

Education has had the Secretary of State in its midst to discuss a number of issues. Over time, as I have attempted to indicate to the members of the committee today, the provincial governments have put to the Secretary of State, particularly during the past couple of years, what we think are reasonable, clear and, quite honestly, not overly difficult questions. That dialogue is going on, although it may not, as the Breau Report suggests, have been formalized to the extent that some in 1976 felt it might have been or should have been.

As I attempted to tell the members of the committee earlier, we asked the Government of Canada what are the national education objectives, the national economic objectives, which it says the country's post-secondary education system is failing to respond to and to act upon. Quite frankly, the situation is not a lack of dialogue; it is a lack of getting answers to what we think are fairly respectable questions.¹⁹

While this statement makes the provincial position appear rather one-sided, provincial governments have not made the task of the federal government any easier. In August 1985, this Committee invited the CMEC to meet with the Committee at the end of our deliberations (May 1986) so that we might have the benefit of their views on the federal role in post-secondary support; they indicated by letter that they had nothing further to add to their June 1984 testimony, but sent a document entitled *Principles for Interaction: Federal-Provincial Relations and Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. In that document, the CMEC insists that EPF is not open for discussion:

For some time now, there has been considerable discussion between the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and the Secretary of State regarding Established Programs Financing (EPF). The Council believes that little will be accomplished by such discussions in the area of federal-provincial relations in post-secondary education. This belief is based on the premise that EPF is a fiscal transfer to the provinces in respect of health and post-secondary education, not for health and for post-secondary education. Accordingly, no specific conditions are attached to how the provinces manage their post-secondary education systems and quite appropriately, where the core funding of post-secondary institutions is concerned, individual provinces plan and budget according to their particular needs and resources.

Given these considerations, the Council does not view EPF as providing a productive focus for a federal-provincial discussion of post-secondary education and believes that the federal and provincial governments should look beyond this issue to aspects of post-

¹⁹ *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance*, Second Session, Thirty-second Parliament, 1983-84, Issue No. 11, p. 36.