


# A NEW LEADER FOR THE NDP

## Introduction

### Focus

This month's *News in Review* story focuses on Jack Layton, the newly chosen leader of the federal New Democratic Party. We focus on his entry onto the federal stage and what it may mean for Canadians. We also examine his role in the changing face of Canadian politics prior to the next federal election.

 Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

### Further Research

The health-care challenge was recently profiled in "A Prescription for Health Care" in the December 2002 issue of *News in Review*. It can also be accessed at [www.cbc.ca/newsinreview](http://www.cbc.ca/newsinreview).

On January 25, 2003, at the party's national convention in Toronto, NDP members took a huge leap of faith in selecting Jack Layton to replace Alexa McDonough as the NDP leader. Winning an impressive first-ballot victory over his opponents, Layton was immediately catapulted from the municipal political scene as a well-known city councillor in Toronto to the national political stage. Layton's triumph was remarkable for a number of reasons. First, he decisively defeated all challengers for the leadership, including two long-time NDP MPs. He also convinced a solid majority of rank-and-file party members that a new image and a break with the past were necessary if the NDP was to regain the support of Canadian voters.

Layton assumes the NDP leadership at a time of great political change in Canada. Both the governing Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives are to choose new leaders in 2003 as Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Joe Clark leave office. The official opposition party, the Canadian Alliance, also has a new and so far untested political leader, Stephen Harper. When the next federal election is held, probably early in 2004, Canadians will be offered a number of new faces to choose from in the race for prime minister. The NDP is hoping Jack Layton's fresh, bilingual, media-friendly image, his strong track record in municipal politics, and his ability to articulate issues of concern to many voters will raise their party from a decade-long slump. He is the best hope for the party since the disastrous 1993 federal election, when it crashed to a record low of nine seats and lost official party status.

What are the main issues the NDP will present to Canadians under Layton's leadership, and how will they differ from those of the other political parties? As an urban politician, Layton feels strongly that the cities of Canada need more federal financial assistance in order to deal with problems such as homelessness, poverty, a decaying infrastructure, and affordable housing. He will also press for a speedy implementation of the Romanow Report on health care, which advocates a far greater level of government spending.

Layton has a solid background in environmental advocacy and will push the Liberals not only to ratify the Kyoto Accord on global warming but also actually implement its major provisions. He has already spoken out against any Canadian participation in a United States-led military attack on Iraq and will reach out to the growing peace movement in this country for support. One of Layton's main goals will be to attract more people, especially the young, to become more involved in the political process and overcome the cynicism and disillusionment they have sometimes felt toward it. His advocacy of major electoral reforms such as changes to the way campaigns are financed and the introduction of a new system of proportional representation may appeal to those who have felt left out of politics in the past.

Jack Layton is indeed a new face on the political scene in Canada, both for his own party and for the public at large. For his many supporters, he represents the hope that his energy, charisma, and intelligence can rekindle the left as a political force in this coun-

**Definition**

Proportional representation is an electoral system whereby parties are assigned seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them. At present in Canada, the candidate with the most votes in a riding is declared the winner. This is called the "first past the post system."

try after a long period of right-wing dominance. To his critics, however, he appears to be a glib, Toronto-based politician with little grasp of national issues and a strident left-wing message that is not in tune with the times.

One of the major obstacles he will have to overcome in the months to come is his lack of a seat in Parliament.

He has stated he will run in a Toronto riding in the next federal election. Meanwhile he may have to watch the political drama of 2003 unfold from the visitors' gallery in the House of Commons while he seeks to raise his national profile and address the issues he feels so strongly about to Canadian voters.

**To Consider**

1. Why did NDP members take a "leap of faith" in choosing Jack Layton to be the party's new federal leader?

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2. What are the main issues the NDP can be expected to present to Canadians under Layton's leadership?

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3. Why is the election of Jack Layton part of a greater process of political change currently underway in Canada?

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4. What advantages and disadvantages does Jack Layton bring to his position as the new federal leader of the NDP?

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5. At this time, what is your personal opinion of Layton? Explain.

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## Video Review

This video review offers both a viewing and post-viewing activity. Part A should be completed while students view the video. Part B can be completed later.

### Did you know . . .

The Progressive Conservative Party is also looking for a new leader? The PC leadership convention will be held in Toronto from May 29 to June 1, 2003. To learn more about the current list of candidates, visit [www.pcparty.ca](http://www.pcparty.ca).

