



Tireless promoter. Some people take Christmas off, but not NSF education chief Bassam Shakhashiri who sent this as his seasonal greeting.

scientific disciplines and on a Foundation-wide basis.

The committee has a few other questions. What can astronomers expect in the way of new facilities? Why isn't the Foundation doing more for behavioral sciences? Two reports due 31 January 1990. What is NSF doing to improve science and engineering education? Report due 30 September 1990. What are the Foundation's long-range plans for improving scientific facilities nationwide? Report due 15 December 1990.

These reports will form the basis for hearings, which will no doubt form the basis for new reports.

Shockley Shocker

Could William Shockley's unpopular ideas about race and IQ have been the result of a blow to the head?

Last fall, *Nature* ran an obituary of William B. Shockley, co-inventor of the transistor, who died last August at 79. The article dwelt mainly on the exceedingly controversial theory that Shockley developed late in life, which posited that the IQs of blacks go up in proportion to their Caucasian blood.

Frederick Seitz, president emeritus of Rockefeller University, has risen in defense of the man if not the theory. In a 30 November letter in *Nature*,

Seitz notes that Shockley's "intense and (to my mind) ill-conceived concentration on socio-genetic matters occurred after a head-on automobile collision in which he was almost killed." In Seitz's opinion, "the residual effects" of the accident "cannot be ignored in evaluating his activity in later years."

The Big Sleep

Falling asleep at the wheel causes about 6,500 traffic

deaths annually and may cause up to 400,000 accidents a year, according to a University of Michigan sleep researcher. "That makes snoozing second only to boozing" as a traffic menace, says the American Sleep Disorders Association.

Neurologist Michael Aldrich has reported in the journal *Sleep* that people with various sleep disorders—who may compose up to 25% of the population—are those most likely to drowse at the wheel. A comparison of 424 people with sleep disorders and 70 normal sleepers showed that 80% of the patients suffered from excessive daytime sleepiness and got into sleep-related accidents about three times as often as the controls. The majority had sleep apnea, where breathing stops many times during the night and leaves people feeling wiped out the next day.

The highest number of accidents was reported by those with narcolepsy, who not only have sleep "attacks" but may also suffer from cataplexy, a sudden loss of motor control.

Aldrich says all this raises the question of whether the sleep-disordered should have their driving privileges restricted.

Americans Capture More Math Degrees

Although foreign students continue to earn the majority of advanced mathematics degrees awarded by U.S. institutions, the trend could be bottoming out—thanks to America's women.

The results of the latest survey conducted by the American Mathematical Society show that although the percentage of American doctoral winners has not gone up, the numbers have. In 1989, U.S. institutions awarded 904 Ph.D. degrees in mathematics, of which 411 went to Americans—compared to 363 of the 804 total in 1988.

Women accounted for almost half the increase in Ph.D.'s for U.S. residents in 1989—accounting for 24% of the domestic total as compared with 21% in 1988. "We should encourage this trend and dispel the notion once and for all that mathematics is a man's game," says Edward Connors, a University of Massachusetts professor who reports on the survey's findings in the November issue of *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*.

Will John Deutch or Dr. X Lead MIT?

The most talked about topic at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology these days is who will succeed Paul Gray as president. The board of directors has to decide within 3 months who will lead MIT into the 21st century. (Past presidents' terms have generally exceeded a decade.)

The heir apparent is physicist John M. Deutch, who has been provost since 1985. But Deutch is resented by many faculty and students who find his management style abrasive. "Fire, aim, ready," is the way one senior professor has characterized it. Deutch won few friends in 1987 when he abruptly shut down the Applied Biology Science Department in what was perceived as a pretty much unilateral decision. And lately, his extensive corporate consulting practice, which yields more than his \$168,000 MIT salary, has drawn criticism from student groups.



Calvin Campbell/MIT

Deutch, nevertheless, remains a top contender for the post. Other faculty members mentioned as possible candidates are Lester C. Thurow, head of the Sloane School of Management; Robert J. Birgeneau, chairman of the Department of Physics; and Sheila Widnall, professor of aeronautics and astrophysics.

But there is thought to be a good chance that MIT's executive board could, for the first time in 50 years, turn to an outsider. Some of the names under discussion are Dean Eastman, a vice president for research at International Business Machines; James F. Gibbons, dean of the School of Engineering at Stanford University; Donald Kennedy, president of Stanford; and Thomas E. Everhart of the California Institute of Applied Technology. Also mentioned is Nobelist Arno A. Penzias, head of research at AT&T Bell Laboratories.