The deportation of the unemployed in the 1930s continued well established practice, but at the same time intensified to such a degree that it became a change in kind. The tradition of expelling immigrants who had become public charges had been established some fifty years earlier. The unemployed who had gone on relief were the main target group for the Department of Immigration during the Depression. Just as unemployment became a mass phenomenon, the response of the Department to it was the mass production of economic deportation.

The Department had claimed, during an earlier period of high unemployment, that it was not its policy to deport the unemployed, unless there were other factors that would make these people unlikely to succeed in Canada. The Department’s claims were necessary to balance the conflicting interests of the transportation companies and the municipalities. It was usually the companies who had brought in the immigrants and who would be asked by the Department to pay the costs of sending deports back whence they came. It was the municipalities who had to pay the costs of maintaining immigrants who became public charges. Except in times of economic crisis the Department had been able to balance these conflicting interests. One of the most important tactics used by the Department in this balancing act was the claim that it did not automatically and arbitrarily ship out the otherwise desirable and fit immigrants who
had fallen on hard times. Such a claim helped the Department to avoid political controversy.

Despite the attempts of the Department to argue that it deported the unemployable rather than the unemployed, the mass deportations of the 1930s aroused a good deal of controversy. Leftwing and liberal public opinion (from the Communist Party to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation to the churches, for example) attacked the Department for "shovelling out" the down and out. The municipalities were caught in a severe financial squeeze, as they were overwhelmed by spiralling relief costs. Neither the provinces nor Ottawa were willing to contribute anything substantial to the high costs of relieving immigrants. The municipalities attacked immigration policies, accused the federal government of importing undesirables, and demanded stronger action. Canadian nativists demanded that the "foreigners" be sent back home so that "white men" could find jobs. None of this was unique to the 1930s, but the scale of the problem was unprecedented.

The official position of the Department of Immigration during the Depression was that it did not systematically deport the unemployed. The records do not support that claim. The general policy of the Department in those years was to deport those unemployed immigrants who had gone on relief. Within that general policy there were some slight deviations. During 1929 and the first six months of 1930, the Department balked at a very few requests for specific deportations. From the summer of 1930 to the fall of 1935, the official policy was one of automatic deportation of the unemployed, while claiming that they were unemployable and undesirable. By 1932, certain ameliorative practices were developed, mostly in response to public outrage and pressure. Most of these practices were related to suspending deportations. Relievers who found work might have their proceedings put into abeyance; Britishers might be ordered deported but the order never carried out.

These years were noteworthy for a concerted effort by the Department of Immigration officials to conceal, deny, or justify their practices. Spurious or misleading statistics were cooked up and purveyed, editors regaled with letters and rationalizations, statements made in Parliament, in public, and in private. In some instances, the Department representatives misled; in others they lied.

By the fall of 1935, the worst was over. The economic situation had bottomed out and was slowly improving, but it was the changes in the political climate that were crucial. The new Minister of Immigration,
Thomas Crerar, was wishy-washy, rather than determined to "shovel out" all of the unemployed. Large numbers of the general public, many Members of Parliament, and perhaps most importantly, numbers of municipal councillors, had condemned the deportation of the unemployed. Even with a compliant Minister (and most of them had little real understanding of what went on in their Department), it was no longer possible to "shovel out" vast numbers at the rate of previous years.

Not that the Department stopped; rather, it retreated. Circumstances directed public attention elsewhere, while the Department continued its usual activities on a scale diminished in comparison to the heyday of the early 1930s, but still higher than in previous decades.

By the fall of 1929, there were already sizeable numbers of unemployed immigrants to be shipped out as public charges. The Department had already begun to send back large numbers of young British men who had come over earlier that year as trainees under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour. A special procedure was set up: the men would be received at the Immigration Building at Montreal, thus qualifying as public charges, then face Boards of Inquiry at which they would be ordered deported as public charges, "they of course refusing farm work." Deporting these men was enough of a political embarrassment, but the special procedures adopted had the potential to create a worse one.

The problem was that many other able-bodied unemployed Britons did not see why they too could not be promptly received and deported. In Montreal, the alternatives for the unemployed were very grim. The Immigration Building meant food and shelter. But the Department argued that these men could find work if they wanted it. While it would be simple enough to hold Boards of inquiry and deport these unemployed immigrants, the Eastern Division Commissioner of Immigration predicted that if this were done, there would "be a rapid increase in the number of cases the Division will have to deal with and we will develop more or less into a booking agency."! That would not only be politically awkward, it would swamp the Montreal Agency with bodies and papers. Neither the staff nor the building could stand the extra load.

The Commissioner of Immigration in Ottawa concluded that the Department of Immigration must take a firm stand to discourage immigrants who were unwilling to work, in anticipation of "quite a number of these cases." Men who were unemployed and refused farm work were to be told, "they will have to make their own way" back home. The
Montreal Agency was told that no special procedures would be permitted to those who applied.  

By the following spring, municipalities were clearly using deportation as an alternative to relief. The regional office of the Department in Winnipeg was receiving deportation complaints against immigrants who had received miniscule amounts of relief. Single unemployed men who had gotten payments of $2 to $4 had been labelled as "public charges". Ottawa balked: immigration was willing to "co-operate" with the municipalities, but not to "extend facilities in the matter of deportation on such slim grounds" if there were no other reasons than unemployment. Immigrants might stop trying to find jobs and "adopt the line of least resistance, which means a free trip home." If the municipalities wanted to deport these people, it was up to them to show that "whoever is involved is a misfit or a type who cannot become established." In other words, the cases had to be somewhat differently constructed and presented. Relief payments of $4 were not in themselves sufficient grounds for deportation in May 1930.

The following month, the Deputy Minister told the Winnipeg Division Commissioner to pass the word to Calgary municipal officials that Immigration would not issue deportation orders against a group of immigrants who had received relief payments ranging from $1-3 for individuals, to $11 for a family. "Unless there is an unfavourable history behind each one of these, they should be given a chance to make good," he wrote. 

By 1930 there was intense pressure from the municipalities to deport public charges. Relief costs had begun to escalate. In Winnipeg, for example, relief costs for 1927-28 had been $31,394; for 1930-31, they rose to $1,683,386. In March 1930, representatives from British Columbia, Ontario, and Prairie provincial governments and a number of Western municipalities had presented to Cabinet figures outlining the financial costs of high immigrant unemployment, in an unsuccessful effort to force the federal government to pay these costs. The federal government's alternative to paying immigrant relief costs was to order deportation of the unemployed. A directive to that effect was issued in the summer of 1930.

Drastic enough, such a policy was conservative in comparison to what had been proposed by Minister of Immigration Charles Stewart. The municipalities had sought sterner measures. While on a visit to the West, Stewart was persuaded to wire his Department to bypass legalities and
ship out the unemployed en masse to clear the relief rolls. His staff reacted with dismay to this politically explosive proposal. Deputy Minister William Egan wired Stewart that certain steps could not be bypassed. "Summary returns impossible unless Department pays all transportation costs both rail and ocean." Because so many of the unemployed were British, Egan feared that "following procedure [outlined] your wire yesterday means those returned would be mainly British and the effect would be disastrous once this becomes known as it will the moment movement begins." Egan suggested instead that the Department stick to a formula of "50% British, 50% foreign and handle all by regular procedure. This only safe course. Using telegraphic warrants will facilitate action. Will act immediately on your reply." And such remained the policy of the Department for a substantial period.  

Although it was at the request of a Liberal Minister that "shovelling out" the unemployed was intensified, the policy continued after the July 1930 elections. The new Tory Minister of Immigration, Wesley Gordon, was briefed by his staff that August. He was told (on Egan’s orders) that it had been and should continue to be the policy of Department to deport unemployed relievers as a matter of routine. Although harvest work might take the burden off Western cities for a time, by winter most of the unemployed men would return to the cities. Either because they would be "determined not to help themselves" (that is, take winter farm "jobs", usually for little more than room and board) or because "they cannot obtain employment," these immigrants would be "public charges at least through the winter," reasoned Department bureaucrats. The new Minister should be acquainted with these facts and his permission asked to continue deportations of the unemployed.  

He apparently did not object to his staff’s proposals.

