

which all surveys in the west commence, being what is called the initial meridian in the Dominion lands system of surveys. It also, for all practical purposes, approximately divides the area we are now dealing with into two equal parts. It has the merit of certainty, it divides the area into two equal parts, and it gives to each almost the same population. Objection is made to the selection of this 4th meridian as the dividing line on the ground that it cuts the ranching country into two. I have been looking at the map I have here, which shows how investigation has demonstrated the limit of the ranching country and the limit of the wheat-growing country. It will be found that the ranching country was originally supposed to extend far down into Assiniboia, almost to the southeast or southwest corner of Manitoba. Recently, however, it has been discovered that it is practically limited to Swift Current, in Assiniboia, so that I think on the whole we have settled these two points: first, we divide the country into two equal parts contiguous; we give each province practically the same area, and we give a certain line as the boundary line between the two, a line which is accepted for all purposes with respect to the division of districts and municipalities, and so forth. In so far as regards the difficulty pointed out by my hon. friend from Alberta (Mr. Heron) before the adjournment with respect to the confusion that is likely to arise in the branding of cattle, my information—which, of course, I give subject to his better information—is that there are about 15,000 of these brands registered in the whole of the Territories, and that about 50 per cent are registered applicable to that district which will be in the province of Saskatchewan. Although the number of cattle held by each individual owner is somewhat smaller in Saskatchewan than in Alberta, the difficulty arising from the branding will not be remedied to any large extent by placing the boundary line where he suggests. Solutions of difficulties are always likely to create embarrassment in one direction or another, and on the whole the best division possible is that which gives the practical results I mentioned a few moments ago.

Mr. BARKER. I have listened to the debate so far with a good deal of interest, mainly because I have to rely on what is said on both sides for information upon which I can form my own judgment. I have heard what the Minister of Justice has just said in answer to the hon. member for Calgary; and it seems to me that looking at it solely from the two points of view thus presented by the one gentleman and the other, there is this to be said in favour of what has been stated by the hon. member for Calgary (Mr. McCarthy). On both sides it is admitted, that the alteration he proposes would bring in nearly all, or, at all events, a great portion of the ranching country, and that the proposition of

Mr. FITZPATRICK.

the government leaves out a very large portion of that country. In addition to that, it will be observed by anybody who takes the map and sketches out what is suggested by the hon. member for Calgary (Mr. McCarthy), that running up to the Saskatchewan river and then inclining northwesterly, you get the easterly boundary of Alberta almost parallel with its western boundary, instead of forming a very rough triangle as the government proposes it. That in itself would seem to be some advantage.

But, I have been struck by the suggestion which has been made this afternoon in regard to Athabaska, and especially with the remarks made about Athabaska by the hon. member for Calgary (Mr. McCarthy). It appears that Athabaska, which we are including in these two provinces, is a very large territory, which at present, has only 242 white people in it. It does strike me that it requires some very peculiar conditions to justify tacking on to fairly well settled provinces, a territory so large as Athabaska, about one-half of the whole area of the two provinces as proposed by the Bill, when the territory has only 242 white people in it. If we throw aside all political considerations and look at it solely from the commercial point of view, it seems to me a most extraordinary thing that any man should contemplate putting Athabaska into these provinces at all. What is the object of it? It must be absolutely clear that Athabaska is about as far at the present day from the provincial status as these other districts were in 1875 when they were given only territorial administration. I should not like to try to divide up the population of Athabaska and see how many it makes to the mile; I am afraid that I would have to cut a man up into very small proportions to make it appreciable, but if we take it as it is, as an unsettled district to all intents and purposes—I mean unsettled as regards white people, throwing aside for the moment Indians and half-breeds, I do not wish to say a word against the half-breeds—but looking at it from the point of view of the white people who are seeking representative institutions, the point of view of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Assiniboia, all of which have a similar population and are similar in their commercial aspect, we will see that the better way of dividing this territory into provinces would be to run the line from east to west along the 55th parallel and thus get a fair sized province consisting of Alberta, Assiniboia and that portion of Saskatchewan now being dealt with, omitting the corner to the north of Manitoba. That portion being taken out, what we call the south portion of the territory would give a province smaller than the province of Quebec, a little larger than the province of Ontario and you would have a compact province that would work well together. That would leave to the north