flexibility in communications and a major exchange of views. There was the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Atkey) who talked about barkings, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Miss MacDonald) who remained silent, and the right hon. Prime Minister who tried to keep an election promise even though it meant the loss of several million dollars in contracts, whatever the Minister of State for International Trade (Mr. Wilson) might say. If he does not have detailed figures, I would suggest that he ask one of the organizers of the Progressive Conservative Party, the president of Atco, who can provide rather accurate figures.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Industry also said how bad the situation was when his party came to power. This was perhaps an excellent idea, but the fact remains that, to rectify this situation in the industrial and commercial sectors, the right hon. Prime Minister created another triumvirate made up of two men who can talk big and one man who may have enough imagination, but who is absent from the House and who is not directly responsible to the population, because the government did not obtain a clear mandate from the voters. Instead of having a triumvirate consisting of two spokesmen and one thinker, we should perhaps have three ministers clearly involved in the development and the implementation of industrial policies in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, when the Progressive Conservative Party came to power, it considered two solutions as a panacea. The first was tax credits and the second was privatization. The Progressive Conservative party, and especially the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens), have for many years criticized the role and even the existence of the Export Development Corporation. During the recent election campaign, and I could quote from several speeches made by Mr. Stevens in this regard, this party made a commitment to the Canadian population to implement a large scale privatization program under the pretext that any activity in whatever sector is always better for Canada and our economy when it is controlled by private enterprise, even though they have never given sufficient proof of this theory.

● (1640)

With this pro-private enterprise, pro-privatization momentum, everything was going. Last September, the President of the Treasury Board produced a list of over ten Crown corporations that were to be turned over to the private sector and he told us he had in his pocket a second list that would be made public in due course. From behind the scenes, we learned that civil servants had to spend the month of August producing a series of internal papers, the purpose of which was primarily to say in which painful way privatization would be carried out, rather than to consider the advantages of such a move. More recently, the President of the Treasury Board told the House about the setting-up of a committee to study the whole of that issue and to show the government how to proceed to privatize the corporations already mentioned. And, last week, the President of the Treasury Board without even waiting for the report from the task force, announced the privatization of the Canada Development Corporation.

Such rambling on the part of the government, added to inadequately prepared statements, brought out all sorts of loose rumours. This government is entering day after day into a process of privatization that is far from just having advantages. As an example, today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with the EDC. The former banker who is now President of the Treasury Board has suddenly found himself cogitating publicly over the privatization of the EDC, and having done that, having thought that out, having publicly pondered over that, he had to take action. And then confusion set in, both abroad among our trade partners, and here among our Canadian exporters. Let us look briefly—and that is what the government should probably be doing—at the EDC, because it is necessary that we should remember what purposes and objectives are being pursued by that corporation. The mandate of the EDC is to facilitate and develop export trade by providing loan guarantees and other financial services. Its role is to ensure that Canadian export sales are not lost because of lack of financing at rates competitive with those offered by foreign exporters.

The EDC is the largest institution of its kind in Canada. Its role is to complement rather than replace other financial institutions. Its purpose is not to subsidize Canadian exports. It is commercially independent and has earned an adequate rate of return on investments made by the government, through the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The EDC's purpose is also to develop trade by offering Canadian firms consultation services in the areas of exports and country credit analysis. The EDC operates on a financial independence basis and at least for the time being it is attempting to maximize its revenue potential. The corporation has a unique accounting structure which allows for financing facilities at the government's own risk, in situations where a transaction would not meet commercial criteria but is to Canada's advantage.

To fulfil that mandate, the EDC offers five types of assistance to exporters: long-term loans; export credit insurance against non-payment by foreign buyers; insurance guarantees; guarantees to contractors and building firms; and foreign investments guarantees against the loss of Canadian investments due to political action.

The previous government, conscious of the predominant role played by the EDC, put forward Bill C-36 passed by the last Parliament. That legislation may be summarized as follows: the ceiling of EDC's loans and guarantees was raised to $26 billion. The authorized capital was increased from $400 million to $1 billion. Easier terms were put in effect to support tender and performance guarantees. The ceiling of authorized loans made on behalf of the corporation was raised to $10 billion. The ceiling of authorized loans made on behalf of the government was raised to $2.5 billion. The corporation's insur-