until this legislation was introduced, the average worker who did have access to a private pension plan did not have this contributions and the employer's contributions locked in until he had either reached the age of 45 years or had worked for that company for 10 years. One, therefore, can understand that there would be a problem when companies laid off workers.

I think of International Nickel in my home town of Sudbury, which has, over the last several years, a tremendous lay-off and attrition record. At the time the company began laying off its employees, a lot of them had not worked for the company for 10 years and left International Nickel without a dollar in their pockets from the pension system. Because there was a failure to define the ownership of the pension fund, the company had been allowed to use that surplus which was built up in the fund in any way it wished. That has not been addressed in this legislation.

There is no clear-cut definition of pension assets and I believe that is a flaw in this legislation. I believe we should have a full debate in committee as to whether or not we as parliamentarians believe that that sort of situation should be left for the next generation. If we do, then I think it is a disservice not only to Canadian workers but to society as a whole. I say that because if we go on the assumption that my definition of a pension is correct—I firmly believe that a pension belongs to the worker. I view it as a deferred wage—then surpluses which have been built up in pension funds should be used to significantly improve retirement packages so that workers can take advantage of early retirement and leave the jobs for our young.

The Hon. Member opposite will agree that one of the towns in his riding, Port Colborne, suffered a tremendous blow from the lay-offs which occurred at the International Nickel Company in Port Colborne. I am sure he agrees that had there been legislation in place which clearly indicated that the pension fund surplus belonged to the workers, they could have bad significantly improved retirement packages which would have allowed people as young as 54 years and 55 years to take early retirement. That way the jobs in Port Colborne and Sudbury could have been kept for the younger workers. However, that was not the case. Because a lot of the workers were worred about inflation and their ability to make a living from the time they took early retirement until they hit the age of 65, they did not take advantage of the early retirement options which were offered by the company. As a result, the company had no option but to lay off the younger workers. Those younger workers then left Port Colborne and Sudbury and I believe that circumstance had a very deteriorating effect on the local economies of those two towns.

I mention Port Colborne and Sudbury as examples, but that type of situation, I am sure, happens in every community across this country. To a large extent, it reflects a downturn in the economy of our natural resource based industries. I suggest that that pattern has been repeated in Atlantic Canada, northern Quebec, northern Ontario and in parts of British Columbia. I cannot speak for the Prairies but that certainly is the pattern. I wish we could have had legislative tools at our disposal so that we could have improved the track record of those communities and kept the young people there rather than giving them no option but to ship out of those communities to seek employment elsewhere.

I would like to deal now with that part of the legislation which deals with the new Registered Retirement Savings Plan. I think it is very important that the public understand clearly that there will now be a different kind of Registered Retirement Savings Plan in effect after this legislation goes through. With the existing system, up until the taxation year of 1986, if one belongs to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan in one's place of work, one has access to a $3,500 Registered Retirement Savings Plan. If one has no access to any pension plan system in one's place of work, then a maximum of $5,500 per year is allowed to be put into a pension plan. That is so that these people will have similar benefits when they reach the age of retirement to other Canadians who belong to a defined pension system.

I understand that my colleagues to my left have difficulty with this legislation. Both the Lalonde Budget of 1984 and the Budget of the now Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in 1985, significantly improved the limits under the Registered Retirement Savings Plan systems. It is going to be done in a staged manner so that over the next four or five years people who do not have access to a private pension plan, that is, those who previously had been under the capping rule of $5,500, will have, by yearly increments, their limit increased to somewhere in the neighborhood of $15,400 by the year 1990-91. Some people have asked why we are so generous with those individuals because it will represent a further financial drain resulting, as it will, in higher forgone revenues.

The major reason we accepted this premise was because in our investigation of private pension plan systems, we found roughly 45 per cent to 50 per cent of males in our society have access to a private pension plan at their place of work. In the neighborhood of 30 per cent of Canadian women have access to a defined pension plan at their place of work. When we investigated the actual tax systems of those pension plans, we were astonished to learn that under the legislation that has existed in this country for the last two decades, people who belong to a defined benefit plan—and that includes every one of the table officers and all of the *Hansard* reporters—receive tax assistance because their pension plans are not taxable. In the year they work, they have to now determine what is the value of that tax assistance. When we look at the public pension plan systems in Ottawa—we investigated this across the country and, frankly, Ottawa is no different from provincial houses—we find that most of the employees belong to a 2 per cent, best five year, defined benefit program. Not all Canadian workers have access to such a rich pension system but the tax legislation reflects the fact that some 500,000 Canadians alone work for the federal Government and there is almost an equal number who work for the provincial Governments. I suspect—and I do not have all the numbers—that when one adds in the people who work for the municipalities