### Part A: While Viewing the Video

Please respond to the following questions as you view the video. You may need a few minutes after viewing to complete these questions.

1. Who is the new leader of the NDP? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was surprising about his victory?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many candidates fought for the NDP leadership? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which two candidates were the major contenders?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Briefly describe the major differences between the two major candidates.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the name of the political party that preceded the NDP?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who was Tommy Douglas and why is he considered important?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. When was the NDP formed? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How did the NDP fare in the electoral politics of the nineties? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What does James Laxer think are reasonable goals for the NDP?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Briefly state your personal opinion of the new NDP leader.  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Part B: After Viewing the Video

In the rush to win media attention and voting support, most political campaigns design slogans to highlight the qualities of their candidate and stay in the minds of voters. View this list of campaign slogans for the individuals running for the position of leader of the New Democratic Party. Use the organizer to record your responses to the slogans.

### Sloganeering NDP Style

Candidate	Slogan	What it suggests about the candidate	My personal evaluation of the slogan
Bill Blaikie	Passionate, Respected, Ready		
Joe Comartin	Leadership with a Purpose		
Pierre Ducasse	Imagination, Solutions		
Jack Layton	New Energy, New Leadership		
Bev Meslo	For a socialist and feminist New Democratic Party		
Lorne Nystrom	Leading Change!		

Which of the above slogans do you think was most effective? Why?

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If you can, suggest a better winning slogan.

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## A NEW LEADER FOR THE NDP

### *A Brief History of the Left in Canada*

#### **Did you know. . .**

The origins of the terms *right* and *left wing* are in the French Revolution? In the seating plan of the French National Assembly, those who wanted greater democracy and change tended to sit on the left while those who preferred to maintain a strong monarch and less change sat on the right. Those in the centre were more willing to compromise. In Canada the CCF-NDP has generally occupied a moderate left position.

"Last century made the world a neighbourhood. This century must make it a brotherhood."  
— J. S. Woodsworth (1874-1942)

The New Democratic Party has never formed the federal government in Canada, yet both it and its predecessor, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) have exerted an important influence on politics in this country since the 1930s. Here is a brief summary of the history of Canada's left-wing political movement, from its founding to the present day.

In the summer of 1933, a new political party was born when delegates met in Regina to found the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, or CCF. The CCF was Canada's first federal democratic socialist party, and it emerged during the depths of the Great Depression. Many Canadians at this time were suffering from severe economic hardship and unemployment and had become disillusioned with the old political parties and what they regarded as their failed solutions to the country's crisis. The CCF's first leader, J.S. Woodsworth, a former minister, leader of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, and socialist MP since 1921, committed his party to the ultimate goal of eradicating capitalism. He hoped to introduce a socialist "co-operative commonwealth" with jobs and social and economic security for all.

In the years that followed its creation, support for the CCF grew slowly in Canada. Despite the Depression, most Canadians were reluctant to endorse the party's radical socialist solutions to it, which included large-scale government involvement in the management of the economy, and public ownership of major industries and utilities. The CCF also faced competition in its western Canadian heartland from another radi-

cal protest party, Social Credit, which had been formed at about the same time. It was not until the Second World War that the CCF began to make real inroads in provincial and federal politics. In 1943, it came close to forming the government of Ontario and two years later won office in Saskatchewan, under the dynamic leadership of T.C. "Tommy" Douglas. The CCF's call for the implementation of a social welfare state, including family allowances, old age pensions, greater rights for workers, and a national public health-care system found increasing support as the war ended. Recognizing their popularity, the Liberals under Prime Minister Mackenzie King adopted many of the measures the CCF had originally proposed. King had always regarded the CCF as "Liberals in a hurry" and his shrewd adoption of many of its ideas strengthened voter support for his own party while blunting the CCF's social reform demands.

