

DESCRIPTION

In a first embodiment this invention concerns an arrangement for energizing a discharge lamp comprising a first generator capable of providing a voltage pulse adapted to trigger the discharge in the lamp and a second generator adapted to maintain the discharge current in said lamp, such second generator including a first electric circuit comprising a series arrangement of a DC voltage source, a first switch and second switch, said first and second switches being arranged so that when the first is closed the second is open and vice versa and a second electric circuit comprising a series arrangement of an inductance and said lamp connected in parallel across said second switch, said switches being operated by a first control means energized by an alternating signal of fixed period T_1 , said first control means being arranged to provide at its output a signal adapted to switch alternately said first switch initially into a closed state during a first time interval T_a , then into an open state during a second time interval T_b .

The invention likewise concerns in accordance with a second embodiment an energizing arrangement for a discharge lamp provided with a first cold electrode and a second electrode having a filament, said arrangement comprising a first generator capable of providing a voltage pulse adapted to trigger the discharge in the lamp and a second generator adapted to heat the filament during a time interval of duration T_d , then to maintain a discharge current in the lamp.

An arrangement close to the first embodiment has already been set forth in the document EP-A-0 152 026 (US-A-4 649 322). In this the triggering of the discharge in the lamp is brought about by a first generator which pro-

vides voltage pulses at predetermined periodic intervals. The luminous intensity of the lamp is controlled by a current source provided by a second generator which permits applying to the lamp a maintenance current for the discharge, the duration of application of which may be varied according to the luminous intensity which it is desired to obtain. The arrangement as mentioned includes furthermore a circuit which enables application of the maintenance current in synchronism with the voltage pulse.

In addition to the two embodiments of the pulse generator, the cited document describes a manner for reducing to practice the generator for maintaining discharge in the lamp. This maintenance generator which is a current source is energized from a DC voltage source and includes essentially a cascade of two transistors which conduct continuously when an instruction signal is sent to the input of the first transistor. The duration of the application of the instruction signal (which can be for instance a video signal) determines the period during which the current source conducts, such period being for instance on the order of 14 ms for a lamp operating at full luminosity, this period being followed by a series of periods of like duration if the lamp is to remain illuminated at this full luminosity. In the case where the arrangement as described were to be adapted to vary simply the luminous intensity of a fluorescent lighting lamp, for instance by means of a manual control, a single pulse would be necessary furnished by a pulse generator at the moment of lamp turn on, this pulse being followed by a DC current to remain continuously at the chosen level.

This manner of operation is costly in electrical energy which is dissipated as heat and thus as a pure loss. Effectively, it is said in the cited document that an energization voltage of 60 V DC enables assuring an arc voltage

of about 40 V in the tube, this leading one to believe that there exists a voltage drop on the order of 20 V which must be absorbed in the current generator. In reality it will be noted that the arc voltage may vary in substantial proportions (10 to 60 V), depending in this on the dynamic load to which the lamp is subjected. The temperature has also an important influence on the value of the arc voltage. Thus, in the cited arrangement, it is the current generator formed from two transistors as hereinbefore mentioned which is to absorb the difference existing between the energization voltage and the arc voltage, such difference being dissipated as a pure loss as already said.

In order to overcome the cited disadvantages, the document FR-A-1 366 032 suggests an arrangement which is a current source without itself consuming current whatever be the load, such load here being manifested by the arc voltage essentially variable as exhibited by the lamp.

This prior art will now be explained having reference to figures 1a, 1b, 1c, 2 and 3.

Figure 1a is a general schematic which shows the basic principle on which the document FR-A-1 366 032 rests. A discharge lamp 1 which may be a fluorescent tube is provided with two electrodes 2 and 3. A first generator or starter 4 provides a voltage pulse adapted to bring about triggering of the discharge in the lamp. This first generator is however not mentioned in the cited document since the energization voltage U_1 is sufficiently high (on the order of 400 volts) to enable automatic triggering of the discharge in the lamp which, as will be seen further on, is not the case in the present invention in which said voltage is only on the order of 60 volts. In this case such first generator 4 could be one of those described in the document EP-A-0 152 026. Figure 1a shows further a second generator adapted to maintain the discharge current

in the lamp, such second generator including a first electric circuit 5 which comprises the placing into series of a DC voltage source U_1 , a first switch I_1 and a second switch I_2 . Switches I_1 and I_2 are arranged in a manner such that when the first is open the second is closed and vice versa. This interdependence is shown on figure 1a by the dashed line 13 which couples the respective contact bars of said switches. The schematic further shows that at the terminals of the second switch I_2 there is connected a second electric circuit 6 which consists of the placing into series of an inductance L and of the discharge lamp 1.

