

**Submission
No 49**

INQUIRY INTO FUNERAL INDUSTRY

Organisation:

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Theme:

Summary

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Inquiry into the Funeral Industry
The Standing Committee on Social Issues

To whom it may concern:

Several years ago I was involved in caring for my dying ex husband. Due to our strange relationship, after his death I was able to take a more objective view of events than my daughters, for whom the loss of a father was more traumatic. I was uncomfortable with the sepulchral tones of the man from the salesman from the funeral parlor and I disliked the promotion of such things as the sale of brass handles and mahogany, because "you owe it to the one you loved."

Since the girls' father had died with very little other than a second hand car, the girls and I chose not to be coerced into buying expensive funeral materials. How much harder for some to say 'no' to expensive funerals, I thought. Sorrow and a sense of guilt for not doing the best thing for the departed cause people to be extremely vulnerable and to outlay far more than they can afford.

Recently I made enquiries about cardboard coffins and was told they were a health hazard. Why? They are used in some other parts of the world such as the United Kingdom.

I spent considerable time researching the cheapest means of dealing with my own death when it happens. It was a long and tedious process to gain the information I required and generally I found my queries were treated with either a 'pass the buck' attitude or point blank refusal to consider my requests. I finally managed to whittle the cost down to \$750.00 using a particle board coffin and by having no service other than

maybe a bit of music and then being cremated and having my ashes buried with no niche.

Many of the questions I asked of funeral parlors were understandably met with distaste. I can understand their concerns. They are running businesses. However, I would like to see far greater choices available to those who wish to reduce the cost of funerals. I do not want to leave my daughters with debts to remember me by and I suspect there are many others who, if they think about it would feel the same.


The big problem is that many people do not want to think about death until a parent or relative dies and by then they are traumatized and in no fit state to make decisions which may affect their bank balances.

I would like to see the following:

- Introduction of cardboard coffins with handles (lack of these being one of the reasons I was given for cardboard being unsuitable).
- More choice about how the crematorium/funeral parlor is used.
- The actual cremation/burial costs to be reduced.
- The choice of what happens to the ashes to include scattering by either the crematorium or the relatives.
- That all options be explained and offered to the relatives of the deceased
- That the relatives be given at least twelve hours before choosing funeral arrangements.
- The cost of storing the remains until cremation or burial be minimal.

I trust these observations are constructive and worthy of consideration in your inquiry.

Yours faithfully,


Joanna van Kool