Despite the fact that Egan had insisted to Stewart that it was necessary for the Department to follow legal and routine procedures, the Department regularly used illegal shortcuts. Telegraphic warrants, for example, were not illegal in themselves, but "Minister’s Orders" for examination were supposed to be issued only after certain basic facts of the case had been sent to Ottawa for perusal. These niceties broke down under the load of public charge deportations. By the summer of 1931, several cities in the West had hundreds of complaints backlogged. The Winnipeg regional office was overwhelmed and unable to process them. Up to May 1930, Ottawa Immigration officials had been sending telegraphic warrants after receiving lists of immigrants’ names by nightletter.
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telegram, without knowing the facts of each case. The Commissioner of Immigration had ordered this practice stopped. But a year later, being swamped under work posed the greater danger. Ottawa agreed to resume the illegal practice of sending warrants in response to wired lists of names. The documentation would be sent to Ottawa after the cases were heard by Boards of Inquiry and deportations ordered. The Immigration Act set out clearly the procedures to be followed, and violations were knowingly tolerated for years at a time for the sake of convenience. Such illegalities were usually well concealed in internal documents and seldom uncovered by the courts.

The Immigration Act set out clearly the procedures to be followed, and violations were knowingly tolerated for years at a time for the sake of convenience. Such illegalities were usually well concealed in internal documents and seldom uncovered by the courts.

The Department of Immigration played a key role in the early part of the Depression. Worsening economic conditions and widespread unemployment meant heightened social unrest. Powerful interest groups such as employers' lobbies and corporations wanted industrial and social peace at any price, so long as they did not have to pay for it. Municipal governments (and taxpayers) were frantic about relief costs. There were political as well as financial limits to municipal sources of revenue. Local elites were determined to keep the lid on. Angry citizens and all manner of protest groups, from fraternal organizations to veterans' associations, blamed immigrants for taking jobs away from Canadians. The Department served all these and the government as well, by shipping out the unemployed; none were satisfied and all wanted increased service.

On the other hand, there was a storm of criticism in the press and from a variety of organizations and associations — including some churches, unions, and the moderate and far left — and from foreign governments. Complaints about the deportation of “foreigners” could usually be dismissed or sidestepped. More worrisome was the furor in Canada and Britain about the deportation of unemployed British immigrants. Many of these had come in the 1920s through the Empire Settlement Act. They had been wooed and subsidized as highly desirable settlers. Now unemployed and on relief, they were labelled as “undesirables” and shipped back home.

Their arrival in Britain often caused howls of protest. His Majesty's Government made inquiries. Memoranda were exchanged. A few scandalous incidents were discussed in the Canadian and British press. Two particularly outrageous deportations were condemned: Miss Alice Barton, an epileptic who had been resident in Canada for seventeen years, and Mrs. Arnsworth, here twenty years, also an epileptic and an inmate of a hospital for the insane. Despite their long residence, they were...
deportable; as members of the prohibited classes they could never legally obtain domicile. These two cases created such controversy that Immigration Minister Gordon ordered that all proposed mental or epileptic deportation cases of immigrants here more than five years were to be submitted for Deputy Ministerial review. Such matters were handled more cautiously thereafter.

Most criticism was directed at public charge deportations. As unemployment and hence public charge deportations increased, so did criticism. By the end of 1930, the Department had decided to take the offensive. The Minister and his staff initiated a campaign to conceal their policies and justify their actions. The campaign took three main approaches. First, it attempted to build up a case that deports were not just the unemployed but rather the unemployable, because they were unable or unwilling to work. Second, it attempted to create and display evidence that the majority (the figures vary) of the deports did not mind being deported and in fact were eager to go home. These were referred to as "voluntary" deportations. Third, the Department tried to conceal the true nature and extent of the deportation of unemployed immigrants who had become public charges, both by misleading statements about its policies, and by publishing figures based on statistics compiled to buttress the "unemployability" and the "voluntary" claims. Such a public relations exercise was to preoccupy Department officials for the next several years.

The campaign began with carefully aimed letters. Deputy Minister Egan, who was fully aware of the Department's policy, wrote to the Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada, claiming quite falsely that "we have not . . . adopted any policy of sending people back home in any numbers merely because they are in temporary distress through unemployment." Egan pointed out that the Minister of Immigration had stated publicly that he was not in favour of mass deportation.11

Gordon wrote explanatory letters to the editors of daily newspapers, hoping to improve the Department's publicity. By January he was citing case studies and analyses based on Department statistics. He claimed that deportation had "affected approximately only one half of one per cent of the immigrants who came to Canada since the commencement of the century."12 He circulated to editors an analysis of the deportation cases of immigrants on a recent sailing of the Ascania, of which there had been much criticism. The analysis purported to justify these deportations on
the grounds that each one was necessary, not just the result of a policy of "shovelling out".

The analysis was not particularly convincing on the face of it. The Ascania contingent had consisted of 72 men and women ordered deported, 37 of whom were accompanied by their families, including 6 Canadian-born children. Of the grounds for deportation, five were due to physical problems (three men were public charges, due to unemployment, and claimed they could not work because of physical disabilities, even if jobs were available; one man was tubercular and ordered deported under Section 33b as a member of the prohibited classes; and one woman, a domestic servant, suffered from pleurisy which the Department regarded as a tuberculosis case). There were four female domestic servants deported as public charges, but in addition these had "unsatisfactory records", meaning that three were unmarried and pregnant and one was accompanied by her illegitimate child. Five of the men had been convicted of unspecified crimes. (A vagrancy conviction, followed by a brief prison term, was an oft-used method of deporting unemployed immigrants as criminals.) Fifteen men were public charges allegedly unwilling to take farm work. Twenty-nine claimed that they were unable to obtain any kind of work. By the Department’s own description, a substantial proportion of these people were being deported for unemployment alone. But the Minister claimed in his analysis that "not one of them was deported because employment could not be found for them on the land."13

Justifications such as this may not have been entirely convincing, but without inside information on the methods used by the Department to compile such data, little real criticism could be levied. Few daily newspapers questioned the Department’s assertions, however little they liked the situation. The Ottawa Citizen was one of the exceptions. Editor Charles Bowman did not believe that the Department deported only the unemployable. "What about the other 200,000 unemployed in Canada? Are they similarly unemployable?" demanded his editorial.14

Not surprisingly, statistics normally kept by the Department were not particularly useful for its public relations campaign. They tended to damn rather than justify the Department’s actions. By February 1931 the bureaucrats were creating new evidence. In order to show that British immigrants were only too pleased to be sent back home, Immigration officials were told to obtain written statements from any Britons requesting or agreeing to deportation.15
Not only were officers supposed to produce written evidence that deportations were voluntary, they were also given specific instructions to try to have immigrants say that they would refuse work if offered, and did not want to "become established" in Canada. By combining these techniques, the Department attempted to argue that "in every case they wanted to be sent home" or, alternatively, even though the statutory cause for deportation was "becoming a public charge", the real reason for becoming a public charge was "something more than unemployment." 

The unemployed were thus the unemployable, and the blame shifted from the economy to the individual who was to be deported.

The system of obtaining "evidence" was applied with a vengeance. In short order the practice of having some willing British immigrants sign written requests for deportation rapidly expanded to the point where it was applied to all British subject deportees. Such zeal could be troublesome: in May 1931 Division commissioners were told to have their officers return to the practice of obtaining handwritten statements from those immigrants who had asked to be sent back. They were no longer to require all those who had been reported for deportation investigations by municipal authorities or other sources to sign forms attesting to their voluntary deportations. Department officials may have stopped extorting signatures; municipal officials continued the practice and applied it to more than the British immigrants. This issue would blow up in Winnipeg and other cities within a short period of time.

Other means were used by the Department to collect evidence that immigrants were volunteering to be deported. Boards of Inquiry were repeatedly instructed to have immigrants agree that they would not take a job, did not want to become established in Canada, and wanted to go home. High-level officials in the Department insisted that these instructions be carried out. They sent pointed reminders. "These instructions were issued with a definite purpose and a rather awkward situation has arisen through failure . . . to carry out the instructions," scolded one missive in November 1931.

By this time Canada's deportation policy had become an Imperial issue. The British Secretary of State for External Affairs had told Bennett that not only had British public opinion been aroused by the large number of public charge deportations from Canada, but the issue would be taken up by Parliament and the press if the numbers continued high during the winter. This could be especially awkward in view of the upcoming Imperial Conference in Ottawa. The U.K. government was unhappy about the
deportation of Britons for problems "beyond their control." Australia treated its British immigrant unemployed as Australians, and Britain wanted Canada to do likewise. More than ever, the Department needed evidence manufactured at Board of Inquiry hearings to "prove" that its victims wanted or deserved deportation. "I wonder if you can put your hands on any cases where Britishers or others have smashed windows or done something of that sort in order to get deported?" asked the Deputy Minister. The answer is not recorded.

