

SEPARATION OF CARBON MONOXIDE FROM GASEOUS MIXTURES
CONTAINING CARBON MONOXIDE AND HYDROGEN ✓

5 The present invention relates to the separation of
carbon monoxide ("CO") from gaseous mixtures containing
primarily carbon monoxide and hydrogen. It has particular,
but not exclusive, application to the separation of carbon
monoxide from synthesis gas consisting essentially of
carbon monoxide, hydrogen and methane.

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Carbon monoxide is usually obtained by separation from
synthesis gases produced by catalytic conversion or partial
oxidation of natural gas, oils or other hydrocarbon
feedstock. In addition to carbon monoxide, these gases
15 contain hydrogen and methane. It is well known to separate
carbon monoxide from such mixtures by a cryogenic
separation process in which carbon monoxide is removed by a
low temperature scrubbing step using liquid methane in a
wash column to provide a CO-loaded methane containing some,
20 typically 3-4%, hydrogen. Residual hydrogen is removed
from the CO-loaded methane in a stripping column to meet
the required carbon monoxide product specification and the
hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded methane is separated into a CO-
rich vapour and a methane-rich liquid in a fractionation
25 column. Usually, a portion of the CO-rich vapour is
recycled to provide a heat pump stream and a portion of the
methane-rich liquid is recycled to provide the methane wash
liquid.

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US-A-3,813,889 discloses such a process in which the
total hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded methane is expanded and
then warmed and partially vaporised before being introduced
into the CO/methane fractionation column as a single feed.
The heat duty required to warm and partially vaporise the
35 fractionation column feed stream is provided by cooling and
condensing a gaseous CO recycle heat pump stream.

US-A-5,133,793 describes a similar process in which the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded methane is sub-cooled, expanded and split into three sub-streams. The first substream is fed directly to the CO/methane fractionation column as a liquid at about its bubble point; the second substream is vaporised and warmed up to its dew point before feeding to said column; and the third substream is vaporised and warmed to a temperature intermediate said bubble and dew point temperatures and then fed to said column. The heat duty required to vaporise and warm the second and third substreams is provided by heat exchange with the total sub-cooling hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded methane and with cooling and partially condensing gaseous feed.

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US-A-4,311,496 discloses a process in which, prior to the methane wash, a gaseous feed containing hydrogen, carbon monoxide and at least 25 vol% methane is subjected to a continuous partial condensation at a higher temperature than the methane wash to provide a gaseous phase fraction and a condensed liquid phase fraction. The gaseous phase fraction is subjected to the methane wash and hydrogen and carbon monoxide are stripped from the liquid phase fraction. Partially condensed overhead vapour from the stripper and bottoms liquid from the methane wash are fractionated into a CO-rich overhead vapour and a methane-rich bottoms liquid, The CO-rich vapour supplies CO to a recycle heat pump stream providing reboil and reflux to the fractionator and the methane-rich liquid supplies wash liquid to the methane wash.

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An object of the present invention is to obtain additional pre-heat in an efficient manner to reduce the overall separation energy requirements of the separation process.

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It has been found that this can be readily achieved by sub-cooling the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded methane and splitting the sub-cooled stream to provide a first portion,

which is expanded and introduced into the CO/methane fractionation column as a liquid feed, and a second portion, which is partially vaporised and introduced into said fractionation column as a two-phase mixture; the heat
5 duty for said partial vaporisation being provided by in part by heat exchange with a cooling and condensing gaseous "intermediate pressure" CO recycle heat pump stream. The pressure of said intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream is intermediate the pressures of the fractionation
10 column and the high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream.

Thus, according to a first general aspect, the present invention provides, a process for separating carbon monoxide from a gaseous feed containing primarily carbon
15 monoxide and hydrogen by cryogenic separation in which:

carbon monoxide is scrubbed from a vapour portion of the feed by a liquid methane wash to provide a CO-loaded liquid methane stream and a hydrogen-rich vapour;

dissolved hydrogen is stripped from said CO-loaded
20 liquid methane stream to provide a hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream is sub-cooled and the sub-cooled stream split into at least a first substream and a second substream, said first
25 substream being expanded and introduced into a CO/methane fractionation means as a liquid feed and said second substream being partially vaporised and introduced into said fractionating means as a two-phase feed;

said fractionating means separates said hydrogen-
30 stripped CO-loaded liquid methane feeds to provide CO-rich vapour overheads and methane-rich bottoms liquid; and

a cooling and condensing "high pressure" CO recycle heat pump stream provides reboil to said fractionation means,

35 wherein part of the heat duty required to partially vaporise said second substream is provided by heat exchange of said second substream against a cooling and condensing "intermediate pressure" CO recycle heat pump stream of a pressure intermediate that of said CO-rich vapour overheads

and said high pressure CO heat pump stream.

