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Re: “The Bill Gates of Switzerland”

Whether they are Russian, Nigerian, American or Swiss, Journalist Tatiana Serafin sure likes to write about billionaires – not even millionaires, but BILLIONAIRES.¹ I guess for her visits to 5 star hotels and swish corporate headquarters are part of the daily grind. I wonder if she would have been quite so complimentary about Stephan Schmidheiny – a man she dubbed the “Bill Gates of Switzerland” – had she taken the time to interview any of the 1,500+ asbestos victims whose case against Schmidheiny and another former Eternit executive will begin in Turin on December 10, 2009. The former executives could go to jail for up to 12 years if convicted of charges relating to negligent asbestos exposures experienced by Italian citizens.²

If a trip to Italy was not to Serafin’s liking, she could have visited Osasco, the Brazilian city where decades of manufacturing of Eternit asbestos-cement building products contributed to the family’s wealth, the wealth which Schmidheiny is so praised for giving away. The members of the Brazilian Association for the Asbestos-Exposed (ABREA) could have told Serafin their opinion of Schmidheiny’s philanthropy. They could have told her how he and his family’s company exposed them to an acknowledged carcinogen and then upped sticks and left town. The fact that people who worked at the factory are dying does not seem to affect the members of the family which owned Eternit at the time these workers were exposed to asbestos. Indeed when questioned about Eternit’s attitude to Osasco’s dying workers at a medical workshop on asbestos

¹ Serafin T. *The Bill Gates Of Switzerland*. Forbes Magazine. October 5, 2009.
<http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2009/1005/creative-giving-philanthropy-bill-gates-of-switzerland.html>

Serafin T. *Then There Was One*. March 27, 2009.

<http://www.forbes.com/2009/03/27/nigeria-dangote-otedola-business-billionaires-feud.html>

Serafin T. *The World’s Richest Royals*. June 17, 2009.

<http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/17/monarchs-wealth-scandal-business-billionaires-richest-royals.html>

Whelan D. Serafin T., C von Zeppelin. *Billion-Dollar Donors*. August 24, 2009

<http://www.forbes.com/2009/08/24/billion-dollar-donors-gates-business-billionaire-philanthropy.html>

² Kazan-Allen L. *Italian Case Against Eternit*. January 25, 2009.

http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_ital_case_against_eternit_09.php?namesrch=casale

Ariel D. *Two men to be tried in Italy over asbestos deaths*. July 22, 2009.

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32087775/ns/world_news-europe/

See also: <http://asbestosinthedock.ning.com/>

cancer in Switzerland in 2004, a long-standing Eternit representative replied that the injured should look to their government as the company had no obligation to them.³

On November 14, 2009, there will be a meeting of ABREA members in Osasco. The topic under discussion will be: *Stephan Schmidheiny: Saint or Sinner?* Individuals who remember the Swiss billionaire from his days in Osasco are being invited to share their thoughts about his subsequent behaviour. If Serafin wants to know more about Stephan Schmidheiny, perhaps she might like to attend this meeting. We will reserve a seat for her in the front row.

Sincerely,

Laurie Kazan-Allen

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³ Kazan-Allen L. *Secrecy and Subterfuge in Switzerland*. October 5, 2004.
http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_sec_sub_switz.php