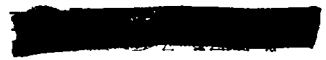


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THE MULTIPLE-WIRE PROPORTIONAL COUNTER
(THE M. W. COUNTER)


WORK DONE BY:

- B. Diven
- B. Rossi
- R. W. Thompson

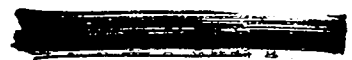
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Instrumentation

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ABSTRACT

A multiple-wire counter, consisting of a grid of fine wires mounted between plane screens, has been operated as a shallow plane proportional counter. Preliminary results on the characteristics of this detector with argon - CO₂ fillings are given.



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THE MULTIPLE-WIRE PROPORTIONAL COUNTER

(THE M. W. COUNTER)

I. Introduction

A shallow multiple-wire (M. W.) proportional counter has been constructed and briefly investigated, with the end in view of using such a detector for counting recoil protons in certain fast neutron experiments.

An element of a M. W. counter is shown schematically in Fig. 1). A grid of fine wires (Fig. 1, w) is mounted rigidly between two screens (Fig. 1, s_1 and s_2) of high transparency. The wires are connected to the grid of the first tube and the screens are connected to a negative voltage supply. An ionizing particle (Fig. 1, p) entering the counter element creates a number of ion pairs between the two screens. The electrons are swept to the wires, and gas multiplication occurs as in the conventional cylindrical proportional counter 1) 2).

The uniformity of response to ionization in different parts of the counter will be influenced by the same factors which determine the uniformity of response of the conventional cylindrical proportional counter.

1) Rose, M. E. and Korff, S. A. Phys. Rev., 59, 850 (1941).

2) Korff, S. A. Rev. Mod. Phys., 14, 1 (1942).

