

Field Naturalists meeting

# Energy Probe official outlines solar heating

Alternate forms of home heating are available now according to Brian Marshall of Energy Probe of the University of Toronto, they are not projects for the future.

Speaking at a recent meeting of the Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalists Club, Marshall outlined the alternate energy forms that are being investigated, but emphasized the viability of solar heating as a means of saving energy instead of wasting it.

"A dollar is better spent saving energy rather than creating it," he said. Marshall says he is partial to solar energy because it is simple to utilize and the manufacturing industry in Canada is ready to market the equipment needed right now.

"There are at least 60 manufacturers of solar collectors in Canada alone. There are hundreds of types of collectors available."

Solar energy is not a new idea, the sun's power has been harnessed as early as 400 A.D., but with the advent of easily obtained fossil fuels, the technology was never seriously developed.

There are two main types of solar heating; the active type which involves gathering the sun's heat and distributing it throughout a building, and the passive type which relies on natural convection to circulate the heat with no outside pump or storage system.

## Prenatal course to be offered

There will be a seven-week prenatal course offered to expectant parents in the Midland and Penetanguishene area beginning on Tuesday, October 4, to be held at Huronia District Hospital.

A minimum of 15 registrants is necessary for a series to be held in Penetanguishene.

Anyone wishing to register may do so by calling the Simcoe County District Health Unit at 526-9325.

**Controversy**  
The choice between the two types is a matter of great controversy says Marshall, even among proponents of solar energy themselves.

The first solar home in Canada was built in Vancouver and utilized the owner's swimming pool as a means of storing heat to be used in the home after night fall and during winter.

The size of a storage facility determines how long the home can rely on solar heat in the event of a cloudy day or change in season.

A model home in King Township near Highway 400, has an active, long term system built in that is designed to store heat for an entire season in a huge underground reservoir beneath the house itself.

The passive system relies more on gathering the sun's warmth on a daily basis and demands more attention be paid to the weather conditions.

"I prefer the passive system myself," said Marshall, "I think it attunes people to their environment which is something I think we need to do."

A house designed with a passive system has a characteristic large exposure to the south and a sloping roof to minimize heat loss to the northern

side. The most common type of passive system uses a glass frontal area that vathers the heat from the sun and a concrete wall that acts as a storage unit, radiating heat inside. The air between the glass and the wall is heated up and as it rises, it escapes into the room through ducts in the wall. Cooled air would then fall to the bottom of the house and be recirculated behind the wall as a result of natural convection and reheated.

**Decentralization**  
Another advantage to solar heating says Marshall is the decentralization of communities that is involved. Smaller groups of houses can be heated from a common solar heating system, and would be set off from larger urban centres because of the exposure to the sun that is necessary.

Marshall also discussed nuclear energy, an alternative which he says, "is just another garden path we're being lead down."

"People have got to start thinking in terms of saving energy not creating it. There's already lots of it around."

Marshall says that soje studies have indicated nuclear power stations will be net losers and that other means will need to be found anyway.

**Insulate to conserve**  
As well as retro-fitting a house with solar heating equipment, a \$3,000 to \$8,000 project for most homes now, Marshall said insulation is still the best way to conserve energy. "You can't over-insulate," he said, "it's easy to upgrade your home's insulation and you can save as much as 50 per cent on heating bills."

The other sources of

energy named by Marshall were, wind power, waves and tides, geothermal power (underground springs and steam) and biomass (wood, plant and animal residues).

These are all renewable resources so there would be no problem of exhausting them as there is with fossil fuels.

"With fossil fuels (coal, gas, oil) it's not a matter

of if they will run out," said Marshall, "It's a question of when. Everyone is agreed on that now."

Marshall is optimistic that solar heating will catch on among builders but says there has been a problem selling the idea.

"The pricing and costing of solar heat has to be done over the life cycle of the home.

"A capital expense of

approximately \$7,000 would allow a system to break even around year 12. That can amount to a \$6,000 to \$7,000 saving but people have trouble seeing that far into the future."

The time will come, he says, when a solar heating system will gain universal acceptance and give people value for their house when it comes time to sell.

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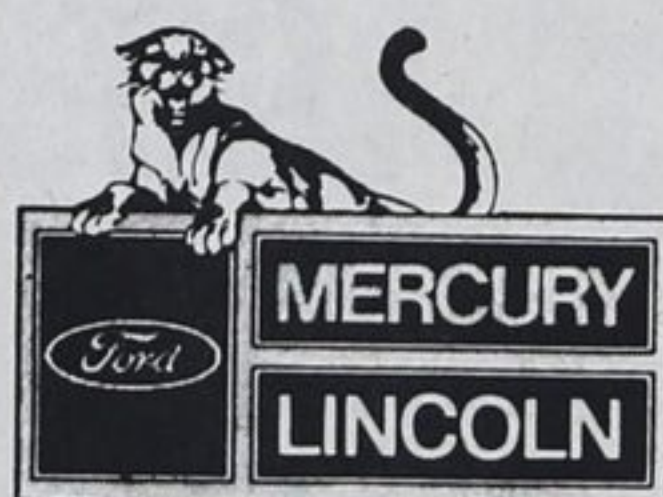
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