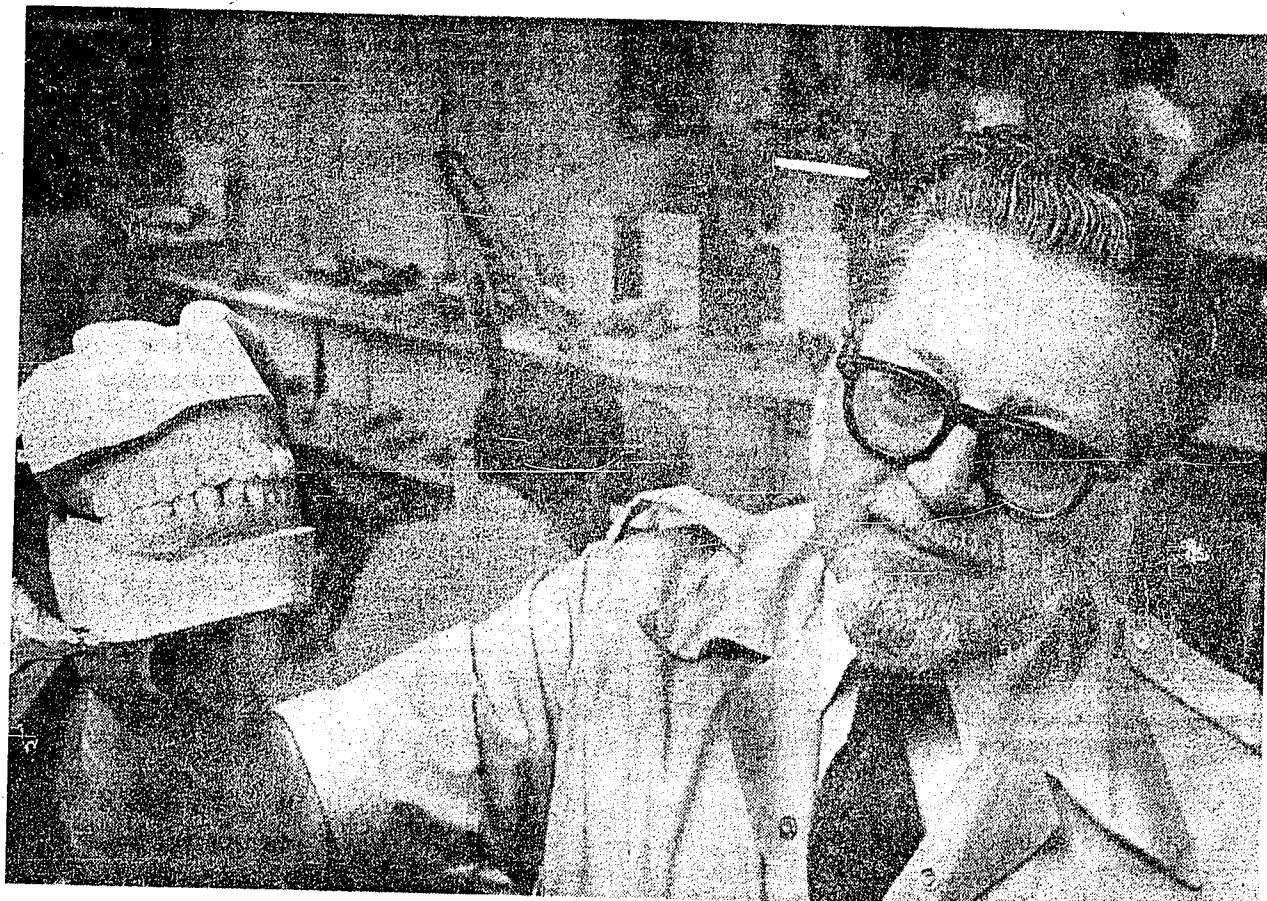


THE FIGHT OVER FALSE TEETH

Who will sell them--the dentist or the man who makes them?



BEN SWEET is a dentist—a man who makes false teeth for dentists who then sell them to patients. It's against the law for him to fit

and sell the teeth to the public. But denturists have started a campaign in Ontario to win the right to cut out dentists as middle men.

By MARTIN DEWEY
Star staff writer

Ben Sweet is a short, barrel-chested man who looks like a kindly Southern colonel in a fried chicken commercial. He certainly doesn't look like a highly skilled outlaw. Yet that's exactly what he is.

By training Sweet is a dental technician—a man who makes false teeth, or dentures, on orders from a dentist. It's a legitimate and respected calling.

But out of conviction and circumstance he makes his living as a dentist—a man who bypasses the dentist and provides cut-rate dentures directly to the public. And that, in Ontario, is as illegal as forging cheques and mugging old ladies.