Switch I_1 is operated by a control means 7. This control means is energized at its input 8 by an alternating signal of fixed period T_1 . This signal has its period T_1 composed of an alternation of duration T_2 at high level followed by an alternation of duration T_3 at low level. The cyclic ratio of this signal is defined as being the ratio T_2/T_1 . The alternating signal of fixed period T_1 is provided by an oscillator and the alternations T_2 and T_3 have a duration approximately equal.

Figure 1a also shows that the control means 7 is arranged to provide at its output 15 a signal adapted to set alternately the first switch I_1 initially into a closed state during a first time interval of duration T_a , then into an open state during a second time interval of duration T_b , the sum $T_a + T_b$ being a function of the input period T_1 .

The operation of this arrangement will now be explained having reference to figures 1b and 1c.

During the first interval of duration T_a , I_1 is closed and I_2 is open as shown on figure 1b. Voltage source U_1 provides a current flow i_1 in the inductance L and the lamp 1 via switch I_1 (circuit 5). In view of the presence of inductance L and the resistance R of the lamp, the current i_1 will increase from a value neighbouring zero to a maximum value determined at the ending of the interval of duration T_a . From this moment begins the second interval of duration T_b during which I_1 is open and I_2 is closed. The situation of the electrical circuits 5 and 6 is then that shown on figure 1c. The electrical energy stored in the inductance L during the preceding phase then produces a current i_2 which via switch I_2 circulates in the lamp 1. The inductance L then behaves as a generator. In contrast to the current practice of certain known energization arrangements, this inductance is not a current limiter but acts as a current reservoir. The current i_2 will diminish during the interval of duration T_b until the appearance of a new interval of duration T_a which will once again close the switch I_1 . From the end of the period T_b a new cycle recommences and a similar sequence follows.

There has just been described the general principle on which is based the energizing arrangement according to document FR-A-1 366 032. In fact it concerns a current source which itself does not consume current and which furnishes only the energy necessary to bring about the luminous flux in the lamp. Effectively, the switches as described are either on or off and consume practically no energy themselves.

The basic arrangement has been explained in referring to switches I_1 , I_2 operated by a control means. In practice there is employed a switching transistor in place of the switch I_1 , such transistor being controlled on its base by the signal coming from the output 15 of the control

means 7. Likewise in practice one may advantageously employ a diode to replace the switch I_2 , such diode being connected so that it is non-conductive when the transistor is conductive. This diode presents the advantage of being self-controlled by the polarity of the voltage present at its terminals.

The schematic of figure 2 shows a manner of obtaining the energizing arrangement according to the prior art. The control arrangement here is a D type flip-flop (D-FF) the terminals Set and Reset of which are connected to -12 volts of the energization for the logic. The output $\bar{Q}$ of the flip-flop is connected to its D input. On its input 8 the flip-flop receives the alternating signal of fixed period T_1 likewise referred to as the clock signal (C1), this signal being provided by an oscillator 9. The transistor T11 is controlled on its base by the output Q of the flip-flop. The collector of the transistor T11 is connected to diode D1 and the emitter to the voltage source U_1 . The operation of the construction which has just been described will now be explained having reference to the timing diagram shown on figure 3.

To the input 8 of the flip-flop is applied the clock signal C1, which appears on the line a of the diagram. This signal oscillates between -12 V and 0 V (0 V symbolized by the signal $\emptyset$), i.e. between the logic values 0 and 1 respectively. This type of flip-flop (for instance CMOS 4013) has the particularity of placing its output Q at the value applied to its input D when the signal C1 goes from 0 to 1 (arrows 18), the passage from 1 to 0 in no manner changing the state of the output Q so long as the inputs Set and Reset are both at the 0 logic level (-12 V). Since the input D is coupled to the output $\bar{Q}$, the output Q will change state at each rising edge 18 of the clock signal as appears on line b of figure 3, the rising edge

18 driving the falling and rising edges 19 of the output Q (arrows 65).

