

The Budget—Mr. Mackasey

tion but because technology has changed the workplace. It has changed the workers, their concerns and their characteristics. I repeat that when the majority of the work force consists of what we call knowledge workers or white collar workers who go to the workplace with their knowledge rather than with their screwdrivers, there is a change in attitude, a change in approach, and a change in understanding.

I can remember the election of 1962 when the then Right Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Diefenbaker, was unfairly castigat-ed for a 92-cent dollar. It was a big factor in the election. Today we talk knowledgeably about this subject. I do not mean only Members of Parliament but people in general talk knowledgeably about floating dollars, about fixed dollars, about 80-cent dollars, about 79-cent dollars. It is not a political problem. People understand that it is only a relative measurement of value as compared to the United States dollar. It is no longer an issue, just like the deficit is no longer an issue if explained properly.

It is significant that when Hon. Members speak about measuring the deficit on a per capita basis, they are using the wrong measurement and the wrong criteria. The deficit must be measured in comparison to our ability to repay it at an appropriate moment, to finance it and to carry the debt charges. That is why it must be compared to the GNP.

The Minister of Finance's Budget pointed out that although he is freezing the amount of the deficit to \$31 billion, the increase in GNP in two years' time will make the relationship between the GNP and the deficit half of what it is today. I may remind the House that after the war in the early 1950s, the deficit in the country was running at 23 per cent of GNP. The deficit is not a problem unless, of course, it is unbridled or represents waste, and nobody wants that. That is why the Auditor General and a committee of public accountants look assiduously to see where there is waste.

I believe that at this point in our history people are entitled to a little more intelligent input from the New Democratic Party. There are exceptions, of course. I know that my time is coming to an end, Mr. Speaker, so I would like to say that yes, there are distinctions between the Parties, and they exist not only in debate. There are clear distinctions between the three Parties. One of the good and useful things that has occurred in recent months and now leading up to our leadership campaign is that those distinctions are becoming more pronounced. People are entitled to know what we stand for.

I do not particularly appreciate that some Members from my own Party's front-benches are unaware of the fact that federal legislation provides that the negative impact of technological change must be negotiated on the federal scene. We brought that legislation in 13 years ago. Three weeks ago, I heard members of the New Democratic Party saying that what we need is legislation that will provide that the Government must negotiate the impact of technological change. That has been a main feature of the changes of the Labour Code. I think I had something to do with introducing that change in 1971. Thirteen years have gone by and members of the New Democratic Party still fail to understand and appreciate that

every collective agreement under federal jurisdiction must make provision to negotiate technological change.

What did that legislation flow from? The Hon. Member for London East (Mr. Turner) could tell us that it came about because of a change in the technology of the railways in the 1960s. At that time, the railways converted to diesel which made the picking up of coal to create steam redundant. Of course, the railways, being the unenlightened employers they were, thought that they could just disrupt the whole work force and never negotiate. Of course, Judge Freedman told us the opposite.

This Party will stand on its record in the next election. It will stand on the universality of its programs, including the old age pension, unlike the former Minister of Finance who, just three weeks ago, said that we must bring in a needs test and apply it, if necessary, to old age pensioners. I hope he repeats that statement in the election campaign. I hope he comes to my riding and tells that to the senior citizens who live there. There are many senior citizens who live in my community because they love the community; they are well represented, the climate is nice, there are many senior citizens' homes and we look after senior citizens in Lincoln.

I would like to see the former Minister of Finance come to the Riding of Lincoln and say: "Vote for me, but remember that if we are elected, the first thing we will have to do is take a good, hard look at old age pensions and see if there is not some way we can save a little money by introducing a needs test". I shall not go on to fight an election campaign on the basis of this Budget, but that statement has bothered me ever since I heard it.

All Parties work collectively at times to ensure that the quality of life in the country is as high as possible, even for those who for reasons beyond their control can contribute very little to the economy. It would do a disservice to the Canadian public if at this late stage, because of the influence of the President of the United States, we bowed to the temptation to become politically expedient and get votes by destroying the things that people have been working for many, many decades to achieve.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey) has made quite an issue of means tests and has clearly implied that he is opposed to them in their entirety. I would ask him if he supports the Government policy of having a means test before the granting of the guaranteed income supplement to about 50 per cent of old age pensioners in the country. Does he also support the Government policy of having a very rigorously applied means test before a veteran aged 55 can receive the war veterans allowance?

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is not in the habit of putting words into my mouth and he has no right to imply that I said that. I know what I said. I spoke specifically about Old Age Security, not the guaranteed income supplement. I understand the difference between the income supplement and OAS. I understand that in order to preserve the basic principles of OAS, we must bring in some