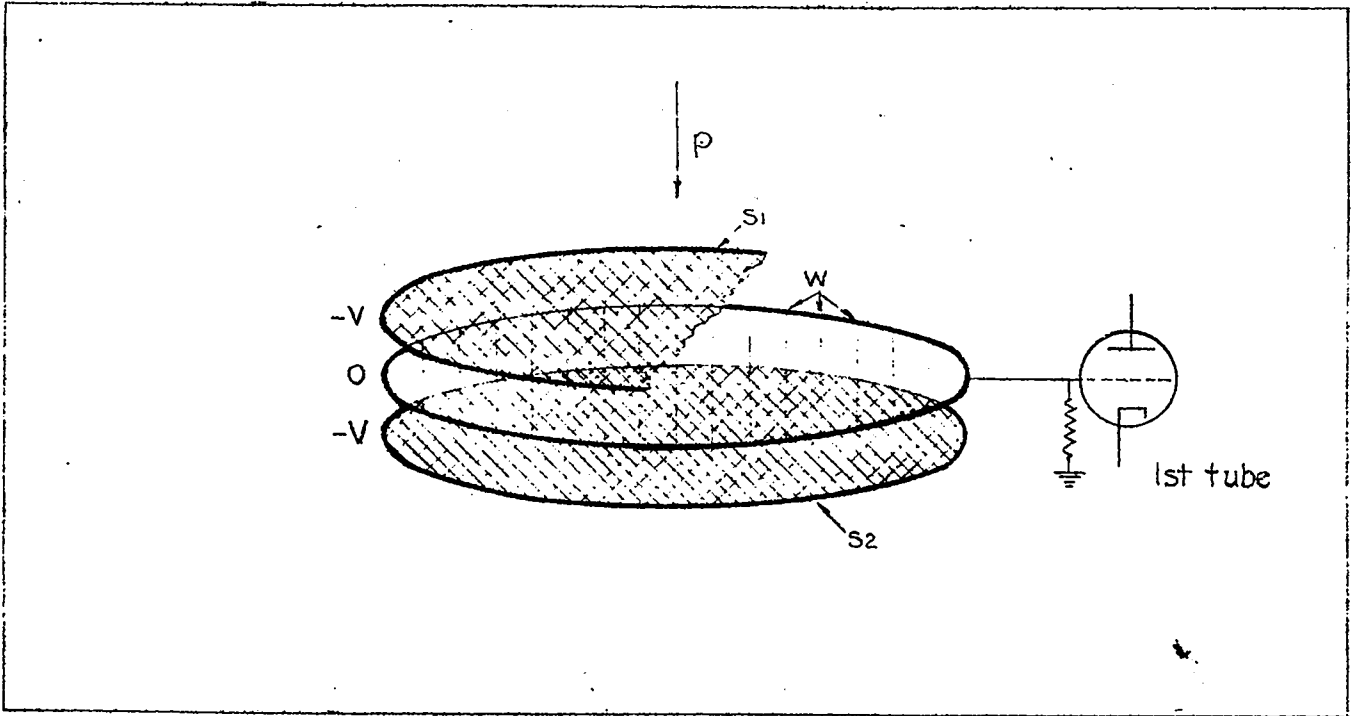


FIGURE 1

THE MULTIPLE WIRE PROPORTIONAL COUNTER

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namely: 1) Electron attachment; 2) Cylindrical symmetry of field about wires; 3) Collection time of initial electrons; and, 4) End effects.

Preliminary tests of the overall effect of these factors have been conducted with a particular amplifier.

II. Apparatus

A. The Counter

A working drawing of the counter used is given in Fig. 2. The wires and screens are mounted on invar rings and stretched tight by differential thermal contraction. There are two counter elements, with a common screen, so that the reaction of one element on another can be investigated.

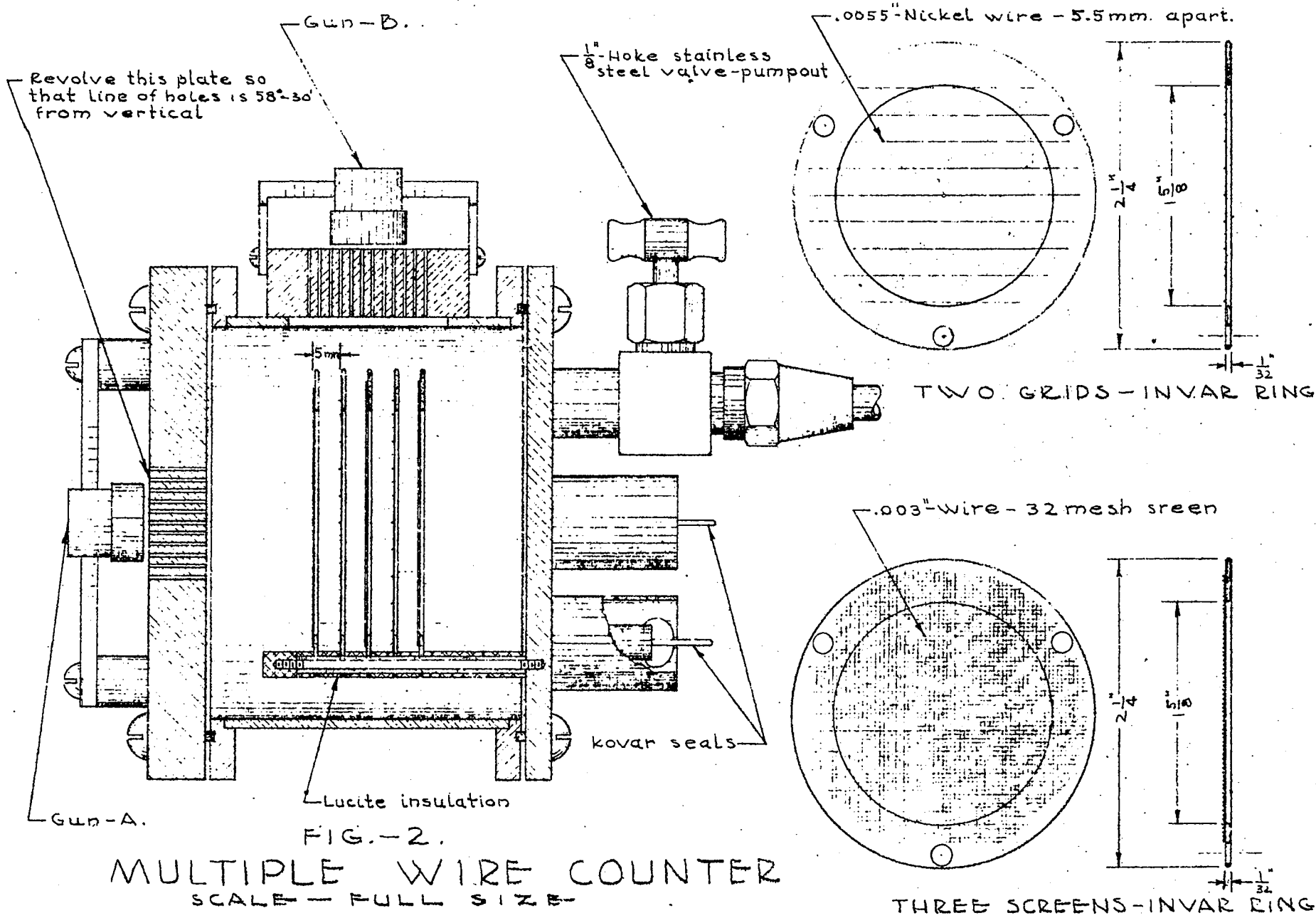
A collimated beam of α -particles (from polonium) can be directed into the counter through either of two sets of collimating holes (Fig. 2, A and B) of 0.026 inch diameter, 0.5 inch length, and of 2mm separation. The holes normal to the plane of the counter are drilled on a line making an angle of 31.5° with the direction of the wires, so that five positions of the beam may be obtained between two wires.