The Department seized on any local improvement in the labour market as evidence that immigrants who remained unemployed did so by choice. Seasonal farm jobs were golden opportunities which the Department insisted lazy immigrants threw away. Departmental officials in Ottawa urged their regional subordinates to send them examples of such stubborn refusals to give up the posh life of a reliefer. In June 1932, for example, a circular to all Immigration offices discussed the inexplicable increases in public charge deportations despite the chances for farm jobs offered by the coming of summer. Blame for continued unemployment must "to some extent be attached to the individual who is unwilling or refuses to accept what is available, as well as to labour conditions generally. . . . The Department is anxious to have definite evidence . . . where deportation is ordered solely on the public charge ground . . . which will indicate whether or not the individual concerned is prepared to accept work, or refuses to do so." The implication was clear: if such evidence were lacking, it was because of the failure of the Boards of Inquiry to produce the hoped-for statements.

Some small concessions were visible, usually as a result of widespread criticism of the Department's practices. For example, some Immigration offices had been requiring recently employed immigrants to leave their jobs in order to attend their Boards of Inquiry for public charge deportation based on their previous receipt of relief. In June 1932 local offices were told that they could no longer do this unless the immigrant were undesirable for reasons in addition to previous unemployment. This was a political rather than a legal decision. The legalities were confused. The Department of Justice had ruled in 1926 that anyone who "is" or "has been" a public charge before acquiring domicile was legally liable for deportation, even if they were no longer a public charge at the time the deportation concluded. On the other hand, an April 1927 Department of Immigration memo had ruled that if someone ceased to be a public charge between the time the deportation complaint was
received and the Board of Inquiry held, they were not deportable under Section 40 as a public charge. This ruling was not generally applied in the early 1930s; the tendency was to follow the older Justice ruling. In 1933 the Department of Justice ruled that if a family received relief for a brief period and subsequently became self-supporting and paid it back, they probably should not be deported as public charges. This ruling would not have greatly affected deportations, because few families would go on relief (or, for that matter, be granted it) if they had any other resources. Few could hope to remain only briefly on relief, find work paying enough to repay it, and thus escape liability to public charge deportation.

In practice, going on relief usually meant a one-way ticket home for single or family immigrants. In some cases, family ties to a reliefer were sufficient grounds for deportation. For example, if a husband were ordered deported, his wife and children were usually included in the order, whether or not they were living apart from him. In many cases, Canadian-born children who were not legally deportable were sent along as "accompanying" rather than being listed on the order. Even if the wife were self-supporting, her legal ties to the husband might be sufficient grounds to include her in the deportation order. Admittedly she might not actually be sent with him when the time came. It depended on individual circumstances, and on the discretion of the Department.

The municipalities were essential partners in the enterprise of "shovelling out" the unemployed. Public charge deportations were initiated at the request of municipal officials. Most cities were eager to remove relievers. On the other hand, elected officials had to pay some attention to public opinion. By 1932 the situation was desperate in many Canadian cities. In Sudbury, for example, the city was running out of money. In the spring of 1932, Sudbury City Council had asked Immigration officials to deport all undesirables. By the end of that year, the definition of undesirability must have expanded somewhat. The city was spending $1,700 daily on relief: $5 a week in food vouchers for a family of two adults and four children. City Council had initiated money-saving measures. Civic workers' wages were cut and their hours reduced to three weeks per month for married, one week for single. Notices were placed in newspapers that a year's residence was required for relief eligibility. Couples married less than six months were ineligible. Property owners receiving relief had a lien placed against their property. Relievers who were residents elsewhere were cut off and sent back home. Some relievers were sent directly overseas to get them off relief: one family was sent
back to Norway. Deportation was even better: someone else would pay the shipping costs. Council told the municipal relief committee to compile lists of all non-citizen relievers so that they could be considered for deportation.24

Routine reporting for deportation of all immigrants who had become public charges was the rule in a number of cities. In Montreal, for instance, there was much unemployment, resources were scarce, and relief hard to get. Large numbers of immigrants were reported destitute and on the verge of starvation. The City reported them to the Montreal Immigration Office for deportation. The local agent said that the office was “filled daily” with public charge immigrants who had been ordered deported, and who wanted to know what would happen to them. He said that they seemed to him to be eager to work, and regarded deportation as a last resort. Edmonton likewise reported all immigrants on relief. The Oshawa City Council had passed a similar policy. In Sault Ste. Marie, immigrants had to sign a request to be deported, before they could obtain relief.25

Traditionally a gathering point for the unemployed, Winnipeg was particularly hard hit. By 1932, Winnipeg’s percentage of unemployed was the second highest in Canada. Since 1930, the city had been borrowing to pay its relief costs. In June 1930 the Winnipeg City Council passed a motion to deport all immigrants who were public charges.26 Council was always on the lookout for ways to cut costs or find more money. Councillors seemed unaware of the human costs of such measures. But after a few years of the Depression, some Councillors began to evince a different attitude.

In June 1930 there had been no dissent to the motion to deport all public charge immigrants; in fact it was initiated by two pro-labour Councillors. But by January 1932, a request by the City of Montreal to join in a scheme for “voluntary repatriation to their native lands” of all unemployed aliens was only narrowly passed (nine “yes”, eight “no” votes).27 Later that year, deportation was to become a contentious issue in Winnipeg municipal politics.

The reaction of the City of Winnipeg to the deportation issue illustrates several significant factors: the point of view of the municipalities; the development of deportation into an issue in civic politics (both partisan and across party lines); the roles of elected city officials (as opposed to city bureaucrats) in deportation; the legal and political ramifications for the municipalities and the federal government of the Immigration Act provision for city officials to report public charge deportation complaints;
the response of civic officials to public outrage (and to a certain extent their own) when the facts were revealed about their complicity in the policy of "shovelling out" the unemployed.

In the absence of studies of other municipalities it is unclear to what extent the situation in Winnipeg was representative. In terms of the local arena, certain tentative conclusions can be drawn. It seems evident that most members of Winnipeg City Council did not know in 1932 that their own City Relief Department was forcing immigrants to sign deportation requests in order to obtain relief. Nor did Councillors know the extent of relief deportations, that is, that the Relief Department was routinely reporting for deportation all those who went on relief after less than five years in Canada. This ignorance was reinforced by the lies about procedures and policies told early in 1932 by Fraser, the Director of the Relief Department. It was not until late 1932 or early 1933 that sufficient evidence had accumulated to convince the majority of Councillors that improprieties and injustices were the norm rather than being caused by oversights, happenstance, and exceptions to the rule.

In Winnipeg it was for the most part the Labour rather than the Citizens faction on City Council who questioned deportation practices. Ed Rea has noted that Winnipeg politics have operated along class lines drawn in the 1919 strike. Winnipeg City Council has long been split between the descendants of pro-striker (Labour) and anti-striker (Citizens) factions. (Although Council’s positions on deportation did not always follow the usual patterns, Rea’s analysis remains helpful.) The Citizens representatives, who were the budget-conscious spokespersons for the Winnipeg political and economic powers-that-be, were only briefly recruited to the anti-deportation side. They were likely drawn there by dismay that British principles of fair play and justice had been betrayed, and the shrewd calculation that it was politically unsound to support a practice widely regarded as morally reprehensible and possibly legally questionable. What none of the Councillors realized was that British justice and fair play had no part in the deportation system, Depression or no. After the mists cleared from their eyes, Councillors found themselves blackmailed by the Department of Immigration. Mounting relief costs and pleas from a few immigrants to be deported, combined with Ottawa’s blockade on all public charge deportations (as opposed to the unemployed public charge deportations to which Councillors had objected) eventually led to sober second thoughts about their refusal to report relievers for deportation. After seven months of standoff, a morally and politically palatable compromise was
developed. Desirable unemployed immigrants would be safeguarded and not reported for deportation; the "unfit" would be liable to deportation without their consent. Council got itself off the hook with this policy and the deportation machinery was set into motion again.

Deportation became a public issue when early in 1932, Winnipeg began to cut off relief for some people. There were public protests not only about access to relief but about deportation of reliefers. In February a large demonstration in front of the Legislature complained that one W. Musali had been cut off relief because he "refused to sign for voluntary deportation." Other demonstrations protested wholesale deportation of the unemployed. City Council began to look more closely at the relationship between relief and deportation.

