**Hybrid Automotive Engine Using Ethanol-Burning Miller Cycle**

This engine would operate with high fuel efficiency and generate little pollution.

*Langley Research Center, Hampton, Virginia*

A proposed hybrid (internal-combustion/electric) automotive engine system would include as its internal-combustion subsystem, a modified Miller-cycle engine with regenerative air preheating and with autoignition like that of a Diesel engine. The fuel would be ethanol and would be burned lean to ensure complete combustion. Although the proposed engine would have a relatively low power-to-weight ratio compared to most present engines, this would not be the problem encountered if this engine were used in a non-hybrid system since hybrid systems require significantly lower power and thus smaller engines than purely internal-combustion-engine-driven vehicles. The disadvantage would be offset by the advantages of high fuel efficiency, low emission of nitrogen oxides and particulate pollutants, and the fact that ethanol is a renewable fuel.

The original Miller-cycle engine, named after its inventor, was patented...
in the 1940s and is the basis of engines used in some modern automobiles, but is not widely known. In somewhat oversimplified terms, the main difference between a Miller-cycle engine and a common (Otto-cycle) automobile engine is that the Miller-cycle engine has a longer expansion stroke while retaining the shorter compression stroke. This is accomplished by leaving the intake valve open for part of the compression stroke, whereas in the Otto-cycle engine, the intake valve is kept closed during the entire compression stroke. This greater expansion ratio makes it possible to extract more energy from the combustion process without expending more energy for compression. The net result is greater efficiency.

In the proposed engine, the regenerative preheating would be effected by running the intake air through a heat exchanger connected to the engine block. The regenerative preheating would offer two advantages: It would ensure reliable autoignition during operation at low ambient temperature and would help to cool the engine, thereby reducing the remainder of the power needed for cooling and thereby further contributing to efficiency. An electrical-resistance air preheater might be needed to ensure autoignition at startup and during a short warmup period. Because of the autoignition, the engine could operate without either spark plugs or glow plugs.

Ethanol burns relatively cleanly and has been used as a motor fuel since the invention of internal-combustion engines. However, the energy content of ethanol per unit weight of ethanol is less than that of Diesel fuel or gasoline, and ethanol has a higher heat of vaporization. Because the Miller cycle offers an efficiency close to that of the Diesel cycle, burning ethanol in a Miller-cycle engine gives about as much usable output energy per unit volume of fuel as does burning gasoline in a conventional gasoline automotive engine.

Because of the combination of preheating, running lean, and the use of ethyl alcohol, the proposed engine would generate less power per unit volume than does a conventional automotive gasoline engine. Consequently, for a given power level, the main body of the proposed engine would be bulkier.

However, because little or no exhaust cleanup would be needed, the increase in bulk of the engine could be partially offset by the decrease in bulk of the exhaust system. The regenerative preheating also greatly reduces the external engine cooling requirement, and would translate to reduced engine bulk. It may even be possible to accomplish the remaining cooling of the engine by use of air only, eliminating the bulk and power consumption of a water cooling system.

The combination of a Miller-cycle engine with regenerative air preheating, ethyl alcohol fuel, and hybrid operation could result in an automotive engine system that satisfies the need for a low pollution, high efficiency, and simple engine with a totally renewable fuel.

This work was done by Leonard Weinstein of Langley Research Center. Further information is contained in a TSP (see page 1).

LAR-16365