

IN DEFENSE OF DENTURISTS!

"Denturists lose fight to sell cheaper dentures!" "Denturist clinics to be closed because they are breaking the law!" "Dental technologist advisory committee warns of dangers of unqualified technicians fitting teeth without supervision!"

A CHALLENGE

The foregoing statements appeared in newspapers and on newscasts on radio and television stations throughout the province on Wednesday, October 8th. They were based on statements made by the Minister of Health in an interview with a reporter in Toronto the previous day. Emanating as they have from the office of this Minister, they constitute a challenge as to this Society's claims respecting the qualifications and ethics of all members of the Denturist Society of Ontario -- a challenge which we cannot and will not ignore!

We wish to make it very clear at the outset, however, that in our response to this challenge, we will refrain from attacking any individual. Our primary concern is to speak of the issues and to avoid being drawn into pointless confrontations.

THE DENTURIST SOCIETY

The Denturist Society is not comprised of "16 or 17 technicians with some training and another 50 or so with no qualifications at all". More than 200 dental technicians are currently registered as members of this Society, all of whom have been in practice for many years -- some for several decades. A dental technician, applying for membership in this Society has to show proof of being in practice for a minimum of 6 years and to provide documentation of his being fully trained in all aspects of dental technology. Additionally, each member, regardless of certificates or diplomas attesting to previous training or qualifications, is required to attend all educational seminars and courses sponsored by this Society and must complete written, oral and practical examinations set by the Denturist Society's Examining Board. Each member must be fully covered by Professional Liability Mal-

practice Insurance before being permitted to deal directly with the public and must also submit to regular and systematic inspections of his place of business by representatives of this Society in order to ensure that acceptable standards are being observed and maintained.

IN THE MATTER OF QUALIFICATIONS

Aside from the very substantial support of the public for continuation of our services, what better proof of qualifications could there be than an admission by the dental profession contained in a news release circulated to the mass media on October 30, 1972. The Ontario Dental Association stated in their release that "nearly half of all the dental laboratories in Ontario have abandoned services to the profession" and further predicted that "this shortage of technicians will become greater if the proposed Dental Technologist Act is passed".

The dental profession press release revealed two things: firstly, that there is no mystery concerning the source of our membership. The men and women who owned and operated the dental laboratories that have "abandoned services to the dental profession", constitute the rank and file of this Society and therefore may not be said to have "no qualifications at all". Secondly, it indicates the overriding concern of the Ontario Dental Association, as it is now being publicly admitted that, denied the services of these men and women who are now members of the Denturist Society, they (the profession) are incapable of doing the work themselves.

This is, perhaps, as it should be. The primary concern of practicing dentists should not be centred on the replacement of natural teeth with dentures or other prosthetic

devices, but should be wholly taken up with prevention, detection and treatment of disease which, in the long run would eliminate the need for dentures.

IN THE MATTER OF COOPERATION

We have stated on numerous occasions, both publicly and privately, that we are prepared to cooperate fully with the Minister of Health and the government in the matter of Bill 203. This is still our position. In order for our cooperation to be meaningful, however, we believe that it entails something more than our merely acquiescing to decisions which have been made without any consultation with this Society. We believe it to be untenable for us to cooperate in situations and under circumstances which we hold to be hostile to our concerns and recommendations. Rightly or wrongly, this was our assessment respecting the Dental Technologist Advisory Committee before whom we refused to appear without representation on that Committee from the Denturist Society.

AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION

We are convinced that every legislator is cognizant of the fact that any legislation granting recognition to a new profession has never come into being without, at the same time, recognizing those who have already been practicing in that particular field, be it law, medicine, or a host of others. Should it be any different for denturists? Is it not unreasonable to expect that there should be some means of assessing and qualifying our members, many of whom have been working in this field for many years?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Notwithstanding the public's overwhelming acceptance of the type and quality of services provided by denturists in the more than 90 denture clinics operated by members of the Society throughout the province, we are NOT asking for blanket recognition under a so-called grandfather clause.

This Society, through a Select Committee, has been negotiating for more than a year with a Community College, in efforts to mount both a short-term and long-term course of studies for denturists. It is our belief that a short-term course designed to up-grade, where necessary, the skills, knowledge, and ability of denturists currently in practice, would lay to rest any arguments against recognition as it would assure that all who successfully complete the course and pass examinations based on the proposed course content will be able to meet acceptable standards of education and training.

IN THE MATTER OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

Throughout the last two years, the Denturist Society, through its members, has provided fully acceptable denture services to many people in Ontario. We are firmly committed to the belief that it is in the best interest of the public for these services to be continued. If it is your wish for the current situation to be resolved in favour of the denturists, we would urge you to continue your fine support for our efforts.

Please continue to write or phone your Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario expressing your support for our efforts to secure legislative recognition.

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

THE DENTURIST SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

50 PRINCE ARTHUR AVENUE,
SUITE 104,
TORONTO 180, ONTARIO.
Phone: (416) 920-0748