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Question by John Duncan, M.P., North Island Powell River
on Ipperwash native standoff
during Question Period, Sept. 18, 1995

Mr. John Duncan (North Island-Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian agenda includes a lot more than the Quebec referendum.

Documented lawlessness was occurring at Camp Ipperwash since the native occupation on July 29. The local community is feeling betrayed by the total absence of military policing. This absence culminated tragically and unnecessarily in the death of Dudley George at the adjacent Ipperwash Provincial Park.

Why did the Department of National Defence allow the 2,000-acre military camp to go totally unpoliced after a 16-year-old crashed the bus into the camp buildings area?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the band occupied part of Ipperwash in the fall of 1993.

In the budget of 1994, the government took the decision that Camp Ipperwash would close. It was surplus to our needs. We then entered into dialogue with the chief of the Kettle and Stoney Point Band, Mr. Bressette, to talk about transferring ownership as part of the original agreement.

Those discussions were rather long and they involved questions of compensation about environmental cleanup, all of which the government was committed to do.

When the rest of the renegade group, which does not accept the main band and the chief, occupied the camp some time ago -- I guess it was in the month of July -- the commander on the spot took the correct action. Rather than have confrontation where there would be loss of life, and given the fact that the camp was not being used by the military, the military agreed to withdraw temporarily, pending negotiations.

Those negotiations have borne fruit with the discussions that were held last week with the Minister of Indian Affairs. Everyone should congratulate him on the job that he did in bringing a resolution to this subject.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island-Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister was begged by the town, by the Province and by the Reform Party and the Chief and Council of the Band to militarily police the camp, and instead left a policing vacuum over lands under his jurisdiction.

The Minister swore an oath as a Cabinet Minister and Privy Councillor to uphold the laws of Canada. When is the Minister going to do that?

Hon David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence, Lib): Mr. Speaker, rather than listen to the inflammatory remarks of the honourable member, what we have seen in the recent events is that only with negotiation with Canada's First Nations can we resolve these disputes.

The fact of the matter is that there was a division within the aboriginal community on the question of entitlement to that piece of land which the Federal Government wants to give back.

After the negotiations conducted by my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, this now appears to be on the way to a satisfactory resolution.

no answer to policing question