

we cannot possibly have all the facts before us at this time, I think the Bill might well be referred to the committee with a distinct understanding that in voting for the second reading no member is committing himself to the principle or to the subject-matter of the Bill. We have to hear parties on both sides with regard to it, and we need to take cognizance of a great many documents which cannot be produced at the present time, before we are able to judge as to the merits of certain provisions in the Bill. I would suggest to the House, therefore, and to hon. members who take an active interest in this matter, that it would be better to refer the Bill to the committee for the purpose of making ourselves acquainted with the facts regarding it, but with the clear understanding, as I said, that in allowing the second reading to take place and referring the Bill to the committee, no member of the House is in any way committed to the principle of the Bill.

Mr. PUTTEE. I did not rise for the purpose of discussing the Bill at this stage, although the Bill is to be opposed, but I desired to ask the hon. member whose name is on the back of the Bill to give us some explanation with regard to one circumstance connected with it. These Bills, Nos. 102 and 103, refer to what is known as the Manitoba Railway contract. Now, about four weeks ago two Bills, No. 75 and No. 87, were put through the second reading and referred to the Railway Committee, and they bore on their back the name of the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. McCreary). Now, I understand he did not give his permission to make any change, but since that time these two latter Bills now before us have been added to the former Bills, and I would like to have the hon. gentleman who is now proposing the second reading, to give us the explanation.

Hon. Mr. SUTHERLAND. I may mention that I received a note from the gentleman whose name was on the Bills, and who certainly had no knowledge of the change. I asked for an explanation from the solicitor; I believe it is usual for the solicitor to look after the drafting of Bills coming before the House. He alone is responsible for the printing of these Bills that were submitted to the committee. I knew nothing of them until I saw them reprinted; and I suppose my hon. friend who has

charge of this Bill had not any knowledge of it either, or had anything to do with it. The solicitor for the companies affected by the Bills referred to by the hon. member for Winnipeg (Mr. Puttee) is alone responsible for suggesting the amendments and having the Bills reprinted for reconsideration of the committee.

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR (Hon. Clifford Sifton). I desire to say upon this point that the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. McCreary), when leaving the city some five or six days ago, had just then learned that these Bills had been reprinted. As he was obliged to leave that evening he sent me a note by special messenger, asking me to communicate with the chairman of the Railway Committee, saying that he was not familiar with the rules of the House, and did not know whether the solicitor had a right to have the Bills changed without his consent, and he desired the chairman of the committee to be at once informed that the change was made without his knowledge or consent. I accordingly informed my hon. friend the chairman of the committee of the circumstance. I say this in order that the position of the member for Selkirk may be made perfectly clear.

Mr. McISAAC. This is a Bill to ratify a lease made between the government of Manitoba and four railway companies operating in that province under one system. The names of the companies are: The Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Company, the Winnipeg Transfer Railway Company, Limited, the Portage and Northwestern Railway Company, and the Waskada and North-eastern Railway Company. These four railways operate in the province of Manitoba under one system. They originally obtained provincial charters from the Manitoba legislature, and subsequently came to this parliament and obtained legislation declaring these roads to be for the general advantage of Canada. The lease which these four companies made with the Manitoba government is shortly this: They agree to hand over for a period of 999 years the combined system at a rental, for the first ten years, of \$210,000; for the next ten years, of \$225,000; for the third ten years, of \$275,000; for the balance of the term, of \$300,000. The conditions of