In another general aspect, the present invention provides, an apparatus for separating carbon monoxide from
5 a gaseous feed containing primarily carbon monoxide and hydrogen by a process of said first general aspect of the invention, which apparatus comprises:

scrubbing means for scrubbing carbon monoxide from the vapour portion of the feed by the liquid methane wash to
10 provide the CO-loaded liquid methane stream and the hydrogen-rich vapour;

stripping means for stripping dissolved hydrogen from said CO-loaded liquid methane stream to provide the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

15 heat exchange means for sub-cooling said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

CO/methane fractionation means for separating the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane to provide the CO-rich vapour overheads and the methane-rich bottoms
20 liquid, said fractionation means having reboil means;

expansion means for expanding the first substream of said sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

conduit means for introducing the expanded first
25 substream into said fractionation means as a liquid feed;
heat exchange means for partially vaporising the second substream of said sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

conduit means for introducing the partially vaporised
30 second substream into said fractionating means as a two-phase feed; and

a "high pressure" CO recycle heat pump system providing the vapour phase high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream to the fractionation reboil means,
35 wherein the apparatus further comprises an "intermediate pressure" CO recycle heat pump system providing the vapour phase intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream, at a pressure intermediate that of said CO-rich vapour overheads and said high pressure CO heat pump stream, to

said heat exchange means for partially vaporising the second substream to provide part of the heat duty to partially vaporise said second substream.

- 5 In a presently preferred embodiment, the invention provides a cryogenic process for separating carbon monoxide from a gaseous feed containing carbon monoxide and hydrogen comprising the steps of:
- partially condensing the gaseous feed against one or
10 more process steams;
- scrubbing carbon monoxide from a vapour portion of the partially condensed feed with the liquid methane wash to provide the CO-loaded liquid methane stream and the hydrogen-rich vapour;
- 15 stripping dissolved hydrogen from said CO-loaded liquid methane stream to provide the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;
- sub-cooling said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;
- 20 splitting the sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream into at least the first substream and the second substream;
- expanding said first substream and introducing the expanded first substream into the CO/methane fractionation
25 means as the liquid feed;
- expanding and partially vaporising said second substream by heat exchange of said expanded second substream against process streams including the sub-cooling hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream and
30 introducing the partially vaporised second substream into said fractionating means as the two-phase feed;
- separating the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane feeds in said fractionating means to provide the CO-rich vapour overheads and the methane-rich bottoms
35 liquid;
- reboiling said fractionation means by heat exchange with the cooling and condensing high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream; and

recycling at least a portion of said methane-rich bottoms liquid to provide the liquid methane wash, wherein said process streams partially vaporising the second substream includes the cooling and condensing
5 intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream.

Preferably, part of the heat duty required to partially vaporise the second substream is provided by heat exchange of that substream against the sub-cooling
10 hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream and/or against cooling and partially condensing gaseous feed (1).

Usually, the CO/methane fractionation means is refluxed with a low pressure liquid CO recycle heat pump
15 stream derived by expanding a portion of the condensed high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream downstream of the fractionation means reboil.

Conveniently, the heat generated by dissolution of
20 carbon monoxide in the liquid methane wash during scrubbing is removed by heat exchange against a warming and vaporising CO recycle heat pump stream at a pressure which is lower than said intermediate pressure. This heat pump stream suitably comprises liquid phase expanded high
25 pressure and liquid phase expanded intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump streams. The vaporised recycle heat pump stream downstream of said scrubbing usually is mixed with the CO-rich vapour overheads from the fractionation means and warmed to provide the supply to CO compression means
30 providing the intermediate and high pressure CO recycle heat pump streams and carbon monoxide product.

