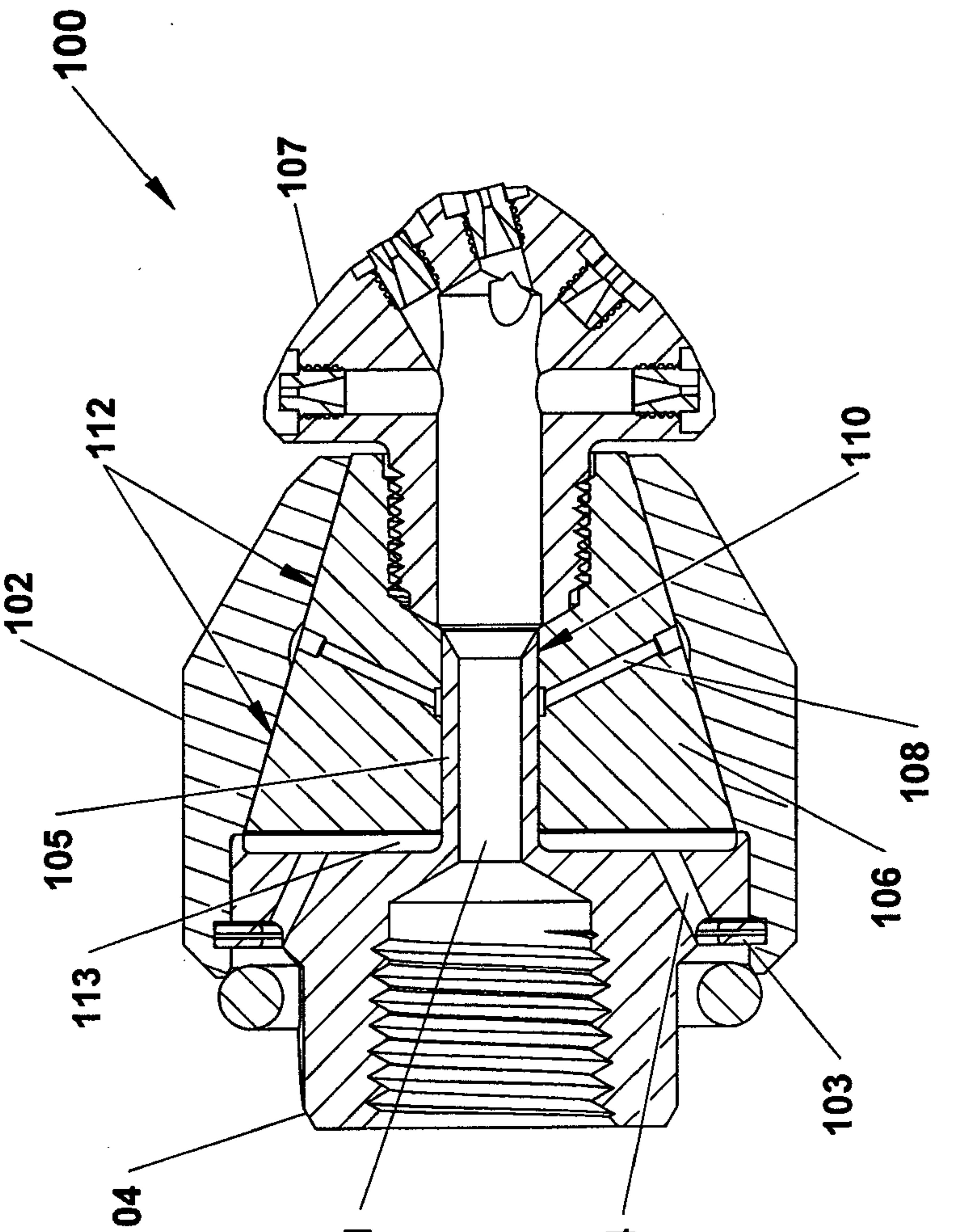


Fig. 5

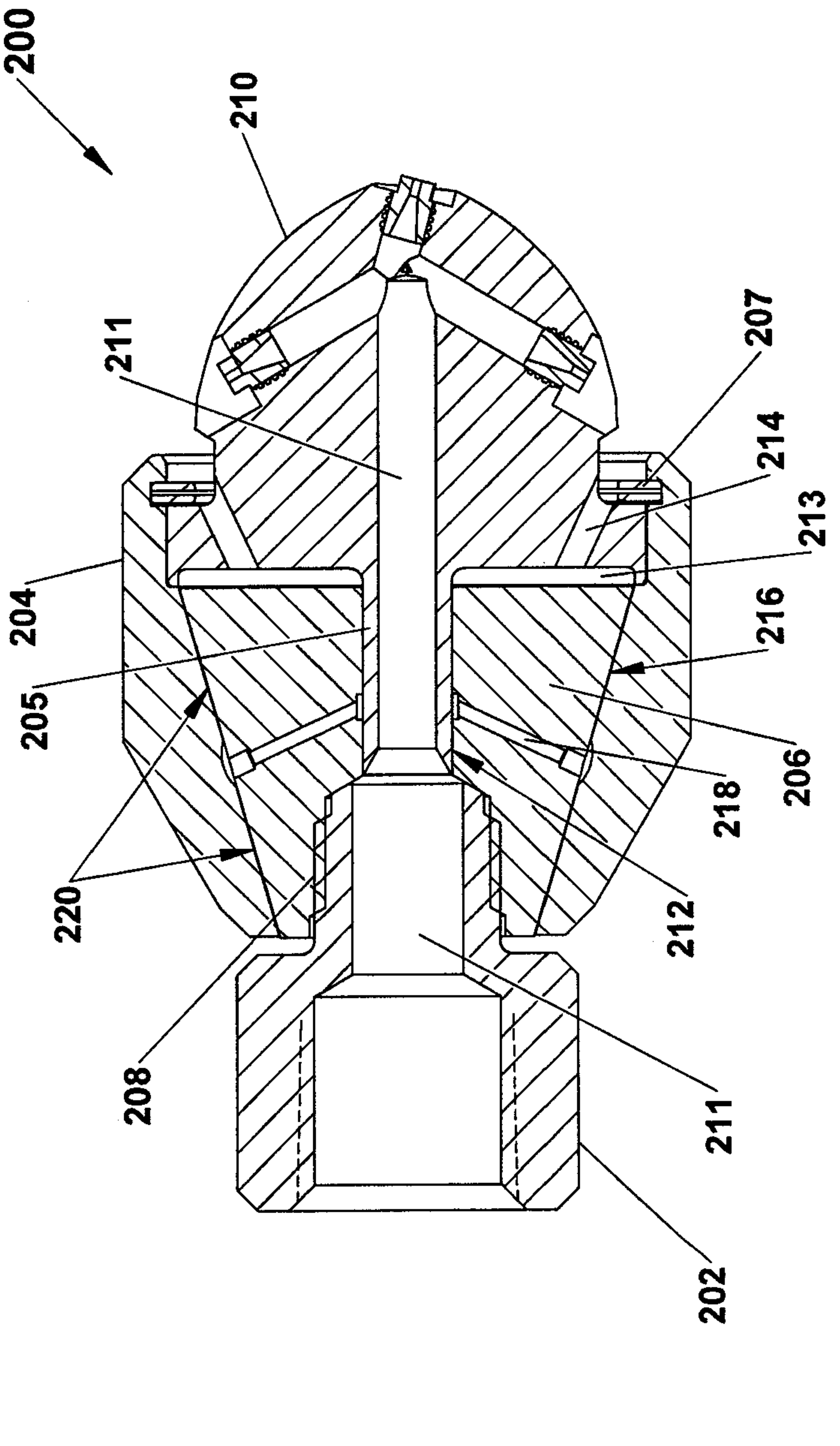
