

In the dentist's office and the technician's laboratory, there's great gnashing of teeth over...

The high cost of DENTURES

By BARBARA FRUM

Many of Ontario's estimated one million denture wearers are fed up to the teeth with the high cost of dental plates.

They're presently paying \$200 to \$300 for dentures. And they blame the high fees on an arrangement that forces them to deal with two men—

A dentist who takes impressions and fits the dentures;

And a behind-the-scenes dental technician, who actually makes the plates, but with whom only the dentist can deal directly.

Convinced that in this arrangement the dentist is a superfluous "middle-man," some denture wearers have cut their denture bills in half, by seeking out a dental technician willing to break the law and provide dental plates directly to the public from a basement "bootleg" shop.

To legalize these flourishing and proliferating denture mills, a group of dental technicians has formed the Ontario Association of Public Denturists.

This association wants the Ontario Dentistry act amended so that technicians (to be called denturists) also would be allowed to work in the patient's mouth.

If the association gets its way, every patient in Ontario will have a choice of going to a dentist or a denturist for his dental plates.

The would-be denturists argue that because dental technicians fabricate the dentures anyway, they should also be permitted to take impressions and slip the finished product into the mouth. The result, they claim, would be a better denture at a cheaper price.

Denture shops

British Columbia and Alberta have already legalized "denture shops" run by dental technicians. In Manitoba and Quebec denturist organizations are attempting to change the Provincial Dentistry acts.

Ontario denturists have no intention of giving denturist-advocates publicity by engaging in head-on confrontations with them.

But they have no intention of seeing denturists legalized here. They have formed committees to work quietly to squelch the movement.

In Ontario, patients requiring dentures must deal, by law, only with a dentist.

The dentist assesses the condition of the patient's mouth, takes his impressions, and writes a prescription detailing his requirements for the lab technician, who will create the actual plates. The finished product is returned to the dentist's office for fittings to the patient's mouth, and any adjustments necessary.

The dentist rationalizes his fee on the basis of the five to seven appointments he requires for diagnosis and fittings, the necessary adjustments after the patient has worn the dentures, and the responsibility of supervising proper fabrication of the plates by the technician.

The amount he pays the technician for the finished plates will vary between \$55 and \$90.

Should the denturists be successful in getting the legislation they want, they believe they could provide

properly fitted dentures to the public for \$125. By eliminating the middleman-dentist they claim they could cut the total cost of fitted dentures approximately in half.

"If the public could get direct service," says John Polowko, a Toronto lab owner, "they'd get not only a cheaper denture but also a better-fitting denture.

"Under the present system, we must rely on second-hand information and guessing, because we're making dentures for patients we've never seen."

The adviser of the denturists in Ontario is Louie (Red) Rosen, head of the Jewelry Workers Union and a long-time labor organizer.

Says Rosen: "The dental technician is the specialist. The dentist is merely the go-between."

"The denturists should leave the question of removable plates to the experts in the field—so that the patient could deal with the person actually performing the service. As it is now, the technician performs the service and the dentist makes money on someone else's lab."

According to Rosen, dentures provide the dentist with a lucrative sideline—"a fringe income, the gravy, over and above what he'd normally make doing fillings, extractions and regular check-ups."

Rosen objects to the earnings of denturists in private practice, which he claims are between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

The reported Ontario average is \$15,500, and only 3-4 per cent of all denturists in Canada, including specialists, earn more than \$30,000. (Ontario dental technicians earn between \$5,000 and \$12,000, depending on their degree of skill.)

Dissatisfaction

Rosen is certain that the maintenance of high standards of work among denturists would be no problem. "The denturist will have to produce a certain quality or he'll lose his accounts, that's all."

Rosen thinks the public would flock to denturists if for no other reason than price. And frequent letters to The Star indicate patient dissatisfaction with denturists.

Mr. A. Croon of Ajax charges that he had to pay a \$10 "permission fee" to a dentist before a technician would repair his plate for an additional \$5 fee.

George H. Clarke, a 76-year-old pensioner, has worn the same set of dentures since 1926 because he cannot afford dental fees. He asked The Star to put him in touch with a dental technician.

John Polowko recalls a letter published in The Star, thanking a "Toronto" clinic for its excellent denture service. By a confusion of names, his lab received 400 telephone calls in three days requesting illegal service.

Polowko believes the many illegal denture shops now flourishing in Ontario are evidence of tremendous public demand for the services of denturists.

Ontario denturists are not impressed with the denturists' case.

Dr. Ashley Lindsay, editor of the Ontario Dental Journal, thinks that the denturists are at best naive. "You have to feel sorry for them," he says, "they don't even know what they don't know."