As the party's fortunes outside its Saskatchewan base declined during the 1950s, many on the Canadian left believed that a new party had to be created, one that could recapture the imagination of voters across the country. In 1961, the New Democratic Party was formed at its first national convention in Ottawa. As a merger of the CCF and major union organizations such as the Canadian Labour Congress, the NDP hoped to build on its traditional Prairie support by reaching out to workers and middle-class Canadians looking for a fresh political alternative to the Liberals and Conservatives. The new party also toned down much of the socialist rhetoric of its predecessor, no

### Further Research

To learn more about the NDP, visit [www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca). To find out more about Canada's major labour organizations, consider visiting the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) at [www.caw.ca](http://www.caw.ca) or the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) at [www.clc-ctc.ca](http://www.clc-ctc.ca).

longer calling for the abolition of capitalism and instead supporting the idea of a "mixed economy" with a role for both the public and the private sector. Its first leader was the dynamic Tommy Douglas, who left Saskatchewan for the federal stage. During the 1960s, the NDP fought a number of federal elections under Douglas's leadership. Despite his abilities as a speaker and increasing public support for some of its policies, the NDP was never able to make the breakthrough to major party status,

Labour lawyer, party activist, and Toronto MP David Lewis replaced Douglas as the NDP's federal leader in 1971, in the midst of a serious crisis within the party. A radical left-wing faction nicknamed the "Waffle" group had challenged Lewis and the mainstream party organization by calling for a much stronger position against the American takeover of Canada's economy. While the Waffle group brought many idealistic young 1960s radicals into the party, its strident positions and rhetoric horrified the leadership, who feared that it would drive moderate, middle-class voters away. In 1972, Lewis led the NDP into a power-sharing agreement with Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's minority government, an arrangement that lasted until 1974. During this time NDP measures like the creation of a publicly owned petroleum company (PetroCan), and a government agency to monitor foreign takeovers of Canadian businesses (Foreign Investment Review Agency) were enacted.

Ed Broadbent replaced Lewis as NDP leader in 1975, following a setback the party suffered in the 1974 federal election. A former York University political science professor, Broadbent was able to raise the party's representa-

tion in the House of Commons in a series of elections, culminating in 1988 when the NDP won a record 43 seats. But opinion polls putting the party in first place in voter support prior to that election had raised hopes among NDP activists that it might be poised to become the next federal government. The NDP's strong showing was still a disappointment.

The 1990s proved to be disastrous for the federal NDP. Even though the party had won provincial office in British Columbia and Ontario along with Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the election of 1993 proved to be a major turning point in the NDP's downward spiral. New party leader Audrey McLaughlin conducted an unfocused and poorly planned campaign. While the NDP was reduced to a paltry nine seats two new political groupings, the Reform Party and the Bloc Québécois, established themselves on the federal scene. While the party was able to regain some of its traditional support in the 1997 election, it suffered yet another reverse in 2000. The Canadian political scene became dominated by right-wing ideas like eliminating budget deficits, reducing government spending, encouraging greater private enterprise, and cutting taxes. The NDP's social democratic message appeared to be out of tune with the public mood.

Following the disappointing 2000 election results, many in the NDP called for a serious round of soul-searching within the party to re-evaluate its role in Canadian politics. Some suggested a name change, while others searched for new policies and leaders. There were calls for the party to adopt the "Third Way" approach to government that mixed traditional social democratic core values with support for an innovative private sector. This stance had helped

Britain's Labour Party win power under Tony Blair. Still others maintained that the NDP had to hold on to its socialist principles and join forces with the growing popular movements against corporate-led globalization and war. The party's choice of a new federal leader, Jack Layton, in January 2003, over long-time party stalwarts Lorne Nystrom and Bill Blaikie signals that the forces of renewal and change within

it now hold the upper hand. Whether the kinds of change in leadership, image, and policy that they have persuaded the NDP to adopt will strike a responsive chord with more Canadian voters remains an open question. In any case, Layton's job of revitalizing the NDP and making it appear more relevant will be a major challenge for him and his supporters in the months following his sweeping leadership victory.

## Responding

1. What were the main policies of the CCF and how successful was it in appealing to Canadian voters during its existence from 1933 to 1961?

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2. Why was the New Democratic Party formed out of the old CCF in 1961? In what ways did it differ from its predecessor?

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3. How successful has the NDP been in Canadian federal and provincial politics during the period from its founding to the present?

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4. What are some of the main problems the NDP has faced in making its message more appealing to Canadian voters since the 1990s? What changes has the party made in order to achieve this goal?

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## A NEW LEADER FOR THE NDP

### Profiles of the NDP Leadership Candidates

Here are capsule profiles of the candidates for the federal NDP leadership, providing background information on each and a quote that indicates his or her views about the direction the party should take in the future.

