

executives are the second highest paid throughout the world with an average salary of over \$400,000 per year.

[Translation]

I want to ask the minister whether he thinks it is fair to put the blame on Canadian workers, when such high salary increases are being given to people in the top jobs in this country. I think the minister will agree this is not fair.

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not attacking Canadian workers. What I am pointing out to all Canadians is that if we allow our cost structure as a country to get out of line in relation to our main competing trading partners, then it will cost us business—business in the export markets and in competing against imports.

I am only making this point to draw to the attention of Canadians that if our competitive position gets out of line, we will lose business, and as we lose business we will lose jobs.

It is in the interests of all Canadians to contribute to getting our cost structure in line with our competitors so that we can have a healthy outlook for our economy, create more jobs, create a better standard of living and create a better way of life for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. Why doesn't the Minister of Finance object to the salary increases paid executives like the President of Bell Canada Enterprises, who got a 9 per cent increase, or \$100,000 per year, and the President of Alcan, David Morton, who got a 15 per cent increase or \$152,000? Why do workers always get the short end of the stick?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think if the hon. member had listened carefully to what I said, he would understand that I have been talking about the over-all cost structure. That includes wages, salaries, the salaries of people at senior levels in these corporations, as well as pricing policies.

Oral Questions

It is important in all elements of the cost structure of the economy that we take into account the fact that over the last two or three years we have become less and less competitive. Until we get that competitive position in line with our major competition, we are going to suffer as a country because of the fact that we will be losing jobs and business. That is certainly not in the interests of any Canadian.

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ROUTE CANADA

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): My question directed is to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Before he was given Route Canada by the government, Manfred Ruhland did not have the financial stability to get a credit card. Yet, after he was given Route Canada by the government, within a week he took his family on a \$17,500 vacation to Austria, paid for by Route Canada. Following soon thereafter were more vacations, expensive cars, two boats and a \$3.5 million plane, all paid for by Route Canada.

Why did the government give Route Canada to Manfred Ruhland when it should have known that by doing so these abuses would occur?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, that is straight out of *The Toronto Star*, and my hon. friend knows it.

He knows that the assets were sold by CN after an investigation of the financial abilities of the Fingold brothers. That is also in the records, if he wants to check.

There was no gift, none whatsoever. It was sold as a going concern to the Fingold brothers. That is exactly the way it happened. Any other suggestion is absolutely incorrect, and my friend knows it.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, Manfred Ruhland talked to the government a month and a half before the Fingold's came into the picture. The government did a credit check on Manfred Ruhland before the sale. The government passed an Order in Council approving the sale.

Some hon. members: Shame!

Mr. MacLellan: CN did not put this deal together, the government did. CN did not even know that Manfred Ruhland was involved.