Suitably, all of the pressures lower than said intermediate pressure are substantially the same "low"
35 pressure.

Preferably, the intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream is provided at an appropriate interstage pressure from a main CO heat pump/product compressor. This

pressure will be optimised in conjunction with the compressor vendor and will vary but will typically be between 12.0 and 16.0 Bara (1.20 and 1.60 MPaa).

5 When the overall cold box refrigeration is provided by a CO expander, it may be advantageous to extract the Intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream from the CO expander exhaust.

10 The following is a description, by way of example only and with reference to the accompanying drawing, of a presently preferred embodiment of the present invention. The single figure of the drawing is a process flow diagram for the separation into hydrogen, carbon monoxide and
15 methane of a synthesis gas consisting essentially of hydrogen, carbon monoxide and methane. The conditions indicated are given only by way of example and relate to a preferred embodiment of the invention.

20 Referring to the drawing, synthesis gas at a temperature of 10°C and a pressure of 19.6 Bara (1.96 MPaa) is fed, via conduit 1, to main heat exchanger 100, where it is cooled to a temperature of -173°C and partially condensed. The partially condensed feed is fed, via
25 conduit 2, to methane wash column 101. The vapour portion rising up through column 101 is scrubbed with sub-cooled recycle liquid methane introduced, via conduit 12, at the top of the column 101 at a temperature of -180°C. Carbon monoxide in the vapour dissolves into the liquid methane to
30 provide, as bottoms liquid, a CO-loaded methane stream which is withdrawn via conduit 3. The column overheads, which is hydrogen containing only small quantities of carbon monoxide and methane, is withdrawn via conduit 4. The heat of solution of carbon monoxide in the liquid
35 methane is removed by indirect heat exchanger 205 at an appropriate location in the column 101 to maintain an essentially isothermal profile through the column 101.

The bottoms liquid from column 101 consists essentially of carbon monoxide and methane with a small quantity of dissolved hydrogen. It is reduced in pressure to 9.6 Bara (0.96 MPaa) by control valve 107 and then
5 introduced into stripping column 102, where it is stripped to remove hydrogen-rich overheads, via conduit 6, to reduce the hydrogen content to the level required to meet the carbon monoxide product specification. The stripping vapour is provided by a reboiler 110 for which reboiler
10 duty can be provided at least in part by indirect heat exchange with the synthesis gas feed in main heat exchanger 100.

The (hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded methane) bottoms
15 liquid is removed, via conduit 5, from column 102, subcooled in main heat exchanger 100 to a temperature of -173°C , and then divided into two streams of about equal volumes. The liquid in one ("first") stream is reduced in pressure through control valve 108 and introduced, via
20 conduit 7, as a liquid feed at about its bubble point at an upper intermediate location of CO/methane fractionation column 103. The liquid in the other ("second") stream is reduced in pressure through control valve 109 and is warmed and partially vaporised in main heat exchanger 100 to a
25 temperature of -160°C . This partially vaporised stream is introduced, via conduit 8, as a two-phase feed at a lower intermediate location of column 103.

The duty in main heat exchanger 100 required to
30 partially vaporise the expanded bottoms liquid portion from column 102 is provided in part by cooling and partially condensing the synthesis gas feed, in part by sub-cooling the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded methane stream from column 102, and in part by cooling, condensing and sub-cooling an
35 intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream supplied via conduit 20.

The two feeds, via conduits 7 and 8, are separated in the fractionation column 103 into purified carbon monoxide

product overheads, withdrawn via conduit 9, and a methane-rich bottoms liquid, withdrawn via conduit 10.

The methane-rich bottoms liquid is sub-cooled in
5 exchanger 104 by indirect heat exchange with other process
streams (not described here) and divided into a major
portion recycled to the methane wash column 101 via pump
105 and a minor portion removed as the methane product via
conduit 11. Pump 105 raises the pressure of the methane
10 wash stream for return, after further sub-cooling in heat
exchanger 106, to the top of column 101, via conduit 12.
Depending on the pressure requirements of the methane
product, conduit 11 can be connected at the discharge side
of pump 5 instead of at the inlet side as shown.

