

Million-dollar monster

YOU'D THINK British Columbia would offer sufficient tourist delights so that it could skip hyped-up promotions designed to attract visitors. But in the city of Vernon, in southcentral B.C., a tourist promotion group plans to offer a \$1 million reward for proof of the existence of Ogopogo, a sea monster said to live in the lakes of the province's Okanogan Valley.

The Okanogan-Similkameen Tourism Association came up with the scheme as part of a plan to use Ogopogo more extensively in its promotional efforts. The money would not be awarded unless proof of the creature's existence is firm enough to stand up in court.

ACCORDING TO legend, Ogopogo resembles a serpent 150 yards long. There have been reported sightings in several Okanogan Valley lakes during the last 50 years.

And the nice thing about it, the people of Vernon say, is the creature reportedly is friendly. Thank goodness,

since tourists are involved.

Before dismissing the whole business as silly, it would be well to consider the possibility that the promotion might be successful. Could it be that people who had been planning to come to Alaska in 1984, for the 25th birthday celebration of statehood, will now go to Vernon, B.C.?

BUT WHO'S GOING to put up a million-dollar reward for proof of the existence of a Lake Iliamna monster, also reported to exist? Nobody cares whether there is a sea serpent in Big Lake. There have been no signs of Big Foot in the Chugach Mountains for years.

And, sad to say, there hasn't been a flying saucer sighting over Southcentral Alaska in a long, long time.

What's going on, anyway? Aside from politics, the weather, school construction problems and a few other things, it's getting pretty dull around here.