Shortly after these demonstrations a Labour Councillor moved that the Unemployment Relief Committee should not report for deportation those immigrants who were on relief solely because of unemployment (unless they had asked to be deported). A Citizens Councillor countered with a motion to tell the Unemployment Relief Committee to request the deportation of all those eligible. The heated debate which followed posed the argument that the deportation of the law-abiding unemployed was "unhuman", against the fear that Winnipeg would become a relief haven. Eventually the matter was turned over to the Committee to consider. The debate revealed splits on Council over the deportation issue. More importantly, it revealed that Councillors had little information about the actual deportation practices of the city. Some Councillors were beginning to wonder if there were not something wrong with the situation. Indeed there was. At this time, Manitoba's per capita deportation rate was higher than Ontario's, which deported the greatest number of immigrants during the Depression.

Winnipeg City Council was drawn more directly into the issue in June 1932 when the Consuls of Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Norway, Poland, and Denmark wrote wanting to know why so many of their nationals had been deported as public charges. They asked three questions: 1) What city regulations provided that immigrants resident more than twelve months were deportable for being on relief due solely to unemployment? 2) What were the regulations for those resident longer than twelve months? 3) Many of their nationals had appealed deportation, yet the Consuls had been told that Winnipeg deported only if the immigrant so requested. Was there a city regulation that reliefers who were willing to work could be deported only voluntarily at their own request?
Winnipeg City Council asked J. D. Fraser, head of the City Relief Department, and City Solicitor Preudhomme, about the city's procedures. Fraser's report (which may have been drafted by one of his staff) misrepresented the actual practices and policies of his Department. Whether or not it was Fraser who wrote the report, he sent it on to Council as his, and he continued to misrepresent his Department's practices on subsequent occasions.¹²

Fraser's memo is worth citing in detail for what it reveals about the rationale of municipal bureaucrats (as opposed to elected officials) for relief deportations. The memo stated correctly that there was no city bylaw governing deportation: the federal Immigration Act said that anyone not a citizen or domiciled (then five years' legal residence) could be deported if they became a public charge. The deportation was set in motion by complaint from municipal officials. Cases were handled ("thoroughly gone into") by Boards of Inquiry which had some discretionary powers. About the issue of voluntary deportations, he said only that the Immigration Act did not require that immigrants apply for their own deportations. Nonetheless, his Department provided a form for that purpose. "Last year we had many letters from persons on relief asking for deportation, and as a matter of convenience to them and for the purpose of having a uniform application form for deportation, the present form in use was adopted." Fraser did not mention that it was not necessary to apply for deportation to be sent back. The city often paid for all or part of the trip in order to remove people from the relief rolls. There are numerous such examples in the minutes of the Unemployment Relief Committee.

Fraser's memo concluded with a statement that was blatantly misleading. "The City of Winnipeg does not propose deportation other than in cases where the same has been voluntarily asked for except in exceptional cases, and then only for good cause." The Relief Department had "no fixed rules or regulations" on deportation. When an "application for deportation" was received, the Department obtained from the "applicant" information about birth, residence, immigration, kin, and so on, to determine if they were a "bona fide resident". The information was sent on to the local Immigration officer, who would decide the next step. The "applicant" could have legal counsel at the deportation hearing. Unless Immigration asked for further information (such as a change of address or the "amount of relief . . . obtained from" the city), Fraser concluded, his Department had no further interest in the case.¹³ This
memo reveals what Councillors knew officially about the deportation practices of the city.

City Solicitor Preudhomme's memo to Council was similarly detailed, legalistic, and repeated much of what Fraser said. Preudhomme explained that unemployment relief was managed by the Unemployment Relief Committee under the control of three levels of government. Since the city had only one-third of the seats, it was not solely responsible for the Committee's regulations and actions unless these had been separately approved by Council. Council had not passed any regulations or officially "taken any action" about deportation; it was a federal matter governed by the Immigration Act which was a Dominion statute. Moving to the city's procedures, Preudhomme discussed the record keeping practices of the Relief Department. Obviously he had been talking to Fraser or a member of Fraser's staff.

The form which is being used by the Unemployment Relief Committee is something which, I take it, has been adopted purely for keeping on record the fact that individuals making voluntary applications to be deported have done so to the Unemployment Relief Committee, so that this committee can have on record the names of persons who have been on relief and should be on the nominal roll of the Committee and may in consequence or deportation be removed therefrom. I can see no other reason for the matter going through the Unemployment Relief Committee.34

Preudhomme apparently understood little about the procedures used in deportation. He was also confused about the difference between the Relief Department and the Unemployment Relief Committee. The latter was dominated in numbers by Council members but in practice and policy by the provincial representative, Public Works Deputy Minister Arthur MacNamara. The sole federal representative seldom interfered, although he did occasionally find some federal money. The committee in fact did not oversee all deportation cases. Moreover, it seems likely from the records that the Committee was not aware of the specific procedures used by the Relief Department. The Committee did hear appeals from people who were refused relief, wanted reinstatement or, infrequently, requested deportation proceedings be halted. There is no evidence in the minutes, however, that the Committee's knowledge went beyond the tip of the iceberg. After 1932, Fraser was the Secretary of the Committee, and would have had control over how much and in what form information reached
the Committee, which in turn was dependent on Fraser for information about the concerns of the Relief Department. There were frequent complaints about Fraser, his staff, and his methods, but most of these were dismissed after superficial investigation. Despite occasional and usually veiled criticism of Fraser by Committee members and others, he easily retained control of his Department and had virtually unchallenged power over relief matters during the 1930s and beyond.35

On the basis of memos received from Fraser and Preudhomme, Council told Preudhomme to draft a letter to the Consuls. The letter was quite misleading, but is useful for what it shows about the city's official views on deportation (assuming that Preudhomme's statements were sincere). Under the British North America Act, he said, the City of Winnipeg had "no power to propose deportation on any grounds; but of course, if any resident appeals to the officials of the city to be voluntarily deported, then the only thing the City Official can do is to submit the appeal to the proper authorities of the Dominion Government." Preudhomme repeated Fraser's version of the procedures followed by the Relief Department, and his own description of the structure of the Unemployment Relief Committee and the city's consequent lack of responsibility for the Committee's actions and policies. In any case, he concluded, misleadingly, "the Unemployment Relief Committee cannot take any effective actions towards deportation. The matter is an entirely Dominion matter . . . the City does not propose deportation and cannot decide on what grounds deportation will be ordered."36

Both Fraser and Preudhomme had mentioned "forms". Anyone applying for relief had to fill out numerous forms. They had to record the length of residence in Canada and in Winnipeg. Immigrants eligible for deportation could easily be identified. When Council found out more about deportation, it would oppose collecting such information. City officials elsewhere had already balked (in Toronto in March 1931, for example), but such obstreperousness usually came to naught. There were other forms to be completed when applying for relief, about which Council was informed; for example, a form promising to repay any relief money granted on penalty of seizure of property. Council had passed a motion to authorize this policy shortly after learning that the 1931 relief bill was $2,408,474 (of which $788,728 was paid by the federal government).37

Council did not know that the Relief Department was also forcing immigrants to sign a form requesting deportation, as a condition to obtain relief.38 Other city officials outside the Relief Department probably did
not know of this, either. The strongest evidence for this ignorance is provided by Preudhomme’s fury when he found out about this practice.

Sometime in January 1933, Preudhomme came across documents showing that the Relief Department had forced relievers to sign a voluntary deportation form. The Department had been using these forms to extort repayment of relief: pay up or be deported, in effect. As well, the form was used to initiate deportations. In the cases which came to Preudhomme’s attention, the Relief Department had asked the Department of Immigration to suspend deportation proceedings against two immigrants who had begun to repay the money that they had received in relief. Preudhomme was furious. He exploded (in a letter marked Confidential) to Fraser,

It is very startling to see that this contract was made, and perhaps some of the aldermen would be astounded to know that the facts as set forth in this contract have occurred. This question of deportation has come upon the floor of the council on several occasions and charges have been made and denied that the Unemployment Relief Department has taken any action whatsoever in deportation proceedings. The agreement in the very first recital states that the Unemployment Relief Department is “minded and disposed to enter a stay of action in the deportation proceedings” . . . clearly indicating that the city of Winnipeg did take proceedings for deportation and was in a position to stay these proceedings . . . .

Preudhomme warned Fraser against continuing the practice and advised that the Unemployment Relief Committee (which he presumed had directed Fraser – an assumption not wholly supported by the records) should be guided by policy established by Council. Preudhomme sent copies of the letter to the City Clerk and to Councillor Andrews who was Chair of the Unemployment Relief Committee.

