

secondary education on which there could be more mutually satisfying discussions.<sup>20</sup>

We find it surprising that provincial education ministers decline to discuss EPF, the cornerstone of federal involvement. This is no way to carry on a dialogue. To give the CMEC its due, provincial education ministers may not be in a position to discuss EPF effectively. When EPF was proposed, it was unilaterally introduced by the prime minister and the federal minister of finance; when it was unilaterally amended in 1982, 1984 and 1986, the legislation was sponsored either by the minister of finance or the minister of state (finance). It would appear that if EPF is to be changed again, it will not be through a process of dialogue with the education ministers; rather it will be by the federal cabinet, more specifically, the prime minister or the minister of finance, dealing with the provincial first ministers and their ministers of finance.

Furthermore, even when federal ministers have openly discussed EPF, the tone of their argument reflects the intransigencies of the two levels of government in this area. When the Honourable Serge Joyal was Secretary of State, he remarked:

It is clearly intolerable that substantial increases in federal support for higher education, transferred via the provinces, are unmatched by increases in the support that a given province actually pays to its universities and colleges. The province of British Columbia froze its level of support to the sector this year, and according to first reports on yesterday's budget, will cut colleges back by 3.5 per cent and universities by 5 per cent for the coming year. The federal government can be accused of nothing but generosity in these circumstances. It is apparent that we must develop ways to ensure that money which this Parliament votes for post-secondary education actually reaches and benefits that sector.<sup>21</sup>

The secretary of state's first annual report to Parliament on post-secondary education in Canada, tabled in February 1986, included a section on federal-provincial consultations. This section makes extensive reference to the number of meetings which took place, but conspicuously omits mentioning any conclusions or results emanating from these meetings. When Secretary of State Benoit Bouchard gave us his views on May 15, 1986, he stated that the federal government, along with the provincial governments, must redefine their respective roles.<sup>22</sup> We doubt that this definition of roles will ever occur. **In our view, as long as Parliament authorizes the unconditional transfer of money to**

20. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Principles for Interaction: Federal-Provincial Relations and Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, (Toronto, 1985), p. 1.

21. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs*, Issue No. 3, (February 21, 1984), p. 6.

22. *Proceedings*, Issue No. 50, p. 19.