B. The Amplifier

An RC coupled linear amplifier of conventional design was used to amplify the α -pulses. The shortest time constant was 100 microseconds.

III. Experimental Results

As the M. W. counter was intended to count proton recoils from a paraffin radiator, the gas used throughout the investigation was argon. It is well known that it is difficult or impossible to operate a proportional counter at high gas amplification with very pure argon. It has



been found in this laboratory that the addition of a few per cent of CO₂ to ordinary tank argon (99.6% purity) makes the operation of an argon-filled counter quite practical. CO₂ is used since it is a good quenching gas, does not attach electrons³⁾, and neither carbon nor oxygen have known neutron-induced reactions up to several Mev. Argon 97% - CO₂ 3% mixtures were used throughout the present investigation.

A. Gas Multiplication as a Function of Counter Voltage

The gas amplification as a function of counter voltage has been measured at total pressures of 4 cm. and 29 cm. The results are presented in Fig. 3. At 29 cm. pressure, the measurements were made by comparison of pulse height with and without gas amplification. At 4 cm. pressure, the energy loss in the counter was too small to permit observation of ionization pulses, so that the gas amplification is plotted on an arbitrary scale.

B. Variation of Pulse Height with Position of Ionizing Particle

1. Transverse Experiment

When a collimated beam of α -particles was shot through the counter normal to the plane of the elements (i.e. through Fig. 2, A), the average pulse height was found to vary continuously from wire to wire, as the source was moved from hole to hole. The pulse height reached a maximum when the α -particles passed near a wire and a minimum when the α -particles passed midway between wires. The curves of Fig. 4 are preliminary bias

3) Healey, R. H. and Reed, J. W. "The Behavior of Slow Electrons in Gases", (The Wireless Press for Amalgamated Wireless, Sydney. 1941) p. 85

