

federal government and the provincial governments. That meeting took place in January, in Quebec City, and two matters of common interest were discussed. The first was the possible renegotiation of the agreements we have with the provinces, commonly called the formula payments, for the support of the official second language and minority language instruction throughout the country, and the second was the question of student assistance. The important question which the hon. member raised is equally one which could be discussed and I will explore the possibility of placing it relatively soon on the agenda for discussion.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, that we have implemented in a satisfactory way, I believe, the kind of intention that was expressed in the Prime Minister's comments last June. I would prefer not to call it a "mechanism" or a "forum". I do not want to get into a semantic confusion which might be misinterpreted. Let me say that we have simply established a continuing arrangement for the discussion of the interface of the policies of the federal government and the provincial governments which touch upon the area of education. It is a method for communication and for discussion of questions of common interest and common concern. Certainly, it does not represent any desire on our part to interfere with or to supplant the council of ministers of education, nor is it in any way an attempt to displace provincial responsibility in relation to education. It is, in essence, a common sense arrangement to discuss matters that are of mutual concern.

It is because of those developments which have taken place in the few months since September, which I believe were very satisfactory developments, that I believe the provincial ministers of education feel we are on the right track. I must confess to the House that I am extremely satisfied with the constructive, positive and welcoming attitude which the ministers of education have adopted in both establishing this procedure for discussion and in the substantive matters we have discussed so far. They have been extremely co-operative, and I welcome that and try to be as co-operative with them as I can. It is because of these developments, of which not all hon. members may be aware, that I thought I should indicate to the House what the situation is now. I should like to point out to hon. members that it was because of this procedural development that we placed in the bill clause 24(3) which refers to the responsibility of the Secretary of State. It reads:

—to consult with the governments of the provinces with regard to the relationship between the programs and activities of the government of Canada and of the government of the provinces that relate to post-secondary education.

I believe that subclause in the legislation embodies or crystallizes the practical and common sense arrangement which we have worked out with the provincial governments.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, wearing a blue flower in my lapel, and with memories of a grand convention held just one year ago, I should like to add my congratulations to the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark) for a most successful first year.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements

Mr. Paproski: Even Simma thinks he is great.

• (1540)

Mr. Schellenberger: I invite hon. members to reread in *Hansard* what I thought was an excellent speech given by my colleague the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) yesterday. I thought his speech was very well delivered.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Schellenberger: I wish to make just a few comments in this debate on federal-provincial fiscal arrangements. I would like to leave the details of these arrangements to my colleagues to discuss. My concern is about the way the agreement was arrived at. In December of 1976 the 11 first ministers met in Ottawa to iron-out the details of this new federal-provincial cost-sharing scheme. Eleven individuals had the responsibility to determine a new economic relationship which will affect all Canadians.

The use of federal-provincial conferences has increased tremendously in the past few years, yet few of us have taken the time to examine the implications of this type of decision-making. Federal-provincial conferences deny elected officials from provincial legislative assemblies and from the parliament of Canada the opportunity to represent the views of their constituents. Instead of being based on the collective will as represented by members of legislative assemblies and members of parliament, the decisions arrived at in a first ministers' conference are based on the will of only 11 individuals. While I have few doubts about the competency of these first ministers, I resent the fact that these men are speaking for all of Canada when they do this without a resolution of either the elected assemblies of the provinces or a resolution of the House of Commons. The people of Canada have elected federal and provincial members in the belief that these men and women will not only represent their views but, also, that this representation will have some impact on policy formation. However, when the policy formation takes place at a federal-provincial conference it is clear that we, as elected representatives, have no way of making known the views of our constituents.

The first ministers' conference is a very vivid example of the present trend toward technocratic decision-making in Canada. Unable to comprehend the technicalities of each issue, the premiers and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) come to these conferences armed with a battery of advice and expertise provided to them by public servants. The power of these bureaucrats has reached awesome proportions, and as a result of this increased power the phenomenon of top-down legislation has emerged. Policy originates in the cloistered offices of government departments in Ottawa and only slowly and sporadically seeps down to the general populace. The bureaucrat makes plans without assessing the interests of the citizens to be affected by those plans. After implementation of a certain policy he compounds his first mistake by failing to arrange for adequate and instantaneous feedback on how the policy is working. Insulated from the real wishes of the citizenry which he claims to serve, the bureaucrat assumes the right