

Solar company shows profits

A Canadian company is proving that solar energy can be not only viable but downright profitable, writes Allan Swift of the *Canadian Press*.

The company Petro-Sun Incorporated of Toronto was founded in 1976 by Jacques Sicotte.

The company's name reflects its broad range of activities — Petro for gas and oil exploration in Alberta and Texas, and Sun, or the Thermo Solar Division, for solar collectors built in Montreal and shipped around the world.

Sicotte, trained as a nuclear engineer, designed the collectors himself and holds patents on part of their technology.

Solar heated homes

He and his father began by building a half-dozen solar-heated homes in an area north of Montreal. After building about 25 such dwellings, Sicotte began looking for a more booming business than housing.

Seeking an infusion of capital, he sold half of his fledgling company to Magnetics International Limited of Montreal.

In 1979, Thermo Solar amalgamated with Quebec Manitou Mines Limited of Toronto and Petro-Sun was established, with head office in Toronto.

At the Montreal plant, some 30 employees build high-temperature collectors while four engineers brainstorm on new energy-related devices. Sicotte, his brother Michel and Raymond Bourgeois, both vice-presidents, prepare bids for solar heating systems.

A warehouse and a plant, employing ten people has just opened in Toronto.

Sales doubled

Sicotte said sales have roughly doubled each year since Thermo Solar was incorporated in 1976.

The federal government boosted the industry last year by making available \$125 million over five years to subsidize solar equipment to heat water in federally-owned buildings. The program is called PUSH — Purchase and Use of Solar Equipment — and the company keeps a list of 96 projects on which it is actively bidding.

So far the company has won contracts to supply equipment for six post offices, two penitentiaries, several fish hatcheries and other federal buildings as well.

There are about ten major builders of

solar equipment in Canada, "and competition is fierce".

Thermo Solar has sold water-heating units to private companies in Canada, and won contracts with the Egyptian Electricity Authority, a Mexican irrigation project and a grain dryer near Winnipeg. Units have been sold in Greece and the group is looking for contracts in Saudi Arabia and the Third World.

Peanut processing plant opened

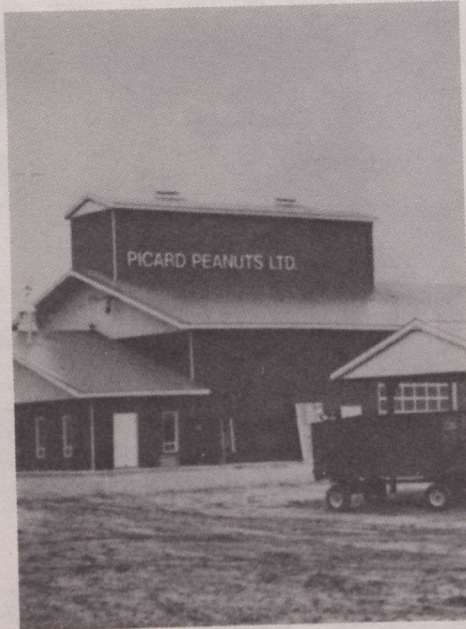
Canada's first peanut-processing plant was officially opened recently in southwestern Ontario.

Located in Windham Centre, Ontario, it is the first cleaning, shelling and grading plant to be built by Canadians. The plant is owned and operated by a grower, Jim Picard, and has a capacity of 5,000 tons. The plant can shell, fry or roast peanut production for 4,000 acres annually.

Last year, peanuts were harvested from 180 acres on six farms, yielding an average of between 2,000 and 2,200 pounds an acre.

Promising crop

Peanuts represent a promising new crop, particularly in Ontario where peanut



Peanuts are becoming a new commercial crop in southwestern Ontario thanks to recent research and development efforts by government, universities and industry. A new peanut-processing plant recently opened in Windham Centre, Ontario, will process Ontario-grown peanuts.

plants can thrive in the sandy lands of Norfolk, Elgin and Oxford Counties. Canada annually imports 74,000 tons of peanut products valued at nearly \$60 million.

Agriculture Canada has invested more than \$500,000 since 1974 in peanut research. This represents more than 60 per cent of total financial investment for research and development of peanuts in Ontario.

Field trials carried out at Agriculture Canada's research station in Delhi, Ontario concentrated on identifying a vigorous-growing plant that was tolerant to cold, early flowering and maturing and high yielding. Effective weed control programs were also investigated.

In five years of research, some 3,600 peanut varieties were studied at the Delhi Research Station. The Valencia peanut proved to be the best variety for Ontario growing conditions. At the same time, it is the most flavourful of all peanut varieties.

Domestic peanut manufacturers are also pleased with the advancement of Canada's own peanut industry. Traditionally, they have had to rely on imports of shelled peanuts from the United States.

American growers this year had a bad crop and will not be exporting the quantities of peanuts required by Canadian manufacturers. These manufacturers will now be able to supplement their production requirements by purchasing Ontario-grown peanuts, as a result of the new processing plant.

Canadian wins Europa Cup

Canadian skier Diana Haight of Fruitvale, British Columbia recently became the first Canadian to win a combined Europa Cup championship.

The win also gave Canada its first victory in an international skiing competition since 1968.

The 16-year-old did not win a race this year on the Europa circuit but emerged with the women's combined title as a result of her consistent skiing performance. Haight's victory was figured from her placings this season in the downhill, slalom and giant slalom. The Europa Cup competition is composed of skiers just below world level. Haight finished with 168 points followed by Brigitte Oertli of Switzerland with 157.