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(71) Applicant: **AUTOMATED PACKAGING SYSTEMS, INC.**
8400 Darrow Road
Twinsburg Ohio 44187 (US)

(72) Inventor: **Gereby, John L.**
20949 Beaconsfield Blvd.
Rocky River Ohio 44116 (US)

Gifford, Eric P.
29549 Miles Avenue
Orange Ohio 44022 (US)

Wehrmann, Rick S.
6100 Stow Road
Hudson Ohio 44236 (US)

Easter, William M.
5245 Fairfield Oval
Solon Ohio 44139 (US)

(74) Representative: **Fisher, Bernard et al**
Raworth, Moss & Cook 36 Sydenham Road
Croydon Surrey CR0 2EF (GB)

(54) Packaging machine and method.

(57) A tabletop machine for automatically loading and sealing flexible containers such as plastic bags forming part of a chain of bags. The apparatus includes structure for supporting a supply (S) of preformed, interconnected bags which are sequentially fed to a loading station. At the loading station, the bag is inflated by a blower having a shutter controlled outlet so that the flow of inflation air is reduced or terminated during feeding and which provides a blast or surge of air to "pop" the bag open when the bag arrives at a loading station. A residual air stream maintains inflation of the bag. After loading, a clamping mechanism is activated which applies a substantially increasing clamping force as a clamp bar (110) nears a heat sealing unit (114) so that should an obstruction or other obstacle be encountered as the clamping bar moves towards the bag, motion in the clamping bar can be resisted by the obstacle without damage to the obstacle or clamping mechanism. While the bag is clamped to the heat sealing unit, a perforation breaking mechanism (102) comprising a blade-like member (150) driven into the web path intermediate a locked web feed roll (62) and the heat sealing unit causes severance of the loaded bag along a line of weakness formed by perforations. A relatively small, low volume air compressor in combination with a storage tank is used to provide the motive force for fluid pressure operated actuators used to operate the clamping bar and the perforation breaking mechanism so that a single source of electrical power is all that is needed to operate the machine.

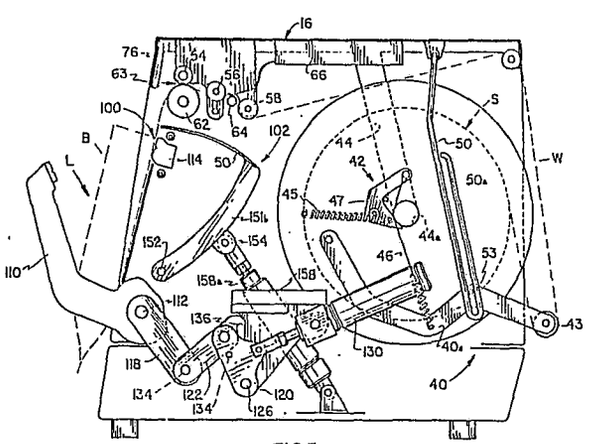

FIG.5

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

EP 88 31 1367

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int Cl 4)
Y,D	US-A-3 477 196 (LERNER) * Column 3, line 42 - column 5, line 27; figure 2 * --	1-5,28, 29	B 65 B 43/12 B 65 B 61/06 B 65 B 51/14 B 65 B 43/36
Y	DE-B-2 836 590 (WIELIGMANN) * Column 3; column 4; figure 2 * --	1,4,28	
Y	US-A-4 416 104 (YAMADA) * Column 2, line 13 - column 4, line 49; figures 2,3 * --	2	
Y	GB-A-1 125 856 (OLINKRAFT) * Page 2, lines 91-105; figure 1 * --	3	
Y	FR-A-1 338 725 (BADOR) * Page 2, paragraph 4; figure 1 * --	5	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl 4) B 65 B
Y	US-A-4 202 153 (LERNER) * Column 7, line 65 - column 8, line 23; figures 1,2 * ----------	29	

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE	24-02-1989	CLAEYS

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

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