



THE DENTURIST ASSOCIATION
OF ONTARIO



BIRTH OF A PROFESSION: THE 1970s

Ben Sweet (left) watching the RCDSO representatives and police detectives raid his clinic for the second time. This story garnered a great deal of attention after it was published on the front page of the Toronto Star on January 13th, 1972.

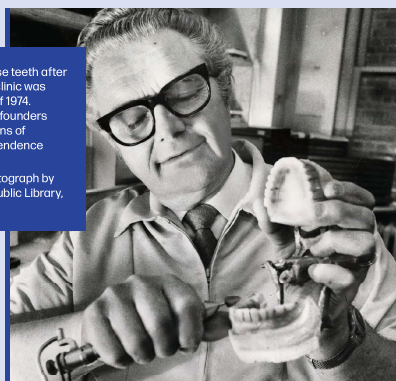
Sweet operated the Ben Sweet Denture Therapy Clinic situated on Eglinton Avenue East. During this raid, he was charged with contravening the Ontario Dentistry Act. The police left with "evidence" in the form of four weeks of denture work on the part of Sweet and his six staff. Photograph by Frank Teskey. TPL, TSPA 0022695F.

The legendary Ben Sweet established the Denturist Society of Ontario in November 1970, but it took until 1972 to become a legal entity. Sweet was the DSO's first president, but before he could even settle in, police raided his clinic and charged him with practicing a form of dentistry illegally.

Denture technicians were considered a huge threat by the dental profession at the time, and the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO) set its sight on quashing the denturists. Any denturist who hung out their shingle became a target. Indeed, three other DSO members - Brian Bridges, Clive Mussell, and Brian Monk - were charged with the same crime as Ben Sweet.

The case against Sweet was ultimately dismissed, but raids were carried out for several more years. They were endorsed by Ontario's Minister of Health, who criticized denturists for their lack of training and licensing, referring to them as "dental bootleggers".

Still, the DSO boasted 140 members, and hired Gordon Smith as a public relations advisor. He helped educate the public, and lobbied MPPs as well as other provincial officials, with a goal of changing the detestable and discriminatory Dentistry Act.



Egil Chramer making false teeth after his Greenwood Avenue clinic was raided by police in May of 1974. Chramer was one of the founders of the DSO and champions of the movement for independence at that time.

Toronto Star Series. Photograph by Boris Spremo. Toronto Public Library, 113411.

A second denturist organization - the Ontario Association of Dental Technicians (OADT) - arose soon after that time. The two bodies worked together to secure recognition for the profession. Their efforts led to the Denture Therapists Act in 1974. The DTA allowed denturists to practice without the supervision of dentists and cater to clients who required full dentures. It did not, however, cover partials. It also required that denturists complete examinations scrutinized by dentists. It was regarded as a half-victory at best.

The DSO and OADT spent the remaining part of the decade forging ahead with their agenda, creating a full denture technician's program at George Brown College and fighting to expand the rights of their members, including the provision of partial dentures to their patients.



Photograph of Ben Sweet greeting another delegate at the IAZ conference, 1977.

Sweet served as the North American Representative for this prestigious conference. This role enabled Sweet to share the expertise that he had acquired as a provincial and national leader in this field with colleagues in other nations.

DAO Archives, fonds 2, Series 5-2, file 3.