

5. to provide for continuing joint policy discussions relating to the health and post-secondary education fields.¹⁶

There has been some controversy with respect to the fifth objective. In the Breau Report (1981) we read:

The Breau Task Force appreciates fully, however, that because education is under provincial jurisdiction, responsibility for coping with change and effectively serving broad Canadian interests must rest with the provinces and their institutions. Therefore, we believe that there should be an effective consultation mechanism to ensure concerted efforts by all concerned to establish and attain the goals that are of mutual interest to both orders of government. This necessity was accepted at the conclusion of the 1976 First Ministers' Conference, where it was agreed that the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and the Secretary of State would meet regularly to discuss questions of mutual interest. It is apparent that this arrangement has not become fully operational, and failure to achieve this goal has tended to undermine the rationale for the commitment of the federal government to continue to provide general support to the provinces for higher education.¹⁷

Many witnesses who appeared before our Committee called for a national policy for post-secondary education and prefaced such a call with a requirement that the federal and provincial governments get down to a meaningful dialogue. In their opening statement before the Committee, the AUCC, for example, stated:

We urge this committee to lend its voice to the need for continued active involvement of the Government of Canada in support of post-secondary education. We recommend that the committee urge the federal and provincial governments, in the strongest possible terms, to negotiate, in good faith and in the spirit of renewed federal-provincial co-operation, a funding mechanism that will satisfy both parties and will ensure that the universities in Canada have access to adequate and stable levels of funding.¹⁸

When the chairman of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) appeared before this committee on June 5, 1984 with respect to Bill C-12, *An Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977*, he responded in the following way to a question about meaningful federal-provincial dialogue:

The story, senator, is, as I indicated earlier, that there have been eleven occasions since 1977 when the Council of Ministers of

¹⁶. MacEachen, p. 79.

¹⁷. Breau Report, p. 129.

¹⁸. *Proceedings*, Issue No. 45, p. 7.