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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today announced the ending of the legal relationship which the Government has had for nearly 20 years with the Catawba Indian Tribe of South Carolina and with its individual members as Indians.

The Secretary's action was taken in compliance with the provisions of a 1959 act of Congress (73 Stat. 592) which were accepted by a majority of the adult tribal members.

The 1959 law authorized distribution of the tribally owned assets among the individual members if such action was first approved by a majority of the adult members. Under this statute, a roll consisting of 226 adult members was established in late 1959. In the intervening months 127 of these members filed with, the Department individual statements accepting the provisions of the act and former Secretary Fred A. Seaton proclaimed the law in effect on July 2, 1960. By its terms two years were allowed thereafter for completion of the property distribution.

The tribal assets to be distributed consisted chiefly of 3,388 acres of land and some buildings. About 100 acres were set aside for community purposes and the balance of the property was appraised. Taken together with tribal funds already on deposit in the U. S. Treasury, it added up to a tribal estate of $187,774.40 or $296 for each of the 631 enrolled members including minors.

Each member was given the option of taking his share in land or in cash. Parents or guardians made the choice for the minors. A total of 345 chose land and 286 elected to receive cash. Tribal members were given a preference to select land they had been using as homesites and family members were allowed to select their share of land in a block. Title to the land so selected was conveyed to the members by quitclaim deed.

The land not selected was offered for sale under sealed bids and the proceeds were distributed among the members electing to take their share in cash.

On completion of the distribution, the constitution and bylaws of the Tribe were revoked. The Department's special responsibilities to the people as Indians are being ended as of July 1, 1962.