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Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Craig, both members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, have been awarded a $59,000 contract by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to provide hot lunches for 900 Cherokee school children in North Carolina next winter, the Department of the Interior announced today. The couple, who operate Craig's Restaurant and Motor Court at Cherokee, North Carolina, were the low bidders for the contract. They agreed to provide the noonday meals at 36.5 cents each, the lowest price offered since the private contract system was initiated at Cherokee in 1955.

"Although the dollar total of the, contract is relatively small, its award to Mr. and Mrs. Craig is of considerable significance to us," Commissioner of Indian Affairs Glenn L. Emmons commented. "First, it provides clear evidence of the increasing ability of Indian people to manage economic enterprises and to compete successfully with other people on a business basis. Second, it demonstrates again the Bureau1s desire to promote participation by local enterprises, both private and public, in its programs and services for the Indian people."

Under the terms of the award, each bidder had to submit a menu for the first month of the 1958-59 school year, beginning September 2. The lunch, which is sometimes the heartiest meal an Indian child receives during the day, must be a well-balanced, hot meal of high nutritional value. It invariably includes meat or fish, vegetables, bread, milk, and dessert. After the first month, the contractor agrees to submit his menus in advance to the Superintendent of the reservation for his approval or modification.

The Craigs, in addition to being in the restaurant business, are familiar with the school lunch program as Mrs. Craig was employed by the Bureau at the Soco School on the Cherokee Reservation for 11 years. The other four schools covered by the contract are situated at Cherokee, Big Cove, Birdtown, and Snowbird, all in North Carolina.