

IS THE WILL OF THE PUBLIC TO BE IGNORED?

An appeal to the people of Ontario to assist denturists to overcome yet another obstacle in our long and continuing struggle to secure legal status.

BILL 203

On June 26, 1972, the Honourable Robert Welch acting on behalf of the Honourable R. T. Potter, Minister of Health for the Province of Ontario, introduced in the legislature Bill 203 being "An Act to Provide for the Licensing and Practice of Dental Technologists".

Mr. Welch, in his comments made on introduction of the Bill, stated as follows:

"After careful consideration the Government has decided that a new health practitioner to be known as a dental technologist should be permitted to deal directly with the public in the taking of impressions for, the making of, and the fitting of, complete upper and lower dentures."

Initially, the introduction of Bill 203 was greeted by the public as at least a partial solution to the raids and prosecutions instituted by the Royal College of Dental Surgeons against denturists throughout Ontario. Initially it was thought that full opportunity would be provided for denturists to qualify to be licensed as dental technologists and to perform their services as an accepted health entity in the Province of Ontario.

However, the public has not been informed of several important developments that have occurred during the few short weeks which have elapsed since the introduction of Bill 203. These developments have had the effect of undermining the belief of denturists that enlightened responsible legislation would be enacted during the forthcoming fall session of the Ontario Legislative Assembly. We sincerely believe that the public will share our dismay at recent decisions reached by the Minister of Health which, in our opinion, will thwart rather than fulfill the intent of Bill 203.

NO CONSULTATION

Prior to the introduction of Bill 203 and, indeed, since the time of Dr. Potter's appointment as Minister of Health, the Denturist Society has tried unsuccessfully on numerous occasions to meet with the Minister.

To date, we have been unable to secure an appointment with Dr. Potter and are therefore of the firm opinion that it has been determined in advance not to recognize this Society and not to take our views into account with respect to any aspect of Bill 203. This seems to us to be completely inexplicable when one realizes that it was the Denturist Society, and the Denturist Society only, that challenged publicly the dental profession's anomalous monopoly over all aspects of dental care.

Response from members of the public directed to Members of the Legislature was, in our opinion, instrumental in convincing the Government to create a role for dental technicians (denturists) independent of dentists. The only dental technicians who have been operating openly in accordance with standards and regulations of any kind are those who are members of the Denturist Society of Ontario. It is because of the excellent work that has been done by these more than two hundred men and women and the very substantial public support for continuance of their services, that the Government was moved to introduce Bill 203. We must ask therefore why has the Minister of Health refused to see us and why is there such evident reluctance to take into account our views BEFORE decisions are made which will effectively determine our fate?

To date, we have received no satisfactory answer to these questions. Indeed, the Minister of Health has not only flatly refused our requests for meetings, but has proceeded to announce the formation of a Committee to recommend standards and criteria for the licensing of dental technologists, several members whom we believe to be COMPLETELY HOSTILE TO THE VERY CONCEPT OF BILL 203.

THE DENTAL TECHNOLOGIST LICENSING BOARD AND THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

An examination of the powers and duties of the Board which will be established to administer the Dental Technologist's Act clearly indicates that it will govern and regulate all aspects of the new dental health practitioners profession, either through its powers to oversee the functions of the Registrar, its

power to set or approve the examinations to determine the qualifications of applicants for licenses, or by recommending regulations to the Minister of Health to be made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. In effect the Act gives no substantive rights to the dental technologists aside from procedural rights and right of appeal from the Board of Dental Technologists where a license is revoked or refused and in effect turns all regulation over to the Board.

The Standards Committee (not to be confused with the Licensing Board) which will shortly begin functioning, would appear to be the forerunner of the Board and the standards required to qualify for a license under the Act finally recommended by this Committee will be of crucial importance not only to denturists now, but will be of even greater importance to the success of the new profession of dental technologists when the Act comes into force.

A CLEAR DANGER

It is very apparent to us, as it will be to any reasonable person, that the attitudes and views of the members of the Standards Committee and later the members of the Licensing Board, will be all important in determining the success and scope of activity of the dental technologist profession. The danger exists that a quorum or a dominating proportion of the Committee (and later the Board) could be fundamentally opposed to the entire concept of dental technologists and by either outvoting or influencing the other Committee members could effectively thwart the purpose of the Legislature by unduly limiting the scope of activity of dental technologists or by creating bars to entry or by setting standards so high as to prevent all but a handful to qualify.

The Act provides no assurance that a dental technologist will be appointed to the Board and certainly none can be appointed until the licensing procedure begins, as none will exist.

The paramount concern of denturists is that no representative of the Denturist Society has been appointed to the Standards Committee which, presumably, is an advisory body only. Additionally, the Committee consists of

two dentists and it is well known that the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario has vigorously opposed the activities of denturists and the passing of this Bill. Indeed, the Ontario Dental Association is currently petitioning its more than 3,300 members for contributions of \$200. per member (something in the area of \$650,000.) to establish a public relations, advertising and lobbying fund for the primary purpose of blocking the passage of Bill 203. The Committee is also partially composed of a registered dental technician appointed by the Governing Board of Dental Technicians, and a dental hygienist registered under The Dentistry Act, both of which are members of auxiliary bodies that have long been involved with the dental profession in a subordinate role and therefore could be unduly influenced by the dentists who are members of the Committee.

Concerning the two lay persons who will serve on the Committee, one of whom will act as Chairman, we have no real apprehensions. We think it likely that they will be much more objective than those members who have been appointed from either the dental profession or the two auxiliary bodies.

TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Since we have no other alternative, we are appealing to you in this quite extraordinary fashion to reconsider your decision respecting the composition of the Standards Committee and to proceed as soon as possible to appoint a representative or representatives (2) of the Denturist Society to this Committee. Surely this is the only proper way of ensuring that denturists currently in practice and the interests of a great number of people residing in Ontario who have supported our efforts over the past several months will be dealt with fairly and honestly.

TO THE READER

As has been clearly indicated in the past, it is only your continuing support of denturists that will determine whether or not the present problems will be resolved to the satisfaction of all. We urge you therefore, to write the Premier of the Province of Ontario and your Member of the Provincial Parliament expressing your support for our recommendations and concerns.

If you require the name and address of your Member of the Provincial Parliament please feel free to phone or write:

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