There is no evidence in Council or Committee records that Councillors or Committee members saw the letter or knew the complete details of the situation. The Committee did discuss the two cases to which Preudhomme referred, and decided to press for repayment without legal action, but the issue appears in the minutes as a routine and brief matter. There is no hint of controversy, no hint that the issue raised questions beyond how to collect relief repayments from these two individuals. Fraser, as Secretary, wrote the minutes; he probably also prepared the agenda and presented the matter as he thought wise. There is no evidence that
anyone but Fraser saw Preudhomme's letter (City Clerk records are missing; Council records contain no comment at all). The absence of a recorded reaction to the letter suggests that no one on Council was shown it by Andrews, who must himself have seen it unless his copy was directed to the Committee. In that case Fraser might have opened it. The City Clerk's copy is probably the only one existing in the files.40

The issue of deportation arose in Council two months after Preudhomme's angry letter was written. Why, and why then? Crucial documents are missing, existing records reveal little. Did members of Council or those on the Unemployment Relief Committee hear privately of Preudhomme's letter? Did the Labour group (which had three seats on the Committee in 1933) hear about it from Preudhomme, or Andrews, or some other source in the City Clerk's office? Or was it simply that the stories told by frightened immigrants or occasionally reported by the press added up to a pattern that could no longer be explained away as exceptional instances of unfairness or injustice?

A precipitating factor was certainly the flood of deportation complaints sent by the Relief Department to the Winnipeg Immigration office in the spring of 1933, to remove many relievers who were about to gain domicile. Councillors heard stories about these people, and some decided injustices were occurring. Councillor Andrews, head of the Unemployment Relief Committee, had come back from a national conference on unemployment spouting spurious statistics created by the Department of Immigration to conceal its actions in "shovelling out" the unemployed. Andrews denied that deportation was being abused. He repeated Ottawa's claim that 2,153 out of 5,532 public charge deportation cases between 1 November 1931 and 31 October 1932 had requested deportation, and only six per cent of all immigrants ordered deported had appealed (fifteen per cent of the "foreign-born" or non-British immigrants).41

Such claims were no longer believed by leftwing Councillors from immigrant wards who were being "besieged" by people under orders of deportation. The issue came to a head in June 1933 when over 1,000 people marched on the Winnipeg Immigration office in a demonstration organized by the Canadian Labour Defense League, the Neighbourhood Council Movement, the Unemployed Ex-Servicemen's Association, and the Committee of the Single Unemployed. The group protested the city's practice of forcing the unemployed immigrants to sign
voluntary deportation request forms before receiving relief, and demanded that the Department of Immigration put an end to this practice.42

When the local Immigration official sent the protest to his superiors in Ottawa, they denied that such a practice was in force. The Winnipeg man called on the Relief Department and got a copy of the form in question (the same form Preudhomme had enclosed in his angry letter to Fraser), as well as an admission that the form had been "in general use" through 1932. He also got a string of limp excuses: it was only for those who wanted to be deported, and anyway it was no longer used and the man (not identified) who had put it into use was no longer with the Relief Department.43

It is possible that the local Immigration officer had been unaware of some of the procedures followed by the Relief Department. He continued to check out the legality of Relief practices in his correspondence with Ottawa. For example, he wrote asking if a promise to repay "on demand" the full amount of relief received (which relief recipients had been forced to agree to, since January 1932) were a legal promissory note. Was the person signing such a promise legally deportable for failure to honour it? The reply of Immigration officials in Ottawa is not recorded. Nonetheless, reneging on such an agreement could be construed as evidence of undesirability. Preudhomme had said that such agreements were illegal and unenforceable as contracts, and that the Relief Department had no authority to enter into or act upon them. Yet it is clear that the Relief Department, and the Hospital Commission, and possibly other city bodies, were routinely using such agreements extralegally to blackmail immigrants into repaying, by threatening them with deportation.44

By the fall of 1933, the Immigration official in Winnipeg had pieced together enough information from gossip, hard luck stories, and press reports to make some shrewd guesses at what had been going on behind the scenes in municipal politics over the last few months. He thought the Relief Department had been trying to use the Department of Immigration as a buffer between itself and some of the City Councillors. Pressure from some Councillors opposing deportation had caused the Relief Department to refrain temporarily from its usual practice of sending over deportation complaints for all immigrants on relief. By the spring of 1933, the Relief Department had a backlog of immigrants who were about to acquire domicile. Delay was impossible: the Relief Department sent over a long list, the stories became public, and hence the uproar.45
By December, deportation scandals were featured in the local press. City Councillors began to give names; for example, four Britshers who had been in Canada nearly five years, were told that they were going to be deported because they were on relief. None had committed any other offence. The Winnipeg Immigration officer fanned the flames by telling the press that no one was ever deported solely for being on relief. He labelled as "fantastic" the charge that the Department of Immigration wanted to deport all relievers, and claimed that in only five per cent of cases was deportation actually carried out. In any case, he said, deportation originated in written complaints from the city. His Department only carried out deportation, it did not initiate it.\(^46\)

Such claims about suspended deportations can only be regarded with skepticism. Figures are not available on the actual number of suspended public charge deportations, but the Department claimed to have suspended (that is, ordered but not carried out) fourteen per cent of cases for 1932-33. The memo in which this claim was made, however, contains a number of demonstrably false statements, so the figure is not reliable. It may be based in part on deportations which were never completely processed and ordered. For example, in the spring of 1932, the Winnipeg office reported that if an immigrant who had received only a small sum of relief got a job and got off relief, the office usually suspended deportation proceedings. According to other documents it was not until several months later that the Department began routinely to suspend some British public charge deportations.\(^47\) The claim that ninety-five per cent of public charge deportations were suspended is simply ludicrous.

All of this erupted in a tumultuous City Council meeting in mid-December 1933. There were three issues: the deportation policies of the Department of Immigration; the practices of city officials; and the legal position of the city in regard to deportation. The crux of the first issue was whether or not the Department of Immigration was routinely deporting otherwise desirable immigrants who had gone on relief solely because of unemployment. Debate on this question became so heated that the second and third issues were not much discussed. At the outset, some Councillors reiterated the Department of Immigration's oft-repeated claim that it did not deport people merely for being on relief. McKerchar, dubbed "watchdog of the treasury", piously reminded his colleagues that Mayor Webb had said "again and again that no one was being deported for being on relief alone." Such statements rang hollow in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary.
Thirteen people on unemployment relief had come to Councillor Flye for help: they were being "badgered and harried" and had been ordered deported. J. S. Woodsworth had confirmed to Flye that such cases were common, and that other municipalities were pushing for deportations. Flye spoke of one Winnipeg family he knew who had gone off relief after being threatened with deportation, and were being kept from starvation by the charity of neighbours, until their five years were up and they would be safe from deportation. Blumberg told his colleagues about an English family who had been in Canada for four-and-a-half years. They had arrived with $5,000 in cash, but had gradually been forced to use up their capital, and eventually had to seek partial relief. They had been ordered deported. The family was devastated, the wife "nearly crazy with worry." Blumberg insisted that it was not an unusual case, and that people in such circumstances were often "driven to desperation." The example of this family showed why relief deportations had to be stopped, he said. Other Labour Councillors added to the evidence.

Such accounts may have swayed skeptics on Council. Their skepticism began to turn to shock, and finally to outrage, when irrefutable documentary evidence was presented. Flye passed around a sheaf of Department of Immigration documents and correspondence given to him by people appealing for help. Simpson read out an actual deportation order. Councillors began to react. Lowe said that he now believed that it was true that the Department of Immigration was trying to send out as many of the unemployed as possible; this was a "blot on the good sense of Canada and the officials responsible for a policy of this kind." Lowe's reaction is not surprising; he was an Independent Labour representative who usually sided with the left on Council, who were leading the attack on deportation. But Lowe's moral outrage was echoed by other less likely allies. Rice-Jones, who probably spoke for a number of the Citizens faction, expressed "alarm" over injustices, saying that the policy was "almost incredible"; he could not understand "how any government could get away with that policy!"