The passage from 0 to -12 V of the output Q has as effect to place the transistor T_{i1} from the blocked state (switch I_1 open) to the conductive state (switch I_1 closed). A current i_1 begins to circulate in the circuit defined by figure 1b, such current having its rate of increase limited by the presence of the inductance L (see line c of the diagram of figure 3 which represents the current i_1 in lamp 1).

When the flip-flop once again switches, its output Q goes to 0 V and renders non-conductive the transistor T_{i1} . From this moment the energy stored in inductance L produces a current i_2 which circulates in the circuit 6 via the diode D1, this current diminishing since no voltage source continues to be applied thereto (see line c of figure 3). This current i_2 diminishes until the transistor T_{i1} becomes once again conductive which takes place at the arrival of a new rising edge 18 presented by the signal T_1 at the input C1 of the flip-flop. The cycle which has just been described in detail then continues in the same manner.

Thus the alternating signal of fixed period T_1 applied to the input C1 of the flip-flop and composed of two equal alternations T_2 and T_3 becomes seen from the lamp 1 a signal of double period and composed of two alternations T_a and T_b of durations approximately equal.

The diagram of figure 3 has been completed by a line d which represents the current I_{D1} in the diode D1. It will be noted that during the period of conduction T_a of transistor T_{i1} no current circulates in the diode while during the blocking period T_b of the same transistor a current i_2 circulates in said diode.

The diagram of figure 3 shows further a current threshold i_{lmin} below which the current in the lamp does not fall. This is caused by the fact that the inductance L is not totally discharged when cycle T_1 recommences.

Although not specifically mentioned in the cited prior art, lamp 1, which most often is a fluorescent lamp, has a cold anode 2 and a hot cathode 3. This cathode is a filament energized by a DC source U_5 . Considerations have been set forth in the document EP-A-0 152 026 on the subject of this energization and the reader may refer thereto for greater detail.

To trigger discharge in the illumination lamp 1, one may employ in the document FR-A-1 366 032 a DC voltage U_1 exceeding 400 volts. This has the disadvantage of requiring high voltage circuits which give rise to insulation problems and at the same time necessitating burdensome components (transistors, diodes, etc.). To overcome this difficulty, the present invention is characterized in accordance with a first embodiment in that the generator adapted to trigger the discharge in the lamp, includes a third switch connected in parallel across the terminals of the lamp and operated by a second control means itself operated by the first control means, such second control means being arranged in a manner such that said third transistor is closed at the start up of said energizing arrangement and then opens on the first occasion that said first switch passes from the closed state to the open state.

In the same manner, to employ a DC voltage source specifically to energize the lamp filament is a solution expensive in energy. To overcome this difficulty the present invention is characterized in that the second generator includes a first electric circuit comprising the setting

into series of a DC voltage source, a first switch and a second switch, said first and second switches being arranged in a manner such that when the first is closed the second is open and vice versa and the second electric circuit comprising the setting into series of an inductance, of the first cold electrode and of a first terminal of said filament, said second electric circuit being connected in parallel across the second switch, a third switch being connected on the one hand to said first cold electrode and on the other hand to a second terminal of said filament, that said first and second switches are operated by a first control means energized by an alternating signal of fixed period T_1 , said control means being arranged to provide at its output a signal adapted to alternately set said first switch initially in a closed state during a first time interval of duration T_a , then into an open state during a second time interval of duration T_b and that the third switch is operated by a second control means itself operated by said first control means, said second control means being arranged in a manner such that the third switch closes at the start up of said energizing arrangement then opens following a period T_d , said opening taking place on the first occasion that said first switch goes from the closed state to the open state following said time interval of duration T_d .

The invention will be better understood with the help of the description to follow and for understanding of which reference will be made by way of example to the drawings in which:

- Figures 1a, 1b, 1c, 2 and 3 illustrate the prior art as discussed hereinabove;

- figure 4 is a schematic showing the principle and setting forth the operation of the energizing arrangement according to the first embodiment of the invention;

- figure 5 is a schematic showing the principle and setting forth the operation of the energizing arrangement according to a second embodiment of the invention;

- figure 6 is a detailed schematic of the energization of a discharge lamp which refers to the basic schematic of figure 5 according to a first practical variant;

- figure 7 is a timing diagram explaining the operation of the schematic of figure 6;

- figure 8 is a detailed schematic of the energizing of a discharge lamp which refers back to the basic schematic of figure 5 according to a second practical variant; and

- figure 9 is a timing diagram explaining the operation of the schematic of figure 8.