Sweet openly operates a denture clinic in a Scarborough shopping plaza and doesn't apologize for his lawless ways. In his own scheme of things, denturists are St. George and Ontario's 3,300 dentists are the dragon. There is even a maiden in distress—a public which is required to pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars for dentures that dentists can have made at a dental laboratory for as little as \$90.

If that makes him a criminal, Sweet contends, we must blame the dental profession.

Work at home

He explains that he had been bootlegging dentures for 25 of the 33 years he has been a dental technician, but only in a small way. He would work on dentists' prescriptions in his laboratory, and at night—as nearly all dental technicians do, he says—he would fit the odd set of dentures at his home.

Then Ben Sweet decided to come in from the cold. Together with other dental technicians he formed the Denturist Society of Ontario, with himself as president. Their objective was to persuade the government to let denturists deal directly and legally with the public as they do in Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.

Last February the society prepared a brief to this effect and Sweet presented it to Health Minister Bert Lawrence. That was when all the trouble started.

"When I submitted the brief," Sweet says, "my laboratory was making dentures for 21 dentists. Within 14 days my business was down to zero. The dentists had heard what I was doing and they cut me right off."

When the same thing began to happen to other members of the new society, he says, the society determined to hit back. They decided to start operating denture clinics in the open and provoke a public confrontation with the dental profession.

Posted a sign

Last April Sweet installed a couple of filing chairs in offices adjoining his dental laboratory and posted a sign on the door inviting customers. Soon he was advertising in newspapers, promising high-quality dentures with a "90-day unconditional warranty as to function and fit."

He also offered low prices—\$150 to \$200 for full upper and low dentures compared with \$300 to \$400 charged by dentists.

In May Sweet was visited by an agent of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons and an Ontario Provincial Police officer.

"They told me they had a search warrant," Sweet remembers. "They had huge cardboard boxes with them and they started to strip all the work from the benches—dentures, material, everything.

They kept it for six months. It meant I had to start all over again."

In all, three new clinics were raided and Sweet and three other denturists eventually had to pay fines of \$100.

"There were customers waiting in my clinic while the raid was being carried out," Sweet says. "As soon as it was over—that very minute—I was back fitting dentures. They'll never put me out of business."

More determined

The raids only stiffened the determination of the Denturist Society, and its 125 members pledged to pay \$100 a month each to underwrite a major campaign to change the law.

On Dec. 11, in a full-page newspaper advertisement, the society accused the dental profession of charging "exorbitant" prices for dentures and said dentists are involved in a serious conflict of interest:

"On the one hand we have that side of dentistry in which the great aim of the dental surgeon should be the preservation of the natural teeth and their associate tissues, and to prevent as far as possible the need for artificial dentures. "But on the other hand it is in the provision of artificial dentures that he makes his greatest profit. In no other branch of medicine does such practice exist."

Just five days later the Royal College of Dental Surgeons and the Ontario Dental Association called in the press. They announced that dentists are prepared to match the prices offered by denturists and will set up clinics where full upper and lower dentures will be available at \$100 below the association's fee schedule—that is, for \$180.

Special course

The clinics will permit a new class of dental auxiliaries to do what denturists want to do—work directly with patients in fitting false teeth. These auxiliaries will not be called denturists (a term dentists consider unbearably highfalutin') but "dental prosthetic therapists" (perhaps on the theory that no occupation will become dangerously popular if people can't remember its name).

The dental college has recommended to the health minister that therapists be accredited after a one-year course at George Brown College in Toronto. This would be in addition to the three-year course now required to qualify as a registered dental technician.

It's not very different from the system of accreditation denturists would like to see applied to themselves. They are talking of a two-year course followed by two years of practical experience before licensing.

As the dental profession sees it, its scheme offers the best of all possible worlds. Auxiliaries will make it possible to provide dentures more cheaply and at the same time they will work under the direct supervision of a dentist.

Did the same

The Denturist Society sees it differently. Gordon Smith, a public relations consultant who is directing the society's campaign, argues that the scheme is a transparent attempt to hang on to a lucrative monopoly.

"They did the same thing in Manitoba during the denturist campaign there, but it didn't work. We got the new law anyway."

There the matter rests for the moment, with each side claiming

to represent the true public interest and each calling the other names.

The Royal College of Dental Surgeons mimes no words when it comes to the competition. According to a recent press release:

"These so-called denturists, whose services are often substandard and sometimes worthless... seek free license to demolish the standards of dental health care built up in this province over many generations. Their actions endanger the public health."

Dr. Nyle Diefenbacher, president of the college, says fitting a patient with dentures is not the hard part. The truly critical procedure is the initial examination of the mouth—and this, he maintains, is something only a dentist is qualified to carry out.

According to Dr. Diefenbacher a dentist provides the patient with two things, his time and his professional responsibility.

