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In response to recent inquiries from the press and from individuals, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett today issued the following statement concerning the distribution to Creeks of the award from their case based on an 1814 treaty:

"It is apparent, from recent inquiries, that erroneous information has been circulated concerning the distribution of an award by the Indian Claims Commission in Docket No. 21 to the Creek Indians. In 1962 the Indian Claims Commission stated that descendants of the Creek Nation as it existed in 1814 are eligible to share in the award. The Creek Nation of Oklahoma filed the original claim in 1948 and in 1952 the Creek Nation East of the Mississippi was permitted to enter the case as petitioners by intervention.

"Nearly $4 million is due the Creeks as the result of the case they entered against the United States to obtain additional payment for about nine million acres of land which they ceded in Alabama and Georgia under an 1814 treaty. The Bureau will present to the 90th Congress its proposal on the disposition of the judgment funds.

"Congress has not yet authorized the preparation of a roll of persons eligible to share in the distribution of the award. However, certain persons and groups have apparently been holding meetings to prepare a roll of the Creeks East of the Mississippi. Until such time as Congress enacts legislation setting forth requirements of eligibility for enrollment, no roll can be considered valid or legal for purposes of sharing in the award and no roll is now being prepared by the Bureau.

"It has also come to our attention that certain individuals and groups have been soliciting fees for application forms for the purpose of obtaining membership in the unofficial organization of the Creeks East. Payment of such fees or joining of any organization which purports to be establishing a roll of the Creeks East, is no assurance that the individual will be qualified to have his or her name placed on the official roll which will be prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"After Congress passes the necessary legislation, wide publicity will be given through newspapers and other news media that the Bureau has prepared a special application form and stating where the form may be obtained. There will be no charge for the forms or for filing them. The Bureau's Muskogee Area Office, Muskogee, Okla. 74401, will be the office handling the details of the Creek roll-making and the distribution of the funds to persons whose names appear on the roll as finally approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

"Accompanying the application form will be an information sheet. This sheet will give instructions helpful in filling out the form. It will also set out the requirements which an individual must meet to be eligible for enrollment, the names of individuals and offices where the completed applications may be filed, and the time period in which the forms must be filed.

"I wish to make it clear that no person, group, or office has been authorized by the Bureau to prepare any list or roll of persons to be used for distribution of the Creek Award. In order that interested

persons will not be inconvenienced, it is suggested that they not write to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for application forms until the announcement is made by the Bureau that the preparation of the Creek payment roll is to begin. Special application forms for enrollment will be made available by the Bureau without charge to the individual.