Figure 4 is a schematic of the principle showing the operation of the energizing arrangement according to the first embodiment of the invention.

It has already been mentioned hereinabove that the DC voltage source U_1 energizing the arrangement according to the invention is at low voltage, for instance on the order of 60 volts. It is known that this voltage is insufficient to trigger discharge in the lamp. It is thus necessary to apply a high voltage pulse to the lamp at the moment when the system is turned on. This pulse is provided by a starter or first generator symbolized by 4 on figure 1a.

According to the invention and as appears on figure 4, the high voltage pulse adapted to trigger discharge is produced by a third switch I_3 connected in parallel across terminals 2, 3 of the lamp 1. This switch is controlled by a second control means 53 itself operated by .

a first control means 7 already described having reference to figure 1a. It is arranged so that at the turn on of the energizing arrangement this third switch is closed. Since, at this moment, the first switch I_1 is likewise closed, inductance L stores energy as has been explained hereinabove. The opening of switch I_3 synchronous with the opening of switch I_1 in view of the interdependence of the first and second control means 7 and 53, liberates the energy stored in the inductance and creates the high voltage required at the terminals of the lamp. A detailed explanation of the operation of the starter will be given in the discussion which will be made having regard to the second embodiment of the invention.

However, in résumé, it may be mentioned that the first control means 7 is identical to that described on figure 2 wherein such means is a D-type flip-flop. The second control means 53 is a second flip-flop of the same type energized at its clock input C1 by the signal present at the output Q of the first flip-flop. The signal present at the output Q of the second flip-flop controls the third switch I_3 which may be a third transistor Ti3.

To give now a practical example it will be mentioned that the transistor Ti1 is of the type 2N5400 and the diode D1 of the type 1N4148. The voltage source U_1 is 60 V. It will be observed here that the inductance employed is of very small dimensions (some mm³) which is an advantage due principally to the fact that the alternating signal of fixed period T_1 is chosen to be of high frequency, for instance greater than 150 kHz.

The first embodiment of the invention which has just been described employs a flip-flop 7 connected to be a divide-by-two frequency divider. One thus has in this case $T_a + T_b = 2T_1$. In other words, if one wishes the transistor to switch at a frequency of 150 kHz, it will

be necessary to energize the flip-flop at double this frequency, i.e. at 300 kHz. In any case, the schematic shows that the period of conduction T_a of the transistor T1 is equal to the open period T_b of the same transistor.

The second embodiment concerns in particular the energization of a discharge lamp equipped with a filament.

The base schematic of a first practical variant of the invention is shown on figure 5. Here there will be recognized the maintenance current generator formed by the first 5 and second 6 electric circuits described hereinabove. Lamp 1 is equipped with a first cold electrode 2 and a second electrode provided with a filament 56. According to this embodiment, the second generator of this construction formed from circuits 5 and 6 serves at the same time to heat the filament and to maintain discharge in the lamp.

To this end the second electric circuit 6 includes the setting into series of the inductance L, the first cold electrode 2 and a first terminal 54 of filament 56. This second circuit is connected in parallel across the second switch I_2 . Figure 5 further shows a third switch I_3 connected on one hand to the cold electrode 2 and on the other to a second terminal 55 of the filament 56. The third switch I_3 is operated by a second control means 53, itself operated by the first control means 7. The second control means 53 is arranged in a manner such that at the start up of the energizing arrangement (by a general switch not shown) the third switch I_3 closes. The filament 56 is then energized by the second generator 56 according to the same principle explained hereinabove. Energization of the filament takes place during a period of duration T_d provided by the block 90 acting on an input of the second

control means 53. This heating period will last the time necessary to render the filament incandescent. When the heating period which is fixed, has run out, the third switch opens, this opening taking place on the first occasion that the first switch I_1 goes from the closed state to the open state following the period of duration T_d . This change of state is exhibited in the form of a logic signal at the output 15 of the first control means 7. This same logic signal acts on the second control means 53 and opens the switch I_3 . As it is found that at the moment of opening of the first switch the energy stored in the inductance L is maximum and corresponds to a maximum current I_1 in the lamp (see figure 3c), the opening of the third switch I_3 which is synchronous with the first brings about a high voltage in the lamp, this high voltage causing triggering of the discharge. Following this, the third switch I_3 remains open and the lamp 1 is energized in maintenance current by the second generator 5, 6.