'No one checks'

"What responsibility?" demands Gordon Smith. "Dentists aren't responsible now. No one checks on their performance and there's no way of doing it."

For evidence, he says, there are the hundreds upon hundreds of people who show up at denture clinics for relief from unsatisfactory dentures that have been fitted by dentists. He maintains that dentists receive too little training in fitting dentures and have too little experience on the job to be really good at it.

He claims, too, that it's "pure drive" to talk about initial examinations. Smith says he knows of no dentist who would X-ray a patient who came to him with no teeth.

A dentist would merely look for visible abnormalities of the mouth, according to Smith, and so would a denturist. The minute a denturist spotted anything wrong he would refer the customer to a dentist or dental surgeon.

"There's not one shred of evidence that anyone has ever been harmed by going to a denturist," he insists.

This is one point the Royal College of Dental Surgeons concedes. Despite repeated charges that denturists are a health hazard, the college has so far been unable to produce a single case of damage.

Health Minister Bert Lawrence says he takes no sides in the squabble between dentists and denturists. So far as he's concerned, he told The Star, it makes no difference whether dentures are fitted by dentists or qualified denturists operating independently.

Jumping the gun

What does worry him, is that denturists are operating in Ontario outside the law and that some are not even qualified or registered dental technicians. Although the Denturist Society requires its members to pass a written and practical examination, Lawrence doesn't take the procedure seriously.

"Ah, nuts," he says. "Anyone could pass their examinations. That society is just a \$10 club. It's as easy to become a denturist as it is to become a Progressive Conservative."

The health minister accuses Ontario's denturists of jumping the gun in their campaign to have themselves legitimized.

"This is what's so damned unfair," he says, "every health professional in Ontario knows that the government intends to completely rewrite all the medical law."

"If I were a denturist I would take a deep breath and wait till March," says the health minister.

The men who make teeth in Alberta are doing a booming business—legally

By CHRIS DENNETT
Star staff writer

CALGARY
There was a time when Ted Moore, like every other denturist in Alberta, used to supplement his meagre income by illegally selling the false teeth he made to neighbors and friends.

Fortunately for Moore, his days as a bootlegger have long since been over.

In 1961, the Alberta government decided to bypass the dentists and permit the denturists to sell their own products directly to the public.

It was a decision, bitterly fought by the dentists, that finally brought the denturists out from their dingy basements and backrooms.

Moore today operates, with a partner, a successful denture clinic in downtown Calgary. He has a shingle over his front door, a smart waiting room and, more importantly, a constant stream of clients.

The people come, he said, because they know they will receive high quality service at the right price.

"From the denturist, the average price of a full set of false teeth, upper and lower, is around \$150," Moore said.

"For exactly the same quality teeth, the dentist will charge anywhere between \$250 and \$300."

Today, Alberta is one of only three provinces in Canada—the others are British Columbia and Manitoba—that has allowed its denturists to go public.

"Ontario could be next the way things are going down there," Moore said. "As president of the denturist society here I've been down to help."

"We are also helping the denturists in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Quebec. Everyone wants this legislation now and it has got nothing to do with us or the governments—the public is demanding it."

The victory in Alberta, although fought so many years ago, was a long and bitter one.

"I and almost every other denturist in the province was running a bootleg business on the side, sometimes quite openly," said Moore.

Toward the end of the 1950s, the dentists decided to go on to the attack to retrieve the lost business.

"We used to get set up," Moore remembered. "The dentists would send someone round for a set of teeth so they could trap us on the job."

Several successful prosecutions followed with the denturists suffering fines of \$50 to \$100.

By that time, however, the denturists were making headway with the former Social Credit government in their efforts to legalize the public side of their business.

"We had a lot of strong friends in the government," Moore said. "We even had some cabinet ministers who had used our services."

But the 1961 legalization was not a complete victory.

"The government insisted that we call ourselves dental mechanics and not the denturists that we wanted," Moore said. "It was a last minute compromise forced by the dentists."

The new legislation also stopped the denturists from supplying partial denture plates to customers.

But neither the new name nor the lack of permission to handle partial plates hurt the newly legalized business.

"We reckon today that we are doing as much as 55 per cent of the denture business in the province," said Jack Katz, the Edmonton vice-president of the Alberta Certified Dental Mechanics Society.

Moore estimates that the average take home pay of the province's denturists now runs anywhere between \$12,000 and \$15,000 a year. "We used to be lucky if we could make \$5,000 a year," he said.

This year, the denturists won a major battle when they were given a provincial contract to supply dentures to welfare recipients.

However, the Alberta Dental Association still takes a heavy swing at the denturists when it can.

"We cannot understand why anyone would want to go to a dental mechanic knowing that he is not skilled in his job. But people do," said Dr. George Decker, executive secretary of the association.