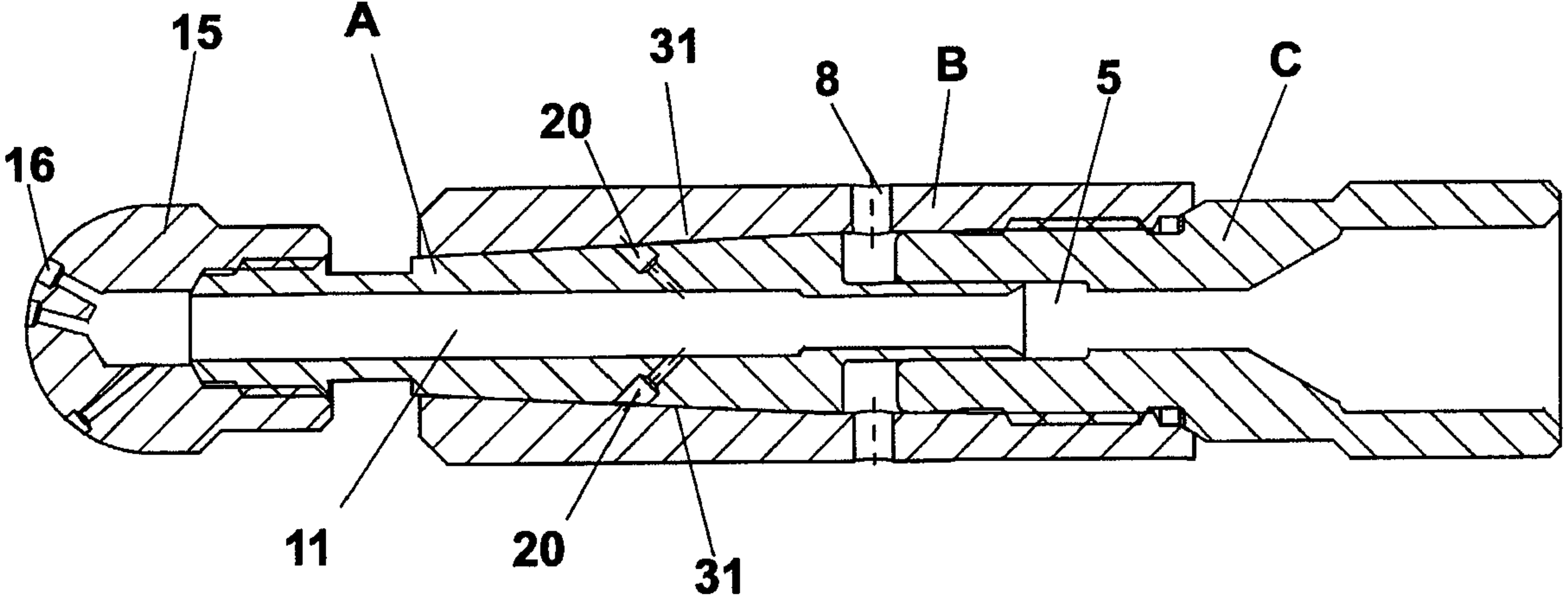


Fig. 6


16
15
A
31
20
8
B
5
C
11
20
31