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The separation energy for the process is provided by
means of a CO recycle heat pump system operating between a
low pressure of 2.75 Bara (0.275 MPaa) and a high pressure
of 28.0 Bara (2.80 MPaa). The compression duty for the
20 heat pump system is provided by a CO compressor 110 which
also provides the carbon monoxide product at a pressure
required for downstream processing.

The conventional heat pump cycle known in the prior
25 art is described below (with reference to the present
figure).

The basic concept of the conventional cycle is to cool
a vapour phase high pressure ("HP") CO recycle heat pump
30 stream, supplied via conduit 22 from compressor 110, in
main heat exchanger 100 to a temperature warmer than its
dew point. The cooled vapour phase HP heat pump stream,
supplied via conduit 23, is then further cooled and
condensed in heat exchanger 201 to provide reboiler duty
35 for the fractionation column 103. The condensed HP heat
pump stream is then sub-cooled in exchanger 202 by indirect
heat exchange with other process streams (not described
here) and divided into two streams.

A portion of the condensed HP heat pump stream is supplied via conduit 24 and expanded through control valve 203 to provide a liquid phase low pressure ("LP") stream at 2.75 Bara (0.275 MPaa) which is introduced into the
5 fractionation column 103 as reflux.

The remainder of the condensed HP heat pump stream is expanded through control valve 204 to provide a liquid phase LP heat pump stream at 2.75 Bara (0.275 MPaa) in
10 conduit 25. The LP heat pump stream is supplied via conduit 26 to heat exchanger 205 where it is evaporated to remove the heat of solution of carbon monoxide in the liquid methane in the methane wash column 101.

15 The evaporated LP heat pump stream from heat exchanger 205 passes through conduit 27 and is mixed with LP overheads (from the fractionation column 103) supplied via conduit 9. The combined vapour phase LP heat pump stream passes through conduit 28 and is rewarmed in main heat
20 exchanger 100 before being supplied at 2.75 Bara (0.275 MPaa) to the suction side of compressor 110.

In accordance with the present invention, a portion of the vapour phase HP heat pump stream is replaced by a
25 vapour phase intermediate pressure ("IP") CO recycle heat pump stream withdrawn from compressor 110 at a pressure of 14.5 Bara (1.45 MPaa). This IP heat pump stream is supplied via conduit 20 to main heat exchanger 100 where it is cooled, condensed and sub-cooled to provide additional
30 pre-heat to the partially vaporising fractionation column feed 8. The condensed IP heat pump stream is supplied via conduit 21 to control valve 206, in which it is expanded to provide a liquid phase LP heat pump stream at 2.75 Bara (0.275 MPaa), and then mixed with the LP heat pump stream
35 from conduit 25 (derived from the HP heat pump stream) to give a combined liquid phase LP heat pump stream in conduit 26. This combined liquid phase LP heat pump stream is evaporated in heat exchanger 205 as described above.

The liquid phase LP heat pump stream derived from the IP heat pump stream displaces a portion of the liquid phase LP heat pump stream derived from the HP heat pump stream and thereby reduces the overall separation energy requirement. The overall CO compressor power reduction is directly related to the difference in pressures between the IP and HP heat pump streams. The difference in shaft compression power between compressing the LP heat pump stream from 2.75 Bara (0.275 MPaa) to 14.5 Bara (1.45 MPaa), instead of to 28 Bara (2.8 MPaa), as would have been conventionally required, can result in up to 7% saving in the total CO compression power.

The overall CO heat pump duty for the separation can be optimised by varying the split ratio between the two feeds, via conduits 7 and 8, to fractionation column 103 and the flow and pressure of the IP heat pump stream and hence the degree to which the pre-heated feed in conduit 8 is vaporised.

Optionally, depending upon a review of the overall cold box heat integrations, additional refrigeration may be provided in main heat exchanger 100 to enable the feed to be cooled further.

It will be appreciated that the invention is not restricted to the particular details described above and that numerous modifications and variations can be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.



