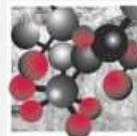




BAN ASBESTOS FRANCE
Association de lutte contre l'amiante
Patrick Herman (président)
Algues 12230 Nant
<http://www.ban-asbestos-france.com>
contact: Annie Thébaud-Mony (06 76 41 83)



ASSOCIATION
Henri Pézerat
Travail • Santé • Environnement

16 rue du Révérend Père Aubry 94120 Fontenay-sous-Bois
présidente : Annie Thébaud-Mony (06 76 41 83 46)

A Public Letter to Stephan Schmidheiny who is on trial for “voluntary disaster” before a criminal court in Turin, Italy

December 18, 2011

Mr. Stephan Schmidheiny:

At a time when an Italian district prosecutor has made a formal request before a criminal court in Turin to sentence you to 20 years of prison, you have the audacity to offer what amounts to a bribe of 18 million euros to the city of Casale Monferrato, whose population has been decimated by the health effects of the asbestos products which were produced at your Eternit factory in that city. With this letter we wish to communicate our indignation over your disgraceful treatment of asbestos victims.

Over a period of several decades, you deliberately organized a campaign of lies and silence regarding the deadly effects of this fiber in your efforts to expand the asbestos market around the globe, a commercial approach which made inevitable the death of millions.

When it became clear that it had become impossible to halt the prohibition of the sale and use of asbestos in Europe, you pulled your money out of this very lucrative industry...from 1984 to 1999 value of your fortune doubled from US\$2 billion to US\$4 billion. You reinvested a part of your ample wealth in the forestry sector in Latin America. According to information from sources in your native Switzerland, you began to buy forest properties in the south of Chile, near the city of Concepción, land which the Mapuche Indians had owned from time immemorial until it was recently expropriated from them, utilizing the tactics of intimidation, torture, and murder that were common practices during the Pinochet dictatorship. You have now extended your forest empire to the Latin American countries of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. Your very intensive plantations of pine and eucalyptus monoculture are beginning to mine irreplaceable subterranean reservoirs of water, which will eventually create a man-made drought in the territories of the Guarani Indians, whose lands have been stolen and ruined in a process similar to what has happened to the landless peasants in Brazil. And if this were not enough, you have now become the largest manufacturer of interior design products and furniture which utilize wood products from Latin America. Your company, Masisa, is now the owner of nine industrial complexes in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, and Mexico...and, of course, you have made sure that your enterprises receive an official seal of approval for environmental policies (ISO 14001) and occupational safety and health practices (OHSAS 18001). These standards have the intended effect of covering up the reality of intense contamination by toxic substances and carcinogens such as pesticides and formaldehyde with which your company treats the the wood products from the trees harvested from the plantations which you own.

None of the facts regarding your harmful policies towards native peoples, workers, and the environment has prevented you from trumpeting what you term your “sustainable practices” to the world at large, a slogan which recalls a similar slogan regarding the “controlled use of asbestos” which you created in order to hide the deadly nature of the production and use of asbestos products from your Eternit factories around the world.

Today you are tempting the Italian victims of asbestos at Casale Monferrato to withdraw their participation in the Turin trial which will judge your possible criminal role in the asbestos business in Italy and elsewhere. As part of this deal, which you have spared no pains to emphasize, you propose to spend millions on health research.

The sheer shamelessness of this proposal, rather than weakening or covering up your responsibility for the health disasters created by Eternit, actually has had the contrary effect of making your guilt obvious to all. It is none of your business, but rather the duty of the criminal trial in Turin to determine what level of reparations should be paid to your victims. As to the question of research, I don't know of any reputable scientific investigators who would agree to accept work regarding the health effects of asbestos with the money you earned through the deaths at Casale and at many other factories around the world.

We would like to end with a solemn plea, Mr. Schmidheiny, for you to respect the dignity of the dead and the sick who are still alive, of all of those whom asbestos---your asbestos---has killed or murdered.