The outcome of the discussion was twofold: first, a demand that the Minister of Immigration declare publicly that nobody would be deported solely for being on relief. Second, the Council would try a course of "passive resistance." This position was not unanimous, nor easily reached. Originally, Flye and Lowe had wanted Council to tell Immigration to stop proceedings in all cases where no criminal charges were involved. Councillors Andrews and Gunn, concerned with possible
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legal consequences of a refusal to report deportable immigrants to the Department of Immigration, wanted some reassurances. It was their idea to ask the Minister to make a public statement on Department policy; they also wanted to ask him to relieve the city of its legal obligation to report. Their proposal passed only when Acting Mayor McKerchar broke the tie by voting with them. (The split was along predictable class lines.) Next, Council agreed without much heat to tell the Unemployment Relief Committee to eliminate from their relief forms any questions on length of residence in Canada. Similarly smooth in passage was a motion that Council was opposed to deportation of relievers with no other charge against them.49

Local evidence based on direct testimony from people ordered deported strongly contradicted official statements from Ottawa. By Christmas 1933 the Department of Immigration had been claiming to whomever would listen that between 1 November 1931 and 21 August 1933, 48 per cent of British and 28 per cent of foreign-born deportees had "applied for deportation . . . [and] during the Board of Inquiry, a further 43 per cent of British and 56 per cent of foreign-born" had asked to be sent home. In the calendar years 1932 and 1933, a total of 8,758 persons were deported as public charges, and hundreds more not counted in the official figures were sent back as "accompanying persons". In this same period deportation for other causes brought the total deported up to 12,785 with 1,130 accompanying persons. Of these, 7,586 deportees were British (59 per cent).50

In a similar statement, the Department claimed that in 1932-33, of the 8,758 public charge deportations, 41 per cent of the people said that they wanted to go home, 23 per cent refused to consider further employment, 8 per cent demanded impossible wages. In a very considerable proportion of public charge cases, the Department said, these individuals had been admitted to Canada to do agricultural work, but many had worked only briefly on farms, then had gone to the cities for industrial work. Others had never worked on a farm at all. "In a number of these cases . . . the men were anxious to join their dependents" at home and glad to be deported.51

Internal documents of the Department leave no doubt that these statistics were unreliable, misleading, and sometimes patently untrue. These figures were derived from charts with such headings as "desire for deportation expressed", or "desire for deportation not expressed"; "applied to be deported", "refused to consider employment", "demanded
impossible wages or working conditions", "illness", "anticipated employment in native country". They also tabulated "appeal dismissed" and "would consider employment but did not appeal".\textsuperscript{52}

Spurious deportation requests were produced by various methods: words of testimony before Boards of Inquiry were twisted; immigrants were forced by municipalities to sign deportation requests. There were manipulative questions asked at Boards. Immigrants who had been assured that they would be deported were asked if they looked forward to seeing their families and friends; if they agreed, the response was counted as a request to be deported or a desire to go home. The Department included numbers of those who "did not appeal" in its voluntary deportation figures. Similarly, if during the Board of Inquiry immigrants made any statements indicating a lack of enthusiasm for a specific job or work experience (such as saying they preferred an industrial job they once had, to farm work, because the former paid better) or a field of work, or even if they expressed discouragement about their ability to find a job, the Department made use of such statements in their statistics showing that public charge deports were unemployable, unwilling, or undesirable. There are cases on record where the Department stated in its memo on the appeal that the immigrant had refused farm work, when in fact the Board of Inquiry transcript showed the opposite.\textsuperscript{53}

Labour Councillors in Winnipeg had reached much the same conclusion. After the New Year they served notice that they were not going to let the deportation issue rest. They presented further information about federal deportation policy and practices, and pressed for action. The local Immigration officer took note of this and wrote to Ottawa suggesting relief cases no longer be processed. If the policy was in truth not to deport immigrants on relief because of unemployment, as Ottawa had been claiming, then those deported as public charges were labelled as undesirable without ever being charged or examined as such, he pointed out. Such cases, even if suspended, were politically dangerous; people treated like this became "centres of propaganda very unfavourable to Government."\textsuperscript{54}

Ottawa did nothing. Council had to act. Public opinion had been aroused by hard luck stories of struggling, respectable families. The press raised embarrassing questions about the deportation of the unemployed, about the Relief Department and its Director, and the responsibility for and substance of orders under which he may have been acting. The increasing ire of the respectable lent weight to that of the radicals, the
unemployed, and the "foreigners". As well, the new Council had equal numbers of Citizens and Labour representatives, with the election of Jake Penner for the Workers Unity League. At the end of January 1934 Council decided that unless they were officially notified that they must do so, the City would cease to report for deportation any cases of public charge solely because of unemployment. Locally, the decision was applauded. The Tribune spoke of the previous policy of automatic reporting and deportation of the unemployed as an abuse and misapplication of the deportation clause in the Immigration Act, and expressed particular concern that nearly ninety per cent of the relief deportations of the last few years had been British immigrants. (In fact, automatic public charge deportations were perfectly in accord with the provisions of the Act, but few people outside the Department of Immigration ever understood that.)

The response from the Department of Immigration expressed concern over potential bureaucratic difficulties, irritation at the persistence of the issue, and a determination that the Winnipeg City Council be given enough rope to hang itself. The federal Department of Immigration gave Council what it had asked for. Commissioner of Immigration Jolliffe wrote from Ottawa that he and the Minister had agreed to discontinue all proceedings; he would not order the city to report relief recipients. In fact, no public charge deportations would be undertaken from Winnipeg. In effect, Winnipeg was to be starved out.

The standoff was by now part of a national issue. Were municipalities required by law to report public charge immigrants to Ottawa? Technically the answer was yes, but the situation was confused by Ottawa's tactics of playing off the municipalities against interest groups. For example, the Canadian Legion had protested to the Department that many municipalities had been threatening veterans with deportation. The Minister of Immigration wrote back denying that veterans had to worry about this. Even if municipalities had been threatening veterans, it was Ottawa, not the municipalities, that had the power to decide who would and would not be deported.

The issue was raised in Parliament. Winnipeg M.P. Abraham Heaps suggested in the Commons that it be optional for municipalities to report, pointing out that the legislation had been framed "before the war, when unemployment was a social crime in the land." But Minister of Immigration Wesley Gordon opposed the proposal, claiming that he reviewed all cases
and did not authorize deportation until he was satisfied that the individual
could not find gainful employment.

There is much evidence that Gordon's statement that he reviewed
all cases was a lie. A 1936 memo described the situation clearly. Under
the Immigration Act the Minister was responsible for dealing personally
with all appeals, while the Deputy Minister was responsible for issuing
warrants and so on. These duties were statutory and could not be delegated
(except to an Acting Minister or Acting Deputy Minister). Because of the
heavy workload, "it has been the practice for years" for the Deputy
Minister to deal with "most" of the appeals. The courts had decided that
this practice was invalid (the memo cited several decisions). Immigrants
had been released on these grounds by the courts. The Department of
Justice concurred with this view and had told Immigration that the Minister
must personally review cases as provided by law. As an alternative, Blair
(who in 1936 became Director, with Deputy Minister status) had proposed
that the Minister would be given only those cases where the Departmental
officials recommended that the appeals be refused. In other words, even
after strong recommendations that blatant illegalities cease, the Department
continued these practices.59 Other documents make it amply clear that
even if it were physically possible for the Minister to review all cases (and
it was not), it was not the policy of the Department that he should
do so.

Gordon's argument against optional reporting by the municipalities
rested on more than his spurious claim that he personally prevented
abuses. He argued that it would create a situation in which the law would
not be equally and consistently enforced throughout the country. "Control
would be transferred from the federal to the municipal" level of govern-
ment, which was contrary to immigration law and policy. Apparently
preferring to see the law flouted rather than changed, Gordon softened
his stand by saying that no municipality in Canada was now reporting
all its cases of immigrants on relief. Of course this statement raised
questions about the motivations and actions of the municipalities. As
Saturday Night tartly pointed out, if municipalities now reported selec-
tively, civic authorities were actually using discretion, while hiding behind
the compulsory reporting clauses and "using the statute as an axe over
the heads of unfortunate non-citizens."60

The freeze on deportation from Winnipeg meant that the city could
not remove any immigrant who had become a public charge. Deportations
had stemmed from four sources of complaints. The Municipal Hospital
Commission reported cases where immigrants had unpaid bills for medical treatment or had become inmates of asylums and other institutions at public cost. In theory, these cases could be deported for medical reasons, but public charge deportations were simpler to carry out if the immigrant had been here less than five years. For medical deportations it was usually necessary to prove that the conditions had existed at entry, and that required more documentation and effort than deportation as a public charge. The second source was the Social Welfare Commission which dealt with relief for the unemployable. These were safe targets. In the thick of defending itself over deporting the employable unemployed, the Department claimed that it deported only the unemployable. Few would challenge immigration policy aimed at acquiring settlers able to contribute to the country. The unemployable might be so through no fault of their own, but there was little protest against their deportation. The third and fourth sources of complaints were the Unemployment Relief Committee and the Relief Department, in charge of relief for the employable unemployed. Official records do not indicate the proportions of deportations initiated by each of these sources, but evidence suggests that the Relief Department (unbeknownst to city officials, or at least to Council) was responsible for the bulk of them.61

City Council's manoeuvre boomeranged. Council had been reacting to wholesale deportation of the unemployed over which it had little control. It was not necessarily opposed to deportation of the unfit or unemployable. Nor was it opposed to legitimate voluntary deportation cases. By the end of March 1934 a few immigrants on relief had appealed to be deported. The Unemployment Relief Committee or Social Welfare Commission were willing to agree to the requests, but the Council's January decision (and Ottawa's reaction) meant that their "hands are tied," they complained. Council tried another ploy. It authorized Mrs. Stewart-Hay, a social worker formerly the Secretary of the Unemployment Relief Committee, now with Social Welfare, to act as an official City Relief Officer and report to the Immigration authorities all legitimate voluntary deportation cases.62

Ottawa refused to act on the complaints. Council tried other tactics. Minnie Watt was a test case. A twenty-eight-year old Scot, she had immigrated in 1929 under the Empire Settlement Act. A linen factory and restaurant worker in Scotland, she had worked in hospital and school laundries in Winnipeg until she became unemployed in June 1933. Soon thereafter she went on relief. Her family had found her a job at home. Officials of the Women's Division of the City Relief Department and on
City Council supported her request. Mrs. Stewart-Hay asked Immigration to arrange Watt's "repatriation".