Figure 6 is a detailed schematic of a first variant of the second embodiment explained hereinabove in its principle. There will here be described the new elements added to those of figure 2. The third switch I_3 is a second transistor $Ti3$ which is controlled by the signal present at the output Q 57 of the control means 53 which is a second D-type flip-flop. The output Q 15 of the first flip-flop 7 is connected to the input C1 of the second flip-flop 53. The input D 58 of the second flip-flop is coupled to 0 volts of the logic energization via a resistance R_3 and a capacitor C is connected between this input D and the -12 volts of the logic energization. The terminals Set and Reset of the second flip-flop are likewise coupled to -12 volts. An amplifier-inverter present in the form of a transistor $Ti4$ is interposed between the output Q57 and the base of the transistor $Ti3$. The purpose thereof is to amplify the signal present at the output Q and to invert it at the same time. The second transistor $Ti3$

has its collector connected to the cold electrode 2 of the lamp and its emitter connected to the second terminal 55 of the filament 56 of said lamp.

To explain the operation of the circuit of figure 6 reference will be made to the timing diagram of figure 7.

At the start up of the system, for instance by means of a switch (not shown) the input D 58 of the flip-flop 53 is at the logic level 0 (-12 V). The output Q 57 of the flip-flop 53 is likewise at the 0 level, the transistor Ti4 conducts and provides a base current to the transistor Ti3 which likewise conducts. The filament 56 is then under tension and is energized by the same second generator 5, 6 which has been described hereinabove (see figure 7a). The current I_f in the filament is composed of a succession of currents i_{f1} provided by the circuit 5 and currents i_{f2} provided by the circuit 6 (see the beginning of figure 7d). The lamp 1 is then short-circuited by Ti3 and the voltage U_1 between terminals 2 and 55 is nul (see beginning of figure 7f). Following turn on of the system, the input D 58 of the flip-flop 53 is brought progressively from -12 V to 0 V and this during an interval of duration T_d which is predetermined by the time constant R_3C and which is calculated to be sufficient to bring the filament to incandescence (see beginning of figure 7b). At the end of the period T_d the input D 58 of the second flip-flop is found to be at level 1 (0 V). From this moment it is understood that the next rising edge 69 applied to the input C1 of the second flip-flop (and coming from the output Q15 of the first flip-flop 7) causes the output Q 57 of said second flip-flop (arrow 65) to switch and pass to 1 (0 V). At this instant the transistor Ti3 opens and the current I_f in the filament 56 is interrupted (arrow 66). The opening of the transistor Ti3 brings about a

high voltage 80 (figure 7f, arrow 68) at the lamp terminals this high voltage being due to the energy stored in the inductance L and which is liberated to bring about triggering of the arc. The switching of the output Q 57 of the second flip-flop which brings about opening of transistor switch $Ti3$ also leads the second generator 5, 6 to energize the terminals 2,56 of the lamp by a current i_1 (figure 7c, arrow 67) formed as already described by an alternation of two currents i_{11} and i_{12} . Following the high voltage pulse 80, a maintenance voltage U_1 is established at the terminals of the lamp (end of figure 7f).

Thus in this second embodiment there is employed the same second generator to energize initially the filament in the lamp during a certain time, then to maintain the arc voltage in this lamp. This system leads to the employment of means which are considerably less expensive and cumbersome than the well-known heavy ballast which today is employed to energize fluorescent tubes employed for lighting purposes.

An assembly very similar to that which has just been described may be employed to put into practice the first embodiment of the invention which was explained having reference to figure 4. In this case the input D 58 of the flip-flop 53 should be connected to level 1 (0 V).

In the assembly which has just been examined (figure 6), the interval of duration T_d during which the filament is energized is a period predetermined by a fixed time constant. One may however imagine that it could be the voltage developed at the terminals of the filament which itself determines this interval T_d . There will thus be described now a second practical variant which is based on the same principle schematic shown on figure 5. Reliance will be placed on figure 8 and on the diagram of figure 9 in order to discuss this second variant.

