

# A CALL FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

## 3RD IN A SERIES OF OPEN LETTERS TO THE PEOPLE OF ONTARIO CONCERNING THE CONTINUING CONTROVERSY BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE DENTURIST SOCIETY OF ONTARIO AND THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF DENTAL SURGEONS OF ONTARIO AND THE ONTARIO DENTAL ASSOCIATION.

Without doubt, most Ontarians are now aware of the fact that several denture clinics, operated by members of the Denturist Society of Ontario, have been entered and searched in recent weeks by paid agents of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons. Armed with search warrants, these agents have seized records, materials and equipment owned by the operators of such clinics, in order to facilitate prosecutions under the Ontario Dentistry Act.

Such raids have occasioned a storm of protest from the public. This protest has taken the form of innumerable letters to the Premier of Ontario and other members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

The Government's answer to the public outcry against the raids has been to state that, while legal action is being taken against denturists, such "ACTION IS NOT BEING TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT BY THE COLLEGE OF DENTAL SURGEONS". In effect, what the Government are saying is that, while they do not condone breaking the law, they are taking no part in the raids and prosecutions involving denturists throughout Ontario.

Quoting from a letter to a member of the public written by the Hon. W. G. Davis, the Premier, in addition to the foregoing, had this to say:

"We are aware of the concern of citizens in this matter and the Minister of Health, through the Council of Health, has set up a three-man task force composed of laymen—there are no dentists, denturists or dental technicians on the force. They will review the claims made by denturists regarding their educational qualifications and their ability to do certain things, particularly the making of impressions and the actual fitting of false teeth. Their report, which is to be presented to the Minister in the very near future, will make recommendations on the role to be played by non-dentists in

the dentistry field. Please be assured that the denturists will be given a fair hearing."

It is with respect to this Task Force which held hearings on February 8th to 16th, 1972 and the comment of a member of the dental profession at a public forum on dental services held in the St. Lawrence Centre, Tuesday evening, March 14th, when he mentioned this Society's appearance before the Task Force and stated, rather ominously, "the denturists have had their day in Court", that the Denturist Society has decided to publish the following information.

### TASK FORCE ON DENTAL TECHNICIANS

While in no way faulting either the efforts or the integrity of the members of the Task Force on Dental Technicians, it is the firm conviction of denturists throughout Ontario that the hearing's terms of reference and its adopted format, effectively precluded any opportunity for this body to deal effectively with the overriding question of what constitutes the public interest and how best that interest may be served "by non dentists in the dentistry field", since attendance at the hearings was limited to delegations from the Denturist Society of Ontario, the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, the Ontario Dental Association, the Governing Board of Dental Technicians, and the Dental Laboratories Association of Ontario only.

We contend also, that the Task Force was not given sufficient time to conduct a thorough examination into all aspects of the issue.

In support of this contention, the Denturist Society offers the following information.

The delegation representing the Society offered to reveal the complete records of all patients served thusfar in denture clinics throughout Ontario in order that the Task Force might have some indication as to the number of persons using the facilities provided. We further advised the Task Force that many of these patients would be willing to appear at hearings or before a panel of qualified persons who could assess the quality and effectiveness of the dentures provided them by members of this Society. This offer was declined.

A further offer to place before the Task Force diplomas and certificates testifying to the qualifications of each member, along with detailed information as to training and experience in dental prosthesis, was also declined. Additionally, we extended an invitation to the members of the Task Force to visit various denture clinics for the purpose of seeing first hand the type and quality of work performed for the public in order that the members would be more fully informed in those areas concerning which they were expected to make recommendations to the Government. This offer too, was declined on the basis that there was insufficient time.

Consequently, denturists are now more than ever convinced that their being considered a viable alternative to dentists in the provision of specific dental services, cannot be resolved by private hearings from which the public is excluded and where only those persons who have a vested economic interest in the outcome are heard.

Hearings, therefore, which will enable members of the public to appear and testify, should be given first priority before any decision is taken, in order that those whose interests are most vitally affected may have the opportunity to play a decisive role in determining the type and quality of dental services to be provided. The public, in the

last analysis, will either reap the benefits or suffer the consequences. To exclude them from the decision making processes, seems to us to be the ultimate folly.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Since no charge of incompetence against denturists can be sustained, the oral health of the public is clearly not at stake with respect to the activities of denturists in the limited areas in which they function. The question as to whether or not denturists should be allowed to perform their services under appropriate legislation which will establish standards, training and education is therefore not a health question. It is a political question only!

Let the issue then be resolved where it ought to be resolved—in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—but only after extensive public hearings have been conducted throughout the province by a committee of the Legislature made up of members of all parties comprising the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

In conjunction with the foregoing, we wish to make the following comments to the people of Ontario: YOUR OPINIONS COUNT! No Government may expect to hold the support of those whom they govern if they ignore the wishes of their electorate. We appeal to you, therefore, to make your views known to your member of the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

In return for your support, the Denturist Society of Ontario gives this undertaking. This Society and its members are determined not to give up in our efforts to secure the passage of enabling legislation which will permit you the opportunity to exercise freedom of choice with respect to denture services.

## THE DENTURIST SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

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