#### **Jack Layton**

Jack Layton was born in 1950 in Hudson, Quebec, and raised in Montreal. He came from a political family, with a grandfather who served as a provincial cabinet minister and a father who was a federal cabinet minister in the government of Brian Mulroney. He received a Ph.D. in Political Science from Toronto's York University in 1983. A year before, he won a seat on Toronto city council and was re-elected in 1985 and 1988. In 1991 he ran for mayor of the city but was defeated. He tried to win election as a federal MP for the NDP in the 1993 and 1997 elections but without success. Re-entering municipal politics in 1994, Layton served from 2001 to 2002 as president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, helping to win him a national profile as an advocate for Canada's cities. Among the policies he supports are greater attention to environmental issues, more government support for health care, and action on the crisis of homelessness in Canada.

Quote: "The winds of change are circling in the political skies, and they are about to fill our sails. Let's hoist that mainsail!"

#### **Bill Blaikie**

Bill Blaikie was born in Winnipeg in 1951. He became a United Church minister in 1978 and advocated a socially responsible Christian faith. In 1979 he won election to the federal House of Commons from Winnipeg, and has held a number of positions within the NDP caucus in Ottawa, as the party's critic on health, environ-

ment, and international trade. He is currently the NDP House Leader and critic on parliamentary reform, justice, and intergovernmental affairs. Blaikie has a long record of service in Parliament on behalf of his party and is very familiar with the day-to-day workings of government. In the leadership contest, he cautioned the party not to opt for change for the sake of change, and presented himself as a steady, reliable candidate who knew how to guide the NDP into the political future.

Quote: "I've heard it said of the NDP that we are too attached to the past, but I tell you that it is our political opponents who are the Jurassic Park of Canadian politics."

#### **Lorne Nystrom**

Lorne Nystrom was born in Wynyard, Saskatchewan, in 1946. He first won a seat in Parliament at the age of 22 in the election of 1968, and was re-elected in every subsequent election until 1993, when he lost to the Reform Party. In 1995, he unsuccessfully sought the NDP federal leadership, losing to Alexa McDonough. He won back his seat in the House of Commons in 1997 and was re-elected in 2000. As a leadership candidate, he appealed to the party to adopt moderate policies such as avoiding deficits and not ruling out tax cuts in order to appeal to a broad base of public support. But to many in the NDP, he was perceived as an establishment candidate whose time had passed.

Quote: "We have to change the way the party sees itself. The party is not only a party of opposition or conscience. It is a

party with a history of leading change and governing well, a party with a history of making hard and difficult decisions in this country.”

### **Joe Comartin**

Joe Comartin was born in 1947 in Stoney Point, Ontario, and before he entered politics practised law in Windsor. In 2000, he won a seat in Parliament, the only NDP candidate in Ontario to do so. Since coming to Ottawa, he has served as the party’s critic responsible for the environment, natural resources, and energy. Comartin enjoyed considerable support from the powerful trade union faction within the NDP, including the endorsement of Buzz Hargrove, the president of the Canadian Auto Workers. He supports a strong commitment to government action to create jobs, especially in industrially depressed areas of the country.

Quote: “As a party, we’ve been too cautious. Too often in the last decade, the citizenry of this country looked to us and said ‘what do you really stand for?’”

### **Pierre Ducasse**

Pierre Ducasse was born in Sept- Iles, Quebec in 1972. He gained a political science degree from Laval University in

1998, one year after he ran unsuccessfully as an NDP candidate in Manicouagan, Quebec. In 2000, he became associate president of the federal NDP and established his credentials as a party organizer from Quebec. He is expected to run again in the next federal election. Many within the party hope that he will help to raise its profile and gain more support for it in Quebec, where it has won few votes in the past.

Quote: “To have the results you’ve never had, you must do what you have never done.”

### **Bev Meslo**

Bev Meslo was born in Trail, B.C., in 1948. She has worked as an advocate for the poor and homeless in her native province and was active in the left-wing Socialist Caucus of the NDP. Her supporters presented her to the party in the leadership contest as the most committed socialist candidate, hoping to return the NDP to its radical roots.

Quote: “If the party is to survive, it must turn sharply to the left. It must return to its working-class roots and principles. It must abandon its failed experiment to be all things to all people, standing in the mushy middle ground while looking for a Third Way.”