"They have a school here in Edmonton which we believe does not teach all the skills necessary for the job of fitting dentures. It's a

case of the blind leading the blind. They don't have the skilled teachers."

Decker disagreed strongly with the claim of the dental mechanics that they are doing at least 55 per cent of the denture business in the province.

"I wouldn't think it was anywhere near that," he said.

"We are still public enemies," Moore said. "But I know of some dentists who refer their denture work to a denturist. They know it can be done more efficiently that way."



TED MOORE
He's a "dental mechanic"

Britain and Russia big suppliers in the Indo-Pakistan arms build-up

By JOHN PARKER
Special to The Star

LONDON

If the "guilty men" behind a war between modern nations are those who supply the arms, then the British and the Russians are mainly to blame for the Indo-Pakistan conflict.

In the 20 years from 1950, Britain stands first in the list of major arms suppliers to both countries, with a total of \$969 million worth of major weapons—ships, aircraft, tanks, missiles and heavy artillery. This represents 36.9 per cent of all supplies to the Indian sub-continent up to the end of 1969.

However, in the past few years, Britain's role of major supplier has been declining rapidly, and has been taken over by the Russians, who in the same period delivered \$823 million worth of arms, nearly

all of it to India. This is 31.4 per cent of the arms trade to the two countries.

After the partition of India in 1948, Britain divided its arms favors roughly equally between the two nations until the late 1950s. Then its contributions to Pakistan fell off and its place was taken there—as part of the American policy of containment of communism—by the United States.

U.S. is third

America now lies third in the "guilty men" table, having supplied \$362 million worth of arms, or 13.8 per cent. France, with deliveries worth \$259 million (9.9 per cent) is fourth.

All these figures are given in a massively authoritative (910 pages) survey produced by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

The figures quoted in the many tables do not take into account the new influences of Communist China on the relative strengths of India and Pakistan. But they do show clearly how Britain's contribution has declined.

In the first five years (1950-54) covered by the survey, Britain supplied 52.4 per cent of both countries' arms, France 28.6 per cent and American 19 per cent. Russia had not yet started to export arms to non-aligned nations due to her (then) isolationist policies.

Between 1955 and 1960 Britain's share went up to 64.6 per cent (with the peak year 1958) with America (15.2) and France (13.9) well down the scale and Russia just beginning supplies. But by 1965-60 Russia had taken over the lead with 67.5 per cent of the total trade, Britain only 12.6 per cent and America, thanks to its arms

embargo to each country after the 1965 conflict, right down to 0.5 per cent.

"Because Pakistan could not hope to mobilize the same manpower resources as India, it attempted to offset India's manpower superiority with firepower superiority. The sort of weapons consequently acquired were those which represented the most visible signs of strength. A second consequence of the military priorities has been the fact that the quest for arms has largely determined rather than reflected Pakistan's international alignment," the survey says.

Visible strength

"During the period up to 1962, the main military contingency for which India was preparing was the possibility of a war with Pakistan. Indian purchases of major weapons between 1954 and 1958 were mainly

a reaction to the acquisition of weapons by Pakistan under the U.S. military assistance program after 1954."

Yet the survey concludes that India did not really intend to use these weapons. They were largely prestige purchases and India "totally neglected" the support backing necessary. There was an "alarming" shortage of spare parts, for instance.

India did not turn to arming seriously until after the China conflict of 1962, in which its forces were humiliatingly defeated. Huge purchases of modern arms were undertaken. The main supplier—Russia, replacing Britain.

The report says that the acquisition of weapons by both India and Pakistan was facilitated by the interests of the super powers in the region.

"Just as the U.S. saw these coun-

tries as a means of linking its military alliances in the Far East and the Middle East to encircle the Soviet Union and China, so the Soviet Union was concerned to see the creation of neutral states on its borders.

"In order to procure the weapons it required, Pakistan signed a military assistance agreement with the United States in 1954. India followed a policy of non-alignment and refused to do likewise.

Relied on Russia

"The war with China had two consequences: first, during the emergency, India requested military aid. The country that was most forthcoming in selling arms on favorable terms was the Soviet Union. And in the years that followed, the Indian air force and navy came to rely on Russia.

"Second, the war with China improved relations between Pakistan and China, to the distress of the U.S. on the outbreak of the Indo-Pakistani conflict in 1965, the U.S. placed an embargo on both countries. As the main U.S. recipient, Pakistan was mostly affected."

"Pakistan then acquired weapons from China, France and, indirectly, surplus weapons from Europe. In 1968, presumably to offset Chinese influence, an arms deal with the Soviet Union was concluded," the report says.

Sadly, the report concludes that there is no prospect of any limitation of the arms race in the regions where the competing military commitments of the great powers are important until there is more progress in a settlement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.