She was rebuffed. The Department did not "repatriate"; it deported. The transportation companies had to pay for deportations of defective immigrants whom they had brought over, and they would not pay for repatriation. Moreover, the Winnipeg office could not deport Watt because Ottawa had ordered that there be no public charge deportations from Winnipeg. If City Council wanted to reconsider its motion, said the Winnipeg Commissioner, perhaps he would be in a position to act.63

Council reconsidered, led by Citizens representatives. A motion for rescinding was defeated. It had been supported by five of the Citizens, but opposed by all the Labour Councillors, augmented by four from the Citizens side. The impasse continued until it was broken by a compromise in July 1934. Carefully selected deportations would be initiated in "isolated cases" by the Unemployment Relief Committee, the Social Welfare Commission, and the Municipal Hospital Commission. The Relief Department was specifically forbidden to initiate complaints unless told to do so by the Unemployment Relief Committee.64

After a bit of procedural housekeeping over the next few weeks, the deportation machinery again began to operate. It appears that Council kept a closer watch on the system. Certainly those who sat on the Unemployment Relief Committee did so. They required a written request for deportation before they would hear such cases; they had to be satisfied that the person truly wished to be deported. Individuals usually appeared in person before the Committee. If the Committee were not sure, they investigated.65

Not everyone on Council was satisfied with the procedures. There were some attempts by Labour members to make further changes, all of which came to naught. Nonetheless, from August 1934 onwards, Ottawa resumed public charge deportations from Winnipeg. The city's surrender was timely; belt-tightening was in order. In September the city cut off relief to 500 families and 1,600 single men (most of whom were Central Europeans) who had arrived in Canada after 1 January 1929.66

Winnipeg City Councillors had been shocked by the procedures of deportation and by the cost in human unhappiness of "shovelling out" the unemployed. If they had known more about the day-to-day realities of the experience of deportation, they would have been horrified, as would have been most Canadians. Despite initial fears expressed by the Department that lazy immigrants would use deportation as a free trip.
home, deportation was no picnic. As larger numbers of deports over-
whelmed the system, conditions which had always been unpleasant
became abominable. For example, a trainload of deports sent in January
1933 from central Canada to Halifax complained that the food on the
train consisted of sandwiches; they were not given clean blankets; they
were not allowed to move freely about the train. They criticized the deten-
tion centres: clean sheets, pillowcases and blankets should be provided;
Board of Health limits on numbers of children per room should be observed;
families should not be separated; the rooms should be clean and sanitary;
there should be suitable food for babies and small children (instead of
pork and beans); all food should be hygienically prepared; the mentally
ill and handicapped should be segregated from other inmates; guards
should be cleaner in their appearance and habits and more civil to inmates;
there should be no alcohol permitted on duty. These complaints were dis-
missed by the Department of Immigration as the work of communists.67

In fact, there was good reason for complaints such as these. Departmen
tal files reveal that conditions were rarely good at deportation
facilities. By 1932 they had deteriorated until they were disgraceful. The
main centre was at Montreal, where immigrants “of all classes and
conditions, deports being collected from all over Canada and sent . . .
for either embarkation or for transmission to the port of embarkation”
were gathered and held.68 The Montreal Detention Hospital, which was
primarily a prison, had been a main deport clearing house since 1907,
and for most of those years had been plagued by understaffing, over-
crowding, and inadequate facilities. As deportation increased each year
(except during the war, but then Montreal was overcrowded with long-
term detentions and prisoners of war held for the Militia) the building
deteriorated. By the late 1920s there were serious problems.

They ranged from breaches of propriety to dangers to health. There
were “nasty declarations” written on the walls of rooms used to hold
families and children. It took nearly two months of complaints and a
personal visit by a shocked Deputy Minister (who said of the writers “it
is a wonder such people are allowed to live”) to have them painted over.
There was severe overcrowding and frequently more bodies than beds.
People slept on mattresses on the floor. There were not enough rooms
for families, so men and women were put in one big room; a curtain
segregated male and female sleeping quarters. (“Mothers and daughters
are amply protected” the Division Commissioner assured his superior after
a press exposé.)69
There was no way for inmates to have fresh air or exercise, and there was nothing to do all day. They were often kept locked up inside. On at least one occasion seventy people were locked into a dayroom meant for a much smaller number. Verandahs formerly used in warm weather were now forbidden because the floors were rotten and iron bars loose; prisoners escaped, or indecently exposed themselves to passers-by. Only patchwork repairs were authorized: Immigration simply ordered the staff at Montreal to "exercise proper supervision" to prevent such incidents. Perhaps it was to prevent escapes that fire escapes were kept locked. Although it was called a Detention Hospital, medical facilities were inadequate. The doctor's examining room was too cold in winter to carry out proper examinations. If he opened a window for ventilation while examining a tuberculosis case, he could not raise the temperature above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. There had always been something wrong with the heating system. To warm up the doctor's room to 60-65 degrees, the rest of the building would be at 75-80 degrees. There was no proper segregation of the inmates with contagious diseases during the 1930s. Immigrants with tuberculosis or venereal disease, or other illnesses, were mixed with those who were insane, convicted criminals, or ordinary public charge cases.

Things got worse. In 1932 the boiler blew up, and failed again later for six weeks during which there was no hot water, so inmates did not wash. The blankets were lousy and vermin were in plain view in the building. Nothing could be sterilized. The disinfecting machine did not work. Even when the equipment was operating properly, there were still vermin; the building, the bedding, and the inmates were infested. The Department blamed it on the deportees. The staff made "every possible effort" to fumigate, the Department claimed. But in fact, their efforts consisted of telling the guards to ask inmates if they had lice; no routine measures were taken. Vermin were brought in "practically every week by deportees," was the excuse of the Division Commissioner. When it got too bad, the Department sent some long-term inmates over to a delousing service run by a City of Montreal refuge.

Although Department officials admitted freely in their internal correspondence that these conditions existed and were improper, they were unwilling to take effective measures for improvement. They decided that deportees would have to live with the lice: "it would be impossible and not advisable to adopt a general practice of delousing every deport held over in the building." Officials including the Deputy Minister admitted
that the existing Montreal Detention Hospital was overcrowded and a
danger to health for the inmates (because of filth, vermin, and lack of
segregation of infectious cases). "Proper care cannot be given to detained
persons." As early as July 1931 they had concluded that the old building
was beyond repair and a new facility was needed. They expected depor-
tation to increase and with it, conditions to deteriorate in the Montreal
Detention Hospital. They knew criticism would continue, but expected
that it would come primarily from deports. This did not pose a danger
to the Department. "We can better face this than justify heavy capital
expenditure at this time." 72

Their predictions were accurate. By 1935 the Montreal Detention
Hospital, still the main deport clearing house, was in a disgusting state.
It was due only to the secrecy with which deportation was carried out
that there was not a major scandal.73 Luckily for the Department, most
"nice" people did not concern themselves with such matters. The
Department's dirty secrets were relatively safe.

