

THE FOLLY OF DR. POTTER'S ANTI-DENTURIST POLICIES!

"Everytime legislators enact a new restrictive law, they create a fresh category of criminals."

So said an eminent U.S. psychiatrist, Dr. Thomas S. Szasz, M.D., in his book entitled "The Manufacture of Madness."

It is a great pity that this kind of logic did not recommend itself to Dr. Richard T. Potter, Minister of Health, before seeking the enactment of Bill 246 — The Denture Therapist Act. It is the firm conviction of denturists that Bill 246 and the manner of its implementation; the fact that it may require many persons to be taken before the courts to be dealt with as common criminals simply because they will not bow to the dictates of an onerous and restrictive law, has all the characteristics of absolute folly! Nevertheless, this is exactly what will happen if the Minister of Health carries out his announced threat to prosecute, after December 7, denturists who continue to supply denture services directly to the public without their activities being controlled by dentists. Denturists found guilty of contravening the Act, will face fines as high as \$2,000.00 for each offence or six months in jail, or both.

It is manifestly apparent to us that this Government have decided that the vested interests of an entrenched profession takes precedence over the legitimate needs and wishes of the public — a clear abdication of responsibility!

Although the Government may attempt to deny this charge and will not admit publicly that they capitulated completely to dentistry, an editorial in a recent edition of the Journal of the Ontario Dental Association boasted that:

"RECENT LEGISLATION, *(BILL 246) THROUGH A LOBBY (OF MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE) CONDUCTED BY MEMBERS OF THE ONTARIO DENTAL ASSOCIATION, HAS INSURED THAT DENTURE SERVICES WILL REMAIN UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF DENTURISTS." *parenthesis ours.

THE PUBLIC HAS NOT BEEN TOLD THE TRUTH

When announcing his intention to prosecute denturists, the Minister alleged that denturists had "spurned his latest offer to give them refresher courses and new examinations in December and January." He further implied that "the Government is left with no option but to proceed immediately against individuals (members of the Denturist Society) who continue to advertise and practice as denturists." And then went on to say that "the future of those who have qualified as denture therapists or registered dental technicians is in

jeopardy because of the illegal activities of the denturists. Those law abiding health workers cannot be subjected to further inconvenience because of the intransigent attitude of some individuals." The Minister concluded his remarks by stating that his Ministry and, we are left to presume the Government also, "have gone to great lengths to accommodate denturists."

Denturists dismiss these statements of the Minister as unfair and thoroughly irresponsible!

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

Dr. R. T. Potter, M.D. was appointed Minister of Health in February, 1972. For nearly twenty months following his appointment, the Denturists Society tried unsuccessfully to arrange an appointment to meet with the Minister. Numerous letters requesting an appointment were simply ignored — some of these the Minister did not even have the courtesy to answer. Direct personal appeals to his fellow-Conservative Members of the Provincial Parliament, his colleagues in the Cabinet and Officials in the Health Ministry to intervene in this matter and urge Dr. Potter to meet with denturists, all ended in failure.

During this time, however, the Minister was directly involved in numerous meetings with members of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons and the Ontario Dental Association. Ignoring, as he did, appeals to take into account the opinions and recommendations of both the public and denturists alike, rather than those advanced by members of the dental profession and officials in his ministry only, the outcome was predictable and a confrontation between denturists and the Government was inevitable.

Denturists did not seek the confrontation that now seems certain to be in the offing. Indeed, we made every effort to avoid a confrontation. It would be unfair to suggest that no person in Government made an effort to work out a compromise between denturists and Health Minister Potter, but it required the direct intervention of the Premier before Dr. Potter would even consent to meet with denturists.

Representatives of the Denturist Society met with Dr. Potter for the first time on September 20 last. A further meeting was held on October 25, at which time we made a concerted effort to resolve our differ-

ences. However, as Dr. Potter's announced intention to prosecute denturists would indicate, our attempts to convince the Minister of the propriety of our stand failed miserably. We know now that the Minister had determined long in advance of our meeting, what his course of action would be and no arguments or recommendations, however fair or reasonable, would he permit to alter his decision. Notwithstanding our desire to avoid embarrassing the Government and to co-operate in every way possible, it is now very clear that the Government generally, and the Health Minister specifically, were never prepared to "accommodate" denturists or their supporters.

We believe that the Minister of Health is now attempting to justify his decision to prosecute denturists by alleging that the denturists are intransigent, inflexible and impossible to deal with.

Nothing could be further from the truth!

DENTURISTS DID NOT REFUSE TO BE EXAMINED AS TO THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

In a recent press release, Dr. Potter alleged that denturists had "spurned" his offer to have them examined as to their qualifications. This simply isn't true! In a letter from the Denturists Society to the Minister of Health, dated November 5, the Society stated that:

"The members of this Society with the full approval of the Directors will apply to take examinations to determine their qualifications."

We would be less than honest if we failed to disclose that there were two conditions which we felt had to be met before we would agree to denturists having their qualifications assessed. Dr. Potter was fully acquainted with these conditions prior to our meeting on October 25. At no time did he indicate that he was opposed to our recommendations. Indeed, denturists had been assured by officials in the Health Ministry that their proposals would be considered reasonable and would likely be accepted.

The conditions were as follows:

- 1) That the Denturist Society be permitted to appoint or recommend the appointment of impartial observers who would be present during all phases of the actual examinations in order to insure that these would be conducted fairly and honestly; and,

- 2) That a Special Review Committee composed equally of dentists and denturists who successfully completed the examinations, along with a representative of the Ministry of Health be established immediately following the examinations. This Committee would be empowered to review any complaints of irregularities and reverse any decisions by the examiners which would be deemed improper or unfair.

The Minister could not possibly misinterpret our desire to co-operate, since we stated in this same letter;

"If these concerns of the Society are met, we can see no reason for our members' objecting further to having their qualifications assessed."

THE MINISTER'S CONCERN FOR DENTURE THERAPISTS IS MISPLACED

Health Minister Potter stated that the future of denture therapists is in jeopardy because of the activities of denturists. This stated concern of the Minister is utter nonsense, since more than 80% of those persons who completed the examinations are not practicing as denture therapists. Several have informed this Society and officials in the Health Ministry that they have no intention of practicing as denture therapists unless and until the Act is amended to allow them to practice without the supervision of dentists. As for the contention that the future of dental technicians is also in jeopardy, the Minister knows this to be completely untrue. Many of these dental technicians have joined the Denturist Society of Ontario in the hope that they could secure a future for themselves free of the anomalous control of dentists.

CONCLUSION

Denturists want it known that neither the Government nor the Minister of Health have been denied any options in this matter. Only the denturists have been denied all options. Therefore, we are serving notice on the Minister of Health, that we intend to resist, with all legitimate means at our disposal, any attempt on the part of the Minister or agents appointed by him, to deny denturists their right to seek legal status, just as we suspect the public will resist any attempt to deny them their right of freedom of choice . . . AND A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU TOO, DR. POTTER!

If it your wish to support Denturists in their campaign to secure the enactment of appropriate and reasonable laws to govern their practice, phone or write:

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