CLAIMS:

1. A process for separating carbon monoxide ("CO") from a gaseous feed containing primarily carbon monoxide and hydrogen by cryogenic separation in which:
 - carbon monoxide is scrubbed from a vapour portion of the feed by a liquid methane wash to provide a CO-loaded liquid methane stream and a hydrogen-rich vapour;
 - dissolved hydrogen is stripped from said CO-loaded liquid methane stream to provide a hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;
 - said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream is sub-cooled and the sub-cooled stream split into at least a first substream and a second substream, said first substream being expanded and introduced into a CO/methane fractionation means as a liquid feed and said second substream being partially vaporised and introduced into said fractionating means as a two-phase feed;
 - said fractionating means separates said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane feeds to provide CO-rich vapour overheads and methane-rich bottoms liquid; and
 - a cooling and condensing "high pressure" CO recycle heat pump stream provides reboil to said fractionation means,
- 25 wherein part of the heat duty required to partially vaporise said second substream is provided by heat exchange of said second substream against a cooling and condensing "intermediate pressure" CO recycle heat pump stream of a pressure intermediate that of said CO-rich vapour overheads and said high pressure CO heat pump stream.
2. A process as claimed in Claim 1, wherein part of the heat duty required to partially vaporise said second substream is provided by heat exchange of said second substream against the sub-cooling hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream.
3. A process as claimed in Claim 2, comprising the steps of:



partially condensing the gaseous feed against one or more process streams;

scrubbing carbon monoxide from a vapour portion of the partially condensed feed with the liquid methane wash to
5 provide the CO-loaded liquid methane stream and the hydrogen-rich vapour;

stripping dissolved hydrogen from said CO-loaded liquid methane stream to provide the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

10 sub-cooling said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

splitting the sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream into at least the first substream and the second substream;

15 expanding said first substream and introducing the expanded first substream into the CO/methane fractionation means as the liquid feed;

expanding and partially vaporising said second substream by heat exchange of said expanded second
20 substream against process streams including the sub-cooling hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream and introducing the partially vaporised second substream into said fractionating means as the two-phase feed;

separating the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid
25 methane feeds in said fractionating means to provide the CO-rich vapour overheads and the methane-rich bottoms liquid;

reboiling said fractionation means by heat exchange with the cooling and condensing high pressure CO recycle
30 heat pump stream; and

recycling at least a portion of said methane-rich bottoms liquid to provide the liquid methane wash, wherein said process streams partially vaporising the second substream includes the cooling and condensing
35 intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream.

4. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein part of the heat duty required to partially vaporise said second substream is provided by heat exchange



of said second substream against cooling and partially condensing gaseous feed.

5. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding
5 claims, wherein the CO/methane fractionation means is refluxed with a low pressure liquid CO recycle heat pump stream derived by expanding a portion of the condensed high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream downstream of the fractionation means reboil.
- 10 6. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein heat generated by dissolution of carbon monoxide in the liquid methane wash during said scrubbing is removed by heat exchange against a warming and
15 vaporising CO recycle heat pump stream at a pressure which is lower than said intermediate pressure.
7. A process as claimed in Claim 6, wherein said heat pump stream removing heat generated by dissolution of
20 carbon monoxide in the liquid methane wash during said scrubbing comprises liquid phase expanded high pressure and liquid phase expanded intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump streams.
- 25 8. A process as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the vaporised recycle heat pump stream downstream of said scrubbing is mixed with the CO-rich vapour overheads from the fractionation means and warmed to provide the supply to CO compression means providing the intermediate and high
30 pressure CO recycle heat pump streams and carbon monoxide product.
9. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the gaseous feed consists essentially of
35 carbon monoxide, hydrogen and methane.
10. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the intermediate pressure is between 1.20 and 1.60 MPaa (12.0 and 16.0 Bara).



11. A process as claimed in Claim 1 and substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawing.

- 5 12. An apparatus for separating carbon monoxide ("CO") from a gaseous feed containing primarily carbon monoxide and hydrogen by a process of Claim 1, which apparatus comprises:

scrubbing means for scrubbing carbon monoxide from the
10 vapour portion of the feed by the liquid methane wash to provide the CO-loaded liquid methane stream and the hydrogen-rich vapour;

stripping means for stripping dissolved hydrogen from
said CO-loaded liquid methane stream to provide the
15 hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

heat exchange means for sub-cooling said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

