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OPINION

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The article quotes from the NSERC Scholarship Guide, "Students who are candidates for undergraduate professional degrees in the health sciences... are not eligible to hold these awards". Apparently this rule has been mis-understood. It is meant to eliminate students who are currently registered in MD or DDS programs; it is not reasonable to preclude all applicants who might one day decide to do an MD or DDS. However, many students and faculty would prefer to make NSERC undergraduate awards

only to students who have a genuine interest in pursuing careers in science. This does not necessarily preclude potential MD and DDS students, as some of them do go on to medical and dental research — hence the need for interviews. You may be interested to know that a survey of past holders of NSERC undergraduate awards show that 80% have gone on to graduate work or careers related to research.

Mary Anne White is an Assistant Professor in the chemistry Department.

Rigorous research

By JOHN BLACKMORE

Before a precis of the paper concerning 'The Newfoundland Origin of the Word Christmas', some background of the group involved is in order.

Originally, the money provided for this project was tied up in Transfer Payments from Ottawa. However, it was discovered that Newfoundland had already received its share for the fiscal year of 1986. The cheque, though, had been signed and rather than waste the paper, it was sent through other channels. NSERC took responsibility for the endowment and contacted Memorial University of Newfoundland to find a deserving professor. Unfortunately, many were involved in some research or another, and the rest were hauling lobster pots. Next, the vocational schools were approached but most teachers already had their 10 weeks. At wit's end, NSERC turned the cheque over to the Nfld. government for a make-work project. The government, experts at spending federal dollars, immediately targeted the funds for a tanning salon/ice-rink complex in Nain, Labrador. The money was sent up north but because of a complication arising from NSERC's involvement, it was stipulated it could only be spent on research. The only resource material in Nain was a Webster's dictionary and as it was close to Christmas, the labourers in Labrador decided to investigate the semantics of the word 'Christmas' in a Newfoundland context.

Undaunted, Mr. Sheppard surmised that the difference in the languages could only mean the origin of 'Christmas' occurred closer to home. He suggested the Beothuks as the probable fabricators of the word. The group now turned its considerable efforts to finding a Beothuk alive in the 11th century or barring that, one of their descendants. Once again, the group met with opposition, discovering that the native Indians were exterminated in the 1800's. This caused Sheppard to cry cover-up, believing the Beothuks were killed to keep them quiet. Now the researchers worked with a vengeance and events moved quickly.

Their accusation of scandal was heard by the Attorney General, who mobilized a Royal Commission. More money was forthcoming as long as the Liberals were a part of the evil deed.

Amanda Nichols now assumes prominence in the investigation. She had read in the National Enquirer about a 97 year-old Aztec priest who could speak to the dead. The priest, Kuakala Arawak, was contacted and arrived in Labrador one week later, travelling by psychic matter transferral. Though no Indian burial sites were in the vicinity, Arawak assured the group he 'could feel their psionic impressions'. This gave the organizers confidence and let the priest begin his ritual.

Arawak went into a deep trance on the 9th of November and broke from it again six days later. Cutlery as far away as Winnipeg is said to have bent in this effort.

Kuakala informed the anxious people that 'Christmas' is a corruption to the Beothuk word 'Coughli-mip' meaning "celebration of the depletion of the winter's stores". This was a time when the Indians could no longer afford the extravagance of the early winter months. The English heard of the word through unknown channels and thought it adequately described their financial state at the end of 12 days of festivities. Later, the religious influence was felt, and as the Beothuks stored cod for the winter, it was an easy blurring of cod to god, to give the holiday its proper significance.

Mr. Sheppard is to receive an honorary doctorate from the Newfoundland College of Fishery Technology at the spring convocation. Plans for another project are underway but Sheppard is secretive, claiming "Nobel hopefuls don't speak to the press."

Secretary's

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If you are interested and/or have any questions, contact Sandra Bell in Room 210.

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