## Activities

1. Form groups with your classmates to discuss and evaluate the candidates for the NDP federal leadership. What do you think are their major advantages and disadvantages? If you were an NDP member, which of them would you have supported for leader, and why? Use the following organizer to gather your ideas.

Candidate	Advantages	Disadvantages	Our Thoughts
Bill Blaikie			
Joe Comartin			
Pierre Ducasse			
Jack Layton			
Bev Meslo			
Lorne Nystrom			

2. In your notebooks, write a response to each of the quotes from the NDP leadership candidates. State how you interpret what each quote means and your reaction to it.

# A NEW LEADER FOR THE NDP

## *Choosing a Leader*

### **Definition**

A trade union is an association of workers that band together to press for better working conditions and higher wages.

In previous NDP federal leadership conventions, the only people who were able to vote for the new leader were delegates attending the meeting. These people were elected from their local party riding associations, and came to the convention either pledged to support a particular candidate or as undecided. In addition to delegates from riding associations, NDP conventions also involved a large voting bloc of representatives from the various trade unions affiliated with the party. This group of votes could sometimes be very influential in determining who eventually became the party's new leader.

For its 2003 federal leadership convention, the NDP adopted a new, "one-member-one-vote" method of electing the new leader. This meant that each of the roughly 82 000 individual card-carrying members of the party would be able to cast their votes for leader, either by mail or online before the convention was held in January 2003. Along with these party members, whose combined votes would account for 75 per cent of the total, were 1630 labour delegates whose votes would be worth 25 per cent. Each one of these labour votes was equal to about 12 individual party member votes. On their ballots, party members were to indicate their preferences among the six leadership hopefuls, rating them from one to six. This preferential ballot would have been used if none of the candidates won 50 per cent of the vote on the first round and more than one vote had been necessary to elect the new party leader.

On January 25, after the last party members and labour delegates had voted online at the actual convention site in Toronto, the results of the first ballot were announced. To the surprise of many, Jack Layton had scored a dramatic victory, winning 53.5 per cent of the total votes, far ahead of his nearest rival, Bill Blaikie, who won 24.7 per cent. Lorne Nystrom followed with 9.3 per cent, Joe Comartin with 7.7 per cent, Pierre Ducasse with 3.7 per cent, and Bev Meslo with 1.1 per cent. Most observers had expected that none of the candidates would win over 50 per cent on the first ballot and that at least a second ballot would be necessary to determine the winner. If this had happened, it might have been possible for some of the candidates opposed to Jack Layton to make a deal to prevent him from becoming leader by agreeing to support one of his opponents.

The Canadian Alliance had already used the one-member-one-vote method of selecting its leader in the race that pitted former party chief Stockwell Day against the eventual winner, Stephen Harper. It is expected that both the Liberals and the Conservatives will adopt a similar method of choosing their new leaders in 2003. Gone are the days when a group of elected delegates met on a noisy, crowded convention floor to elect their party's new leader. Now every member of the political movement will have the right to cast his or her vote for the candidate of their choice, sometimes using the most up-to-date technology to do so.



## A NEW LEADER FOR THE NDP

### *Writing a Letter to the New NDP Leader*

In his acceptance speech at the NDP convention, the party's newly elected leader Jack Layton told Canadians that, "the NDP is interested in what you have to say."

Write a draft letter to the new NDP leader, outlining your views, suggestions, comments, etc. on one or more of the following issues of concern to you and other Canadians:

1. Canada's relationship with the United States (possible war with Iraq, war on terrorism, border security issues after September 11, etc.)
2. Environmental issues (ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, alternative energy sources, recycling, etc.)
3. Canada's health-care system (the Romanow Report, public vs. private health care, federal and provincial responsibilities)
4. Reforming the electoral system (changes to campaign financing, proportional representation, use of referenda, etc.)
5. The future of Canada's cities (homelessness, decaying urban infrastructures, housing, etc.)
6. Economic assistance to regions of the country facing hardship (Prairie farmers, Atlantic Canada, etc.)
7. The role of government in the economy and society (social programs, policing of corporate behaviour, taxes and spending, etc.)
8. Any other issue of concern to you

You can mail your letters to either address below:

Mr. Jack Layton  
Federal Leader, New Democratic Party  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON

Mr. Jack Layton  
Federal Leader, New Democratic Party  
802-85 Albert Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 6A4

Or e-mail your letters to: [ndpadmin@fed.ndp.ca](mailto:ndpadmin@fed.ndp.ca).