Figure 8 is a detailed schematic of the second variant. Relative to the first variant (figure 6), this assembly differs essentially by the addition of a comparator 106 and of a third D-type flip-flop 105 and by the elimination of the time constant R_3C . Terminal 55 of lamp 1 is connected to the + of the comparator 106, the terminal - of this comparator receiving a reference voltage U_{ref} . The output 108 of the comparator is connected to the input C1 of the third flip-flop 105. The D input of this flip-flop is connected to the 1 logic level (on this occasion to the voltage $-U_1 + 12\text{ V}$). The output Q 109 is connected to the D input of the second flip-flop 53 via a transistor Ti5 acting at the same time as inverter and voltage converter. In this second variant it is the output $\bar{Q}$ 107 of the second flip-flop which is connected to the transistor Ti4.

To explain the operation of the circuit of figure 8, reference will be made to the timing diagram of figure 9.

At the start up of the system, for instance by means of a switch (not shown) the input D 58 of the flip-flop 53 is at the 1 logic level (0 V). The output $\bar{Q}$ 107 of flip-flop 53 is thus at logic level 0, the transistor Ti4 conducts and provides a base current to the transistor Ti3 which likewise conducts. The filament 56 is then under tension and is energized by the same second generator 5, 6 which has been described hereinabove (see figure 9a). The current I_f in the filament is comprised of a succession of currents i_{f1} provided by the circuit 5 and the currents i_{f2} provided by the circuit 6 (see beginning of figure 9f). Lamp 1 is then short-circuited by Ti3 and the voltage U_1 between the terminals 2 and 56 is nul (see beginning of figure 9h). Voltage U_f across filament 56 between terminals 54 and 55 increases progressively as is shown by line b of figure 9. This increase is due to the increase of the resistance of the filament which is a consequence of

its heating. When the voltage U_f has attained a reference value U_{ref} which may be fixed and which corresponds to full energization of the filament, output 108 of the comparator 106 passes from the low level to the high level indicated by the rising edge 110 (arrow 111, figure 9c). The edge 110 brings about in turn switching of the flip-flop 105 and passage of the output Q 109 from the low level to the high level, this effecting the rising edge 12 (arrow 113, figure 9d) since the D input of the flipflop 105 is at the 1 logic level. From this moment it is understood that the next rising edge 69 applied to the input C1 of the second flip-flop 53 (and coming from the output Q 15 of the first flip-flop 7) brings about switching of the output $\bar{Q}$ 107 of said second flip-flop (arrow 65, line e of figure 9) which goes to the 1 logic level. At this instant the transistor Ti3 becomes non-conductive and the current I_f in the filament 56 is interrupted (arrow 66, line f of figure 9). As has already been explained having reference to the first variant, the opening of transistor Ti3 causes application of a high voltage 80 (figure 9h, arrow 68) at the lamp terminals, this high voltage being due to the energy stored in the inductance L and which is liberated to bring about triggering of the arc. The switching of the output $\bar{Q}$ 107 of the second flip-flop which brings about opening of the transistor Ti3 also leads second generator 5, 6 to energize the terminals 2, 54 of the lamp by a current I_1 (figure 9g, arrow 67) formed as already described by an alternation of two currents i_{11} and i_{12} . Following the high voltage pulse 80 a maintenance voltage U_1 is then established at the lamp terminals (end of figure 9h). It will be further noted that the interruption of energization of the filament brings about the falling edge 114 of the output signal 108 of the comparator 106 (figure 9c, arrow 115). The passage of this signal to the low level however has no influence on the third flip-flop 105 which reacts only to rising edges on its input C1 in a manner such that its output Q 109 remains at high level

(figure 9). In this manner the third flip-flop stores in memory the fact that the lamp is illuminated and there is no longer need to re-energize its filament. Were such to be the case following for instance an energization breakdown, one could then reactivate the reset input of the third flip-flop 105.

In conclusion, it will be noted by way of example that the reference voltage U_{ref} may be chosen to be 12 volts and the comparator may be of the type 74C909.