"If a denture were simply a mechanical device, they might have a point. But a denture must go on to living tissue, and must allow proper functioning of the jaws.

"If a denture doesn't fit properly it can cause excruciating pain in the jaw joints. It can destroy the bony ridges it sits on; severe irritations could even cause cancers."

'Uneducated'

There are no entrance requirements for the four-year apprenticeship program for dental technicians. Few of them ever complete Grade 12 and a high proportion have never gone past Grade 7 and 8, Lindsay says.

Dentistry students spend five years at university learning the basic sciences so they'll be able to assess and treat all problems of the mouth.

This, Lindsay says, explains why many denturist customers often end up back in a dentist's office, with serious problems caused by "uneducated technicians who don't understand the mouths they work in."

One Toronto dentist is currently treating an embarrassed dental technician who made himself a beautiful-looking bridge, but almost irreparably damaged his remaining teeth in just two months.

"Anybody can make a bridge and slip it into the mouth," says Lindsay, "but only a dentist has the knowledge to tell if it can go in and not harm the teeth it's attached to, or the teeth it will bite against. The dental technician knows a trade. But that's all."

Lindsay believes the denturists were successful in getting legislation in British Columbia through the failure of the denturists in that province to take them seriously.

"The denturists' case to the B.C. legislators was that the public was being fleeced. The legislators, who are politicians after all, and anxious to please the public, said 'why not?' and gave the denturists the go-ahead."

"When the denturists woke up to what had happened, they persuaded the Legislature to amend the new act to at least require a dentist's certificate before a denturist could proceed."

"As a result of this amendment, denturists in B.C. are seriously cutting into the denturists' trade by withholding those certificates."

Reports on what percentage of the dentures in B.C. are being made by dental technicians vary. The Ontario Association of Public Denturists estimates 80



PATIENT TOM WAYMAN TRIES 'EM FOR SIZE. He's a student at the University of British Columbia.

per cent, the Royal College of Dental Surgeons feels 20 per cent is more likely.

When the Denturist Association makes formal approaches to the Ontario government its officials expect their loudest opposition will come from the denturists.

Dr. Ken Pownall, registrar of the Royal College, says: "To work on a human you should have the highest training you can get. I don't believe in half a dentist. You don't go directly to a druggist without a prescription and you don't let a guy make you an artificial leg before you've seen a surgeon."

Terrible gap

But Pownall does admit the terrible gap in dental services exposed by the denturists' campaign for low cost dentures.

He believes the only good to come out of the British Columbia situation was the establishment of clinics run by denturists to compete with the denturists in giving low cost service to people on marginal incomes.

"Welfare people in Ontario are getting dental services now," says Pownall. "It's the marginal people I worry about."

The "bootleg" basement operations that exist in Ontario cater to these people, many of them newly arrived Canadians.

"These people may be used to low grade men in Europe," says Lindsay, "but I still deplore the second rate dentistry these groups get here."

"Our profession has failed to tell them the kind of service they could, and should, get. If they can't afford the fees for that service, then service should be provided for them."

The Royal College prosecutes an average of four or five bootleggers a year for practising dentistry illegally in a basement or backroom operation.

Penalties are \$100 for a first offence, \$200 for a second, and \$500 for each subsequent offence; as far as Lindsay is concerned, that's a cheap license to practise for a busy denturist who pays no business tax or income tax on his illegal earnings.

It is difficult to estimate the strength of the denturist in Ontario because of the anonymity of most members. No one admits to being directly involved. Association literature bears no address or phone number; just a postal box number.

The denturists say such secrecy is necessary—their opponents are in a position to inflict severe economic reprisals on them.

Thriving

Those opponents are not just the denturists. The owners of the large dental laboratories that make most of the dentures for the denturists are thriving on the status quo. They feel the "rebel" denturists are hurting the reputation of the ethical dental technicians.

The Governing Board of Dental Technicians, empowered to examine and license dental technicians in Ontario, is also against them.

Says the board's Charles Goodall: "The people agitating for denturism are a disgruntled few who can't earn a living as technicians so want to be allowed to deal directly with the public."

"A skilled dental mechanic can earn over \$200 a week doing what he's trained to do; if he's earning \$80 he isn't worth any more."

Would-be denturist Polowko complains that the number of technicians interested in being denturists has been underestimated by the board. He wants a secret vote to canvass the true feelings of the group.

Secrecy is necessary because denturism advocates would lose their livelihood, he claims. Small lab owners would be blacklisted by the denturists and lose their existing accounts. Employed technicians would be fired by the big lab owners to placate the denturists.

Rosen is convinced most lab owners would drop their opposition once denturists are legalized. "They have too much business acumen not to realize it would enhance their opportunities."

He thinks the denturists would also benefit the denturists.

