

APRIL 1

ROAD CONTRACT FAR EXTENDED, DREW CHARGES

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Extension of a highway contract to four times its original estimate without asking further tenders after the original contract was let was under question before Public Accounts Committee of the Ontario Legislature yesterday by Opposition Leader George Drew, who also inquired into automobile expenditures in several Government departments, which inquiries will be continued this morning with calling of further departmental officials.

The McGuinness-O'Connor contract for a ten-mile stretch of road between Kingston and Seeley's Bay, which Col. Drew said "started out at \$90,000 and wound up at nearly four times that figure" was again under question as to whether it was Government policy to extend contracts without asking further tenders.

Conditions Unusual.

J. D. Miller, Acting Deputy Minister of Highways, on the stand for more than two hours, said the conditions in this contract were unusual. Conditions changed after the work was begun. Col. Drew sought to show that a better price might have been obtained on extension, or that previous survey should have warned the Highways Department of what was ahead. It was brought out that whereas the original contract had called for 16,700 tons of cut stone at \$2 a ton, the last certified amount used had been 62,675 tons, on which basis G. H. Doucett (Prog. Cons., Lanark) thought a better price might have been obtained. Mr. Miller said that in the past there had been other contracts comparable in scale which had been extended on agreement and without tender. "Apparently it's not an uncommon practice," said Col. Drew.

As to the unexpected situation met with on the Kingston-Seeley's Bay road, which had turned from a maintenance into a construction job, Col. Drew suggested: "Surely engineers can make some allowance for variable factors and arrive at some estimate."

Call More Officials.

Further information as to the construction of the road is to be sought this morning when three officials will be called before the Public Accounts Committee, District Engineer Noonan and Inspectors J. D. Forster and W. G. Clark of District No. 8, Department of Highways.

Several Government department officials were questioned as to car rentals and methods of using cars for Government work, and at Col. Drew's request mileage accounts of about a dozen of the 533 employees who received them will be presented for review as typical cases today.

F. A. McDougall, Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests, and H. Cotnam, Provincial auditor, were questioned as to car usage and procedure and as to instructions to departments for cutting down mileage as a gasoline and tire conservation measure.