CLAIMS

1. Energizing arrangement for a discharge lamp (1) comprising a first generator (4) capable of providing a voltage pulse adapted to trigger discharge in the lamp and a second generator adapted to maintain a discharge current in the lamp, said second generator including a first electric circuit (5) so arranged as to couple in series a D.C. voltage source (U_1), a first switch (I_1) and a second switch (I_2), said first and second switches being arranged in a manner such that when the first switch is closed, the second is open and vice versa, and a second electric circuit (6) so arranged as to couple an inductance (L) and said lamp in series, connected in parallel across said second switch, said switches being operated by a first control means (7) energized by an alternating signal having a fixed period T_1 , said first control means being arranged to provide a signal at its output (15) adapted to set alternately said first switch initially into a closed state during a first time interval T_a then into an open state during a second time interval T_b , characterized by the fact that said first generator (4) includes a third switch (I_3) connected in parallel with the lamp terminals (2, 3) and operated by a second control means (53) itself operated by said first control means (7), said second control means being so arranged that said third switch is closed when said energizing arrangement is turned on and subsequently opens on the first occasion that said first switch (I_1) passes from the closed to the open state.

2. Energizing arrangement according to claim 1, characterized by the fact that the first switch (I_1) comprises a first transistor (T_{11}) controlled by the first control means (7), that the second switch (I_2) comprises a diode (D_1) connected so as to be non-conductive when said first switch is closed, that the first control means (7) comprises



a D type flip-flop energized on its clock input (8) by the alternating signal of period T_1 obtained from an oscillator (9), that the transistor (Ti1) is controlled on its base by the Q output (15) of said flip-flop, the collector and emitter of said transistor being connected respectively to the diode (D1) and the voltage source (U_1), the terminals $\bar{Q}$ and D of said flip-flop being interconnected, that the third switch (I_3) comprises a second transistor (Ti3) controlled by the second control means (53), that said second control means comprises a second D type flip-flop energized on its clock input (C1) by the signal present at the Q output of the first flip-flop and that the second transistor is controlled by the signal present at the Q output of said second flip-flop.

3. Energizing arrangement according to claim 1, characterized by the fact that the discharge lamp (1) comprises a first cold electrode (2) and a second electrode provided with a filament (56), said filament being connected to first (54) and second (55) terminals, that said second electric circuit (6) is so arranged as to couple in series said inductance (L) and said lamp (1) by its first cold electrode (2) and said first terminal (54) of its filament (56), that said third switch (I_3) is connected on the one hand to said first cold electrode (2) and on the other hand to said second terminal (55) of said filament, and that said second generator is adapted to heat said filament (56) during a period of duration T_d after which said third switch (I_3) opens, said opening taking place on the first occasion that said first switch (I_1) passes from the closed to the open state following said period T_d .

4. Energizing arrangement according to claim 3, characterized by the fact that the period of duration T_d is predetermined.



5. Energizing arrangement according to claim 3, characterized by the fact that the period of duration T_d is defined by a comparator which receives the voltage developed across the terminals of the filament (56) on its first input and a reference voltage on its second input, the period of duration T_d ending when said voltages become equal.

6. Energizing arrangement according to claim 3, characterized by the fact that the first switch (I_1) comprises a first transistor (T_{i1}) controlled by the first control means (7), that the second switch (I_2) comprises a diode (D_1) connected so as to be non-conductive when the first switch is closed and that the third switch (I_3) comprises a second transistor (T_{i3}) controlled by the second control means (53).

7. Energizing arrangement according to claim 6, characterized by the fact that the first control means (7) is a first D type flip-flop energized at its clock input (8) by the alternating signal of period T_1 , that the first transistor (T_{i1}) is controlled at its base by the Q output (15) of said first flip-flop, the collector and emitter of said first transistor being connected respectively to the diode (D_1) and to the voltage source (U_1) and that the second control means (53) comprises a second D type flip-flop energized on its clock input (C_1) by the signal present at the Q output of said first flip-flop, said period of duration T_d being present in the form of a signal corresponding to the D input (58) of said second flip-flop (53) and that the second transistor (T_{i3}) is controlled by the signal present at the Q output (57) of said second flip-flop via an amplifier-inverter (T_{i4}), the collector and emitter of said second transistor being respectively connected to the first cold electrode (2) and to the second terminal (55) of said filament (56) of said lamp.