"They would free the dentist to do the preventive dentistry he was trained to do," he says.

\$200 fee not unusual

Dental mechanics charge less for dentures than denturists do, says George Connolly, president of the B.C. Dental Mechanics Society.

He said dental mechanics charge from \$85 to \$110 for a set of dentures and \$45 to \$50 for single dentures.

A dental college spokesman said the college's fee schedule is \$130 for a set of dentures.

However, both agreed that \$200 fees are not unusual. The dental college spokesman said that unless a fee over \$130 is agreed on in writing beforehand, patients can obtain refunds for higher fees.

Plan gets rough ride

Metro Executive found favoring Eaton Centre

A revised plan for the \$260 million Eaton Centre, given rough treatment by a combined meeting of City and Metro Councils yesterday, comes up for another review Tuesday.

Then, Metro executive committee will be asked to approve leasing the site of the old city hall, at about \$500,000 a year, to make way for the project.

But Eaton Centre managing director David Owen has made it clear that, even with leasing, demolition of the old hall will still be needed if the project is to go ahead. The new plan lops 14 floors from a 57-story office tower opponents said would overshadow the new hall.

The project is expected to get a more sympathetic handling from the executive than it did yesterday. If members vote along the lines of their public pronouncements, it will win approval by a 5-2 vote.

Outspoken in their support of the project are Mayor Philip Givens, Metro Chairman William Allen, Scarborough Reeve Albert Campbell, York township's Reeve Jack Mould and Controller Herbert Orlicie. Only Controller William Dennison and Etobicoke Reeve John MacBeth have spoken against it.

But all the executive can do is recommend the lease to Metro Council. The executive approved the earlier plan, but council turned it back.

Feeling of council members is, to say the least, mixed. The proposal is guaranteed another rough hearing when it comes before that council next Friday.

Favreau would alter rules for inquiries

OTTAWA (CP-Special)—Privy Council president Guy Favreau told the Commons yesterday he believes the inquiries act should be revised.

The present act does not spell out rules of procedure sufficiently, he said.

More rigid safeguards could be added, he said, and some of the powers of commissioners could be strengthened.

Mr. Favreau was replying to a number of questions about the future of royal commissions asked by Opposition Leader John Diefenbaker.

Other MPs also criticized the inquiry being held by Mr. Justice Wishart Spence into the Gerda Munsinger affair.

Favreau emphasized that he was not stating government policy. He would have to consult the cabinet before this could be done, he said.

Favreau himself was strongly criticized a year ago in the report of the judicial inquiry into the Lucien Rivard bribery case. He later resigned as justice minister.

Mr. Diefenbaker said judges should no longer be appointed to head inquiries into matters of political controversy, especially judges of the Supreme Court of Canada.

This was an obvious reference to Mr. Justice Spence.

"We dare not," said Diefenbaker, "if democracy is to be preserved, allow for the setting up of royal commissions having essentially the characteristics of state trials."

Did Cardin get Spence letter? He won't say

By MICHAEL BEST
Star staff writer

OTTAWA—Justice Minister Lucien Cardin—unlike his Conservative predecessor, Davie Fulton—is keeping mum on his correspondence with Mr. Justice Wishart Spence, who is conducting an inquiry into the Munsinger sex-spy affair.

Rumors here suggest Mr. Cardin was invited by Mr. Justice Spence, by letter, to answer allegations made against him during the inquiry hearings, which wound up last month.

But Cardin and his lawyer, A. J. Campbell of Montreal, refused comment. "I think any comment would interfere with Mr. Justice Spence's freedom of action in the matter," Mr. Campbell told The Star.

Earlier this week, Mr. Fulton made public the contents of a letter from Mr. Justice Spence, and his blistering reply, which said that "nothing in the world" could make him reappear before the judge to answer allegations made against him at the hearings.

Former prime minister John Diefenbaker is reliably reported to have received a similar letter from Mr. Justice Spence, but has declined to say anything about it.

Pierre Sevigny, his former associate defence minister, whose liaison with Mrs. Gerda Munsinger set off the inquiry, has admitted receiving a letter from the judge, but also has refused comment.

Two boys spot paint-spattered body in lake

HAMILTON — The paint-spattered body of a 63-year-old man was recovered from Lake Ontario this morning after it was spotted by two school boys near the Burlington canal pier.

The body, dressed in jersey and sweater, had been in the lake only a short time.

Police would not reveal the man's name, but said that he was 63 years old and came from Hamilton. The victim was spattered with green paint and was clutching a set of false teeth.

Johnson says he's finding departments 'disorganized'

QUEBEC (CP)—Premier Daniel Johnson said yesterday after a cabinet meeting that his ministers reported the various government departments are "disorganized" and "in a terrible state."