Gas Multiplication

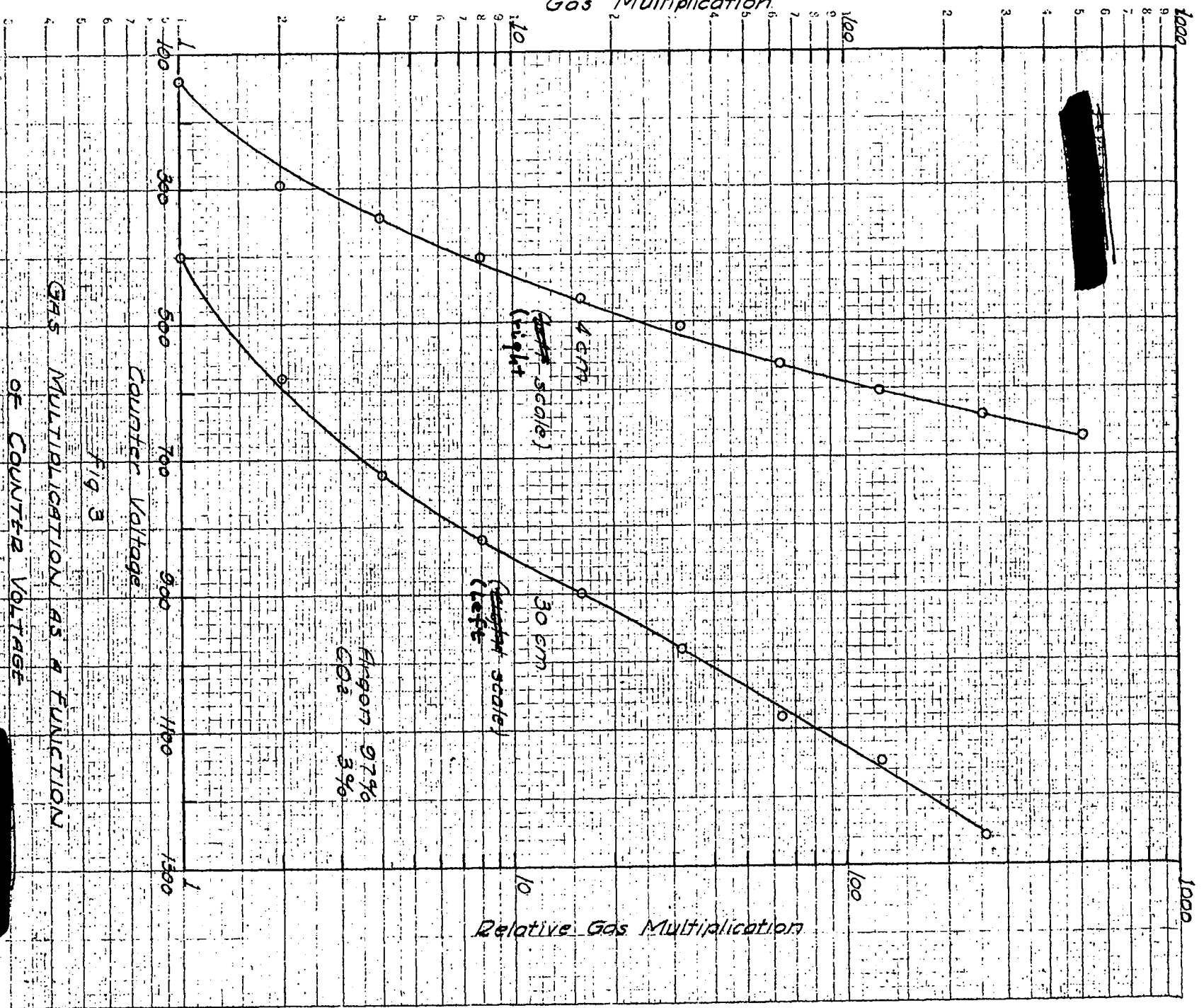
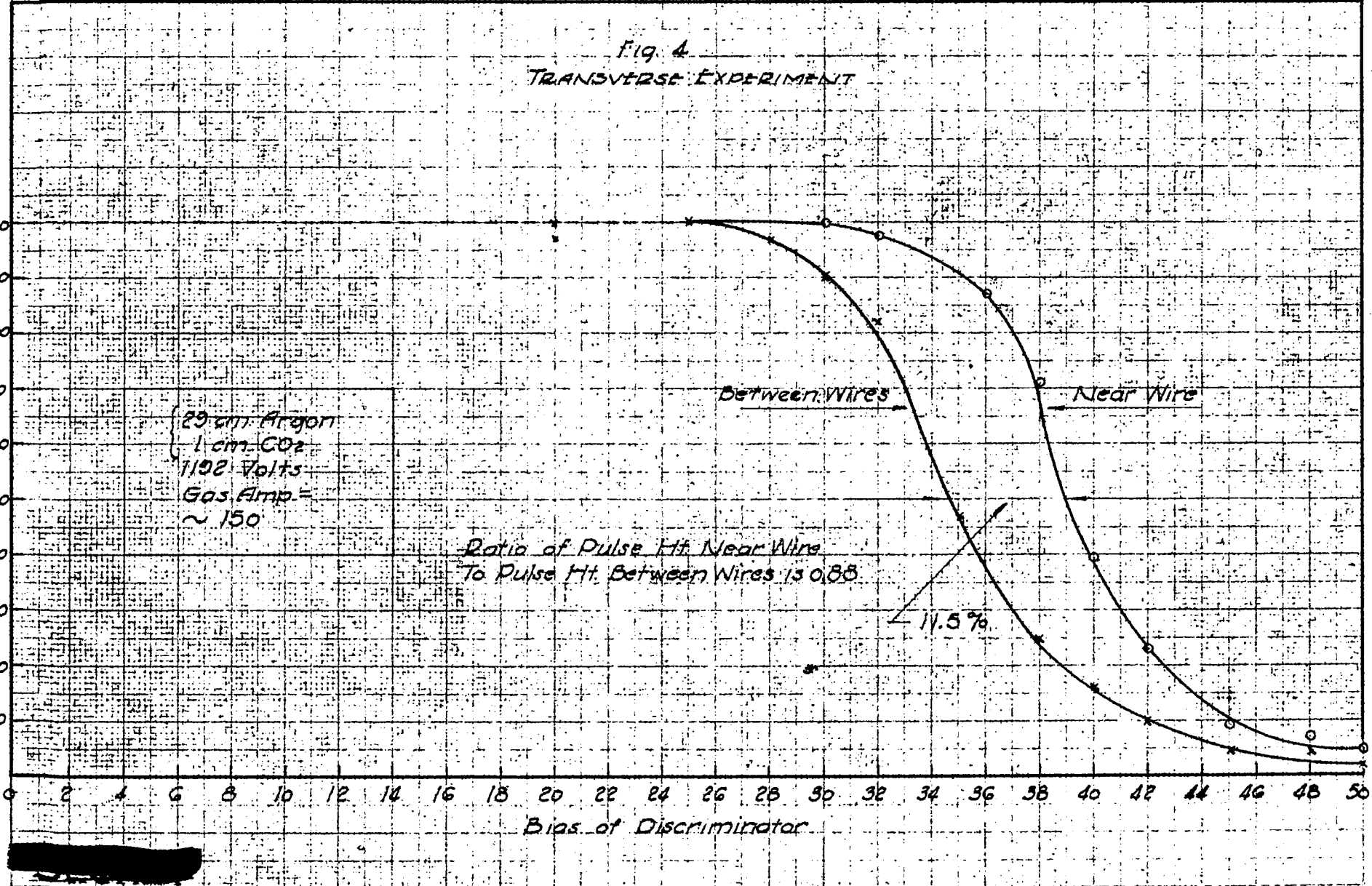


