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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash today issued a statement summarizing the status of the Seminole Indian lands claims case which is pending before/the Indian Claims Commission. The text of the statement follows:

"In response to many queries from the press and from individual citizens, and in order to halt further spread of unsubstantiated rumors, the following status report is submitted concerning the lands claims case of the Seminole Indians now pending before the Indian Claims Commission for additional payment from the Federal Government for lands once held by the Indians of Florida.

"Two claims were filed with the Claims Commission, one by the Seminoles of Florida (1950) and one by the Seminoles of Oklahoma (1951), as successors of the Seminole Nation. (Seminole is a name given to the Indians living in Florida at the turn of the 19th century, consisting of Indian immigrants, chiefly Creeks of the Hitchiti-and-Muskogee-speaking stock, with an admixture of remnant Florida prehistoric aborigines.) The claims of the two present Seminole groups have now been consolidated inasmuch as they were identical claims for "recovery of the value of a parcel of land being all of the present State of Florida excepting three enclaves." (The three excluded areas were known as the Picolata Purchase on the northern Atlantic Coast, the Forbes Purchase on the upper Gulf Coast, from Apalache Bay to Apalachicola Bay, and the Pensacola Purchase on the northwestern Gulf Coast, all consisting of lands sold by Spain prior to U. S. accession of Florida.)

"The case is based on the cession to the U. S. by the Seminoles under the Treaty of 1823 of about 32,000,000 acres for which they received 4 million reserve acres, 6,000 dollars' worth of livestock and farm implements, and 5,000 dollars per year for 20 years; and also upon the cession of the reserve lands under a later treaty made in 1832 in exchange for lands in Oklahoma territory.

"Hearings have continued intermittently for several years, with deliberations at one period focusing on the motion of the Miccosukee tribal groups to dismiss the monetary claim in favor of restoration of title of the lands to the Indians, However action on such a motion is outside the jurisdiction of the Indian Claims Commission whose authority is confined to granting monetary settlements,.

"On May 8, 1964, the Indian Claims Commission handed down an interim opinion acknowledging that the Seminole Nation, as it existed at the time of the 1823 treaty of cession had original Indian title to almost all the lands that now comprise the State of Florida, except for the three tracts called Forbes, Pensacola and Picolata Purchases and certain Spanish land grants. Title to the reservation established by the 1823 treaty was held to have been extinguished by the 1832 treaty.

"The case was ordered to proceed for determination of (1) the net acreage of the lands ceded under the 1823 treaty, except for the reservation lands, the value of the lands as of September 18, 1823, and the amount of consideration paid under treaty; (2) the acreages of the reservation lands and the value as of May 9, 1832, and the amount of consideration paid under the treaty; and (3) the amount of credits or deductions to which the 'United States may be entitled.

"In view of the many steps yet to be taken in the case--most time-consuming among which is the gathering of documentary evidence of the actual acreages and value of the lands in question--it cannot be indicated with any degree of certainty how much more time may elapse before final decision is possible, As the case now stands, all issues on titles, boundaries, acreages and land values must be determined before there could be any indication of possible amount of recovery."
