

Adjournment Debate

from surviving family members or executors of an estate. The matter of delegating authority to district offices of the commission to deal with these claims has been considered, and approval has been given to work toward decentralizing decision-making on these applications.

The Pension Act provides that the amounts payable in burial grants are the same as those authorized for the Department of Veterans Affairs under the veteran's treatment regulations. The conditions under which the Department of National Defence and the Department of Veterans Affairs determine the amount payable to funeral directors differ. The Department of National Defence pays for the funerals of all service members regardless of the financial circumstances of their families, as this is regarded as a condition of service. The Department of Veterans Affairs pays a funeral grant as a matter of right when a veteran's death is related to his service and when the death results from other causes, on the basis of the financial circumstances of the deceased's estate. The Canadian Pension Commission pays a funeral grant when a disability pensioner's estate is not sufficient to cover the expenses of his last illness and burial.

Each department determines its rate using different criteria. The DND rate is based on the national average cost of a civilian funeral. The DVA rate is based on the national average rate paid by provinces and municipalities for funeral costs which are their responsibility.

As the hon. member said, the DVA rate has been revised regularly since 1975 and was increased to \$625 as recently as June, 1980. We will continue to ensure that the rate is closely monitored.

In both departments the aim is to provide that servicemen and women or ex-servicemen and women are buried in dignity and in a manner which honours them as people as well as their service rendered to Canada. The present rates are considered to achieve this aim.

CUSTOMS TARIFF—REQUEST FOR REMOVAL OF DUTY ON BODY ARMOUR

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, recently I asked the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Bussières) a question about bulletproof vests for members of our law enforcement agencies across Canada. There is a 25 per cent duty on importing such body armour into Canada. "Body armour" and "bulletproof vests" are terminologies for the same thing.

● (2210)

In view of the information the minister gave me, if we are producing good quality bulletproof vests in Canada, then I agree we should protect our own industry and jobs for Canadians.

My real concern arose out of the serious acts of violence we hear about today, and quite often the personnel of our law enforcement agencies become the targets of such violence simply because they symbolize the law and its administration.

It is up to us as citizens who want law and order to lend our real support to them if we expect them to do the crucial and necessary job which all of us want done.

This important task of supporting our law enforcement agencies applies to municipal, provincial and federal police and other security agencies. Policemen should not have to purchase bulletproof vests on their own; this item should be part of their regular or normal equipment.

There should be considerable testing of such equipment to make sure it is practical and dependable. It is my understanding that there really are not any set standards in operation now in Canada. If a company does not meet specific standards, then it should not be allowed to sell its product on the market. If it does produce a product which meets proven standards, then purchases could readily be made from that firm for law enforcement agencies anywhere.

With regard to the information I received from the minister's officials, I find the name of one Canadian producing company, which I have since been informed does not at the present time produce body armour but is considering doing so. The company did produce this product for a period of time but stopped a short time ago. The company in question is doing considerable research, I understand, with the RCMP and other useful sources. Even at this time and under these circumstances this company's production is probably six months down the road.

The second company the officials discussed with me is still producing bulletproof vests and is making sales abroad, for example, in some countries in the Middle East and a few in the United States. The reason this second company is not making very many sales in the United States is because of the stiff competition there from companies which have a lot of experience in the field. There is no reason why we cannot produce a good Canadian product or products if we make use of all research facilities applicable for experimentation and testing. I should add that the second company in question has sold many of its vests to some municipal and other police forces in Canada, and it has also worked very closely with the Department of National Defence—and is still doing so.

Ironically enough, this Canadian company has had its equipment tested by an American firm which I believe is called H. & P. White Co. Ltd. This company springs from the old Henry Packard and White Co. Earlier in this century, this company was approached by Al Capone, who asked it to build him a bulletproof car. Today, the offspring of that company is renowned for the testing of bulletproof vests. Anything approved by it passes the test and becomes a government approved and lawful item of body armour.

The Brinks Security firm and special constables at the Olympics in Montreal, for example, have been and were provided with body armour, some of which was made in Canada. Therefore, from my limited research on this subject, I am convinced we can produce a good product in Canada.

In the best interests of all our law enforcement agencies, including military police and special agencies, my main inter-