

Mr. POWER: The Last Post fund will pay a maximum of \$50 for the funeral and a maximum of \$25 for the grave to provide a respectable sepulchre for indigent veterans, that is, veterans who cannot be buried otherwise. As the hon. gentleman knows, the department looks after the funeral expenses of indigents who die in departmental hospitals, and this fund has to do with ex-soldiers who are indigent and who die outside of the hospitals.

Mr. MacNICOL: Could the minister give us the number of those to whom this assistance had to be given during the past year?

Mr. POWER: I have not the figures for 1935 but I have them for the fiscal year 1934-35, when they totalled 606.

Mr. MacNICOL: Just one other question in regard to this item. Christie Street hospital, Toronto, was in my riding, though it is not in it now. The cemetery largely used is the soldiers' plot in Prospect cemetery. I was just wondering what means the government uses in directing from whom the caskets shall be purchased, or does the government make any direction in that regard? If so, what is the standard of the caskets used for the bodies of those whose families have to obtain this relief?

Mr. POWER: When soldiers who have no other resources die in departmental hospitals the department looks after their burial. The choice of the casket and of the undertaker is left to the relatives of the soldier. A certain amount of money is provided, I think \$75, to look after the expenses of the funeral.

Mr. MacNICOL: Do I understand that if a soldier dies at the hospital his relatives are permitted to send for their own undertaker? My information is to the contrary, that the undertaker is selected by the department.

Mr. POWER: My information is to the effect that the relatives of the soldier are allowed to choose the undertaker. Perhaps my hon. friend will remember that in 1932 or 1933 General Ross, the then member for Kingston, discussed this question at great length. I think at that time the minister, Hon. Murray MacLaren, laid down the rules which were to be followed. I have not those rules before me, but my recollection is that the relatives of the deceased soldier were permitted to choose their own undertaker and that the department simply furnished an amount of \$75. Perhaps my hon. friend will remember that General Ross objected to the practice which had existed up

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

to that time of calling for tenders from undertakers. I think his resolution was along that line.

Mr. MacNICOL: I am very glad to hear that it is the practice of the department at the present time to permit the relatives to select their own undertaker.

Mr. BROOKS: I should like to ask as to the time within which an application must be made after the death occurs, in order to take advantage of this fund. I recall that a few years ago the application had to be made almost immediately, and if that was not done no benefit was obtained. I was wondering whether or not that regulation has been changed, because it has worked a great hardship on many people who were not aware of the existence of the Last Post fund, and by the time they obtained the information it was too late to take advantage of it.

Mr. POWER: Of course my hon. friend will understand that this fund does not operate under the control or jurisdiction of the department; it is a voluntary organization. There are local committees set up in different towns and districts, having their own regulations governing applications. I should say that in the normal course of events an application for assistance from this fund must be made immediately. I speak subject to correction, but I am under the impression that it does not very often happen that a refund is made to the relatives after the funeral has taken place. I should not think that would be the case, because it must be remembered that this is a fund for persons who die indigent.

Mr. BROOKS: That is exactly the point. Everyone who dies has to be buried. Whether the friends or relatives of a deceased soldier have funds or not, he is buried, but it is too late then to take advantage of this fund. I know of a number of cases in my own province. As the government is making a contribution to this Last Post fund, there should be a regulation allowing persons to take advantage of it even after the burial. I think the regulation is too strict.

Mr. POWER: I shall be very glad to provide my hon. friend with a copy of the regulation.

Mr. BROOKS: I have seen the old regulation.

Mr. POWER: I am informed that there have been some changes; I will provide my hon. friend with a copy.

Mr. WOOD: I represent a constituency in which there are some five thousand Indians.