FIG. 3
 GAS MULTIPLICATION AS A FUNCTION
 OF COUNTER VOLTAGE

Relative Gas Multiplication

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Fig. 4
TRANSVERSE EXPERIMENT



curves corresponding to the maximum and minimum pulse height. The total amplitude of the variation is seen to be about 11% of the average pulse height. It should be emphasized that this is a preliminary result and that the variation is undoubtedly a function of all the counter parameters. The curves of Fig. 4 were taken under a very particular set of conditions.

2. Longitudinal Experiment

In connection with coincidence counting methods, it is of interest to investigate whether a pulse in one element of the counter produces a pulse in an adjoining element. This question was investigated by shooting α -particles into the counter parallel to the plane of the elements (i.e. through Fig. 2, B). With 30 cm. of argon, 0.9 cm. of CO_2 , and 1192 volts on the counter (giving a multiplication of about 150), it was possible to set a lower limit of 500 for the ratio of a genuine pulse to the corresponding induced pulse appearing simultaneously in the adjacent element. The boundary of the "active volume" was found to be sharply defined by the screen (cf. ratio above) to the extent that it could be investigated with collimating holes 2 mm apart. No investigation was made of edge effects at the invar rings.

C. Statistical Spread in Pulse Heights

Differentiation of the curves of Fig. 4 gives a half-width of 13% of the average pulse height. This is an upper limit for the width of the statistical distribution in pulse height. No attempt at evaluation of the true width will be made since 1) non-uniformity of the mica-windows; 2) dirt on the mica windows; and, 3) finite thickness of the polonium

source contribute an unknown fraction of the observed width.

IV. Conclusions

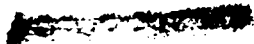
- 1) A M. W. counter can be used for counting the number of ionizing particles traversing it.
- 2) Since the counter can be made very shallow and since gas multiplication can be used, it is especially suitable for range measurements at low energies and for range measurements at high energies but low intensity.
- 3) The counter is suited to coincidence methods due to the absence of appreciable pickup from adjoining units.
- 4) Further investigation is required before it can be said that the M. W. counter is suitable for pulse height methods.
- 5) Although tests have not been carried out, it seems very likely that the M. W. counter can be used as a Geiger-Muller counter.

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