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Editor – readers@forbes.com
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Re: **“The Bill Gates of Switzerland” by Tatiana Serafin, 10/5/09**

Dear Editor:

Ms. Serafin’s recent article about Stephan Schmidheiny fails to meet even the most minimal standards of intellectually honest investigative reporting for which Forbes is so well known, but instead sounds like you simply printed a press release issued by Schmidheiny’s public relations staff. While it may be true that he has given significant funds to a variety of charitable endeavors, the fact remains that his family’s fortune derives solely from a century of criminal exploitation of working men and women all over the world. Indeed, Schmidheiny himself was recently bound over for trial by Judge Cristina Palmesio and set for trial along with another Eternit executive on charges of causing criminally negligent asbestos exposures in Casale Monferrato and other Italian towns. His trial begins December 10, 2009 in Turin, Italy, and if convicted, he faces up to 12 years in prison. No wonder he is using you to try to clean up his image in advance of trial.

Eternit built a worldwide business on the manufacture of asbestos-containing construction materials without even the most basic regard for worker health and safety. As a result, there are epidemics of asbestos-related disease, including crippling asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma (a cancer whose only known cause is asbestos exposure) in the communities around his factories throughout Europe and elsewhere, including the very factory in Osasco, Brazil where he was employed briefly as a young man. Although he worked side by side with Brazilian workers, since he left that country he has totally abandoned any connection to them despite repeated entreaties from those workers. Mr. João Francisco Grabenweger, a Brazilian co-worker who was charged by company management to guide and accompany Schmidheiny in Osasco because he was of Austrian descent and fluent in German, waited in vain to hear from Schmidheiny until, unfortunately, he himself died of asbestos-related disease.

Eternit to this day continues to fight efforts by its Brazilian employees who are desperately seeking reasonable compensation. To the thousands of victimized workers and their

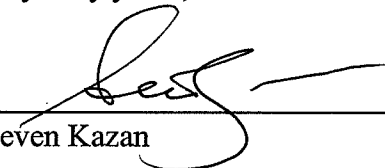
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family members in Osasco alone and the members of ABREA (the Brazilian Association of People Exposed to Asbestos), your attempt to sanctify Schmidheiny is an obscenity.

The evil done by Schmidheiny's family and family business extended into the United States as well. I am a trial lawyer who has spent the last 35 years fighting for asbestos victims. In 2001, our firm took Eternit's U.S. subsidiary to trial on behalf of Don Lee Henderson and his wife, Marlene Henderson.¹ Mr. Henderson was diagnosed with mesothelioma in the summer of 2001, and in December 2001, a unanimous Alameda County jury returned a verdict against Eternit based on its defective design of its asbestos cement board products, its failure to warn about the dangers of asbestos, and its negligence in supplying those materials to its customers. Eternit put aside \$300,000.00 to pay its lawyers to defend the case, and when the \$2.5 million judgment was entered against it, immediately put its U.S. subsidiary into bankruptcy rather than meet its legal and moral obligation to the Hendersons. This case is one of many, and Eternit continues to evade its legal and moral responsibility to its thousands of victims around the world.

That is the true legacy of Schmidheiny, his family, and his family's business – Eternit. Calling him “the Bill Gates of Switzerland” was an insult to Bill Gates and to Eternit's victims.

Very truly yours,



Steven Kazan

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¹*Henderson v. Eternit* (2001) Alameda County Superior Court Civil Action No. 843027-6 – the file is available online at <http://apps.alameda.courts.ca.gov/domainweb/html/index.html> under Case No. C-843027.