

Review: Lack of coverage of Bilderberg meeting

July 13, 2011

REVIEW

The annual Bilderberg conference, an invitation-only gathering of about 140 guests, took place in St. Moritz, Switzerland on June 9-12. The gathering was closed to media.

The annual conference has taken place since 1954, principally among North Americans and Europeans from political, economic and business backgrounds. Their discussions are private and they publish no proceedings.

The complainant, Theodore Zafiris, wrote June 10, 2011 to note there were several Canadians attending the conference. He wondered why there was no coverage of it, including the protests about the gathering.

Esther Enkin, the executive editor of CBC News, wrote back June 21, 2011 to say the news organization was faced with choosing among thousands of possibilities the few dozen stories of greatest significance and interest to Canadians.

Zafiris wrote again June 22 to point out the Canadians in attendance and say he found it "hard to believe" the conference was "hardly newsworthy." Given that the governor of the Bank of Canada was there, "Canadian taxpayers would like to know what value they are receiving" from Carney's presence at the meeting. He requested a review.

CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices support robust newsgathering that is accurate, fair and balanced and provides a Canadian perspective on world affairs.

CONCLUSION

I am sympathetic to CBC News and other news organizations on this story. The gathering is by invitation only and the site of the meeting is secured for its duration. Unlike the large gathering at the annual Davos economic conference or the summit of G8 or G20 leaders, there is a blackout of coverage while it takes place. Doubtless, there are stories of Canadian interest taking place without a chronicle.

Even so, the Ombudsman's mandate does not directly deal with what CBC News chooses to cover day-to-day. It is vital for CBC News to maintain its independence over decision-making and how it allocates its resources. Only if there were a pattern of avoiding a theme or creating a distorted view of an issue through its choices might there be reason to possibly cite a violation of CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices. I cannot find any such violation.

Kirk LaPointe
CBC Ombudsman