Although the Department was remarkably unresponsive to criticism,
there had been so much trouble over deporting British unemployed who
were otherwise desirable immigrants, that by the spring of 1934 the
Department was suspending "some" of these deportations. It continued
to deny that it had been or was routinely deporting the desirable
unemployed. In 1934, the Minister wrote to Member of Parliament
Kennedy that it was not "the policy of the Department to effect depor-
tation solely" on account of becoming a public charge because of
unemployment caused by generally depressed conditions. "In all cases
of deportation on public charge grounds, other factors have been present."
Backpedalling behind the scenes, the Department sent out a directive in
August 1934 ordering all its offices not to carry out British public charge
deportations based solely on unemployment, after they had been ordered.
Many of these immigrants were almost eligible for domicile, the directive
explained. There were Canadian-born children in these families who could
not be legally deported. The directive recalled that many of these
immigrants had been regarded as highly desirable when they were recruited
and screened under the Empire Settlement scheme. They were now
undesirable solely on grounds of unemployment, which in the vast majority
of cases was due to general economic conditions rather than individual
failings. The Department felt that it was only fair that "if their unsuit-
ability arose out of conditions over which they had no control, we keep
them rather than send them back to be a charge overseas."74
Such a policy had long been sought by the British government. Local events were also important. The excesses of the Canadian government had led to a sizeable protest against deportation, coming not only from the poor and the radical, but from a broad spectrum including respectable sources: international craft unions, churches, the CCF, the Liberals, and increasing numbers of middle class people. The Bennett Iron Heel policy had become politically awkward. If it now seemed untenable to persecute the communists, how could it be justified to deport the otherwise unobjectionable British unemployed?

The effect of the directive to suspend British public charge deportations is unclear. For the British immigrants ordered deported as public charges, it delayed rather than eliminated deportation. Agents were told to inform such immigrants that it was "extremely unlikely" that their deportations would be carried out; they were to "try to settle successfully in Canada." Such advice must have rung hollow. These people lived under a cloud: if Ottawa deported only undesirables, they were officially labelled as undesirable by the deportation order, carried out or not. As well, they lived under a sword of Damocles: deportations were suspended, not cancelled. They could be reactivated at any time for any reason.

An official policy to suspend the deportations of desirable British public charge cases did not mean that public charge deportations came to a halt. Rather, it meant a shift in the description of cases (other grounds had to be brought forward) and in the nationality of the immigrants deported. The overrepresentation of Britons among the public charge deportees had long been a political problem for the Department. Relief deportations still continued. For example, a "Statement showing amounts of relief for public charges deported during the month of August 1934" (when the rate of unemployed deportations had slackened) showed the following average amounts of relief for which people were deported: to Scotland $49; Czechoslovakia $126; Finland $33; France $320; Germany $80; Lithuania $100; Poland $120; Roumania $563; Sweden $510. The average amount was $118. Although deportations continued at high levels through 1935, there were several thousand fewer than there had been in 1934. In fact the number of deportations in the fiscal year ending 1935 was smaller than in any year after 1921 (although the percentage of deportees compared to numbers of immigrants over the three years previous was still higher than 1931). Public charge deportations still took place with the same intensity they had in fiscal 1930.
When Thomas Crerar became the new Minister of Immigration after the July 1935 elections, Department bureaucrats had to prepare memoranda to brief him on policy and activities of his new Department. What they told him does not accord in many respects with what unpublished Department documents show to have been happening. His staff told Crerar that “over a period of three years an effort has been made to determine the attitude of individuals to deportation.” The Department’s research led one top official to say “I think it is quite correct to say that at least 90% of the British public charge cases dealt with wanted to go home.” They told Crerar that between 1902 and 1934, 27,185 immigrants had been deported to all countries as public charges. Immigrants had become public charges for a variety of reasons: illness in the family, death of the breadwinner, unemployment, criminality, insanity, and so on. But the most important reason, especially in the last few years, had been unemployment, “sometimes due to the inability or unwillingness of the immigrant to accept or undertake the sort of work that may be available.” The Immigration Act provided that immigrants who became public charges were to be deported, and this had been done until the spring of 1934 when the Department began to suspend some British public charge deportations. Later that summer, these deportations were generally suspended. The Department’s practice was not consistent with the law “as it stands”, they told Crerar. One of his first decisions as a Minister concerned this issue. Should the Department carry out the deportations of British immigrants who had become public charges solely because of unemployment?

The Minister’s reply was consistent with the Department’s claimed policy, but in opposition to its practice. British immigrants should be deported as public charges if they had been and would continue to be a serious problem in Canada, or if they were anxious to go home and had friends and relatives to go to and the municipalities were urging deportation. But the Department should distinguish between those who were public charges solely because of unemployment and had no other problems, and those who otherwise had problems such as being ill or incapacitated, he said. It is clear that there was no question of suspending the deportation of non-British public charge cases. Also left open was the option to continue to claim that there were other problems than unemployment to justify public charge deportations of Britons. Crerar may have cared about what was done to the unemployed, but he was told what his subordinates wanted him to know, in the time-honoured tradition of the
Department. There was no cleanup, no new broom; merely a confirmation that the more contentious of the Department's practices should be carried out more discreetly in politically acceptable ways.

Internal documents prepared to summarize Depression deportations refute the Department's claims that it was the unfit rather than the unemployed who were "shovelled out". In a report prepared in 1935, the Department attempted to analyse the number of deportations due to illness. There were 10,805 public charge deportations between 1 November 1931 and 31 January 1935 (those accompanying not included). Only 797 of these (7.4 per cent) were listed as related to illness. For the British the illness rate was 394 of 6,684 cases (5.7 per cent); for the non-British, 403 of 3,941 (10.2 per cent). Another analysis of public charge deportations for the calendar years 1932 and 1933 showed that of a total of 8,758 cases, 622 (7 per cent) involved illness; of the 5,578 British cases, 314 were illness related (5.6 per cent), while the rate for the 3,180 non-British cases was 308 (9.6 per cent). Clearly illness was not a factor in most public charge deportations. Then what was meant by unfit? Was unemployability a matter of attitude rather than physical condition? The Department's records offer no satisfactory answers to these questions.

The extent of public charge deportations was considerable. According to unpublished Department figures, between the beginning of November 1931 and the end of January 1935, the Department deported 10,805 immigrants as public charges (not including accompanying). The published statistics of the Department from the annual reports show even greater numbers. Between fiscal 1929-30 and fiscal 1934-35, a total of 17,229 public charge deportations were carried out (not including accompanying). There is every indication that the vast majority of these people were simply unemployed.

A sympathetic view would have it that the Department was caught in the middle during the Depression. If it had balked at deporting the unemployed, the municipalities would have been up in arms and the provincial governments could have used the issue to pressure the federal government to assume more of the costs of relief, especially for immigrants. On the other hand, if the Department openly and admittedly "shovelled out" the unemployed in the tradition of the British poor law and its own deportation policy, public protest would have added to political pressure that the Department and federal government could ill afford to
increase. The Department either had to change its practice, or change what people could find out about its practice. It chose the latter course.

It began by trying to build airtight cases for public charge deportations, and to include other grounds, such as medical grounds, when possible. It also tried to purvey the claim that it did not deport the desirable unemployed. It made this claim to the municipalities, the transportation companies, Parliament, the press, prominent individuals, the left, and the general public. Further, it tried to sell the notion that most public charge deportations were "voluntary". The evidence on which it based these claims was questionable to say the least.

The general public did not have access to this information. Nonetheless, the files did not conceal the practice of having deports sign voluntary relief forms, whether done by the municipalities or by the Department (as it was done at various times for British and other immigrants). The case that the Department tried to build for public consumption was based on statistics which could be proved fallacious only by insiders. The Department created categories of evidence which it then used to produce statistics that were more or less technically correct but gave an essentially false picture of Departmental activities.

The Department's game of passing the buck on deportation requests from the municipalities was clever; it was literally true that the Department responded to municipal requests for deportation. Yet since 1906 the municipalities had been required to report deportable immigrants. While there was little the Department could do to enforce this provision, it is also clear that since 1906 it had been the practice of the Department to seek out deports actively, using the legal provisions for municipal reporting as a crucial part of the seeking-out mechanism.

The Department tried to escape being caught between conflicting interest groups (or more accurately, tried to avoid being caught) by the device of suspending some British public charge deportations. Ordering but not carrying out deportation was supposed to stop protest and calm public opinion. It had the opposite effect in some cases. If only the undesirable were deported, then ordering a deportation was tantamount to labelling someone as undesirable without allowing them to hear or refute the charge. This was a familiar tactic, used by the Department to manage its own employees.

In public charge deportations, the Department acted arbitrarily when it could, and retreated behind the smokescreen of lies and red tape when public or interest group pressure created political repercussions.
Deportation policy and practice during the 1930s served the interests of government (federal first, municipal last), and of corporations and employers. When cheap labour became redundant labour, the Department got rid of it. There was little humanity in its policy or its managers who went about Department business relatively unremarked, unobstructed, and uncontrolled.