Part of the reason for this was the strike of 1,600 government-employed professionals, who walked off their jobs May 9, he said.

"This strike must be settled within 15 days, if a 'ruinous' situation is not to develop, the new premier said.

Golf has to wait for Lesage check-up

QUEBEC (CP) — Former premier Jean Lesage abandoned plans for a golf game yesterday because there was an "urgent need" for him to go to hospital and have a medical checkup, a spokesman for the Liberal leader said.

"Mr. Lesage wanted to undergo this examination before allowing himself a well-deserved rest," an official statement said.

\$10 test could save many babies from disease, U.S. expert claims

By RUTH WORTH
Star staff writer

EDMONTON—North America's luxurious society can afford machines in every hospital to test newborn babies for hereditary diseases, a Chicago pediatrician suggested to the Canadian Medical Association yesterday.

Dr. David Hsia said insurance plans should cover the cost of such large-scale testing which automated equipment could reduce to \$10 a child.

Half of the 39 hereditary errors of metabolism which cause mental retardation are detectable at birth by blood or other tests, he said, and preventive treatment by diet or drugs is possible in 13 or 14 of the cases.

Dr. Hsia, director of the genetic clinic at Chicago's Children's Memorial Hospital, said these 39 hereditary errors cause 10 per cent of all cases of mental retardation.

Pakistan quits

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan (UPI)—Foreign Minister Zulfikar A. Bhutto, chief architect of Pakistan's policy of close association with Red China, stepped down last night for reasons of health.

Other genetic errors which cause physical illnesses—such as cystic fibrosis or muscular dystrophy—could also be detected by the machines and life could be prolonged in some

cases of cystic fibrosis which is often fatal when a child is young, Dr. Hsia explained.

In cases where no cure for hereditary disease is known, early detection helps doctors to inform parents of the possibility that other children they might have will also be afflicted.

He said half the parents informed of such family genetic errors at Chicago Children's Hospital decide to have other children anyway.

Credit man: Montreal worst for bankruptcy

Special to The Star
OTTAWA — Montreal is still the top Canadian city when it comes to fraudulent bankruptcies, Percy J. Houghton, manager of the Canadian Creditmen's Association, said today.

"Toronto has a really bad problem with these bankruptcies but Montreal has an even worse one," he said in an interview.

Mr. Houghton is attending a seminar here at which his association is stressing the need for more legislation to govern bankruptcies.

He said that bankruptcy losses in Canada last year totalled \$550 million.

Woman stabbed during quarrel, man charged

A Carlton St. woman is in Wellesley Hospital in serious condition from internal bleeding after she was stabbed in the side with a bread knife.

Hugh Robert Pearson, 32, who lives in the same house, was charged with wounding June Solomon, 32.

Police said Mrs. Solomon heard a noise in the basement and found Pearson and another woman there. A fight developed there and later in the upstairs rooms where the two lived.



TECHNICIAN GEORGE CONNOLLY IN LAB. When he's through, the plates go to a dentist.

Solitary cell can trigger suicide or murder, survey finds

By RUTH WORTH
Star staff writer

EDMONTON—Solitary confinement often triggers homicidal or suicidal reactions in a habitual criminal and does not persuade him to behave better in prison, two psychiatric researchers told the Canadian Psychiatric Association yesterday.

In a study of 21 men with long prison records, Dr. Bruno Cormier, director of

the forensic psychiatry clinic at McGill University, and his research associate, Paul Williams, found that eight men tried to mutilate themselves or made suicide attempts. One succeeded.

The man who did commit suicide hesitated between the desire to destroy himself and killing someone else, with self-destruction winning out.

But another man who at-

tacked and seriously wounded a guard had expressed almost no suicidal or self-mutilation tendencies.

Of the 21 subjects, the most dangerous were those who presented the following fantasy: "I don't want and I'm not able to kill myself, but I can do the kind of things that will make them have to kill me."

Destroying his cell and his personal possessions in

it may represent the compromise other men in the study made between suicide and murder, the researchers said.

"As the cell symbolizes the penitentiary, destroying it is an attack against the environment. But as it is also an extension of the body image, its destruction is a disguised attack against the self," the researchers believe.

The third clear choice that remains for the men in solitary is to withdraw from life, and live in fantasy.

This almost invariably leads to a psychotic state in which the prisoner refused to leave solitary, claiming that he is capable of spending more time there than they are able to give him.

"In this state, the prisoner truly believes he is com-

plicating and disturbing the life of the prison authorities (which is true), but in his imagination he bestows on his guards enhanced and exaggerated feelings of empathy and sympathy."

The researchers found that all habitual criminals had been sent to prison for the first time before they were 18 years old and had spent three-fifths of their adult lives behind bars.