

## Jack Layton (1950-2011)

**O**utlook Magazine joins millions of Canadians in mourning Jack Layton and extending condolences to his family, both personal and political.

Jack died tragically soon after his greatest achievement—leading the NDP to Official Opposition status, for the first time in the party’s history, thereby bringing the left into the political mainstream. The NDP’s gains in Quebec under Jack’s leadership represented a partial bridging of Canada’s “two solitudes.” An anglophone party leader who was also a native Quebecker and fluent French speaker, Jack successfully appealed to Quebec on social issues that transcended the national question.

Jack already had an impressive record as a Toronto city councillor when he became NDP leader in 2003. He took a strong stand on issues including opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and support for gay rights, security certificate detainees, and striking postal workers in the face of the Harper government’s back-to-work legislation.

Jack gave all he had for his achievements, lead-

ing a vigorous campaign even after his initial bout with prostrate cancer and his hip injury, already suffering from his soon-to-be detected recurrence of cancer. To the end he displayed a humour, optimism and congeniality which have become rare in political life. One of his most moving actions was his final letter to Canadians, offering hope in various ways, both personal—to others suffering from cancer, even when his own hope was gone—and political—for a more just Canada.

Jack inspired thousands of young Canadians, particularly in Quebec, to become actively involved in politics, something no other political leader has managed. We hope his untiring dedication to a better Canada will be carried forward.

The path ahead for the NDP is uncertain, and the challenges facing it and the rest of the left are as great as ever. But we will have Jack’s example of courage, integrity and humanity.

*“My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we’ll change the world.” ♦*

## J-14 protests in Israel

**The** tent protests in Israel against growing social and economic inequalities constitute a new aspect of the situation in the Middle East. The ongoing occupation and national conflict tend to repress internal social conflicts, but they nevertheless continue under the surface, and have a way of emerging unexpectedly.

The protest against rising housing costs began on a small scale, when a young Tel Aviv woman named Daphne Liff, evicted because she couldn’t pay her rent, set up a tent on Rothschild Boulevard; within a week, hundreds of tents sprang up. The protests have taken place against a background of increasing privatization under various governments, dismantling the welfare state which Israel used to be known for. The J-14 protests, as they were quickly dubbed (they began on July 14, Bastille Day) have gone beyond housing costs to related issues such as privatization, high prices, and low wages and salaries, and have embraced a variety of progressive demands such as increases in health spending. The protests have taken on a decen-

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tral-ized character, with small encampments throughout the country, rather than attempts to stage large rallies in Tel Aviv. Many of the protesters’ slogans, such as “Mubarak, Assad, Netanyahu,” pay tribute

to the recent “Arab Spring.”

Most protesters have avoided—at least formally—making links to anti-occupation struggles, perhaps to prevent the government from dismissing them as “leftist,” and to avoid splitting the movement itself, given how strongly the Israeli-Jewish public is imbued with obeying the “national consensus.” But in some circles these taboos have been broken. In some tents, Palestinian and Jewish activists have discussed Palestinian grievances, and chanted, “Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies.”

Social inequality is related to the occupation in concrete ways. One protester, Bracha Ben Avraham, resident of a moshav outside Nahariya, close to the Lebanese border, said, “We’re fed up that money goes to subsidize housing in settlements in the West Bank.” Or as the peace group Gush Shalom said, even more simply, “Money for the settlements OR money for housing, health services and education.” The new focus on social issues has led some commentators to question the sacred cows of security and military spending. One *Haaretz* op ed was titled, “It’s time to slash Israel’s military budget” (Aug. 16).

The vicious attacks on Eilat, Israel’s southernmost city, to which Israel responded with brutal air

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