CO/methane fractionation means for separating the
hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane to provide the
20 CO-rich vapour overheads and the methane-rich bottoms liquid, said fractionation means having reboil means;

expansion means for expanding the first substream of
said sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

25 conduit means for introducing the expanded first substream into said fractionation means as a liquid feed;

heat exchange means for partially vaporising the
second substream of said sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

30 conduit means for introducing the partially vaporised second substream into said fractionating means as a two-phase feed; and

a "high pressure" CO recycle heat pump system
providing the vapour phase high pressure CO recycle heat
35 pump stream to the fractionation reboil means,
wherein the apparatus further comprises an "intermediate pressure" CO recycle heat pump system providing the vapour phase intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream, at a pressure intermediate that of said CO-rich vapour



overheads and said high pressure CO heat pump stream, to said heat exchange means for partially vaporising the second substream to provide part of the heat duty to partially vaporise said second substream.

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13. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 12, wherein said heat exchange means for sub-cooling the hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream and said heat exchange means for partially vaporising the second substream are
10 integrated whereby part of the heat duty required to partially vaporise said second substream is provided by the sub-cooling hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream.

15 14. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 12 or Claim 13, comprising:

heat exchange means for partially condensing the gaseous feed against one or more process steams;

scrubbing means for scrubbing carbon monoxide from a
20 vapour portion of the partially condensed feed with the liquid methane wash to provide the CO-loaded liquid methane stream and the hydrogen-rich vapour;

stripping means for removing dissolved hydrogen from said CO-loaded liquid methane stream to provide the
25 hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

heat exchange means for sub-cooling said hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane stream;

expansion means for expanding the first substream of said sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane
30 stream;

conduit means for introducing the expanded first substream into said fractionation means as a liquid feed;

expansion means for expanding the second substream of said sub-cooled hydrogen-stripped CO-loaded liquid methane
35 stream;

heat exchange means for partially vaporising said expanded second substream;

conduit means for introducing the partially vaporised second substream into said fractionating means as a two-



phase feed;

a "high pressure" CO recycle heat pump system providing the vapour phase high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream to the fractionation reboil means; and

5 recycle means supplying at least a portion of said methane-rich bottoms liquid to said scrubbing means to provide said liquid methane wash, wherein the apparatus further comprises an "intermediate pressure" CO recycle heat pump system providing the vapour
10 phase intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream, at a pressure intermediate that of said CO-rich vapour overheads and said high pressure CO heat pump stream, to said heat exchange means for partially vaporising the second substream to provide part of the heat duty to
15 partially vaporise said second substream.

15. An apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 12 to 14, wherein the high pressure and intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump systems are integrated.

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16. An apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 12 to 15, wherein the heat exchange means for partially vaporising the second substream receives gaseous feed whereby part of the heat duty required for said partial vaporisation is
25 provided by cooling and partially condensing said gaseous feed.

17. An apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 12 to 16, further comprising expansion means for expanding a portion
30 of the condensed high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream downstream of the fractionation reboil means and conduit means for introducing said expanded condensed stream as reflux to the CO/methane fractionation column.

35 18. An apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 12 to 17, further comprising heat exchange means for removing heat generated by dissolution of carbon monoxide in the liquid methane wash in the scrubbing means by heat exchange against a warming and vaporising CO recycle heat pump



stream "26,27) at a pressure which is lower than said intermediate pressure.

19. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 18, further
5 comprising expansion means for expanding liquid phase high pressure CO recycle heat pump stream; expansion means for expanding liquid phase intermediate pressure CO recycle heat pump stream; and conduit means for conveying said expanded streams to said heat exchange means for removing
10 heat generated by dissolution of carbon monoxide in the liquid methane wash in the scrubbing means.

20. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 19, further
comprising means downstream of the scrubbing means for
15 combining recycle heat pump stream vaporised in said heat exchange means for removing heat generated by dissolution of carbon monoxide in the liquid methane wash with the CO-rich vapour overheads from the fractionation means; heat exchange means for warming the combined stream; and
20 compression means for compressing the warmed combined stream to provide the intermediate and high pressure CO recycle heat pump streams and carbon monoxide product.

21. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 12 and substantially
25 as hereinbefore described with reference to, and as illustrated in, the accompanying drawing.