

ESKIMO BURIAL SITE FOUND

An expedition into Hudson Bay by a team from the National Museum of Man has discovered a large Eskimo burial centre of the prehistoric Thule culture.

The finding of the 350-year-old site is expected to close many gaps in the understanding of the Thule culture - for example, by answering biological questions about the early Eskimo people, and providing new insight into their attitudes and behaviour toward death. The Museum also hopes to be able to correct historical mistakes about the Foxe expedition of 1631 searching for the Northwest Passage.

Thule is the best known prehistoric culture in the Canadian Arctic, but material, such as skeletal remains has been extremely scarce until now.

The 12-man team, directed by Charles F. Merbs, an anthropologist from the University of Chicago, has found 335 Thule culture burial sites of the 1613 era, during the past two summers, in the northwest corner of Hudson Bay. The expedition, initiated by the Museum, was sponsored jointly by the National Museum of Man and the National Geographic Society.

HISTORICAL BELIEF

The Eskimo deaths in this newly-explored region are believed to have been caused by an unknown disease brought to the area by a longboat that broke

loose from one of explorer Thomas Button's two ships in 1613, when he was searching for the Northwest Passage. Historians believe Button lacked direct contact with the Eskimos of the regions at that time. They speculate that the longboat was lost during a storm but that later, carrying the unknown disease, it was found on shore by Eskimos. The epidemic that ensued may have eliminated half the Eskimo population of the area, Professor Merbs believes.

"The places of death were than abandoned," he says, "and they have remained abandoned right up to the present." The site, however, was found in 1631 by another European explorer, Captain Luke Foxe, who was also searching for the Northwest Passage. He recorded the "island of dead Eskimos" and noted that some of the weapons found with the dead were tipped with flattened iron nails, an indication they had made contact with white people.

The location, however, remained for many years a mystery because Foxe made a mistake in latitude in pinpointing it on the map. It is expected that much will be learnt from Professor Merbs' studies that will provide knowledge of the little-known transition from the Thule culture to that of the present-day Eskimo. The Merbs expedition will return to the same area for further investigations next summer.

TUNIS AND OECD MEETINGS

The Minister of Industry and Trade and Commerce, Mr. Jean-Luc Pepin, headed the Canadian delegation to the first meeting of the Canada-Tunisia Joint Commission in Tunis last month. This meeting was of particular importance for Canada in view of the Canadian Government's efforts to strengthen its relations with one of the most important countries of French-speaking Africa.

The Canada-Tunisia Joint Commission was created last May as a result of the visit to Canada by President Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia. The two countries, wishing to continue the exchange of views that took place during the visit, considered that a joint commission would best serve this purpose. Their mutual interests have become increasingly close in several fields, including cultural affairs, trade, technical and economic assistance, *francophonie* and other aspects of international affairs. As had been agreed on last May in Ottawa, the first meeting took place in Tunis; future meetings will alternate between the two capitals.

Mr. Pepin was accompanied by officials of the Department of External Affairs, Industry and Trade and Commerce and of the Canadian International Development Agency.

OECD MINISTERIAL MEETING

Following the meetings in Tunis, Mr. Pepin led a Canadian delegation at the annual meeting of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris on February 13 and 14.

The Ministers examined the prospects for economic growth and stability in OECD countries, the current state of their economic relations with the rest of the world, and the future programme of the Organization. In their survey of the aid and trade prospects of the developing countries, they reviewed the progress of member countries in implementing the proposed preferential tariff system for exports from developing countries.

The Ministers also considered the economic policy problems created for the governments of industrialized countries by rapid technological change.

Ministerial representatives from all 22 OECD countries in Western Europe, North America and Japan attended the meeting. Mr. Pepin was accompanied by officials from the Departments of External Affairs, Finance, Industry, Trade and Commerce, Agriculture and the Bank of Canada.

A total of 23,261 domestic refrigerators were sold in Canada in December and 745 were exported.