

The fuel elements are made of uranium oxide pellets enriched with uranium-235. They are spaced apart by wedge discs formed of uranium-238 or thorium-232 that absorb slow neutrons to produce plutonium-239 or uranium-233, respectively. Both are fissionable. The reactor, therefore, "breeds" more fuel as it burns uranium.

Method Separates Chemicals

Also assigned to the Atomic Energy Commission were rights to patent No. 3,022,134, awarded to Paul R. Fields of Chicago and Nadine M. Isaac of Brussels, Belgium. They devised a method of separating curium and americium, both of which are produced in nuclear reactors burning uranium-238.

After separation from americium, the curium is valuable as a power source for use in satellites, since it takes more than five months to lose half its radioactivity. The separation is achieved by contacting the molten salt of the two elements with a dilute organic solvent at a temperature of 300 degrees Fahrenheit.

Patent No. 3,022,236, rights to which were also assigned to the Atomic Energy Commission, was granted to Aaron J. Ulrich, Wheaton, Ill., James W. Butler of Hinsdale, Ill., and Albert J. Hatch of Chicago. It covers a device using radio-frequency methods for containing the plasma necessary for controlled thermonuclear reactions.

• Science News Letter, 81:158 March 10, 1962

INVENTIONS

Common Market Patent Possibility for Future

► THE IDEA of a common market patent that might replace the multiple patent procedures in the Western world is creating a considerable amount of interest and apprehension in industrial and patent law circles.

In order to have manufactured products flow freely from one of the common market nations to another, it is argued that barriers imposed by patent rights separately determined for each country would have to be lowered. One way to do this would be to have a common market patent, which would be valid in all of the countries.

The idea of such a patent seems to have originated in Germany because of the intensive manufacturing interests and operations in that country.

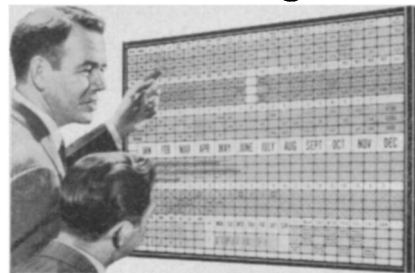
At the present time patents have to be applied for and obtained in a multiplicity of national jurisdictions. The patent laws and the criteria for patentability are somewhat different in each of the countries of the world. The United States and Canada have the most closely allied patent systems.

Trademarks are becoming a concern of common market countries, and the question arises as to whether they, also, can be put upon an international basis.

While the common market is not concerned, it is known that the trademark Bacardi for rum, which was previously held by a Cuban corporation, has been transferred to a United States organization with the prospect that it may not be possible for Cuba to export rum with the Bacardi label to non-Communist countries where the trademark is recognized.

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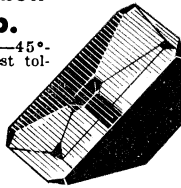
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