

The Proposed Amendment

A Bill is now before the House of Commons, introduced by Mr. Macpherson of Vancouver, amending last year's Act in such a way as to allow 9 karat gold, bearing the Hall mark of Great Britain or the Government stamp of any foreign country, to be imported into Canada and offered for sale in this market. The manufacturing jewellers are almost unanimously opposed to the amendment for the following reasons:—

9 Karat Gold will not Wear

It has been found in actual wear that 9 karat gold is too low a quality to keep its color. Ten karat gold can be finished with a good polish, it will wear well and give good satisfaction. Nine karat gold on the other hand soon becomes tarnished. The experience of English manufacturers has been so uniform in this respect that they generally gild their 9 karat goods. This artificial finish however soon wears off, leaving the 9 karat gold showing through in reddish brown or copper colored patches.

No Hardship to British Manufacturer

The Act as it stands inflicts no hardship on the English manufacturer. He makes his cheap lines of jewellery almost wholly for export, and it is just as easy for him to change from 9 to 10 karat quality to conform with the Canadian law as it is for the Canadian manufacturer to change from 10 to 9 karat quality to conform with the English law. The English manufacturer has been treated more than generously under the Act. His Hall marked goods are admitted to this market on exactly the same terms as goods of domestic manufacture, notwithstanding the fact that Canadian stamped goods would be unsalable in England. To develop a market in the United Kingdom the Canadian manufacturer must first send his goods over in the rough to be Hall-marked; then he must bring them back to be completed, and finally send them over a second time when they have been made ready for the market. It is quite obvious that such a proposition is impracticable, and it therefore becomes equally obvious that the English Hall-marking System affords the manufacturer of that country the best protection he could possibly have. When Canada admits every standard of Hall marked goods over 9 karats without further marking, she is making a very liberal concession indeed to a country where public opinion almost universally demands the British Hall-mark.

A Serious Hardship to the Canadian Manufacturer

The amendment, if adopted, would do the Canadian manufacturer a marked injustice. It would sanction the importation of an article, the manufacture of which is absolutely prohibited in Canada. In other words, the market of this country so far as 9 karat gold is concerned would be made a close preserve for the benefit of the English manufacturer. Such a condition is surely intolerable.

A Tariff Grievance

Under the British preference the Canadian manufacturer of jewellery has a protection of 22½ per cent. Considering the advantages enjoyed by the Britisher in the way of cheap labor and free raw materials this protection is little enough. But if, as is now proposed, 9 karat goods are imported to compete with domestic 10 karat goods, the margin of protection to the local manufacturer will be materially lessened, for he will be compelled to put more value in the article he offers for sale than does his competitor.

Just what this difference amounts to is aptly illustrated by the trade catalogues now being distributed in Canada by English manufacturers. On the front page of a price list issued by a Birmingham house is a sticker stating that all designs of 9 karat goods listed therein can be supplied to the Canadian trade in 10 karat quality, at an advance of 7½ per cent. This statement is significant. It shows first that the English manufacturer is quite prepared to make goods that will conform with the new Canadian Act. It further shows that if Canada does not insist on his doing so, the duty against him will be lessened by 7½ per cent., making it 15 instead of 22½ on low grade goods.

The Injustice of Unstable Legislation

Believing that the Act would become operative in July next, manufacturing jewellers have recently been registering their trade marks. They have been making costly stamps for all classes of gold work and are now in full swing turning out for the fall trade goods that conform to the conditions imposed by the Act. Any change at this stage would be a serious loss and a manifest injustice to men who are relying on the stability of a Government measure and carrying out in good faith all the requirements defined therein.